



**Association
"Latvia Media Ethics Council"**

CODE OF ETHICS

1. Purpose and scope of the Code

1.1. The purpose of the Code is to define basic professional ethics and behaviour properties approved by the association "Latvian Media Ethics Council" (hereinafter - Association) in the process of obtaining, storing processing, and distributing information in relation to media work.

1.2. The Code advocates the freedom and pluralism of the media to ensure the diversity of the media environment while promoting responsible and professional practices for obtaining, storing, processing, and disseminating information.

1.3. In its activities, the Association, along with this Code of Ethics, complies with the laws of the Republic of Latvia, the norms of international law, and the case-law taking into account the ethical norms of the media that they contain. When reviewing the complaints, the Association shall also take into account the codes of ethics or conduct implemented in the specific field.

1.4. The Association explains the content of principles included in the Code by compiling the practice of applying this Code and, when necessary, ensures the revision of the Code to strengthen the principles of professional ethics and behaviour of the media in practice.

2. Use of the Code

2.1. The Code is a media self-regulation document which sets out the principles and behaviour agreed between the founders and members of the Association. Members of the Association shall take care of the creation and use of mechanisms that ensure compliance with this Code in the activities of the media.

2.2. The Code is intended to promote a common understanding of professional standards and criteria as a basis for the development of good media professional practices, and it should be taken into account that different types of media, journalism, genres, and formats should be assessed within their editorial policies, content and technical boundaries.

2.3. Also, the Association shall act as a mediator between the parties of the dispute, using the values and principles established in the Code.

2.4. The Code shall be binding to members of the Association, as well as to any person who has confirmed in writing that he has acceded to the Code and notified the Association about his actions.

3. Values

3.1 This Code protects fundamental values of media and media professionals such as freedom of expression, diversity of information and opinions, editorial independence, media credibility, autonomy, the rights of journalists, integrity (objectivity), human rights, especially children and minors' rights, equality and non-discrimination, audience education, mutual trust between the media and the audience.

4. Principles

The Association shall promote the following principles of ethical practice in the activities of the media and in the activities of related professionals:

4.1. **Integrity** - publishing of falsely presented, misinterpreted, or misleading information is not acceptable and can be prevented as well as exaggeration, stereotyping, and efforts to influence the audience intentionally and confidentially, in a false, distorted or misleading form. The media shall, as far as possible, ensure that such information is corrected or withdrawn.

4.2. **Diversity** - the media ensures the rights of the public to receive multiform information and views from different sources. The media and related parties shall also take into account different views when they appear to be personally unacceptable.

4.3. **Prohibition of discrimination and incitement to hatred** - the media guarantees that published materials and readers' comments do not contain hate speech, calls for violence, and other statutory prohibited activities. When identifying such non-conformities, they should be addressed as soon as possible, while complying with self-regulatory mechanisms.

4.4. **The distinction between facts and opinions** - when disseminating the information, the facts should be clearly distinguished from the opinions or interpretations of journalists.

4.5. **The distinction between editorial content and advertising** - the media does not allow the publishing of hidden advertising. Paid content has to be clearly separated from the content created by the editorial.

4.6. **Acquiring and use of information** - the media shall obtain as much information as possible that is relevant to the audience to create media content that is as objective and impartial as possible;

4.6.1. **Verification of Facts** - media shall avoid the publishing of unverified information;

4.6.2. **Verification of authenticity** - when using images and documents in the material to be published, their authenticity should be verified;

4.6.3. **Critic attitude towards the source** - when obtaining the information, it must be assessed critically, taking into account the professional, financial, or other interests of the source of information, as well as the possible conflicts of interest.

4.7. **Respect** - the media recognizes and respects the unique value of every human being, and is obliged to demonstrate this value in contact that includes social networking sites;

4.7.1. **Gentle treatment of vulnerable persons** - In order not to harm an individual, a journalist or other media representative shall interview or involve persons in their work, with great care and consideration to emotionally unstable, or otherwise vulnerable persons, as well as persons who, due to other circumstances or lack of experience, are unable to assess the consequences of publishing information.

4.7.2 **Precautions at work with minors** - in obtaining, processing, and disseminating information about children and minors, special care should be taken to avoid harming them.

4.8. **Confidentiality** – when obtaining sensitive information about a natural or legal person, the media must make every effort to ensure that any unauthorised leakage of such information does not harm this person. By disseminating such information, the media conciliates the public interest and the potential harm to a particular person.

4.9. **Respect for Copyrights** - the use of the intellectual property of others must refer to its author/ source. The media shall obtain all necessary authorisations for the use of copy works. None of the persons can claim the authorship of the work of others. When using a piece of others' work as a citation or even when retelling the essential, reference to the original is mandatory.

4.10. **Disclosure of a conflict of interest** - in the event of a conflict of interest, it must be declared openly. In the event of a potential or seeming conflict of interest, the media representative shall provide information indicating the absence of a conflict of interest or withdrawing from the performance of duties on a specific issue in order to ensure public confidence in the media.

4.11. **Transparency** - the media shall, so far as possible, provide the public with the information on its owners, managers, and true beneficiaries.

5. Rights

Injured persons have the right to refer a complaint to the Ethics Council of the Association regarding alleged infringements of this Code.

6. Supervision mechanisms of the Code

6.1. The Association determines the procedure for accepting and evaluating complaints in accordance with the procedures specified in its Statutes. The Association shall make information on the procedures for submitting and evaluating complaints, easily available on its website.

6.2. If the Ethics Council of the Association finds the complaint to be justified and the subject concerned is a member of the Association (has joined this Code of Ethics), the Ethics Council may impose an obligation to acknowledge the error and to make the decision of the Ethics Council public in the relevant media. In the event of a factual error, the media is obliged to publish the correction of the error as soon as possible, in the case of several errors - withdrawal, and if necessary, an apology must be issued.

6.3. The Ethics Council of the Association shall publish its decisions on its website, taking into account the right to privacy of injured persons.