



*Moldovan Journalist's*  
**CODE**  
**OF ETHICS**

Chișinău, 2024



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## **We, Journalists of Print, Broadcast and Online Media,**

*Being aware that responsible journalism is possible only in conditions of freedom of expression that is guaranteed and secured by the international and national law,*

*Realizing that responsible journalism is the primary obligation of the profession that ensures the right of the public to receive truthful, verified and full information,*

*Realizing that society's trust in journalists is a supreme value of the profession,*

*Protecting professional honor and independence by strengthening self-regulation mechanisms in view of ensuring society's right to receive information,*

*Considering the disinformation, fake news and manipulative messages disseminated through the media as harmful and dangerous phenomena for informing the public and for the democracy,*

*Condemning any attempt to involve journalists in political partisanship or ideological-financial mercenary activities, propaganda wars or information wars,*

*Assessing professional solidarity as crucial and qualifying settlements of accounts between journalists through the media as actions that undermine the prestige of the profession, that discredit it and diminish its social legitimacy,*

**Adopt This Code and Commit to Follow Its Provisions.**

## 1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 A journalist is a person, whether or not employed by a media organization, who regularly engages in one or more activities, such as gathering information of public interest from any relevant source and processing and publishing it in any form, including text, photographs, video and/or audio recordings, images, graphics, etc., for public dissemination by any means, including mass media, for informational, educational or entertainment purposes.
- 1.2 The journalist practices his profession in view of serving the public interest according to his own conscience and in agreement with the principles set out in this Code of Ethics.
- 1.3 The journalist, in practicing his profession, must be free and independent.
- 1.4 The journalist, in practicing his profession, is not entitled to assume obligations that collide with the profession of journalist.
- 1.5 Practicing the profession of journalist is compatible with:
  - participating in specialist trainings;
  - specialist teaching activities;
  - participating in specialist conferences, round tables, symposia and seminars;
  - participating in specialist investigations, surveys, studies, evaluations and research;
  - participating in specialist juries.
  - and the like.
- 1.6 The professional activity of the journalist is incompatible with the dissemination of messages forbidden by the law (hate, homophobia, anti-Semitism or discrimination speeches) or with political propaganda, religious or election agitation activities.
- 1.7 The journalist does not tolerate hate speech, discrimination, homophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, etc. in the statements of

sources, people they quote, guests on their programs, and it is their duty to intervene in time and disassociate themselves from such messages on the media platform they represent.

- 1.8 In case of a critical speech addressed to a particular person, the journalist must give priority to protecting their privacy, and in case of a critical speech addressed to a public person, he should give priority to the public interest.
- 1.9 The journalist must possess specialized knowledge and skills. Moral integrity, basic journalist skills and language culture are essential professional requirements essential for a journalist and for journalism.

## **2. ENSURING ACCURACY OF INFORMATION**

### **COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The journalist collects information in an ethical and legal manner. When collecting public interest information, each time the journalist makes sure that there is a reasonable balance between his rights and the rights of the persons concerned in his media products.
- 2.2 The journalist undertakes demarches to collect information from credible and quotable sources.
- 2.3 The journalist does not accept to collect public interest information from its holders for money or for other benefits.
- 2.4 While collecting information, the journalist usually identifies his name and the media outlet he represents, as applicable, warning the source that the information provided thereby may be made public. As a rule, the journalist warns his interlocutor if the discussion is recorded.
- 2.5 While collecting information, the journalist should not abuse of his social status or of his professional opportunities, exert pressure on the sources, promise or offer them any compensations/favors.
- 2.6 The journalist protects the identity of his sources in accordance with the provisions of the Law no.64/2010 on Freedom of Expression.

- 2.7 The journalist doubts any information collected. The journalist should obtain and present the opinion of all parties relevant to the subject. The journalist must prove the multitude of opinions, even though he disagrees with them.
- 2.8 The journalist respects the information source's wish to remain anonymous and at the same time assumes responsibility for the truthfulness of the information made public from anonymous sources.
- 2.9 The journalist assigns quotes accurately. The quotes must be precise and, in case of partial quoting, the journalist is required not to distort the message of the person quoted.
- 2.10 The journalist uses headlines that reflect the content of the journalistic material and avoids sensational or misleading headlines.
- 2.11 The journalist respects the copyright. The free taking over of journalistic materials takes place as established by the author or the media outlet. In such cases, the source and author of the information must be quoted and, for online media, the direct link to the source should also be indicated in the first paragraph of the text. An item can be taken over in full only in the conditions imposed, requested and provided by the rights bearer.
- 2.12 In the process of gathering information about protests, strikes, demonstrations, social unrest, the journalist does not associate himself with the organizers or participants. The journalist must be easily identifiable – by a vest or badge that says “press” or by other means. Exceptions are made when the journalist is working undercover or when not displaying the capacity of a journalist is the only way to get the facts.
- 2.13 In practicing his profession, the journalist is not required to coordinate the final version of the journalistic item to be published with the sources who provided the information.
- 2.14 If the journalist offers his journalistic product to more than one media outlet, he must notify the respective outlets about it.

