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# Editorial Policy Document

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## Introduction

From the beginning, Start Magazine has its own Editorial Guidelines that apply to all of our content and set the standards expected of our reporters. This document aims to give better insight and easier access to the guidelines we use in our newsroom. Adapting to the world trends and technological developments, in addition to Start BiH magazine, we have also developed an online platform, [www.startbih.ba](http://www.startbih.ba), to which all of the following guidelines apply.

### Our values

- Start Magazine is the recipient of the prestigious Amnesty International Media Award for Best Investigative Reporting on Raped Women during the war in BiH (2003)
- Start Magazine was named the magazine of the year by all journalist associations that existed in BiH (2002)
- Start Magazine received the award for best photojournalist in BiH (2002)
- Start Magazine BiH and [www.startbih.ba](http://www.startbih.ba) are independent media that provide accurate and verified information from all spheres of society, which is professional and responsible to the public regardless of political pressures, intimidation and attacks, inadequate working conditions, unfair competition and underdeveloped market which is conducive to strengthening media clientelism.
- Start Magazine is one of the few print media in Bosnia and Herzegovina that has managed to maintain itself despite its editorial policy that does not suit political leaders and their clientele who hold all the levers in their hands, especially the economic ones.
- We have been trusted by numerous local and international organizations through support in the realization of a number of projects: Open Society Fund BiH, USAID, US Embassy in BiH, Internews, JUFREX- European Union and Council of Europe...

### Our capacities

- Editors

The editor-in-chief and his deputy are responsible for continually adhering to strict guidelines for integrity, accuracy and impartial reporting, which are the principles of business in the media production process. They occupy key positions in the editorial management structure. These are media professionals who have a proven track record.

- Editorial Board

It consists of full-time employees and external contributors / journalists, analysts, columnists, webmasters, web designers, photojournalists, cameramen, distributors. These are media professionals who have a proven track record. External associates are hired constantly or occasionally depending on the needs of our media.

- Inventory / promotional space

Through the sale of promotional space in the magazine Start BiH, as well as on our website, we generate revenue. We have price lists for each of our media individually, we cooperate with marketing agencies, but also directly with the marketing agents of companies.

- Projects and ideas

They represent a significant item because of unfair competition in BiH market, our commitment to independent and impartial reporting, resisting political influences, which all together reduce the marketing pie for our media. Our projects are supported by international organizations through calls for proposals and they are a significant support to the realization of our ideas.

- Space and equipment

We have our own space. We have all the equipment we need to work with the fact that in the coming period it will require reinforcement and replacement due to obsolescence.

## Mission and vision

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### **Mission**

Professional and responsible provision of timely, relevant and accurate media content to the public, respecting the code of journalistic ethics and professional standards.

### **Vision**

That our media, Start BiH magazine and website [www.startbih.info](http://www.startbih.info), can be recognized by BiH and the public, as independent media that professionally and responsibly inform the public, provide accurate and verified information, and as such take a leading position in the media industry by respecting the self-regulatory system in the press and online media, following and respecting the BiH Press Code and Online Media in daily journalistic work.

**Ownership structure:** The publisher is registered with the competent municipal court in Sarajevo, BiH under registration number UF-I-2455-99. It is registered as a d.o.o.- limited liability company. The first issue of Start BiH magazine was published on October 2, 1999.

**Ethical Policy:** START lists editorial values and practices through its editorial guidelines, and our entire production is expected to adhere to them.

Editors and publishers of our print and online media shall ensure that all relevant staff is informed about this Document.

Editors and publishers of our print and online media shall further ensure that the provisions of this Document are fully complied with.

The Editor-in-Chief is appointed by the Publisher. The Editor-in-Chief, with the consent of the Publisher, appoints assistants, editors and a journalistic team.

To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them: START should provide duly accurate and impartial news, current affairs and factual programming to build people's understanding in all parts of the Bosnia and Herzegovina, region and diaspora in the world. Its content should be provided to the highest editorial standards. It should offer a range and depth of analysis and content using the highest calibre presenters and journalists, and championing freedom of expression, so that all audiences can engage fully with major local, regional, national, BiH and global issues and participate in the democratic process at all levels as active and informed citizens.

