

Respecting the Journalistic Code in Reporting: A Case Study of EuroPride¹

Aleksandar Đokić²³, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

The Code of Journalists of Serbia prescribes the appropriate manner that is necessary to report on particularly sensitive social groups, while respecting ethical principles and professional norms (Article V, paragraph 4). Relying on the Code, the aim of this paper is to answer the research questions dealing with the way daily newspapers in Serbia report on EuroPride 2022 and the differences in reporting on sensitive social groups in relation to the quality of newspapers (serious daily, semi-tabloid and tabloid). A total of 23 texts were analyzed, the subject of which was EuroPride, published in the daily newspapers *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer* during the manifestation, from September 12 to 18, 2022. The results of the analysis showed that the newspapers *Danas* and *Večernje novosti* adhered to the Code of ethics, while *Informer* violated the Code of Journalists in 100% of published articles (N = 4) and reported discriminatorily about the LGBT+ community.

Keywords: EuroPride, ethics, LGBT+, journalists' code, discrimination

Respecting the Journalistic Code in Reporting: A Case Study of EuroPride

Introduction

The LGBT+ community represents an important segment of modern society, which increasingly strives to ensure equality and respect for diversity. However, despite advances in rights and visibility, it often faces obstacles, stereotypes and discrimination, especially in countries with more conservative social structures and in those ruled by a traditional patriarchal society such as Serbia. Reporting on LGBT+ issues in the media plays a key role in shaping public opinion and raising awareness of the rights of this community. EuroPride, as one of the most impressive manifestations of support for LGBT+ rights in Europe, gathers thousands of

¹ This paper was presented at the International Scientific Conference Media and Challenges of the Modern Society, held on May 30–31, 2024, at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia.

² Corresponding author: djokicaleksandar30@gmail.com

³ ORCID: 0009-0000-9765-0402

participants every year and provides a platform for expressing equality and solidarity. Belgrade, as the host of one of the biggest EuroPride events, represented a specific meeting point of various social and cultural factors, which is why the focus of this paper is particularly on the manner the media followed and reported on this event and the LGBT+ population itself.

The media portrayal of the LGBT+ community and events such as EuroPride can go in the direction of education and empowerment, but also deepen prejudices and polarization, and therefore it is necessary to analyze the tone, content and approach of media reporting in the social and political context of Serbia, where issues of diversity and acceptance often cause public reactions.

When reporting on this topic, the media, i.e., journalists, often take a sensationalist approach in order to increase the circulation of their media. Čedomir Čupić explains sensationalism as “unexpected news that strongly affects a person’s senses, and later on his perception. The goal of a sensation is to distract people or to divert their attention from important issues and problems of common life” (Čupić, 2010: 59).

He further writes that the sensations that appear in the media equate truth and lies, justice and injustice, good and evil, hatred and love, beauty and ugliness, and because of this, people lose their value orientations and compasses. Čupić claims that sensations and spectacles are the most often and best sold. “Media sensations, when it comes to personal lives, take on the characteristics of ‘modern cannibalism’. They attack the personality not only to the point of ‘baring’ but to the ‘bones’. Journalists and the media turn into ‘piranhas’ on dry land. An unbearable state of verbal and written terrorism, insignificance and irrelevance is created which makes everything senseless. The audience turns into a mass or a crowd hungry for other people’s exposed intimates, stumbles and of the lowest passions. Media sensationalism is the rule of insignificance, banality, vulgarity and brutality in the public space” (Čupić, 2010: 61).

Who are the members of the LGBTI+ population? LGBTI+ stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Although these terms have an increasing global use, in different cultures other terms can be used to describe people who form relationships between the same sexes and those who display non-binary gender identities” (Being LGBTI+ in Eastern Europe: Report for Serbia, 2017).

In order to be able to talk about this population, it is necessary to define basic terms. The full acronym is LGBTTIAQ, with the shorter acronym LGBT+ being more generally accepted and known to the wider population.

