



Moldovan Journalist's
CODE
OF ETHICS

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 of involving journalists in political partisanship or ideological-financial mercenary actions, propagandistic war or information war of trolling type,

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 The journalist is the individual, employed or not with a media outlet, who regularly carries out one or more activities, such as collecting public interest information from any relevant source, and editing and publishing it in any form, such as text, photograph, video and/or audio recording, picture, graphics etc. for public dissemination through the media.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- 1.8 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.
- 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 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.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 The journalist puts headlines that comply with the content of the journalistic material and avoids those that mislead the public.
- 2.12 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.

- 2.13 While collecting information about protests, strikes, manifestations, or social disorders, the journalist should not associate with the organizers or the participants. The journalist should be easy to identify – by a vest or nametag having the inscription ‘press’ or by other ways.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 If the journalist offers his journalistic product to more than one media outlet, he must notify the respective outlets about it.

VERIFICATION OF FACTS

- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 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

- 2.19 The journalist must clearly distinguish between facts and opinions and should not present opinions as facts.
- 2.20 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.
- 2.21 Opinions and factual items should be delimited so that anyone could easily make a proper distinction between them.
- 2.22 The journalist expresses his opinion in an honest and ethical manner, without deliberately distorting facts or data.
- 2.23 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.

2.24 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

2.25 The commercial and political interests of media owners should not lead to publishing distorting or manipulative information or to forbidding/ignoring public interest information.

2.26 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.

2.27 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.

2.28 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.

2.29 Hidden publicity information, unmarked publicity information or the presentation of such information as a journalistic product is forbidden.

2.30 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

2.31 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.

2.32 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.

- 2.33 The journalist respects the principle that any person subject to negative criticism is entitled to a reply to specify the inaccurate information or deny the information. The right of reply is secured only if the person concerned makes references to concrete facts in the journalistic product, the reply has a reasonable size, does not make allegations against a third party, and is worded in decent terms.
- 2.34 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.
- 2.35 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

- 2.36 The journalist and the media outlet undertake all demarches to prove openness and cooperation to the public.
- 2.37 Media outlets indicate their address, editorial policy, contact data, and the final owners/beneficiaries, and are encouraged to publish their funding sources to ensure transparency.
- 2.38 The journalist and the media outlets encourage and supports citizen journalism.
- 2.39 The journalist and the media outlets adopt a similar behavior in both the real and the virtual space.
- 2.40 Media outlets, in administering their webpages as well as their pages in the social media, do not afford and do not accept from the public any derogations from the legal and ethical norms in the reactions (comments).

CONSCIENCE AND CENSORSHIP CLAUSE

- 2.41 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.
- 2.42 The journalist is entitled to refuse any professional task that contravenes the law, professional ethics, his own convictions or the norms of this Code.
- 2.43 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.
- 2.44 The journalist cannot use the information he holds for personal interests.

3. Human Rights Protection

PRIVACY

- 3.1 The journalist is obliged to respect the right to privacy and dignity of persons, including of deceased persons.
- 3.2 Interfering with one's privacy is allowed only when the disclosure of facts pursues a public interest.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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).
- 3.6 The journalist respects the privacy of persons and asks their permission to photograph/film them, except when they are in a public place.
- 3.7 Images displaying nude bodies must be electronically processed so that not to expose intimate areas to the public. Exception are artistic images.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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

- 3.10 The journalist respects the presumption of innocence and considers any person innocent until a final and irrevocable court sentence is issued against them.
- 3.11 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

- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 The journalist does not disclose the identity of victims of accidents, disasters, crimes, and especially of sexual assaults. Exception are the cases when they or their family (when the person is not capable to give their agreement) have agreed on it or when the public interest prevails. The journalist shall take all measures to reduce the eventual negative events on such persons.
- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 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

- 3.16 The journalist treats with special accuracy the information collected about children, making sure that publishing such information will not have negative consequences (fear, suffering etc.) on them.
- 3.17 The journalist protects the identity of children involved in events with negative connotation (accidents, crimes, family conflicts, suicides, violence and any kind of abuse etc.), including as witnesses. Audio/video recordings and photographs must be changed in order to protect children's identity. Exception are the situations in which the children's identification is of public interest and those in which the journalist acts in the supreme interest of the child, with or without their parents' or guardians' agreement.

TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 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.

4. Journalists and Conflicts of Interests

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 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.
- 4.5 The journalist's professional work is incompatible with his work in administration structures of public authorities and of political organizations.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 If registered as election candidate, the journalist does not perform his professional work during the election campaign.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 The journalist does not use the media platform or the media outlet for which he works in his own interest.

5. Special Techniques and Equipment for Collecting Information

- 5.1 The use of special techniques of investigative reporting (hidden video camera, hidden microphone etc.) is justified only when there is a public interest in place and when the information cannot be obtained through other means.
- 5.2 The use of special investigative techniques must be mentioned explicitly when publishing the information.

6. Mutual Obligations between the Journalist and the Employer

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The journalist is entitled to renounce his capacity of author of a journalistic item and to refuse to sign it if the content of the item has undergone significant distortions during editing.

7. Self-Regulation

- 7.1 Each journalist and newsroom of the Republic of Moldova is responsible for applying this Code.
- 7.2 The monitoring of the application of this Code and the examination of the infringements of its provisions is the responsibility of the Press Council of Moldova that issues declaratory decisions and makes recommendations.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 This Code does not forbid journalists to guide themselves also by other professional ethics codes that may as well include other professional obligations.
- 7.5 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 the national conference held on 3 May 2011 in Chisinau and was completed in May 2019 after debates and public consultations held by the Press Council of Moldova.



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