## **VERIFICATION OF FACTS**

- 2.15 The journalist usually verifies the information from at least two sources independent from each other. The journalist publishes only the information that he considers truthful after verifying it.

- 2.16 If it is impossible to verify the information and the sources, such information can be made public only if failure to publish it may cause harm to the society. In such situation, one should indicate that the information has not been checked.
- 2.17 The journalist ignores the information if, after verifying the facts, it proves to be false, manipulative, or irrelevant to the topic tackled.

## SEPARATION OF FACTS FROM OPINIONS

- 2.18 The journalist must clearly distinguish between facts and opinions and should not present opinions as facts.
- 2.19 The journalist expresses his opinions on a factual basis starting with the information that he, in good faith, considers truthful and that can be verified, if needed.
- 2.20 Opinions and factual items should be delimited so that anyone could easily make a proper distinction between them. The journalist expresses his opinion in an honest and ethical manner, without deliberately distorting facts or data. Exceptions may be made in cases where the journalist uses clearly delineated satirical genres.
- 2.21 The journalist does not present the results of opinion surveys as fait accompli. The journalistic materials about opinion surveys should be accompanied by the following information:
- name of the organization that conducted the survey;
  - date or time interval in which the survey took place and the method used;
  - size of the sample and maximum error margin;
  - beneficiary of the survey and the funding source.
- 2.22 In practicing his profession, the journalist should ensure a balance between the society's right to receive public interest information and the right of the media to present opinions that may shock, offend or bother someone.

## COMMERCIAL/POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

- 2.23 The commercial and political interests of media owners should not lead to publishing distorting or manipulative information or to forbidding/ignoring public interest information.
- 2.24 It is mandatory to make a clear separation of journalistic products from commercial publicity, from items produced for publicity purposes, and from political (electoral) publicity. Commercial publicity, items produced for publicity purposes, and political (electoral) publicity should be marked and presented in such a way as to not confuse it with journalistic products.
- 2.25 The media outlet, in producing and/or broadcasting commercial publicity, items produced for publicity purposes, and political (electoral) publicity, is guided by the legal norms in force and by the provisions of this Code.
- 2.26 The journalist is entitled to refuse the task of preparing publicity items of any type, as argument serving the fact that they are not the subject-matter of journalistic activities.
- 2.27 Hidden publicity information, unmarked publicity information or the presentation of such information as a journalistic product is forbidden.
- 2.28 The journalist does not use his own name or image for publicity purposes, except when promoting either social and humanist values through media messages or journalistic products of one's own.

## CORRECTION OF ERRORS AND THE RIGHT OF REPLY

- 2.29 The journalist has the obligation to correct the factual errors found as soon as possible, publishing rectifications that are easy to identify. Online media, when correcting errors, should specify that the journalistic product has been amended and/or completed, indicating the date of the amendment/completion.
- 2.30 The media outlet, upon discovering that it has published a false or manipulative piece of information, must promptly notify about it and remove it by offering the respective apologies to the public and to the person(s) directly concerned, as applicable.



- 2.31 The journalist respects the principle that any person who is the subject of negative criticism in a journalistic product in which his or her opinion has not been included for reasons beyond the journalist's control (live broadcasts, live talk shows or interviews where the journalist cannot predict what the participants/guests will say) has the right to reply, to clarify the inaccurate information or to refute the information. The right of reply is guaranteed only if the person concerned refers to concrete facts in the journalistic product, the reply is of reasonable length, does not make accusations against third parties and is expressed in decent terms.
- 2.32 The reply is published as soon as possible and in conditions similar to those in which the journalistic product to which it refers was published.
- 2.33 If the possibility of securing the right of reply is missing or if the person concerned renounces the reply, the journalist announces about it.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF OFFICIAL WEBPAGES**

- 2.34 The journalist and the media outlet undertake all demarches to prove openness and cooperation to the public.
- 2.35 Media outlets provide their address, editorial policy, contact details, owners/beneficiaries and information on sources of funding to ensure transparency.
- 2.36 The journalist and the media outlets adopt a similar behavior in both the real and the virtual space.
- 2.37 The journalist usually signs the material he produces and publishes.
- 2.38 Media outlets, in managing their websites and social networking pages/accounts, do not allow and do not accept any deviations from legal and deontological rules in reactions (comments) from the public. To this end, media outlets properly manage reactions/comments to media products.

