



CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS & LOBBYING
(Adopted by the 32nd annual general meeting of members of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland
held in Dublin on January 26th 2016)

Professional public affairs practice and lobbying are proper, legitimate and important activities that are essential within any democratic system. Those activities ensure an open two-way communication between national and local government (including the Oireachtas, the entire public service, as well as other bodies funded wholly or mainly from public funds), the institutions of the European Union (EU) and bodies whose activities and interests are governed, regulated, impacted or otherwise influenced by such institutions.

Public relations practitioners will, from time to time, make representations to public representatives of all types, whether elected, co-opted, appointed, public servants, those employed in the public service, or those appointed to public bodies (for the purposes of this Code all such people will henceforth be referred to as public officials).

In order to ensure that the activities of its members are conducted to the highest possible standards of practice and ethics, the PRII adopted this Code of Professional Practice in 2003, which is a condition of membership of the Institute. In light of the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015, it was amended in 2016.

The code directs PRII members to the acceptable and appropriate standards of behaviour in public affairs activity. It reflects the requirement of the Regulation of Lobbying Act and complements the obligations of public officials under the Ethics in Public Office Acts, Local Government Acts, Electoral Acts and standard terms of employment and other rules which also govern the activities of such officials. However it goes beyond the basic legal minimum requirements and speaks to the high professional standards demanded by and of PRII members.

For the purposes of this Code of Professional Practice, public affairs practice is defined as:

All activity associated with representing the interests of a client or employer in relation to any matter of public policy, including:

- *the provision of professional advice to clients/employers on matters relevant to public policy or law; or procurement, selection, nomination or appointment for public contract or office*
- *lawful and ethical actions intended to promote a change of public policy, law or the expenditure of public funds; and*
- *the making of representations, or the advocacy of a point of view, to any persons or institutions, including the provision of information and advice.*

Code of Professional Practice

All members of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland:

A. Conduct towards the public.

1. Shall at all times be familiar with and observe all relevant EU, local, national and international law in force, with particular regard to the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015; shall have due regard for the public interest and shall not seek to improperly influence the decision-making processes of government, whether local or national, or the E.U. Institutions.
2. Shall take reasonable steps to ensure that all information supplied, and representations made, by them to third parties is factually accurate and honest.

3. Will actively disclose, at the earliest possible opportunity, the identity of clients on whose behalf they are making representations on matters of public policy or decision-making, current or proposed legislation, or in respect of the business of the Oireachtas, Northern Ireland Assembly, local authorities, the European Parliament or any other parliament or legislative assembly.
4. Shall ensure that any financial relationships involved in their professional dealings are legal and ethical. Members shall not act in such a way as to place public officials in a real or potential conflict of interest, or to make any offer, inducement, reward (direct or in-direct) that would result in the public official being in apparent breach of his/her obligations under ethics legislation or statutory codes of conduct.
5. Shall act at all times in a professional, ethical and reasonable manner and shall not bring unreasonable or undue pressure or influence to bear in their activities as public affairs practitioners. All public officials should, at all times, be treated with courtesy and respect.
6. Where he/she is a member of a local authority or is appointed by the government to any state or semi-state body, or is engaged by such organisations on a consultancy basis, shall not offer public affairs consultancy services to third parties in respect of the business or related activities of that authority, body or organisation as well as to related, linked or subsidiary organisations.
7. Shall not offer public affairs consultancy services and simultaneously be a member of the Oireachtas, Northern Ireland Assembly, UK Parliament, European Parliament, or other parliaments or legislative assemblies.
8. Shall not offer public affairs consultancy services for financial reward or other inducements and simultaneously be employed in the Public Service or engaged as a full time adviser to government.
9. Shall, while attending any parliamentary or other representative assembly, national or local government building, observe the rules and procedures of that institution.

B. Conduct towards clients / employers

10. Recognise their duty of professional care to their clients and/or employers.
11. Shall make their clients/employers aware of their obligations under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 if relevant.
12. Shall take all necessary steps to ensure that they are properly informed of their clients' or employers' relevant concerns and interests and shall at all times properly and honestly represent these interests.
13. Shall properly inform clients about any potential conflicts of interest, or of any competing interests arising from their professional practice or other business, family or social associations. If it should emerge that an actual conflict of interest exists and it cannot be resolved, the member must cease to act for that client. A member may represent such competing interests only:
 - a. where he/she has obtained the explicit and informed consent of all the parties involved, and;
 - b. where the member is enabled to act for each of the parties with an equal professionalism and duty of care.
14. Shall, in all cases where any conflict of interest or potential conflict arises between their professional duties and their personal activities, give precedence to their professional responsibilities and where necessary either cease the relevant personal activity or withdraw from their professional duty.
15. Have a positive duty in all their professional dealings to maintain full and proper client confidentiality.
16. Where he/she forms the opinion that the objectives or activities of his or her client/employer may be unethical, illegal or contrary to good professional practice, including this code of conduct, are required to so advise the client/employer. In circumstances where this advice is not acted upon in the

appropriate manner, the member shall forthwith cease to act on behalf of the client/employer in such matters.

17. Shall not make improper claims regarding their access to, or influence over any institution of the European Union, national or local government, public official or member of the media.
18. Shall not knowingly guarantee the achievement of results nor undertake assignments which are beyond the member's capabilities.

C. Conduct towards the profession

19. Reaffirm their commitment to the European Code of Professional Practice (Code of Lisbon) and the International Code of Ethics (Code of Athens) and their successors.
20. Shall not bring professional public affairs and public relations practice into disrepute.

Breaches of the Code

Breaches of this Code of Conduct shall be treated as breaches of the Disciplinary Code of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland and shall be subject to such procedures and sanctions as provided for in the Disciplinary Code.

Revisions

Adopted by the 20th annual general meeting of members of the Public Relations Institute of Ireland held in Dublin on December 8th 2003 and amended at the 32nd annual general meeting of members held in Dublin on January 26th 2016.

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