

BBC Thematic Review of Migration

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Review will be configured to assess whether the BBC is meeting the required standards of impartiality and accuracy across BBC UK content, including the devolved Nations and English Regions (this review will not include the BBC World Service). It will point to ways in which coverage across platforms can be further improved and enhanced. The BBC Editorial Guidelines set out how due impartiality and due accuracy are to be attained in BBC content. Importantly, the Editorial Guidelines underline that impartiality requires that “the existence of a range of views is appropriately reflected”.

<https://www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality>

Scope

The Review will cover all relevant radio, television and online content on the UK public services. It will also cover relevant programme and other social media use. It will specifically assess News & Current Affairs and Factual output on migration, but will not be limited to these areas of content. The Review will include migration as it affects the devolved nations of the UK and the English regions. It will not be possible, without devoting excessive resources and time to the project in the time available, to assess every piece of content on every aspect of migration across the UK. The Review will attempt to include major areas of migration policy that are themselves controversial and/or relate to public policy and political controversy. The period over which content is assessed has been timed to take in major international events, including the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as well as public announcements about migration made in the UK Parliament and elsewhere.

Methodology

The methodologies to be used will include:

Content analysis. Over a specified period, *i.e.*, between March and November 2022, relevant content will be analysed qualitatively against a range of criteria (see Assessment criteria below) designed to indicate whether it suggests any underlying assumptions, explicit bias or revealed preference over time. The leaders of the Review may choose to go beyond the specified period where they deem it necessary. This methodology will encompass social media use.

Audience research. Assessing what audiences think of BBC content and how far they think it achieves fairness and impartiality. This will include consideration of existing audience research which may indicate audience views of bias and fairness. If required, further

qualitative research may be commissioned to help explain why audiences hold the views exhibited.

External stakeholder engagement. Seeking the opinions of experts, informed commentators and other interested parties with a full range of views on the BBC's achievements and deficiencies in achieving impartiality in content on the subject of the Review.

Internal stakeholder input. Including internal subject matter experts, those involved with content in the relevant subject areas and senior leaders, as appropriate.

Complaints. Analysis of any relevant complaints, with the BBC's response, about the subject matter of the Review.

Assessment criteria

The Review will be asked to concentrate on evaluating impartiality and bias (where it is found to exist) across output and not simply on reviewing content and news coverage. However, the absence of some types of content may give rise to bias by omission.

In addition, the assessment of impartiality should consider the following:

1. Whether the different types of migration are correctly distinguished, along with their motivations, effects and the laws and policies that govern them.
2. The accurate and comprehensible presentation of relevant data and statistics.
3. To what extent coverage of migration is impartial across content given audiences' views and what is known about the history, distribution and impacts of migration.
4. If the choice of stories demonstrates a fair and appropriately nuanced approach and provides an appropriately broad range of voices and perspectives.
5. How far emigration is covered in content to ensure an appropriately nuanced picture is presented.
6. Whether those who appear in content – both migrants and those from UK communities – are depicted and described fairly.
7. If the language, images and tone used in content raise impartiality issues.
8. Whether the effects of migration on different UK communities are fairly covered.
9. To what extent the impact of migration on the UK economy, including public services, the labour market and the public finances, is covered accurately and fairly.
10. Whether appropriate recognition is given to the factors influencing migration and the experience of other countries in managing it.

The Review will not seek to reach judgments about any areas of policy debate. Instead, it will consider the BBC's expertise in and approach to producing content and coverage of the subject area and how these might be strengthened for the future.

The Review will submit its findings to the BBC Board and it may also choose to make recommendations. The Board will determine the arrangements for publishing the Review once it has received and considered it.

17th April 2023.