



RFE/RL Code of Professional Journalism

(Section 2.2 of RFE/RL Policies and Procedures)

All RFE/RL journalists, journalistic contributors and regional analysts must observe the following principles:

Accuracy

- » RFE/RL journalists and regional analysts will do their utmost to ensure that all broadcasts and publications (including those transmitted via the Internet) are factually accurate. Where doubt or controversy may exist on significant points of fact, information must be based on at least two independent sources.
- » RFE/RL journalists and regional analysts will not broadcast or publish material that is based on rumor or unsubstantiated information.
- » Factual errors will be corrected as soon as possible.

Impartiality

- » Information will be presented in a factual context that enhances understanding of the events and issues and provides clarity without distortion or bias.
- » Journalists and analysts will present opposing or differing views accurately and in a balanced manner on all issues, providing perspective to audiences and not merely platforms or positions. When groups or individuals whose views are important for balanced programming decline to comment, it is appropriate to note this in the story or article.
- » RFE/RL shall be independent from any political party, ruling or opposition group, emigre organization, commercial or other special-interest organization, or religious body, whether inside or outside the set of countries to which RFE/RL broadcasts radio or television programming (the "Broadcast Area"); and shall not endorse or advocate any specific political, economic, or religious viewpoint.

Analysis, Commentary and Editorials

- » Commentary is an integral part of modern journalism, alongside analysis and—most important of all—factual news reporting. Editorial management must ensure that RFE/RL audiences are presented with a diversity of views on controversial subjects. There must be a clear disclaimer that opinions expressed are those of the writer and do not represent RFE/RL's position. And commentaries from all sources must meet RFE/RL's professional standards.
- » Journalists must not insert their personal opinions or judgments in factual reports. Broadcasts and publications should generally contain background information and explanations that help the audience better understand the information reported.

- » Commentary by RFE/RL journalists in RFE/RL programming, including the English-language website, requires the prior approval of the Executive Editor, an Associate Director of Broadcasting, or the Director of Central News.
- » Bureau staff or stringers may provide commentaries only in very exceptional cases and only if approved in advance by the Executive Editor or an Associate Director of Broadcasting.
- » Commentaries provided to RFE/RL by outside experts are welcomed. Writers and, where relevant, their affiliations must be clearly identified.
- » RFE/RL staff may contribute commentaries to other media outlets as long as the material neither embarrasses the Company nor violates the Conflict of Interest policy (Section 3.5.2). To coordinate the publication of outside contributions, RFE/RL staff is required to inform the Director of Communications in advance about the contribution (see Section 3.5.1 – Media Contacts).
- » Freelancers who contribute to other media outlets can use their RFE/RL affiliation in their writing only with the prior approval of their RFE/RL editors.
- » RFE/RL journalists may publish private blogs but first must notify their supervisors. All RFE/RL personnel, including non-journalists, are expected to avoid embarrassing the Company when blogging or engaged in other on-line activities.

Tone of Moderation and Respect

- » Broadcasts and publications shall at all times maintain a calm and moderate tone and project a model of civilized, reasoned discourse and a respect for the human rights of all persons. Broadcasts and publications shall not contain religious, ethnic, socio-economic, or cultural slurs upon any person or groups and shall observe common standards of etiquette and taste.
- » Broadcasts and publications shall not contain material that could be construed as inflammatory or as incitement to violence. Programming on disturbances or other tense situations must be balanced and factual.

Avoidance of Advocacy

- » RFE/RL supports democracy and the human rights common to democratic states. However, RFE/RL shall not advocate the adoption of specific policies or legislation, nor shall programming endorse or oppose candidates for elective or appointed office.
- » RFE/RL supports the right of all peoples to self-determination as stated in the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. However, broadcasts and publications shall not advocate or endorse separatist or secessionist causes.
- » RFE/RL supports freedom of travel and migration for all peoples in accordance with internationally recognized norms. However, RFE/RL broadcasts and publications shall not incite the act of defection or encourage emigration.

Ethical Conduct

- » RFE/RL staff and contributors to programs and publications shall maintain the highest ethical standards in all conduct, taking particular care to avoid any conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof, in their relations with individuals, groups, political or commercial interests inside or outside the Broadcast Area. RFE/RL staff and contributors shall in no way abuse their status as public figures or the good reputation of RFE/RL to promote personal interest or gain. See policy on Conflict of Interest (RFE/RL Policies & Procedures, Section 3.5.2).