- “Lesbian - a woman who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to women;
- Gay - a person who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same sex, is more often used for men, and is not wrong for women either;
- Bisexual person - a person who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to both sexes;
- Transgender person – a person whose gender presentation and gender

expression are in contrast to their biological sex and traditional gender roles for their gender;

- Transsexual person – a person who intends to, is in the process of, or has changed (i.e., adjusted - from a subjective perspective) gender;
- Intersex – a person who was born with undefined distinctly male or female sexual organs;
- Asexual - a person characterized by the absence of sexual orientation or lack of interest and desire for sex;
- Queer - a term used to describe all persons who are not heterosexual, i.e., deviation from heteropatriarchal norms and principles, questioning and constant disruption of everything that is socially assumed and conditional. This word also refers to activism, theoretical trends and movements” (Stojanović, Vuković, Stanković, Randelović, 2016: 18).

If we talk about respecting and ensuring the rights of this population, we can conclude that they are at an extremely low level. In the annual Rainbow Europe Index survey conducted by the ILGA-Europe organization in 2017, which concerns the respect of LGBTI+ persons, the institutional and legal framework in the Republic of Serbia was rated at 30%.

This is supported by the fact that Serbian society is extremely traditional and patriarchal, and hate speech, discrimination, and violence against this population does not abate. As the sociologist Mršević (2013) writes in her work “Homophobia in Serbia and LGBT Rights”, homophobia in contemporary Serbian society represents a widespread form of negative attitude toward non-heterosexuality. Homophobia manifests itself through various forms of public hate speech, but also through discrimination and violence motivated by homophobic attitudes. Of particular concern is the fact that homophobia leads to the denial of basic rights to the LGBT community, including the right to freedom of peaceful public assembly.

Explicit homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, intolerance, and discrimination against LGBTI+ people are increasingly present in the media, but also on social networking platforms. The LGBTI+ individuals face daily fear in Serbia, and their basic rights, such as the right to a transparent love life, expression of their gender, and the like, are threatened.

The results of the Annual LGBTI+ Survey show that sexual orientation and gender identities are recognized in Serbia, as well as in the countries of the European Union, as reasons for discrimination, violence, abuse and harassment in various areas of life. “The state of fundamental human rights of LGBTI+ citizens in Serbia is difficult to assess because there is no system of data collection at the national level, as well as relevant data on the prevalence of discriminated persons, especially from the aspect of the prevalence of LGBTI+ persons” (Annual LGBTI+ Survey, 2020: 1). Pride is precisely the place where basic human rights are sought, and European Pride is the subject of this paper.

Marija Radoman in her work “Research of the views of the LGBT population on the security sector” writes that “respect for the rights of the LGBT population can

be taken as an indicator of the democratization of the country both at the declarative legislative level and in practice. This minority has been the subject of intense public attention in Serbia since 2009, when the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination was passed and when the Pride Parade was banned. Until today, the issue of sexual minorities is set as very important for detecting those policies in Serbia that pretend to be or are close to liberal pro-European values or conservative organization of society” (Radoman, 2012: 150).

Previous research (Milivojević 2013, Čupić 2010) has shown that the media play the role of gatekeepers. Editors, as well as journalists, control which topics will be covered and released to the public. In addition to that role, the media largely shape our perception of reality, but also determine already existing attitudes. By influencing the role of the public, i.e., the formation of public opinion, the media can significantly contribute to the construction of an open, equal and tolerant society. However, the same media can also be a catalyst in inciting hatred, xenophobia, racism, homophobia and violence. It is important to remember that the function of the media is to examine, question and criticize. Moreover, fostering a culture of speech, critical thinking, respect for basic human rights, the right to equality and the right to protection against discrimination should be respected when reporting on members of the LGBT+ population.

When we talk about discrimination, it is necessary to explain the term itself. In their work “The problem of discrimination of the LGBT community in Serbia”, Isaković and Žolt write that discrimination refers to “unjustified discrimination or unequal treatment of certain people or groups toward other individuals or groups who have different personal characteristics, which puts them in an unfavorable social position. Personal characteristics as a basis for discrimination can be religious or political beliefs, ethnic origin, race, health status, disability, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, etc.” (Isaković & Žolt, 2016: 397).

They add that discrimination is based on “the existence of prejudices and stereotypes associated with these social groups, the basis of which are wrong, fixed, irrational or simplified opinions about others and, as a rule, it is very difficult to overcome them. Prejudices against different social groups, including the LGBT population, are acquired through social learning, most often learning from a model (role model). They represent a major social problem, and we can find their roots in the traditional way of life and traditional understandings” (Dobrić-Brankov, 2012: 62, according to Isaković & Žolt, 2016: 397).

