

#MYSTORY MEDIA (LITERACY) AND MIGRANTS

DOS & DON'TS GUIDE FOR REFUGEES TO TELL THEIR STORIES AND FOR JOURNALISTS TO REPORT THEM BETTER



Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union



Acknowledgments

This booklet was produced with the support of the European Commission' Europe for Citizens Programme.

It reflects the views of the authors only and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for its content. The project partners are:



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DOS AND DON'TS FOR CRAFTING STORYTELLING ABOUT MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

MYSTORY

This guide was drafted within the activities of MyStory project (mystoryproject.eu) funded by the European Commission. It aims:

- a) to facilitate journalists and bloggers' work so that they are better able to meet ethical standards when portraying migrants and refugees in the media;
- b) to equip migrants and refugees (M&R) and respective supporting organisations, to produce their stories more effectively.

The following recommendations draw on MyStory's debates and the network of contacts from the project consortium, and take into account relevant international policy papers on the subject. The activity of the project will also inform and support the EC's legal framework and future initiatives.

Please note that specialised handbooks and legal documents are available online. Our guide aims to offer practical tips rather than exhaustive information. Therefore, it consists of three distinct sections, addressing respectively:

1. Journalists and online bloggers when they cover M&R stories;
2. Migrants and Refugees;
3. Organisations working with migrants and refugees.

PART ONE

FOR JOURNALISTS WHEN THEY COVER M&R STORIES YOUR AIM IS TO FACILITATE UNDERSTANDING



Act in the public interest, adopt a professional approach.

Be aware of personal assumptions, mention only relevant aspects, be truthful.

Be professional, fair and impartial, balancing different viewpoints.

Try to be objective, who choose the stories? Why? How are migrants and refugees portrayed? Report "with" migrants (not just "about" them).

Check the facts, provide context, background information and explain the cause of the phenomenon

For example, talk to colleagues and consult public online resources. Opinions are relevant but clearly separate them from facts.

Give accurate, complete information.

Avoid sensationalist tones and be mindful of the impact of images, positioning of interviewer, editing and so on.

Use the appropriate terminology and updated authoritative evidence.

Know your vocabulary, be aware of the words you use: refugees, migrants, asylum seeker and so on. Search first for reliable information, including background literature.

PART ONE

FOR JOURNALISTS WHEN THEY COVER M&R STORIES YOUR AIM IS TO FACILITATE UNDERSTANDING

← DON'TS →

Do not stereotype stories. They could easily become the reality for readers and viewers.

Do not spread propaganda or hate speech, be independent.

Don't let shocking headlines overshadow the human and personal elements of your reporting. See people as people.

Do not harm people by revealing personal identities of refugees or witnesses

Grant anonymity to sources especially if they are vulnerable or at risk. Refugees are often ordinary people fleeing bad situations.

Don't be afraid of challenging your own views.

Ensure your story exhibits true reportorial effort, question the dominant discourse and overcome your own biases. Respect dignity and others beliefs, culture and religions.

Don't misuse data and statistics.

Make sure you provide the whole picture and follow journalistic ethics.



PART TWO

FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

WHEN THEY TELL THEIR STORIES

←————→

DOS

Tell your story

Learn storytelling techniques. If possible, undertake a training course online or in person.

Find your focus and define your purpose (What and Why)

What is your story about? This is related to the purpose of your story and is similar to a story headline. Balance negativity with positive messages.

Choose stories/topics that concern and move emotionally (How)

Choosing and defining the topic of your story is challenging. If your story moves you emotionally yourself, this is a good sign. Using the first person perspective usually gives your story more authenticity.

In any case keep it short (How)

Consider that the usual attention span when watching online contents is not very long, you only have a few moments to grab a viewer's attention and engage them, so try to keep it short (2 -7 min).

Find your own language (How)

Social media and digital storytelling offer possibilities to tell stories without using words. In any case, consider possible language barriers – using simple language can help overcome cultural barriers – think about who you want to reach. Use free online resources.

Get your story out (Where)

For example, by setting up a blog or build personal relationships with relevant journalists and publishers. It can be about 'who you know'. Also, develop relationship with civil society organisation and with local media agencies to get support.

PART TWO

FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES WHEN THEY TELL THEIR STORIES

← DON'TS →

Don't tell a purposeless story with no meaning behind it.

Do not play up the self-pity. It can be counterintuitive and alienating. Be sure there is a relevant, informative value to your story.

Don't think too big

Find and focus on simple stories or choose only one part of the larger story – small stories can be as impressive as big ones, but are easier to produce and often get more attention.



PART THREE

FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES' ORGANISATIONS TO PROMOTE YOURSELF BETTER



Recruit dedicated staff to deal with media.

You may need a communication officer to master the opportunities offered by technology. Consider training and workshops for M&Rs themselves.

Maintain an active social media presence

Publish concise, truthful facts and stories of real people. Be aware of the importance of images.

Establish links with the authorities and cultivate useful contacts with the political community.

Set up meetings with civil society organisations, government officials and politicians to discuss specific, sensible demands.

Leverage relationships with schools or voluntary sector bodies to communicate.

Use available human resources to showcase work being undertaken. Committed people may achieve more than professionals.

Acquire skills and partnerships resources and train internal staff.

You need communication and writing skills to publish the who, what, when, where and why of your organisation.

Enter into dialogues with journalists and online bloggers.

Feed the journalists; they are hungry, and focus on building relationships. Ask for advice from reporters on how to best present your news. Network with media professionals and online bloggers.

Include refugees, migrants.

Do not paternalise refugees and migrants – give them opportunity to speak for themselves.

Consider language barriers

Consider using native languages, as well as language of the country your target group is coming from – especially when they are new to the country.

PART THREE

FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES' ORGANISATIONS TO PROMOTE YOURSELF BETTER



DON'TS



Don't distance yourself from the media environment.

Build ties with journalists and editorial managers to frame working rules that are to the point and deal with the social and professional specificities of different national circumstances. Also, talk to media who have a reputation of anti-immigration in order to reach their readers.

Don't focus excessively on 'clicks'.

Monitor results and assess audience response. The success of digital storytelling is not only measurable by "clicks" – it is also about the message sent and how it is received.

Don't feed the trolls.

Challenging misguided reporting, hate speech, propaganda and misinformation can be carried out through your own online platforms or through social media, but do not enter into dialogues that are unproductive or use problematic language. It is a waste of your time. Let your content speak for itself.

Do not post content or photos without consent.

Especially when dealing with children.

My Story project partners:

EAVI - www.eavi.eu

DRPDNM - www.comide.net

EUROFORM - www.euroformrfs.it

Hungarian Moving Image and Media Education Association - www.c3.hu/~mediaokt/angol.htm

Intermediakt - www.intermediakt.org

International Alliance of journalists - www.alliance-journalistes.net

Further Information



The European Association for Viewers Interests (EAVI) is an independent, not- profit international organisation based in Brussels. Its primary objective is to promote and enhance the interest of citizens as media users across Europe. Therefore EAVI's ambition is to empower individuals to be more than simply globalized consumers of media, but rather Citizens of Europe who benefit from it. To achieve its objectives, EAVI develops and implements a wide range of activities. Much of the initiatives carried out involve citizens and organisations from many of the 28 EU Member States. They focus on promoting full active citizenship and media literacy and engaging the European Institutions and policy-makers.

Contacts:

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