



## **Code of Conduct of the Austrian Public Relations Association (PRVA)**

Resolution of the PRVA General Assembly of 5 March 2008

### **Code of Conduct**

The Code of Athens, the Code of Lisbon – with the exception of Articles 10, 11 and 12 – and the Stockholm Charter shall form an integral part of the PRVA Code of Conduct.

1. This Code of Conduct shall be binding on all PRVA members.
2. The basic philosophy underlying public relations and the measures taken in this field presuppose a democratic social order.
3. Public relations need to be guided by a spirit of partnership. This shall apply to companies, agencies, non-profit organisations, NGOs and individuals as well as to all areas of public relations, such as internal communications, media work, public affairs, investor relations and others.
4. In the corporate and institutional sector, public relations fall within the scope and responsibility of top management, so that only the execution of PR tasks can be delegated.
5. Public relations presuppose that PR clients are integrated into society and hence take it for granted to accept their rights and duties towards different public groups. This includes fulfilment of social, ethical and environmental requirements.
6. In the media sector, public relations shall be characterised by a spirit of cooperation and personal responsibility based on honest and long-term communication between editorial departments and PR clients.
7. With regard to their practical implementation, public relations require strong professional and social qualifications and dedicated commitment.
8. Public relations are an independent discipline and call for specific strategies and measures. In strategic terms they shall be coordinated with other disciplines such as marketing, sales promotion, advertising etc. in the sense of integrated corporate communications.
9. Paid information space must be indicated as such. Illegal surreptitious advertising occurs when a placement fee is paid in order to provide information related to a company, a product or a service in the editorial sections of the media and this is not made clear to the reader, listener or viewer.
10. Tie-in transactions shall not be permitted. A tie-in transaction occurs when financial payments to a medium are made conditional on editorial coverage and/or when editorial coverage is made conditional on financial payments.

11. Postings in forums, blogs and other online media on behalf of companies or institutions must be authentic and be signed with the sender's real name, unless they are private messages.
12. It is contrary to serious public relations work to use PR instruments to vilify other persons, companies or institutions or deliberately disseminate false reports about them.
13. Guarantees for success cannot be given when the agreed PR service can only be provided with the help of external third parties (e.g. editors) not involved in the contract with the employer or when it depends on the free decision of such third parties. Media coverage cannot be guaranteed.
14. PR professionals shall only disseminate information which they have received in good faith and have checked to the best of their knowledge. It is not permitted to deliberately disseminate false information.
15. PR professionals shall not enter into verbal agreements with fellow professionals and/or with clients, if such agreements may be used to deliberately harm competitors.
16. Before accepting a mandate, PR practitioners shall examine whether such mandate may give rise to a conflict of interest with any existing mandate. In case of doubt they shall check with the existing and the potential client whether the mandate may be accepted.
17. All gifts, presents and favours provided by PR professionals to journalists, politicians and other persons should be of such a value that the recipient does not have to conceal their acceptance and is not forced into a position of obligatory dependency.
18. PR professionals shall treat all information and documents of their clients with greatest confidentiality, unless they are used for the tasks assigned to them.
19. In their work, PR professionals shall be guided by their ethical principles. They know that they must not do anything which will or may mislead the public into wrong conclusions or actions.
20. PR professionals shall put their work in the service of their clients or employers. They commit themselves to honestly advocate the interests of their clients or employers and to protect them against harm.
21. In the practice of their profession, PR professionals are involved in the activities of their client organisations. They shall be loyal to the organisations' goals and policies, provided that both are consistent with human dignity and basic human rights, the law and legislation based on them and the professional and ethical standards of the profession.



22. In the event that the PR practitioner works for an organisation whose communication activities lack respect for people and fairness to other organisations, he or she will use their best efforts to urge this organisation to change its conduct. If required, the PR practitioner will resign from the assignment.

23. PR professionals shall respect the independence and freedom of their contacts and shall therefore not use any instruments of power.

24. PR professionals regard public relations as an essential function to create trust, attract public attention and, if necessary, also scrutinise their own behaviour. For this reason, they shall not consciously harm the image of their profession.

Vienna, 5 March 2008