This population has been sensationalized in the Serbian media for decades, which violates the Code of Journalists of Serbia⁴, i.e., its numerous principles prescribed by the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia (NUNS) and the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS). At the same time, reporting from last year’s EuroPride is the subject of this paper. In this paper, we will deal with checking how many daily newspapers *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer* reported on EuroPride, but also how many times they violated the principles prescribed in the Code of Journalists of Serbia.

⁴ You can find the Code of Journalists of Serbia at the link here. Visited: 20. 1. 2023.

Reporting in Print Media - Respect for Journalistic Standards

It was said among theoreticians, as well as in journalistic circles, that print media would die out due to the invention of the Internet, the transfer of news to online platforms followed by the publication of news on social networks; however, this did not happen, because daily newspapers are still produced and found on newsstands throughout Serbia.

Vulić & Milovanović in their work “Factography and interpretation in the Serbian daily press” write that the pursuit of true, complete and timely information has been the basis of society since the beginning of the first patterns of civilization. “The emergence of the press as the first mass media contributed to the satisfaction of the need for information, on the basis of which individuals can further create judgments about reality and build a value system” (Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 307). In the following text, the authors state that “the press fulfills one of its basic functions, which is also one of the reasons for its creation - to provide accurate, complete and timely information, which can only be achieved by comprehensive research of the topic being written about and its placement in a wider social context” (Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 308). What the authors described is interpretive journalism. What is an interpretation? Vulić and Milovanović write that it is:

“an integral element of the daily press, and according to theorists, it is one of the ways in which it has remained a competitive medium and contained its readers even in the era of the Internet. Providing a deeper analysis, shedding light on the background of events, revealing the hidden by answering the questions of why and what to do next - the characteristics are a good interpretation, which ‘makes’ the reader think and take a critical stance, thus becoming an active subject of public communication” (Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 308).

Matić (2012) noted that the crisis has gripped the media in Serbia in recent years. In her work “Structural causes of the news press crisis in Serbia”, she points out that the crisis led “to the commercialization and tabloidization of the media, but also affected, among other things, the quality of interpretation in the press. The news press crisis in Serbia is partly a reflection of the world press crisis, but it is essentially caused by the specific characteristics of the domestic media sector” (Matić, 2012: 167 according to Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 308).

In his book “Media ethics and media lynching” Professor Čedomir Čupić, PhD, from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade points out that the role of the media and journalists is three-fold: “to transmit information essential for public life; to mediate between the government and citizens, that is, the state and civil society; and to be the first external critic and controller of the government” (Čupić, 2010: 13). According to him, freedom of expression and freedom of criticism are prerequisites for other professional standards, among which he singles out independence and integrity, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, appropriate attitude toward sources of information, respect for persons who are the subject of information, elimination of any form of discrimination and responsibility of journalists (Čupić, 2010).

“Freedom of expression and freedom of criticism are a prerequisite for other professional standards. Freedom of expression stems from one of the basic human rights - the right to freedom. Without freedom there are neither free individuals nor a free society” (Čupić, 2010: 14). For Professor Čupić, the responsibility of journalists when reporting is twofold.

“Firstly, to act in accordance with professional standards and secondly, to resist any external pressure that calls into question the right of citizens to be informed about everything of public importance in the community. A journalist is also responsible to the sources of information, the individuals about whom he speaks and writes, professional standards, professional journalistic organizations, personal beliefs and convictions, i.e., his own conscience and editorial management” (Čupić, 2010: 43).

Jevtović and Despotović, in the book “Geopolitics of Media”, indicate the great importance of media representation and the media for creating public opinion.

“The media is a strong factor of socialization, but also a source of political power, so the question of media ownership and control over content becomes key to the formation of media representation. The corporate interests of media owners are key to determining the editorial policy of the media, while media whose main goals are to make a profit and spread their own ideology, views, beliefs, opinions and attitudes lack a sense of responsibility toward the society they are supposed to serve - they abandon their role as guardians of public interests and turn to junk media content, tabloidization, sensationalism, censorship, etc.” (Despotović and Jevtović, 2019 in Stevanović: 2022: 12).