The text of this document is based on the Press And Online Media Code Of BiH- The Press Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Self-regulatory Body for Print and Online Media.

This Code is drawn from existing European standards of journalistic practice. The Code's purpose is to establish the foundation of a system of self-regulation in print and online media, which shall be considered morally binding for reporters, editors, owners and publishers of print and online media.

Journalists and editors of print and online media shall respect generally accepted ethical principles and protect the professional integrity of journalism. In addition to this Code, laws and other legal regulations constitute the framework in which print and online media operate in BiH.

This Code includes the basic principles of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Independent Union of Professional Journalists of BiH, the Association of Journalists of BiH, the Independent Union of Journalists from the Republic of Srpska, the Association of Journalists of the Republic of Srpska and the Syndicate of Professional Journalists of the Federation of BiH, and it is adhered to by the Association of Croat Journalists in BiH.

## ***General Provisions***

Journalists of print and online media in Bosnia and Herzegovina ("journalists" further in the text) have an obligation to the public to maintain high ethical standards at all times and under all circumstances.

It is the duty of journalists and publishers of print and online media to respect the needs of citizens for useful, timely and relevant information and to defend the principles of freedom of information and the right to fair comments and critical journalism.

Journalists shall abide by commonly accepted social standards of decency and respect for ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Journalists shall abide by standards of human rights defined by international and BiH acts on human rights.

Journalists shall develop the awareness of gender equality and the respect of individuality as the integral part of human rights.

Journalists shall protect the rights of the individual, while at the same time upholding the right to information in the public interest.

### ***Article 1 - Public Interest***

The public interest, according to this Code, is defined as the procedure and/or information which has the intention of helping the public create personal opinions and decisions about issues and events, including the efforts to detect criminal and/or civil offenses, and to prevent the seduction of the public by certain statements or actions of individuals or organizations.

### ***Article 2 - Editorial Responsibility***

It is the highest responsibility of reporters and editors to ensure, in all their work, respect for factual truth and the right of the public to know the truth.

Journalists shall at all times perform their work in the spirit of fairness, honesty, and civility when collecting information, reporting and presenting opinions.

Plagiarism, falsification, deliberate suppression of facts and acceptance of bribes or favors which could influence the work of a reporter or editor are this profession's greatest moral offenses.

### ***Article 3 – Incitement***

Journalists shall at all times be aware of the danger that arises when media, through hate speech, encourage discrimination and intolerance.

Mindful of this danger, journalists shall do their utmost not to incite and/or inflame hatred and/or inequality based on ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability or mental disability.

Journalists shall under no circumstances incite criminal acts or violence.

### ***Article 4 – Discrimination***

Journalists must avoid prejudicial or insulting references to a person's ethnic group, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability or mental disability.

References to a person's ethnic group, nationality, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical disability or mental disability shall be made only when directly relevant to the occurrence being reported.

### ***Article 4a - Gender Equality and Respect of Individuality***

Journalists shall avoid direct or indirect comments which might place individuals in an unequal position or discriminate them based on sex, gender, sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation.

### ***Article 5 - Accuracy and Fair Reporting***

Journalists shall not publish inaccurate or misleading material in the form of pictures, texts or other materials.

Pictures and documents must not be falsified and/or used in a misleading manner.

Journalists shall not conceal and/or withhold any essential information, the disclosure of which would materially affect the interpretation of a report published and the general readers' understanding.

Journalists have the professional obligation to promptly correct any published information that is found to be inaccurate. The apology and/or correction shall be published with due emphasis.

Journalists shall always report truthfully and accurately about the outcome of an action undertaken as a result of defamation they were involved in.

The journalist shall report only on the basis of facts, the origin of which is known to the journalists.

In reporting and commenting controversy, journalists shall make an effort to hear and represent all sides in a conflict. If one side in a controversy refuses to make itself available to the journalist, the publication may legitimately note this refusal in its reporting.

