

STRÖER

Journalistic Principles

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1 | Preamble

Ströer SE & Co. KGaA (Ströer) is explicitly committed to independent and critical journalism. Such journalism is a key part of a vibrant democracy – providing guidance, facilitating opinion-forming, and presenting a balanced picture of social discourse. It is therefore subject to special rights and obligations in our liberal democratic constitutional order.

Ströer's offering includes journalistic services such as the two news portals t-online.de and watson.de, and special interest portals such as familie.de, kino.de, and giga.de. They are brought together under the umbrella of Ströer Content Group GmbH. t-online has a greater reach than any other news medium in Germany. Via the internet and public video screens, it reaches over half of the German population every month. Accordingly, the journalistic offering is aimed not at a specific target group, but at all citizens.

The journalists, editors, and publishers at Ströer are aware of their responsibility. Articles are checked with journalistic due diligence for content, origin, and truth. Ströer is also committed to the right of freedom of opinion enshrined in the German constitution, to pluralism and diversity in our society, and to the right of intellectual property (e.g. copyright, trademark rights).

2 | Scope and implementation

The Journalistic Principles of Ströer SE & Co. KGaA provide a binding framework for journalistic activities within the Group. They are supplemented by editorial policies and guidelines of the media brands. The provisions of Ströer's groupwide Code of Conduct also apply.

The applicable legal provisions are authoritative. Ströer and its online media are subject to the German Interstate Media Treaty (MStV, the German legal framework for media services), which requires adherence to recognized journalistic principles. The competent media authorities of each federal state are responsible for regulation. Complaints can also be submitted to these authorities. Ströer is also guided by the principles of the press code of the German Press Council.

Ströer Content Group GmbH and the affiliated media brands are responsible for the implementation of the Journalistic Principles and they provide a copy of these to their employees. The Journalistic Principles are also available to the public at all times on Ströer's website.

3 | What we stand for

3.1 | Being truthful

Our news reporting is always truthful. Facts are reported without judgment or interpretation. We avoid misleading distortion. Our truthful reporting is also always balanced. It is based on verifiable information and gives equal weight and prominence to opposing viewpoints. We do not follow any ideologies or supposed majority opinions in the selection and presentation of content. Tendentious, one-sided reporting with a prejudgment of persons or groups is also proscribed.

3.2 | Respecting human dignity

We avoid inappropriate portrayals that could violate people's dignity. The vilification of religious, ideological, or moral beliefs is contrary to our journalistic values. This includes presenting opinions that are likely to offend, insult, or defame people. Statements assessing someone's professional and personal suitability adhere to the principles of appropriateness and proportionality.

3.3 | Avoiding discrimination

We take a clear stand against discrimination on grounds of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or membership of a geographical, social, ethnic, or religious group, or on the basis of any other individual characteristic, both in news reporting and in opinion pieces. Our efforts to make our content as accessible as possible also follow this principle.

3.4 | Protecting privacy

We respect privacy and the right of people to determine what information about them is made public ('informational self-determination'). We report only on persons in public life and conduct that is of public interest. If the identity of persons in the latter group is disclosed, care must be taken to ensure that the public interest in disclosure outweighs the individual's right to privacy.

3.5 | Being independent

The content of our reporting is not influenced by private or commercial interests of third parties or by personal financial interests. Our journalists do not accept bribes or allow themselves to be used in any other way to spread or suppress information. They do not engage in activities that could harm our credibility. In the case of additional functions that are compatible with our credibility, we are careful to ensure strict separation from our journalistic activities.

We do not accept benefits of any kind that could influence our journalistic decisions. Commonplace gifts or other hospitality may be accepted if their value is within socially customary and professionally necessary limits (low double-digit euros range). Promotional gifts or other low-value items are acceptable. Our journalists do not promise third parties gifts or hospitality in exchange for information.

Journalists are also obliged to comply with the relevant provisions of capital markets law. Prior to publication, insider information is used for journalistic purposes only. Insider trading and market manipulation are prohibited.

