

Code of Lisbon

The following are the criteria and standards of professional qualification set out for practitioners bound by this Code.

Every member of the PRLI duly admitted as such in accordance with the rules of the Institute is deemed for the purpose of this Code to be a public relations practitioner, and to be bound by the Code.

General professional obligations

In the practice of his profession, the public relations practitioner undertakes to respect the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, in particular, to freedom of expression and freedom of the press which affect the right of the individual to receive information. He likewise undertakes to act in accordance with the public interest and not to harm the dignity or integrity of the individual.

In his professional conduct, the public relations practitioner must show honesty, intellectual integrity and loyalty. In particular, he undertakes not to make use of comment or information that, to his knowledge or belief, is false or misleading. In the same spirit he must be careful to avoid the use, even by accident, of practices or methods incompatible with this Code.

1. Public relations activities must be carried out openly: they must be readily identifiable, bear a clear indication of their origin, and must not tend to mislead third parties.

2. In his relations with other professions and with other branches of social communications, the public relations practitioner must respect the rules and practices appropriate to those professions or occupations, so far as these are compatible with the ethics of his own profession. A public relations practitioner must respect the national Code of Professional Conduct and the laws in force in any country in which he practices his profession and must exercise restraint in seeking personal publicity.

Specific professional obligations

A. Towards clients or employers

3. A public relations practitioner shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of the clients or employers concerned.

4. In the practice of his profession, a public relations practitioner must observe complete discretion. He must scrupulously respect professional confidence, and in particular must not reveal any confidential information received from his clients or employers – past, present or potential – or make use of such information, without express authorisation.

A public relations practitioner who has an interest that may conflict with that of his client or employer must disclose it as soon as possible.

5. A public relations practitioner must not recommend to his client or employer the services of any business or organisation in which he has a financial, commercial or other interest without first disclosing that interest.

A public relations practitioner shall not enter a contract with his client or employer under which the practitioner guarantees quantified results.

A public relations practitioner may accept remuneration for his services only in the form of salary or fees. On no account may he accept payment or other material rewards contingent upon quantifiable professional results.

A public relations practitioner shall not accept as a reward for his services to a client or an employer any remuneration from a third party, such as discounts, commissions or payments in kind, except with the agreement of the client or employer.

When the execution of a public relations assignment would be likely to entail serious professional misconduct and imply behaviour contrary to the principles of this Code, the public relations practitioner must take steps to notify his client or employer immediately and do everything possible to see that the latter respects the requirements of the Code. If the client or employer persists in his intentions, the practitioner must nevertheless observe the Code irrespective of the consequences to him.

B. Towards public opinion and the information media

6. The spirit of this Code and the rules contained in preceding clauses, notably clauses 2, 3, 4 and 5 imply a constant concern on the part of the public relations practitioner with the right to information, and moreover the duty to provide information, within the limits of professional confidence. They imply also a respect for the rights and independence of the information media.

7. Any attempt to deceive public opinion or its representatives is forbidden. News must be provided without charge or hidden reward for its use or publication.

If it should seem necessary to maintain the initiative in and the control of the distribution of information within the principles of this Code the public relations practitioner may buy space or broadcasting time in conformity with the rules, practices and usages in that field.

C. Towards fellow practitioners

8. The public relations practitioner must refrain from unfair competition with fellow-practitioners. He must neither act nor speak in a way which would tend to depreciate the reputation or business of a fellow practitioner, subject always to his duty under clause 10b of this Code.

D. Towards the profession

9. The public relations practitioner must refrain from any conduct which may prejudice the reputation of his profession. In particular he must not cause harm to the PRL, its efficient working or its good name by malicious attacks or by any breach of its constitution or rules.

10. The reputation of the profession is the responsibility of each of its members. The public relations practitioner has a duty not only to respect this Code himself but also to:

a) assist in making the Code more widely and better known and understood

b) report to the competent disciplinary authorities any breach or suspected breach of the Code which comes to his notice

c) take any action in his power to ensure that rulings on its application by such authorities are observed and sanctions made effective