Respecting the journalistic Code when reporting from an event implies that journalists, i.e., media workers, follow all moral and ethical standards prescribed by the Code and adhere to them when reporting. It includes numerous principles, some of which are truthful reporting, journalistic attention, respect for privacy, independence from pressure, prevention of corruption and conflict of interest, relation to sources of information, use of honorable means, respect for authorship and protection of journalists. Journalists are obliged to respect the laws, and to think in advance about the consequences of their reporting on society, as well as individuals. However, compliance with this Code is not mandatory and there are no sanctions for journalists or media that violate them.

That is why it is of great importance that journalists and the media are self-disciplined and adhere to the Code. Only compliance with the prescribed Code helps to ensure public trust in the media, which will also contribute to the public interest.

In her work “Why diversity is important”, Snježana Milovojević, PhD, Professor from the Faculty of Political Sciences points out that reporting on diversity refers to the presentation of “otherness” (characteristics different from those that we/the majority possess), i.e., sensitivity to and fair treatment of diversity in the media.

“Ignoring, suppressing and excluding diversity results in the dominance of majority groups over minority groups. The consequence of such dominance is discrimination, which in relation to different groups can be manifested in many ways. But the end result of all those ways is always the same: minorities are excluded from the generally

accepted, and their experiences remain hidden and unnoticed” (Milivojević, 2012: 165).

She further explains that according to many contemporary theories, media representation is considered central to the process of identity formation. “It is also crucial for the public perception of actors, it affects the formation of social attitudes toward minorities, including their public acceptance or rejection. That is why the consequences of inappropriate representation are both serious and great” (Milivojević, 2012: 65).

Historically, LBGT+ contents and their representation in the media were mostly of a negative character. Therefore, the combination of insufficient visibility and minimal, but at the same time negative visibility, certainly contributed to the negative perception of the LBGT+ population in the general public. As Judith Butler states in her book “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”, it is not only the dominance of heteronormative ideologies and visibility, but also socio-cultural conditioning, in addition to visual culture that promotes “homosexual invisibility” (Butler, 1993 according to Stevanović, 2022: 3).

The image of this population in the media is presented in three ways: neutral, positive and negative. The research numbers of relevant organizations that will be used in this paper show that the media reports on this topic in all three ways, depending on the media policy that is represented.

Research and the Media Image of the LGBTI+ Population in the Media

In Serbia, the visibility of the LGBTI+ community in the media has increased significantly in recent years. As it is written in the research “Media analysis of the representation of the LGBTI community in the Serbian media during 2020⁵”, with the growth of the visibility of the LGBTI community, the reporting of the problems faced by this community has also increased. “While in previous years (especially in the first decade of the 2000s) the reporting mostly concerned the (non)holding of the Pride Parade, in the previous year the media in Serbia reported on various topics when it comes to the LGBTI community” (Đorđević and Omeragić, 2021: 3). In this research, they add that the pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, which has affected the entire world, has affected the issue of legalizing same-sex unions, and it has finally become actual. This was also related to the fact that Serbia, as a country, committed itself through the Washington Agreement to work on the decriminalization of homosexuality in the world (Đorđević and Omeragić, 2021).

When it comes to their analysis in 2020, they write that:

“the reporting narrative on this topic in Serbia was mostly neutral and the principles of journalistic ethics and the prohibition of discrimination were respected. On the other hand, the transmission of statements by certain members of parliament or church officials in which members of the LGBTI community are insulted and belittled, and their way of life is called sinful or to blame for the pandemic caused by the COVID-19

⁵ The full research is available at the link here. Visited: 28. 1. 2023.

virus, contributes to the creation of negative and homophobic attitudes in society, that is, such attitudes become normalized year after year. It is also noticeable that the attitudes of the right-wing media have not changed, that is, the criticisms and warnings of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Press Council are still not effective” (Đorđević and Omeragić, 2021: 4).

According to the report “Annual LGBTI survey⁶” of the Center for Research and Development of Society - IDEAS and the Gay Lesbian Info Center GLIC, which was conducted in 2020, it shows that 82% of respondents believe that Serbia is not a good place for LGBTI people to live and that only 14% of them feel free to express their identity.