3.6 | Separating advertising from editorial content

Advertising is kept strictly separate from editorial content. Publications for promotional purposes are designed to be identifiable as marketing/advertising. All advertising formats are clearly labelled. Materials published in our own self-interest are clearly identified as such. Editorial publications must not cross the line and become surreptitious advertising. The fundamental applicability of the legal provisions governing advertising remains unaffected.

3.7 | Maintaining professional secrecy and confidentiality

Our journalists maintain professional secrecy and, if necessary, make use of the law governing witnesses' right to refuse to give evidence. The identity of informants is not disclosed to third parties without their explicit permission. This applies in particular if the informant allows their information to be used on condition that they will not be identified or be at risk of being identified as the source.

Confidentiality is a precious commodity and is always mandatory save for in exceptional cases. Such exceptions may apply if there is a duty to report a crime and the information may be of relevance to a potential offense. Matters that are confidential may be reported on if, after careful consideration, the need to inform the public is deemed to outweigh the reasons for the confidentiality.

3.8 | Reporting appropriately on acts of violence and criminal offenses

Reporting about prosecutions, criminal proceedings, or other matters in which allegations are made must be free of prejudice. The presumption of innocence applies. Particular attention must be given to protecting the identity of victims. The rules governing the reporting on suspects that have been developed in case law apply.

When reporting on criminal cases, special care must be taken to ensure that the information on suspects (e.g. while investigations are ongoing) or (convicted) offenders does not lead to discriminatory generalization. Information that could lead to the suspect or offender being identified is published only in exceptional cases, such as when the legitimate interest of the public outweighs that of the subject. When reporting on past cases, the interest in rehabilitation is to be respected and the offender only made identifiable in justified exceptional cases.

3.9 | Protecting children and young people

Children and young people enjoy special protection in our society. We therefore remain mindful of the potential effect on children and young people when considering the content and design of articles. We are especially careful with regard to persons who need special protection, such as children and young people.

This applies to research in general and to reporting on criminal investigations and court cases in particular. It also applies to family members and other persons indirectly affected by publication.

3.10 | Protecting stored data

We comply with the statutory provisions when processing and storing data for internal editorial use. When sharing information with other media, we handle personal data with care. In particular, it is stored in such a way as to protect it against access by unauthorized third parties. Editorial confidentiality applies. The sharing of data between editorial teams for journalistic/editorial purposes is permitted.

4 | How we work

Our journalists and editors are obliged to apply journalistic due diligence. Information intended for publication is always carefully researched and checked. We maintain a strict distinction in our articles between factual information and opinion or criticism.

Investigation

Our journalists investigate openly and inform people who they are, where they are from, and why they are asking questions. Investigations are carried out undercover only if this is the only way to find out information that is of particular public interest. In any event, journalists are not permitted to use illegal or unfair methods to obtain information.

Content

The sense and meaning of an article must not be distorted through editing or headlines. Statements that cannot be substantiated are to be identified as such, in so far as they are published at all. It goes without saying that text must be clearly understandable even when read quickly. Reports of interviews or parts of interviews must accurately reflect the true meaning of what the interviewee said. Forward-looking statements intended to provide information about a possible future scenario must be identified as such.

Presentation

Pictures, photo montages, charts, and illustrations are not used in a misleading way and must always reflect the content of the text. Photos intended to symbolize a person or event must be identifiable as such.

Sources

The name of the author and the source of the news and content must be clear in every report. If text supplied by third parties is used in edited or unedited form, this must be made clear in the source information. The source must always be named in the case of an interview or parts of an interview. If the text of an interview is paraphrased rather than quoted verbatim, the source must still be cited.

Correction

If published news or claims prove to be incorrect, the error will be publicly corrected in a timely and appropriate manner. The reader must be explicitly and, so far as possible, fully, informed of incorrect reports and of the true facts. Corrections are issued with a reference to the original article.

Surveys

When publishing survey results, our journalists ensure transparency concerning methods and background. When publishing survey findings or election results, or when reporting on elections, our journalists also report on opinions and positions that they do not personally share.

5 | Contact

The contact details for questions and suggestions concerning the **Journalistic Principles of Ströer SE & Co. KGaA** are as follows:

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