

DRPR Guideline on the Use of AI in PR

Preamble

In the course of digitalisation, the communications industry is undergoing a massive process of change in which artificial intelligence (AI) is playing an important role. The use of AI is changing the day-to-day work of agencies and communications departments in companies and institutions (e.g. AI support for research, topic identification, content creation and distribution, data analysis and evaluation). Accordingly, AI systems can make PR work simpler and more efficient and potentially increase the quality and quantity of output. At the same time, there is a risk of misuse of AI tools, for example through the creation of 'deep fakes' with the aim of manipulating the public.

In principle, the use of AI harbours inherent risks - both in terms of discrimination and a possible bias in the original data with which an AI system is trained, as well as the weighting of this data. The DRPR therefore supports the view that platform operators and providers of AI tools must also assume responsibility with regard to applicable law and compliance with ethical standards for their tools, explain their functionality and data basis transparently and prevent misuse in the best possible way. This puts communicators in a position to check AI software with regard to its permissible usability. When using AI in the communications industry, communicators are responsible for making the 'final human decision' (Deutscher Ethikrat 2023, p. 79).

The German Communications Code and international codes such as the Code d'Athènes, the Code de Lisbonne and the Seven Commitments already make it possible to reprimand, disapprove or admonish violations, particularly of the requirement for truthfulness or transparency. In view of the growing relevance of AI, however, the German Council for Public Relations considers it necessary to consolidate and expand existing standards as part of a separate DRPR AI guideline.

The basic idea of the guideline is to enable recipients of PR activities to recognise the extent to which content was generated with the help of AI and who is responsible for the content (transparency). Only clearly recognisable labelling can ensure that further processors of PR content (e.g. in journalism) are able to comply with the necessary due diligence obligations and ethical provisions.

The German Council for Public Relations is concerned with a responsible, practice-orientated and constructive approach to AI as well as compliance with due diligence and legal and ethical regulations.

Knowledge of and compliance with the codes and guidelines are part of the professional qualification and professional behaviour of communication professionals. They must be taken into account in training and further education - especially in the field of AI.

Due to the highly dynamic nature of AI applications, the DRPR will regularly review and, if necessary, revise its position on the use of AI, taking into account current debates and regulations from other parties (e.g. European Union, Ethics Council). As communication does not stop at national borders, joint international regulations are being sought.

The following regulations apply in detail:

I. Transparency / labelling

Labelling is always mandatory for PR and communication professionals if

- AI-generated content is created and published without being checked (e.g. AI-based translation of content).
- recipients may get the impression that this is a reproduction or depiction of reality (e.g. AI-generated images, even if they have been manually post-processed).

In these cases, PR and communication professionals **must label the use of AI openly, transparently and clearly recognisable to the layperson** so that recipients of PR activities can recognise this without any doubt.

The labelling obligation also applies to agencies, editorial offices, freelancers, semi-professional providers and private individuals who offer media-like platforms (influencers).

II. Truthfulness

The principle of accuracy and truthfulness enshrined in the German Communications Code also applies to work with AI tools; therefore, unverified AI-generated content must also be labelled (see I.).

The AI-based creation and dissemination of fake news and so-called 'deep fakes' for manipulation purposes is not permitted.

Furthermore, it is not permitted to feign relevance through AI-generated interactions or comments or the misuse of AI-based dissemination tools ('bots').

III. Responsibility of clients and agencies/service providers

If companies or other organisations commission agencies or individuals to carry out PR measures, the provisions of Articles I and II and compliance with the preamble apply to both the client and the contractor. Both sides bear equal responsibility here.

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