



concordia
SOCIAL PROJECTS

CONCORDIA Visual Storytelling ²⁰²²

Our guidelines for responsible and respectful image use and story creation



Principles & Boundaries

In this chapter we listed 4 key principles and examples, under which images should be taken and stories should be captured in the context of CONCORDIA. Alongside these, we also outlined the boundaries: the limitations that should not be crossed when capturing and distributing visual stories.

We highly recommend the readers to also review our [Code of Conduct](#) and [CONCORDIA's Child Protection Policy](#), as the baseline document that inspired the boundaries defined below.

The principles we are committing to are based on CONCORDIA's vision (Children and young people live a self-determined life out of marginalisation.) and [Impact Model](#), our values (chances, commitment, heart connection, courage).

Above all we must be guided by the humanitarian principle of **Do No Harm** and conform to the highest standards in relation to children's rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)', which are reflected in our Child Protection Policy.

4 KEY PRINCIPLES

We define the following four key principles and standards:

1. Compliance with personal rights

We fully respect the privacy of each and every person, which includes also the privacy of photographs and images. It means that pictures of people are not to be made accessible to the public, if this would violate the legitimate interests of the person depicted or, under certain circumstances, of a close relative and/or legal guardian.

PRINCIPLES

- For minor persons under the age of 16, written consent must be obtained from both the child (according to national legislation) and from his/her parent or legal guardian. It must be assured that the child won't be placed at risk under any circumstances.
- Informed Consent—the informed understand why they are being photographed/filmed/interviewed, what the resulting communication will be, how and where it will be communicated and how they can withdraw their consent.



Prioritise informed, full and freely given consent as an ethical (and often legal) requirement for storytelling. Ensure that collaborators understand and agree with the purpose of the story collection and use of the final story, the implications of its publication and their right to withdraw consent at any time.

Excerpt from a video story about Natalia. It shows the daily challenge of fetching water. Like many other rural households in Moldova, she does not have her own access to water.

When asking for the informed consent of a child, make sure you use an age-appropriate approach. The CPP national managers ensures the best way for the child to understand. The final responsibilities for obtaining the consent are the national directors.

Written permission from a parent or legal guardian must be always obtained before using a photo of a person under the age of 16.

It is the responsibility of the national organisations to ensure that communications are legally compliant in relation to GDPR, data protection and intellectual property rights as well as national laws.

- › We must ensure that our programme participants are supported and empowered to safely participate in image taking and sharing their story.
- › We must recognise and respect their rights to participation and protection during content creation.
- › We must make sure that the programme participants whose image/story we have gathered, is informed where to reach us in case they no longer wish their story to be featured.

● In exceptional humanitarian crises situations, wars or natural disasters it isn't always possible to get informed consent. However the content producer is required to ensure - to the best of their ability - that consent would have been given.

● Stock photos – in general CONCORDIA avoids the use of stock photos. Exceptions apply in sensitive situations, such as cases of abuse in which authentic images cannot be used. In such cases for fundraising purposes stock photos will be used.

BOUNDARIES

⊖ It is not allowed to use child real name or address.

⊖ It is not allowed to use authentic images of victims of child abuse.

⊖ It is not allowed to take or use pictures of undressed or partially undressed children, as this contradicts CONCORDIA values, as well as personal and children's rights.

⊖ Social Media: we don't tag programme participants on our social media post.

2. Dignity

CONCORDIA ensures that each person's dignity is respected and protected throughout the entire process of image-production. This must also be reflected in the image itself. Dealing with dignity must take into consideration the personal view of those, whose history and life is portrayed. Their position on how to be represented must be always respected and clear information must be provided about the purpose and use of the material (informed consent).

PRINCIPLES

● We show the reality and do this by choosing pictures which reflect real problems, such as poverty, without humiliating the person.

● We want to show the beauty of people's diversity and colourfulness, the liveliness in the eyes, focusing on strength and positivism.

● We use (visual) storytelling which involves our programme participants at eye level in order to become a powerful tool to expose injustice and encourage others to share their experiences too.

● We want our programme participants to feel stronger and more confident by involving them in our (visual) storytelling.

● Therefore, use images and stories that respect people's self-worth, privacy, safety and rights, and present them with dignity.

- We are guided by a rights-based approach, which means we recognise our programme participants as our active partners in the process of sharing their stories rather than as subjects for our stories and we must ensure that the images we create are ethical and supportive of participation and protection.

Working ethically requires those involved to employ empathy and sensitivity and to think critically about their work and the impact it may have on others.

BOUNDARIES

Every child/person has the right to determine their own story. If someone no longer wishes for their story or image to be used (despite consent), this is to be respected.

- ⊖ In principle, no images should be used in combination with stories that are more than 5 years old. In the case of individual exceptions, it must be stated that this is not a current story. Symbolic pictures which don't give any further information about the program participant are excluded as long as the person gave the consent once.

