

# VADE MECUM, FOR RESPONSIBLE INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION

The **devreporter** project was created with the aim of guaranteeing the right of European citizens to be well-informed on international events and global problems. In order to do so, it relies on information related to cooperation and development. Our goal is to promote a journalism with a more global vision, for global citizens.

The **devreporter** project is based on the idea that the changes that are taking place in the cooperation sector and in the media make it necessary to update the relationship between media professionals and the communications departments of organizations. We need to renew our rhetoric in order to improve the quality of the information we offer. The challenges to development and international solidarity are becoming increasingly complex, urgent, and interrelated. As a result, it is essential that we provide the public (who is not familiar with these matters) with adequate, precise and understandable information. Journalists and NGOs need to develop new abilities, new knowledge and new methods in order to inform and educate European public opinion on matters that often seem distant from their everyday lives, but which are essential to people all over the world.

During the three years of the **devreporter** project, we have carried out multiple activities for analysis, training and debate. We have also revised the codes of ethics elaborated by NGOs on a European level and those of journalists in our three regions

(see list in the annex). And now we, journalists, organizations, local administrations, professionals and students, members of the **devreporter network**, feel that in order to improve the quantity and quality of the international information available on matters of development and international solidarity, we must:

- 1 Encourage a journalism of “solutions”**
  - Go beyond just describing problems. Explain possible solutions or proposals, including those offered by civil society, and their results.
  - Adopt a critical journalistic point of view that encourages reflection.
- 2 Treat all countries and communities with dignity. Avoid sensationalism and victimization**
  - Be aware of the importance of the vocabulary used. Pay attention to both written and audio-visual language.
  - Avoid language that is discriminatory, androcentric or that uses stereotypes. Avoid concepts with negative connotations (“aid” is not “cooperation”; terms like “underdeveloped” or “third world” are not pertinent, since they are inadequate and obsolete).





- Ask, where possible, for the consent of others before publishing images of them. Do not publicise images that violate human dignity.
  - Portray groups and communities as “strivers”, not just as victims. Be especially careful with the portrayal of women: avoid showing them exclusively in the classic role of individuals only in charge of the family; portray them as holding important political, economic, social and cultural roles.
  - Be especially careful with the images or testimonies of children, and avoid making sensationalist use of them. The dignity of children and their rights have to come before any other sort of consideration.
- 3 Distinguish journalistic information from institutional communications by organizations**
- Organizations should offer information beyond what is strictly connected to their activities. Training in communication should be promoted within organizations so that they can provide useful information to journalists.
- 4 Make participants from countries in the South who are involved (or not) in international cooperation more visible. Include them in the production of information.**
- Be aware of different sources on the ground and give voice to the local population. Consult all sort of Southern sources; not just NGOs, but also governments, leaders and local professionals, etc.
  - Develop North/South alliances to enrich, diversify, produce and spread information.
- Give voice to individuals so that they can tell their own stories. Include the opinions of children in matters that affect them.
  - Work with journalists and media from countries in the South.
- 5 Avoid being limited to the predominant role of Northern NGOs in producing information: avoid *NGOing* all international information**
- Take on cooperation from different points of view – economic, political and cultural – to encourage comprehension.
  - Take on important questions that are not simply centred on the projects of Organizations. Provide the necessary tools to put international solidarity measures in perspective.
- 6 Encourage comprehension of events and their complexity, with context and causes**
- Whenever possible, use extended formats that provide context for events and the places where projects are taking place.
  - Break up information according to gender, age and/or ethnicity, especially in matters that affect men, women and children differently.
- 7 Encourage local media to take on international realities to encourage mutual awareness among different populations**
- Be aware of local problems and interests, and make proposals adapted to local journalism.
  - Give voice to local practices that can be sources of inspiration internationally.



## 8 View events in perspective, and present them with a global dimension to encourage understanding of present and future interdependencies

- Show the relationship between causes and the impacts in the countries involved.
- Catch the interest and curiosity of the audience by presenting the common problems and the commitment of citizens in all their diversity.

## 9 Refer to international cooperation from a generalized point of view that encourages an awareness of different aspects, and distinguish actions of development from emergencies

- Present conflicts without simplifying them. Avoid using the technical vocabulary of cooperation; seek simplicity without oversimplifying.
- Overcome a purely technical presentation of cooperation, and do not forget the political dimension of cooperative actions.

## 10 Follow up on events and situations

- Avoid the monopoly of emergencies, conflicts and disasters in standard coverage. Follow up on events and provide information regularly on the evolution of situations.

## Documents and codes of conduct analysed:

- ▶ *Code of conduct on images and messages*, **Concord** (2006)
- ▶ *Code of conduct on images and messages*, **Dóchas** (2007)
- ▶ *Codi ètic i de conducta per a les Ongd*, **Federació Catalana d'ONG per al Desenvolupament** (1997)
- ▶ *Codi ètic i de conducta de Lafede.cat*, 2014
- ▶ *Communication guide for development organisations*, **IDLEAKS** (2014)
- ▶ *Successful Communication - A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*. **RAPID - Research and Policy in Development** (2005)
- ▶ *EYD2015 Toolkit - Campaign information*, **EU** (2014)
- ▶ *Carta di Roma, codice deontologico dei giornalisti per il rispetto dei migranti e richiedenti asilo*, **Federazione Nazionale della Stampa** (2008)
- ▶ *Carta di Treviso, codice deontologico dei giornalisti per il rispetto dei minori*, **Federazione Nazionale della Stampa** (1990)
- ▶ *Charte d'éthique professionnelle des journalistes*, **Syndicat national des journalistes France** (2011)



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