“As in previous years, violence is at the top of the list of problems that LGBTI+ people face on a daily basis. As many as 59% of respondents stated that they had been exposed to some form of violence in the last year. The data indicating the frequency of sexual violence reported by 14% of respondents is particularly worrying. Emotional violence is still the most frequent form of violence against LGBTI+ people and was experienced by 56% of participants in the research. When it comes to physical violence, the same level of exposure is shown as in the previous research cycle in 2018, i.e., this form of violence was reported by 8% of respondents” (Annual LGBTI+ survey, 2020).

The focus of this year’s research was also on the position of LGBTI+ people in the field of work and employment. The results show that 16% of LGBTI+ workers who were looking for a job believe that they have been discriminated against in the last year, while 24% believe that they have been discriminated against at work. A high degree of mistrust of LGBTI+ citizens in the state and the existing protection mechanisms against violence and discrimination, as well as insufficient information, are key factors that lead to the fact that LGBTI+ people are not ready to use the available protection mechanisms.

As the basis of their demands toward the state, LGBTI+ citizens stated “improvement of the legislative framework, and above all the regulation of same-sex unions, improvement of protection mechanisms against violence and discrimination, raising the general population’s awareness of equality and improvement of the role of education in the field of tolerance development and protection against discrimination of LGBTI+ students. In order to improve the position of LGBTI+ citizens, it is necessary for state institutions to urgently take concrete measures to demonstrate a greater commitment to the protection of the human rights of LGBTI+ persons. Likewise, employers should continuously work on improving protection mechanisms in the working environment in order to achieve full inclusion in the labor market and ensure the right to dignified work” (Annual LGBTI+ Research, 2020).

If we look at the Report on monitoring compliance with the Serbian Code of Journalists in daily newspapers in the period from July 1 to December 31, 2021⁷, the

⁶ Full research [here](#). Visited: 27. 1. 2023.

⁷ The entire report is available at the link [here](#). Visited: 28. 1. 2023.

daily newspaper *Informer* is in third place with 949 articles in headlines that violate the Code of Serbian Journalists, while *Večernje novosti* is in fifth place with 586 articles in headlines that violate the Serbian Journalist Code. The daily newspaper *Danas* violated the Code of Serbian Journalists in 45 articles, and is in last place. During the six-month monitoring, the results of the report of the Press Council showed that 5,715 articles violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia, and in this period the daily newspaper *Alo* violated the Code in most articles.

In the same period, in 2020 alone, from July 1 to December 31⁸, there were about 2,000 fewer violations than in 2021, more precisely, the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated in 3,724 texts, according to the Media Monitoring Report of the Press Council. In 2020, *Večernje novosti* took third place with 627 articles, while the daily *Informer* was in fifth place with 509 articles. The daily newspaper *Danas* violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia in 35 articles and occupies the penultimate place.

According to the latest Review of the work of the complaints commission of the Press Council for the year 2022⁹, 57 complaints were resolved and in all cases the code was violated, while 5 complaints were resolved in which there were no violations of the code. According to the Press Council, most complaints were filed by individuals - 68 of them filed a complaint with this self-regulatory body, followed by 15 civil society organizations. Media that complained comprised 66 online media, 19 print media and 1 news agency. The most common violations of the Code are Truthfulness of Reporting and Responsibility of Journalists with 33 violations and Journalistic Attention and Respect for Privacy with 26 violations.

Methodology

Research Methodology

The research subject in this paper is the way in which the print media *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer* reported and respected the Code of Serbian Journalists when reporting on EuroPride, which was held from September 12 to 18, 2022 in Belgrade. The verification will be done using scientific research methods where the presented hypotheses will be proven or disproved - a qualitative-quantitative analysis of the content of the mentioned media.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of the paper “Respecting the Journalistic Code in Reporting: A Case Study of EuroPride” are:

1. Determine how many texts were published in the period from September 12 to 18, 2022 which refer to EuroPride

⁸ The 2020 Press Council report is available at the link here. Visited: 28. 1. 2023.

⁹ An overview of the work of the Press Council's complaints commission can be found here. Visited: 12. 2. 2023.