## CONSCIENCE AND CENSORSHIP CLAUSE

- 2.39 The journalist does not accept censorship of any type. The actions of editors or distributors of media products, when based on professional reasons, are not considered censorship.
- 2.40 The journalist is obliged to refuse any professional assignment that violates the law. The journalist has the right to refuse any professional assignment that is contrary to professional ethics, his own convictions and the rules of this Code.
- 2.41 The journalist does not accept to write for another person, to sign a journalistic product with another real person's name, or to sign a journalistic product that is not his authorship.
- 2.42 The journalist cannot use the information he holds for personal interests.

## 3. USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS

- 3.1 The use of AI in journalism must uphold the core values of professional ethics: truthfulness, accuracy, fairness, impartiality, independence, non-bias, non-discrimination, accountability, respect for privacy and confidentiality of sources.
- 3.2 In the use of AI, editorial decision making remains the essential and exclusive role of journalists and media outlets.
- 3.3 The journalist and media outlets need to use AI systems that operate predictably and do not violate privacy and data protection laws.
- 3.4 The journalist and media outlets prioritize the use of authentic images and recordings to reflect real events. Where appropriate, they make a clear distinction between content derived from the physical capture of the real world (photographs, audio/video recordings) and content created or modified using AI.
- 3.5 When using AI, the journalist must not mislead the public. In particular, he must refrain from creating or using AI-generated content that imitates real shots and recordings or realistically portrays real people.

- 3.6 The journalist must explicitly communicate to the audience whether the media product was generated in whole or in part by AI.
- 3.7 The journalist uses AI without violating copyright or intellectual property rights.

## 4. HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION

### PRIVACY

- 4.1 The journalist is obliged to respect the right to privacy and dignity of persons, including of deceased persons.
- 4.2 Interfering with one's privacy is allowed only when the disclosure of facts pursues a public interest.
- 4.3 The journalist reports about the private behavior of a public person who performs a public function without their consent only when such behavior affects their capacity of performing the public function or there is another well-grounded reason for offering such information to the society.
- 4.4 The right to privacy also applies to the publication or republication of public documents. The public availability of information does not necessarily imply a journalist's right to republish it freely.
- 4.5 The journalist does not publish personal data – diagnosis, address, telephone number and other information required by the legislation on the protection of personal data. Such data may be published only if it serves the public interest and, where appropriate, with the consent of the data subject.
- 4.6 The journalist reports about the private behavior of a private person only if such behavior disturbs public order or infringes the rights of other persons.
- 4.7 The journalist does not provide to the public morbid details of crimes, accidents or natural disasters, or details of suicidal techniques. The same rules apply to visual items (photographs, videos).

- 4.8 The journalist respects the privacy of individuals and asks permission to photograph/film them, except in relevant cases where they are in a public place.
- 4.9 Images displaying nude bodies must be electronically processed so that not to expose intimate areas to the public. Exception are artistic images.
- 4.10 Images must represent reality accurately. Electronic processing should not be used to give a false impression about persons or events. Exception are collages that should be marked accordingly.
- 4.11 Archive images or symbolic photographs, used to illustrate journalistic items, should be marked accordingly. The journalist makes sure that the images used correspond to the message of the journalistic material.

## **PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE**

- 4.12 The journalist respects the presumption of innocence and considers any person innocent until a final and irrevocable court sentence is issued against them.
- 4.13 When reporting on criminal investigations or cases examined in the court of law, journalists shall use precise language in order not to harm the trial participants.

## **PROTECTION OF PERSONS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS**

- 4.14 The human dignity of each person must be respected. National, ethnic and social origin, race, color, nationality, citizenship, language, religion, age, sex, gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, health status, opinion, political affiliation or any other protected characteristic may not be presented in an inappropriate or derogatory manner.
- 4.15 The journalist adopts an inclusive and human rights-based approach when dealing with sensitive issues, so that no one is victimized, stigmatized or subjected to other forms of abuse during the production of journalistic material and after its publication.
- 4.16 When producing journalistic material about vulnerable groups and individual representatives of these groups, the journalist will ensure that they are fully represented and that their position is clear and presented to the public in an explicit and undistorted manner.

- 4.17 The journalist, through his professional and editorial conduct, discourages expressions and behaviors based on prejudices and does not allow in his journalistic materials approaches and expressions that would encourage the spread and validation of prejudices regarding gender equality, violence of any kind, vulnerable groups, etc.
- 4.18 The journalist acts in a spirit of respect for human dignity towards the sources, persons or groups about whom he writes, using the correct vocabulary recommended by experts in the protection of the rights of vulnerable persons.
- 4.19 The journalist treats with special accuracy the information collected about crimes, natural disasters, accidents and other similar cases in which someone is harmed in any way, each time making sure that publishing such information shall not cause more suffering to those harmed or not guilty for what has happened.
- 4.20 The journalist will not reveal the identity of victims of accidents, disasters, crimes, especially sexual assault, including online victims. Exceptions are made when the victim or the victim's family consents (if the person is incapable of giving consent) or when the public interest prevails. The journalist will take all steps to minimize any negative impact on these individuals.
- 4.21 The journalist treats with special accuracy the information collected from persons in shock or from helpless persons, making sure that the publishing of the information will not harm the rights of such persons, and shall try to anticipate the eventual negative effects on them.
- 4.22 The journalist does not take advantage of persons' vulnerability or their lack of knowledge of their rights and freedoms, or encourage them to resort to humiliating actions and that harm human dignity.

