

Moldovan Journalist Code of Ethics (new edition)

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1.1 The journalist is the individual who earns his means of living by collecting, editing and publishing information about public interest events in view of their public dissemination.

1.2 The journalist shall exercise his profession in view of serving the public interest according to his own consciousness and in agreement with the principles stipulated by this Code of Ethics.

1.3 According to the Law on Freedom of Speech, the public interest shall be the interest of the society (and not a simple curiosity of individuals) in the events related to the exercise of public power or to other issues that raise the interest of the society or of a part thereof.

2. ENSURING ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

Obtaining and Treatment of Information

2.1 The journalist shall present the information in an honest and balanced manner and only after having taken steps for verifying it.

2.2 The journalist shall request the opinions of all parties relevant to the subject.

2.3 The journalist shall accurately assign quotations. The quotations shall be precise and in case of partial quotations, the journalist shall be obliged to not distort the message of the person quoted.

2.4 The journalist shall observe copyrights. Journalistic materials can be taken over free of charge in the limit of maximum 500 characters but without exceeding half of the article or news story taken over. It shall be mandatory in such cases to quote the source and author of the information and, for information portals, also to indicate the direct link to the source. Full taking over shall be possible only based on an agreement concluded with the bearer of the rights.

Accuracy and Verification of Facts

2.5 The journalist as a rule shall verify the information from two sources independent from each other. The journalist shall publish only the information of which he is convinced, after verification, that it is truthful.

2.6 The journalist as a rule shall indicate the source of his information and shall take steps to obtain information from quotable sources.

Separation of Facts from Opinions and Commercial Communication

2.7 The journalist shall make clear distinction between facts and opinions and shall not present his own opinions as facts.

2.8 The journalist shall express his opinions on a factual basis, starting from the information that in good faith he considers truthful.

2.9 Opinions shall be presented in pages/programs/segments especially dedicated for this purpose or shall be graphically delimited from information.

2.10 It is mandatory to separate clearly journalistic products from those produced for advertising purposes. The advertising materials shall be distinctly marked and shall be presented in such way as to not be mixed up with the journalistic ones.

Correcting Errors and Right to Respond

2.11 The journalist is obliged to correct factual errors as soon as possible by publishing errata or rectifications.

2.12 The journalist shall observe the principle that implies that any person directly referred to in a material has the right to respond. The right to respond shall be ensured only provided it makes references to specific facts in the respective material, has a reasonable size, does not bring allegations against third parties, and is formulated in decent terms.

2.13 The response shall be published as soon as possible, preferably in conditions similar to the journalistic material to which it refers.

Consciousness and Censorship Clause

2.14 The journalist shall be entitled to refuse or publicly denounce any type of censorship. The actions of hierarchical editorial managers when based on professional reasons shall not be considered censorship.

2.15 The journalist shall be entitled to refuse any professional task that contravenes the law and the principles of this Code.

3. SOURCES REGIME

Protection of Sources

3.1 The journalist shall protect the identity of sources including before courts of law, prosecutors, police, and other law-enforcement bodies. Protection of professional secret and confidentiality of sources shall equally be the journalist's right and obligation.

3.2 Protection shall be granted to sources only when disclosing their identity may endanger their life, security or professional activities.

Pecuniary Relations With Sources

3.3 In his relations with public authorities, various economic structures, or individuals while executing his professional duties, the journalist shall avoid any relations that could affect his independence and impartiality.

3.4 The journalist shall not pay money or provide other benefits in exchange for information.

4. PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Privacy

4.1 The journalist shall have the duty to observe the right to privacy and dignity of persons.

4.2 Interference in privacy shall be allowed only when the public interest in the disclosure of facts prevails over the protection of the person's image.

4.3 The journalist shall report about the private behavior of a public person without the latter's consent only if such behavior affects his capacity to exercise his public office.

4.4 The journalist shall report about the private behavior of a private person only if such behavior disturbs public order or violates the rights of other persons.

4.5 The journalist shall not supply to the public morbid details of crimes, accidents or natural catastrophes, or details of suicidal techniques. The same rules shall apply to visual materials (photographs, video materials).

4.6 The journalist shall observe the privacy of individuals and shall ask their permission to take their pictures or film them except when they are in a public place.

4.7 Images representing nudes shall be processed electronically so that to protect intimate zones. Exception to this shall be artistic images.

4.8 Images shall accurately represent the reality. Electronic processing shall not be used in order to create a false impression about people and events. Exception to this shall be collages, which shall be marked as such.

Presumption of Innocence

4.9 The journalist shall observe the presumption of innocence and shall consider each person innocent until a final and irrevocable sentence is pronounced against him.

4.10 In reports about court proceedings, the journalist shall observe the right to privacy and to a fair trial of all the parties involved.

Protection of Individuals in Vulnerable Situations

4.11 The journalist shall not disclose the identity of victims of accidents, calamities, crimes, and especially of sexual aggression.

4.12 Exception to this shall be the cases when they or their families have agreed to this (when the individual is not capable of giving his agreement), or when the public interest prevails.

Protection of Juveniles

4.13 The journalist shall protect the identity of juveniles involved in events having negative connotation (accidents, crimes, family conflicts, suicides etc.), including as witnesses. In this regard, video recordings and photographs shall be modified so that to protect the identity of the juveniles.

4.14 Exception to this shall be the situations in which the public interest requires that the juveniles be identified. Exception shall also be the cases when the journalist acts with the parents or tutor's consent in the highest interest of the juvenile.

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

4.15 The journalist shall equally treat all the persons with whom he comes in contact while exercising his work duties and shall not discriminate on grounds of sex, age, ethnicity, religion, social status or sexual orientation.

4.16 The journalist shall mention the ethnical affiliation of a person only when this is relevant from an editorial point of view.

5. JOURNALIST AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

5.1 The journalist shall not accept presents in cash, in kind or any other benefits that may be offered thereto to influence the journalistic act. It is allowed to accept promotional materials of symbolic value for information, editorial or personal use.

5.2 If a journalist participates in business trips that are paid for by third parties, the method of funding of the trip shall be made public.

5.3 The journalist shall separate editorial activities from political and economic ones.

5.4 The journalist shall not be subject of promotions or advertising for commercial products. Also, the journalist shall participate in charity actions in such a way that the public knows if it is a personal involvement or an editorial support.

5.5 The profession of journalist is incompatible with any other position in state authority, legislative or law-enforcement bodies, as well as with the affiliation to a political party.

5.6 Holders of positions in state authority bodies who have contributions in the media shall specify their official positions when signing materials disseminated in the press.

5.7 If the journalist registers as an electoral candidate, he shall request suspension from office for the duration of the electoral campaign.

5.8 The journalist shall not use in his personal interest or in the interest of individuals close to him the confidential information that comes in his possession by virtue of execution of his profession.

6. SPECIAL INFORMATION COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT

6.1 The use of special journalistic investigation techniques (hidden video camera, masked recorder etc.) shall be justified only when there is a public interest and when the information cannot be obtained by other means.

6.2 The use of special investigation techniques shall be explicitly mentioned when publishing the information.

7. SELF-REGULATION

7.1 Each signatory to this Code in part shall be responsible for applying it. The monitoring of the Code application and hearing of breaches of its provisions shall be entrusted to the Press Council of Moldova and to the Commission for Journalist Professional Ethics.