2. Determine the number of texts in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride

Results

In the period from September 12 to 18, 2022, i.e., at the time of the start and end of EuroPride in Belgrade, 874 texts were published in the daily newspapers *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer*, which is shown in *Table 1* by the dates of newspaper publication. It is important to note that the daily newspaper *Danas* and *Informer* are published on weekends as two issues, while *Večernje novosti* had their editions during the weekend as well, that is, on September 17 and 18.

During the analyzed period, the daily newspaper *Danas* published 224 articles, *Večernje novosti* published 369 articles, and the daily newspaper *Informer* published 281 articles.

Table 1

Display of texts in daily newspapers during coverage of EuroPride in Belgrade in 2022

Date	Number of texts in daily newspaper <i>Danas</i>	Number of texts in daily newspaper <i>Večernje novosti</i>	Number of texts in daily newspaper <i>Informer</i>	Total number of texts
12. 9. 2022.	38	44	49	131
13. 9. 2022.	36	56	46	138
14. 9. 2022.	37	47	46	130
15. 9. 2022.	39	60	47	146
16. 9. 2022.	41	56	46	143
17. 9. 2022.	33	106 (67 + 39)	47	186
18. 9. 2022.				
Total number of texts	224	369	281	874

In the monitored period, the daily newspaper *Danas* and *Večernje novosti* reported daily, while *Informer* did not write about EuroPride on September 12 and 15 (*Table 2*). The daily newspaper *Danas* reported the most about EuroPride with a total of 12 articles, followed by *Večernje novosti* with 7 articles and *Informer* with 4 articles, and the subject of EuroPride was in 23 articles of these printed media.

Table 2:

Number of articles on EuroPride coverage by day in daily newspapers in Serbia

Date	Number of texts on EuroPride in daily newspaper <i>Danas</i>	Number of texts on EuroPride in daily newspaper <i>Večernje novosti</i>	Number of texts on EuroPride in daily newspaper <i>Informer</i>	Total number of texts
12. 9. 2022.	1	1	0	2
13. 9. 2022.	1	1	1	3

14. 9. 2022.	2	1	1	4
15. 9. 2022.	2	1	0	3
16. 9. 2022.	2	1	1	4
17. 9. 2022.	4	2 (1+1)	1	7
18. 9. 2022.				
Total number of texts	12	7	4	23

Both daily newspapers *Danas* and *Večernje novosti* tried to respect the principles prescribed in the Serbian Journalists' Code when reporting. However, it can be seen in *Table 3* that the daily newspaper *Informer* violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia four times in the same number of texts when reporting on EuroPride.

Table 3:

The number of texts in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride

Date	The number of articles in the daily newspaper <i>Danas</i> in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride	The number of articles in the daily newspaper <i>Večernje novosti</i> in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride	The number of articles in the daily newspaper <i>Informer</i> in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride	Total number of texts
12. 9. 2022.	0	0	0	0
13. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
14. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
15. 9. 2022.	0	0	0	0
16. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
17. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
18. 9. 2022.		0		
Total number of texts	0	0	4	4

In the text “Porfirije: We are not for the gay parade, they are raping our souls and minds” published on September 13, section IV Responsibility of journalists is violated, where it is written that “a journalist must oppose all those who violate human rights or advocate any kind of discrimination, hate speech and incitement of violence” (Code of Journalists of Serbia, 2015: 15).

Picture 1:

“Porfirije: Nismo za gej-paradu, SILUJU NAM DUŠU I PAMET”;
photo: print *Informer* / 13. 9. 2023.



This article was also violated in the text “VERY DANGEROUS MESSAGES FROM AMERICAN AMBASSADOR HILL - America is pushing us INTO THE LGBT WAR!” which was published on September 16. Here, apart from section IV Responsibility of journalists, section V Journalistic attention, i.e., article 4, was also violated, in which it is written that a journalist “must be aware of the danger of discrimination that can be spread by the media and will do everything to avoid discrimination based on, among other things, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, language, religion, political and other opinion, national or social origin” (Code of Journalists of Serbia, 2015: 18).

