



IPRA Code of Conduct: Frequently Asked Questions

Background

1. What does IPRA want to achieve with this code?

The Code is aspirational and reflects IPRA's mission as a body promoting "the highest standards in the practice of public relations" worldwide. IPRA hopes it will serve as an example to other associations and individual practitioners.

2. What did it consolidate?

The Code is a consolidation of three previous IPRA codes of ethics: the 1961 Code of Venice on professional conduct, the 1965 Code of Athens on ethical behaviour and the 2007 Code of Brussels on the conduct of public affairs (lobbying).

3. Why was there a need to consolidate the Codes?

There was some overlap in the content of these three codes and this may have led to some confusion. Also the Codes of Athens and Venice were written some 50 years ago. Today's use of language has changed. As PR practitioners we believe in clarity of communication.

4. At whom is the Code aimed?

It is up to individual members of IPRA and indeed of the PR profession globally to observe the Code. IPRA hopes that other PR associations will adopt the Code.

5. How is the Code enforced?

Every PR practitioner should aspire to observe the principles which the Code elaborates. Each practitioner has to be free to interpret and apply their own standards of personal morality and conscience in observing them in their own cultural context.

IPRA is not a police force. Enforcement on IPRA members is according to an established disciplinary procedure. A complaint may be made by an IPRA member or anyone else with "appropriate standing". The general concept is that anyone may complain but the procedure may dismiss a complaint if it is believed the complainant is not directly affected by the behaviour of which they complain.

6. I don't see the term stakeholder used much in the Code – why not?

The term stakeholder may be open to many interpretations. As such its use may be confusing. Instead in the Code's articles we tried, for the most part, to be explicit about the "stakeholders" concerned by the relevant article. Examples are:

- practitioner
- those with whom the practitioner comes into contact
- all parties involved
- affected parties
- the principal
- public representatives, the media.

7. Does the Code sum up all that IPRA stands for?

No. The Code relates only to one of IPRA's four missions, that of standards of behaviour. The others are providing intellectual leadership, promoting networking, and raising the standards of PR by sharing knowledge and best practice.



Interpretation

8. Why does the Code reference the United Nations?

The reference in the recitals and in article 1 to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) reflect the fact that the original Code of Athens was inspired by these documents. The UN charter (1945) and the UDHR (1948), were very much in the minds of the authors of the Code of Athens in 1965. Article 19 of the UDHR reads: *“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”*. This right is no less relevant today.

9. Isn't article 3 on dialogue in contradiction to the fact that PR people usually advocate one side of an argument?

This is exactly the point of article 3. Everyone is entitled to their opinion and to express it. Good PR may well mean you advocate as best as possible the arguments on one side of a debate but that should never be an excuse to prevent the communication of the other side's point of view.

10. What is the difference between “inducement” of article 13 and “improper influence” of article 14?

An “inducement” may be a bribe or offer of, for example, paid-for travel. “Improper influence” may be a threat to the other party or other forms of aggressive behaviour.

11. In the real world don't we find paid-for editorial or types of lobbying in contradiction to articles 12 and 13?

This is exactly the point of the articles. The highest standards of PR mean these things should not happen. IPRA speaks for those high standards. We also expect those standards from the media themselves: see our web site for a copy of the IPRA charter on media transparency.

12. What if the Code conflicts with a national law?

IPRA is not aware of any such conflict and would be interested to learn of any specific. IPRA is responsible for its own Code. Governments are responsible for their national laws. It is up to the practitioner to decide where the ethical and moral path lies.

Further information

Who do I contact if I have a question about the Code?

All questions on the code should be sent in the first instance to the IPRA Secretariat at secretariat@ipra.org