- ⊖ If the material of the person on the image of a story is older than 5 years, the person is no longer under the care of CONCORDIA and it is

not possible to renew the consent agreement, the material should not be used.

- ⊖ Images of children sitting on an adult's lap (mother or father with the child on their lap excluded) or images that could be misinterpreted should be avoided.

- ⊖ Don't publish a story or an image which might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used.

3. Acceptance of cultural differences

We noted differences in visual perception related to cultural factors due to different social circumstances and hotspots. As we are working with marginalised and historically discriminated minorities (e.g. Roma and Romnja), we see a great responsibility with regard to the reproduction of stereotypical images and narratives, which we do not support.

PRINCIPLES

- We use images and stories which authentically represent the environment, context, situation and people we work with.

Find ways to „pass the microphone“ to contributors so that their voices are not appropriately silenced or controlled. Doing this requires creating a safe space for their stories and, often, some degree of empowerment or confidence-building.



Ioana was one of the first children to spend her afternoons learning and playing at CONCORDIA day care centre CASA Cristina in Ploiești/Romania. In a short video story about her, she suggested the places and settings and what she wanted to tell, and thus remained the owner of her story.

- We must strive to balance a commitment to accurate representations of the realities faced by the

- We must comply with any local or cultural restrictions in relation to taking images of people, places or objects.

- We must be aware of the danger of a single story and try to include as much context as possible. If all we see is how poor people are, it becomes impossible to imagine them as anything else. Their poverty becomes the single story which reduces them to the one stereotype.

- › Therefore: We commit to telling fuller stories: providing audiences with credible evidence and context that both generates empathy and improves public understanding of the challenges and circumstances facing the people we work with. Where the design does not allow for full captions, create a visible link for people to access further information - a clear and short user journey from a single image to the fuller story.

- Content that features celebrities or experts should serve to amplify rather than silence the voices of the people we work with.

BOUNDARIES

- ⊖ We do not use imagery that promotes stereotyping, endangers or belittles the individual or vulnerable group, promotes racism or hatred.

- ⊖ Content that features celebrities or/and experts: We do not frame the celebrity as the hero of the piece, but instead use them to help frame an issue.

4. Authenticity

We want to present our work and the communities and people we work with in an authentic way. A way to ensure authenticity is to work collaboratively in communities and with local content creators.

PRINCIPLES

- We use images and stories which accurately represent the programme participants, their environment, context and situation. We make sure that our visual stories reveal the reality of our work.

- We want to show our work from many sides. Both programme participants and professionals such as social workers or psychologists should have their say and contribute their perspective and experience.

Maria and her son are one of the programme participants in Malki Iskar/ Bulgaria. This portrait was taken up close. Although it is not always essential to show the context, it certainly adds meaning to the image. In this picture the focus should only be on them.

Credits: Benjamin Kaufmann



Show programme participants as fully dimensional human beings who have multiple roles and wide-ranging interests, personalities and agency. If you tell a story about a community or group of people, include diverse representation and contextual details to show more than one dimension of that community.

- We only use electronic technology to improve the quality of the photo (for example, to make it clearer or to enlarge it, if necessary).

- In our visual stories our values should be identified and help to connect with the people who are in the heart of our mission.

- We represent a diversity of people and voices in our communications.

- We don't only show a person's problems, we will show his/her personality either through their voice, or through other details about their lives which are distinct from the problem being shown.

- Across our communications we gather content which illustrates people supporting or caring for each other, leading work, or being capable agents of change.

- Where possible we show examples of the changes that people are driving themselves and how the people we work with are contributing to solutions.

- We gather content which shows local and national staff supporting programme participants and feature their voices and full names.

BOUNDARIES

- ⊖ We never use photo work programmes to create a false impression of the people and events represented. The person who will make photos won't manipulate the subject or subjects of the photo to make the picture more spectacular. Exception: when we have to remove some objects from the pictures that effect the quality or the good visibility, or a commercial brand is too „big“ in a picture and is not related to the context.

- ⊖ We do not ask children to promote a certain brand of a company in return for donation, for example taking pictures of them wearing hats with a company brand. Children may take pictures, from their own initiative, wearing clothing items with logos of companies, but this is not connected with any expectations of receiving donations.

- ⊖ We avoid images that look down on someone with the intention of creating a greater sense of vulnerability or need.

If the answer to your questions is not clear, or you have doubts about the core principles of this framework please contact one of the Visual Guidelines working group members.

Work in close communication with programme participants and local creatives to find, shape and tell the most accurate and authentic stories possible.



Labinot, one of our students in Tranzit Centre in Prizren/Kosovo who explains the meaning of music for him personally. Credits: Samir Karahoda



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