Picture 2: “VEOMA OPASNE PORUKE AMERIČKOG AMBASADORA HILA – Amerika nas gura U LGBT RAT!”; photo: print *Informer* / 16. 9. 2023.



Both sections were also violated in the text “LGBT ORGANIZATIONS IGNORE PROHIBITIONS BY THE MINISTRY OF POLICE - Gays do not give up walking in the city” which was published in a double issue on September 17 and 18.

Picture 3: “LGBT ORGANIZACIJE IGNORIŠU ZABRANE MINISTARSTVA POLICIJE – Gejevi ne odustaju od šetnje gradom”; photo: print *Informer* / 17, 18. 9. 2023.



Conclusion

Reporting on socially sensitive groups or marginalized groups in the Serbian media, such as the LGBT+ population, is extremely difficult and sensitive. On the example of reporting from EuroPride, it can be seen that the daily newspaper *Danas* and the daily newspaper *Večernje novosti* respected all professional and ethical standards and principles. These two publications did not use sensationalist headlines, which would further interest the readers, but reported on the event in an objective manner and in the public interest.

The daily *Informer*, unlike the other two media, used sensational headlines and capital letters and thus harmed this population in its reporting. In the focus of this media's reporting were the officials of the European Union, but also the US ambassador to Serbia, as well as the "threat to the safety" of citizens, if EuroPride takes place, and all of this led to the spread of hate speech against the LGBT+ population.

The role of the media in today's society is extremely significant. Precisely for these reasons, the media professionals must follow the principles prescribed by both journalist associations in the Code of Journalists of Serbia, which state that it is the duty of journalists to follow professional and ethical principles, as well as to resist all pressures to violate these principles. Fostering language culture, as well as freedom of thought, speech and expression and media independence, are notions that are defined and prescribed by this Code. However, these values are not part of the editorial policy of certain media, such as *Informer*, which on a daily basis violates both ethical and professional principles when reporting on socially sensitive topics. In addition, the media has a very important role when it comes to the development and functioning of democracy; this is of extreme importance when we talk about the rights of the LGBT+ population in Serbia, because the media is a pillar of democracy in every country.

Respect for human rights refers to respect and protection of the rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity - especially when it comes to LGBT+ people. This includes the right to freedom of expression, equality before the law, protection from discrimination, the right to life and security, as well as other rights that are enshrined in law. The main goal is to ensure that all LGBT+ persons are equal and treated equally in society. However, this is not possible in all parts of the world because LGBT+ people are still discriminated against and their basic rights are not respected. Apart from the above-mentioned rights, it is important to mention the right to education, the right to access health care and other aspects of life.

It is extremely important to note that respect for the human rights of LGBT+ persons is not only a matter of rights and fairness of a system in the state, but also important in order to strengthen society as a whole in every country. Equal rights and equal treatment of all citizens lead to the creation of a stronger community characterized by solidarity and functioning according to the principle of equality and tolerance. All this leads to the fact that respecting this population is courageous and

crucial for strengthening democracy, the rule of law and a society based on human rights and equality for all.

In order for objective, true and timely information to reach citizens, journalists, editors and media owners must respect all professional principles and standards when reporting, because only in this way can reporting on marginalized groups be improved. Apart from the Serbian Code of Journalists, there are numerous manuals that define how to report on major events, but also on topics that are socially sensitive.