## **PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

- 4.23 The journalist treats information collected about children, including information obtained with the consent of their parents/guardians, with great care to ensure that the publication of such information will not have negative consequences (feelings of fear, distress, etc.) for them.
- 4.24 The journalist should protect the identity of children involved in events and situations with negative connotations (accidents, crimes, family disputes, suicides, violence and abuse of any kind, etc.), including as

witnesses. Audio/video recordings and photographs should be edited to protect the identity of children. Exceptions are made when the identification of the child is in the public interest and when the journalist is acting in the best interest of the child, with or without the consent of the parent or guardian.

- 4.25 The journalist usually avoids covering family disputes involving children.

## **TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

4.26 The journalist treats all the persons with whom he comes in contact fairly while performing his profession and does not discriminate on such criteria as sex, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, social status, sexual orientation etc.

4.27 The journalist mentions the ethnic affiliation, political opinions, religious convictions, sexual orientation and other type of sensitive information of a person only when this is relevant from an editorial point of view.

## **5. JOURNALISTS AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS**

5.1 The journalist does not accept money, presents, paid trips, or any other advantages that are offered to him to influence the journalistic act and whose acceptance would compromise his independence and authority before the public, and would affect the trust in journalists as a whole.

5.2 The journalist informs the public if he has enjoyed any retribution outside the one offered by the editor or distributor of journalistic products with whom he is in work or creation relations.

5.3 If a journalist participates in business trips, paid by third parties, he informs the public about it. In general, the journalist avoids participating in events or trips at the expense of the sources. He shall do it only if acquiring information is not possible otherwise.

5.4 Journalists are not subjects of commercial publicity. The participation in charity actions must happen in such a way that the public knows if it is a personal involvement or editorial support.

5.5 The journalist's professional work is incompatible with his work

in administration structures of public authorities and of political organizations.

- 5.6 Holders of positions in state power bodies who have contributions in the media must specify their official positions when signing items disseminated in the media.
- 5.7 If the journalist is registered as a candidate, he does not exercise his professional activity during the election period.
- 5.8 The journalist does not use any confidential information that he possesses by virtue of his profession in his personal interest or in the interest of persons close to him. The journalist does not use the media platform or the media outlet for which he works in his own interest.

## **6. SPECIAL DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT**

- 6.1 The use of special investigative journalism techniques (hidden video camera, hidden dictaphone, etc.) is justified only when there is a public interest and the information cannot be obtained by other means. The journalist must ensure that he does not harm third parties.
- 6.2 The use of special investigative techniques should be explicitly stated at the time of publication, and persons appearing in images or audio recorded in an explicitly negative context should be asked for their additional opinion, with the journalist introducing them appropriately.

## **7. MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS BETWEEN THE JOURNALIST AND THE EMPLOYER**

- 7.1 The employer may use a journalistic item based on a contract signed in written form with the item's author. The use of the journalistic item in the absence of such a contract does not exempt the employer from the obligation to pay the respective remuneration to the author.
- 7.2 The journalist has the right to renounce the authorship of the journalistic material and to refuse to sign it if the content of the material has been distorted as a result of editing.

## 8. SELF-REGULATION

- 8.1 Each journalist and newsroom of the Republic of Moldova is responsible for applying this Code.
- 8.2 The national journalism self-regulation body is the Press Council of the Republic of Moldova.
- 8.3 The Press Council is responsible for monitoring the application of the Code, investigating complaints and self-reports of violations of its provisions, and issuing decisions and recommendations.
- 8.4 Certain provisions of this Code may be completed/ revised as needed and depending on the circumstances, after public consultations with the participation of all stakeholders, organized by the Press Council.
- 8.5 This Code does not forbid journalists to guide themselves also by other professional ethics codes that may as well include other professional obligations.
- 8.6 When issuing decisions on finding violations and/or when making recommendations, the Press Council guides itself by this Code and the journalistic good practices accepted at international level.

*The Moldovan Journalist's Code of Ethics was approved at a national conference held in Chişinău on 3 May 2011, and completed in May 2019 after public debates and consultations held by the Press Council of the Republic of Moldova.*

*On 3 December 2024, during the 2024 Media Forum, the amendments and additions to the Moldovan Journalist's Code of Ethics were approved after the debates and public consultations held by the Press Council in October–November 2024.*