

## **Cultivation of Contacts in the Political Arena**

### **Preamble**

It is legitimate to cultivate contacts between, on the one hand, politicians and civil servants who are committed to the common good, and, on the other hand, organizations with their own individual goals. Its purpose is the exchange of information and the reconciliation of different opinions and situation analyses. It allows particular demands or expectations of policy to be presented, and thereby exposes them to public debate about conflicting wishes. It therefore serves better understanding on all sides and supports decisions based on the common good.

If this is to work, the first prerequisite is that the contact and communication management of those working in the political arena – their public affairs – is consistently transparent towards their addressees and the politically interested public, without prejudice to their professional duty of confidentiality. Secondly, lobbying aimed at influencing political decisions has to be carried out with honest methods.

These two requirements apply both to those representatives of political contact and communication management who advise internally and to those who operate externally. Public affairs consultants and lobbyists acknowledge them as mandatory. They are aware that violations of the following provisions can lead to a public reprimand or warning from the German Public Relations Council (DRPR).

### **1. Requirement of transparency**

1.1 The political contact and communication management of the companies, associations, foundations and other organizations operating in the political arena aims at a group of politicians and public officials who are accountable towards the public. Therefore, public affairs consultants and lobbyists must also ensure that their organization, their interests and their main method of operation (e.g. lobbying, public relations, events etc.) are made public in an appropriate manner.

1.2 Public affairs consultants and lobbyists must inform their political contacts of the identity and interests of their clients as well as their own interests.

1.3 If public affairs consultants and lobbyists participate in public debates that concern the goals of the client organization, the obligation to disclose the client and the client's interests also applies towards the audience of the debate. Any innocuous job title used by public affairs consultants and lobbyists is irrelevant here. They must not use an ostensibly neutral position to conceal their actual function.

1.4 Political campaigns are an instrument serving to influence the formation of public opinion. They must therefore be publicly conducted and follow the principles of honest PR work. Clients must be named upon enquiry from the press.

1.5 If contractual relationships exist between politicians or civil servants on the one hand and organizations engaged in lobbying on the other hand, these facts must be revealed by the beneficiary. Organizations engaged in lobbying should advise their partners to do this and if necessary take the initiative themselves.

## **2. Integrity**

2.1 Public affairs consultants and lobbyists will respect codes and voluntary commitments of political decision-makers as an expression of integrity. They will not do anything that will cause conflicts for political decision-makers with their public or professional duties. They will, in particular, not entice them to accept benefits, and they will refrain from any form of coercion.

2.2 Public affairs consultants and lobbyists will advise their clients against illegal, dubious or immoral undertakings. They will reject such assignments.

2.3 Conflicting or competing interests are only to be pursued with the explicit approval of the affected clients or employers.

2.4 Public affairs consultants and lobbyists are to treat the information entrusted to their care as confidential when dealing with third parties. Announcements to the public are to be agreed on with the client or employer. However, it is expected that public affairs consultants and lobbyists will also consider the interests of the political public. The willful deception of the public is not permissible.

2.5 Public affairs consultants and lobbyists will not gather information through dishonest means. They will not deliberately spread false information. They will not engage in intrigue.

2.6 Public affairs consultants and lobbyists will not falsely convey the impression that they are authorized representatives of companies or other organizations if this is not true or is no longer true.

2.7 Financial contributions to politicians and civil servants are prohibited. 'Contributions' include all forms of financial benefit that go beyond the reimbursement of examinable expenses.

2.8 Material benefits must be arranged in such a way, in terms of value, that there is no need for the receiver to conceal their acceptance. 'Material benefits' include invitations, trips, hiring of cars for personal use, discounts, services, subsidies etc.

2.9 Fees and other contractual agreements with politicians and civil servants and public sector employees must also be arranged in such a way, in terms of value, that the receiver does not need to conceal their acceptance. They must not exceed appropriate remuneration for legitimate and actually performed services.

2.10 Donations in kind and in cash, irrespective of their size, are to be disclosed by the donor if they are directly connected with his/her public affairs activities.

### **3. Framework**

3.1 The rules stated above are valid for all organizations active in the political arena which are based in the Federal Republic of Germany and operate in the public arena of the Federal Republic or in the European area.

3.2 They apply to the following groups of people:

- \* the PR practitioners of these organizations – the lobbyists - ;
- \* their superiors;
- \* all employees of agencies or consultancies that are charged with lobbying;
- \* political consultants and lawyers, insofar as these occupational groups are charged with lobbying, and
- \* trade associations and social advocacy organizations that operate in the political arena.