References

- Butler, J. (1993). *Imitation and Gender Insubordination*. Routledge. New York.
- Čupić, Čedomir (2010). *Medijska etika i medijski linč*. Čigoja štampa: Beograd.
- Dorđević, A., Omeragić, A. (2021). *Medijska analiza predstavljanja LGBTI zajednice u srpskim medijima tokom 2020. godine*, LABRIS: Beograd.
- Isaković, M., Žolt, L. (2016). Problem diskriminacije LGBT populacije u Srbiji. *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, Knjiga XLI-2 (2016), str. 397-413, DOI: 10.19090/gff.2016.2.397-413
- Matić, Jovanka (2012). "Strukturni uzroci krize informativne štampe u Srbiji", *Godišnjak Fakulteta političkih nauka* br. 8, Beograd, str. 167–183
- Miletić, M., Milenković, A (2015). *Priručnik za LGBT psihoterapiju*. Udruženje za unapređenje mentalnog zdravlja, Beograd.
- Milivojević, S. (2012). Zašto je različitost važna?, *Čitanka LGBT ljudskih prava*, 2. dopunjeno izdanje, urednici: Aida Spahić i Saša Gavrić, Sarajevo, str. 161 – 168.
- Mršević, Z. (2013). Homophobia in Serbia and LGBT rights. *Southeastern Europe*, 37(1), 60-87. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763332-03701004>
- Radoman, Marija (2012). "Istraživanje stavova LGBT populacije o sektoru bezbednosti". *Filozofija i društvo* 1:150-171.
- Stevanović, Ana (2022). *Medijska reprezentacija LGBT zajednice*. Master rad, Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Nišu.
- Stojanović, A., Vuković, J., Stanković, I., Randelović, B. (2016). *Stigmatizacija mladih LGBT osoba od strane državnih institucija*. Centar za socijalni rad "Sveti Sava" Niš.
- Vulić, T. M., & Milovanović, I. R. (2016). Faktografija i interpretacija u srpskoj dnevnoj štampi. *Nasleđe*, Kragujevac, 13(35), 307-319. <https://doi.org/10.5937/nasIKg1635307V>

Internet resources:

- IDEAS – Centar za istraživanje i razvoj društva (2020) i Gej lezbejski info centar GLIC. Godišnje LGBTI+ istraživanje, *Godišnje-LGBTI-istraživanje-2020.pdf* (ideje.rs). Accessed: 28. 1. 2023.
- ILGA-Europe – the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, Rainbow Index for May 2017, site: Side B index online (ilga-europe.org). Accessed: 6. 2. 2023.

- Savet za štampu (2015). Kodeks novinara Srbije: uputstva i smernice. Retrieved 28. januara 2023. from <https://savetzastampu.rs/dokumenta/kodeks-novinarar-srbije/>. Accessed 28. 1. 2023.
- Savet za štampu (2021). Izveštaj o monitoringu poštovanja Kodeksa novinara Srbije u dnevnim novinama u periodu od 1. jula do 31. decembra 2020. godine, <https://savetzastampu.rs/monitoring/izvestaj-o-monitoringu-postovanja-kodeksa-novinarar-srbije-u-dnevnim-novinama-u-periodu-od-1-jula-do-31-decembra-2020-godine/>. Accessed 28. 1. 2023.
- Savet za štampu (2022). Izveštaj o monitoringu poštovanja Kodeksa novinara Srbije u dnevnim novinama u periodu od 1. jula do 31. decembra 2021. godine, <https://savetzastampu.rs/monitoring/izvestaj-o-monitoringu-postovanja-kodeksa-novinarar-srbije-u-dnevnim-novinama-u-periodu-od-1-jula-do-31-decembra-2021-godine/>. Accessed 28. 1. 2023.

Poštovanje novinarskog kodeksa prilikom izveštavanja – studija slučaja Evroprajd

Aleksandar Đokić, Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Apstrakt

Kodeks novinara Srbije propisuje na koji način je neophodno izveštavati o posebno osetljivim društvenim grupama, uz poštovanje etičkih principa i profesionalnih normi (Član V, stav 4). Oslanjajući se na Kodeks, cilj ovog rada je da odgovori na istraživačka pitanja Na koji način su dnevne novine u Srbiji izveštavale o Evroprajdu 2022. godine i Kakve su razlike u izveštavanju o osetljivim društvenim grupama u odnosu na kvalitet novina (ozbiljni dnevni list, polutabloid i tabloid). Analizirana su ukupno 23 teksta, čiji je predmet izveštavanja bio Evroprajd, objavljena u dnevnim novinama *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* i *Informer*, u periodu trajanja manifestacije, od 12. do 18. septembra 2022. godine. Rezultati analize pokazali su da su se novine *Danas* i *Večernje novosti* pridržavale etičkog kodeksa, dok je *Informer* u sto odsto objavljenih tekstova (N = 4) prekršio Kodeks novinara i diskriminatorno izveštavao o LGBT+ zajednici.

Ključne reči: Evroprajd, etika, LGBT+, kodeks novinara, diskriminacija

Received: 20th September 2025

Revision received: 8th October 2025

Accepted: 12th October 2025