### ***Article 6 - Comment, Conjecture and Fact***

Journalists, while free to express their own views, must distinguish clearly between a comment, a conjecture, and a fact.

### ***Article 7 - Opportunity to Reply***

The right to reply shall be extended to relevant persons if the editor determines that such a step contributes to accuracy and impartiality.

If at all possible, the opportunity for an immediate response shall be made available in the same edition of the publication as the one containing the accusation and/or incorrect information, not exceeding the originally published article in length.

### ***Article 8 – Misrepresentation***

Journalists shall use only fair means to obtain news, documents and/or photographs.

Journalists and photographers shall not obtain information and/or pictures through intimidation or harassment.

It is unethical to misrepresent one's identity or intentions, and to use subterfuge to obtain information for publication, except in the most extreme circumstances, and in a lawful manner, when the publication of thus obtained information would clearly serve the public interest.

### ***Article 9 – Privacy***

Journalists shall avoid intrusions into and individual's private life unless such intrusions are necessary for the public interest.

Topics involving personal tragedy shall be treated with consideration, and the affected individuals shall be approached with discretion and sympathy.

### ***Article 10 - Persons Charged With Criminal Offenses***

Journalists shall not treat any individual as a criminal prior to a court sentence to that effect.

Journalists have the duty not to prejudge the guilt of an accused person.

Journalists have the duty to publish information about the dismissal of charges against, or the acquittal of, anyone whose filed charges or commenced trial they had reported about previously.

### ***Article 10a – Protection of Witnesses***

Journalists shall demonstrate special caution and sensitivity when reporting about witnesses in war crime proceedings, respecting rules and regulations in terms of not identifying the protected witnesses.

Journalists shall generally avoid identifying witnesses in war crimes trials, as well as their relatives and friends, unless their identification is necessary for the complete, fair and accurate reporting about the trial, and if such identifying shall not cause misinterpretation of the truth or the trial process.

### ***Article 11 - Protection of Children and Minors***

When treating children and minors, journalists have the obligation to be extremely careful, respecting ethical norms and the Convention on Children's Rights, starting with the child's interest.

Journalists are obligated to protect the child's identity in procedures not involving the public.

Journalists shall not interview or photograph children under the age of 18, regarding matters involving the child's family, in the absence of or without the consent of a parent or guardian.

Journalists shall not identify children under the age of 18 when they are victims of crimes.

Journalists must not, under any circumstances, identify children under the age of 18 who are involved in criminal cases as witnesses, victims or defendants.

### ***Article 12 - Advertising and Sponsorship***

Commercial, political advertisements and sponsored articles must be distinguished from editorial content and clearly identified as what they are.

Sponsored material shall clearly indicate the source of sponsorship.

### ***Articles 13 - Confidentiality of Sources***

Whenever possible, journalists should rely on open, identified sources of information. These sources are to be preferred to anonymous sources, whose honesty and accuracy cannot be judged by the public.

Journalists have an obligation to protect the identity of those who provide information in confidence, whether or not they explicitly request confidentiality.

### ***Article 14 - Copyright and Author's Rights***

Journalists may use reasonable summaries with limited quotations, material from other publications or holders of copyrights, without express permission to do so, as long as the source is cited appropriately.

Substantial use or reproduction of material protected by copyrights requires explicit permission from the copyright holder unless such permission is stated in the material.

### ***Article 15 – Complaints***

Print and online media shall, in an appropriate place, contain the following: the name, address, telephone number, fax number, the internet/e-mail address and contacts of the responsible publisher and editor, to whom complaints regarding the writing of print and online media can be addressed.

*This Code was adopted on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1999 by all Journalists' Associations in BiH. Start has been using it since its inception, October 1999. This Editorial Policy Document was amended in December 2017 after the registration of the website [www.startbih.ba](http://www.startbih.ba), or Start online under ISSN 1840-1015 of May 11, 2017. The document is valid until a new amendment is made.*

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