

DRPR Guideline on Maintaining Contacts in the Political Field

Preamble

The DRPR guideline on maintaining contacts in the political field supplements the German Communications Code with regulations for political communication. Maintaining contact between people working in politics and civil servants who are committed to the common good and society as well as organisations with particular goals is legitimate. Its purpose is the exchange of information between the parties and the comparison of different views and situation analyses. It not only enables the presentation of particular demands or expectations to politicians, but is also an integral part of the democratic process through public debate. In this way, it serves to improve understanding for all and promotes factual decisions orientated towards the common good.

The prerequisite for such work is that ...

... public affairs professionals maintain consistent transparency towards the persons addressed and the politically interested public, notwithstanding their professional confidentiality obligations.

... the influence of lobbyists on political decisions is exercised by honest means, which in turn are verifiable and transparently disclosed.

Both requirements apply to both internally advising and externally acting representatives of political contact and communication management.

These guidelines are mandatory for public affairs professionals and lobbyists. They are aware that violations of the rules may result in a public reprimand or warning by the German Council for Public Relations. According to Section 12 of the German Communications Code, the German Council for Public Relations monitors compliance with the rules of this guideline in order to protect the reputation of the profession and its practitioners.

1. Transparency

- 1.1 The political contact and communication management of companies, associations, foundations and other organisations active in the political field is aimed at a group of people working in politics and civil servants who are accountable to the public. Public affairs professionals and lobbyists must

therefore also ensure that their organisation, their interests and their main working methods (e.g. lobbying, press work, events, etc.) are made public in an appropriate manner.

- 1.2 Public affairs professionals and lobbyists must truthfully and verifiably disclose their principals as well as their and their principals' interests to their political dialogue partners.
- 1.3 Public affairs professionals and lobbyists may under no circumstances conceal their actual function or their principal.
- 1.4 Political campaigns must be conducted openly and observe the principles of professional PR work. Principals must always be named in press enquiries.
- 1.5 If contractual relationships exist between persons working in politics or civil servants with lobbying organisations or persons, such facts must be made easily accessible to the public by the beneficiary.

2. Integrity

- 2.1 Public affairs professionals and lobbyists respect codices and voluntary agreements of political decision-makers as an expression of integrity and to protect the reputation of their profession. They will refrain from doing anything that puts political decision-makers in conflict with their public or professional duties.
- 2.2 Public affairs professionals and lobbyists will advise principals against illegal, dubious or immoral projects. They will reject such assignments.
- 2.3 Conflicting or competing interests may only be pursued with the explicit written consent of the affected principal or employer.
- 2.4 Public affairs professionals and lobbyists must treat the knowledge entrusted to them confidentially towards third parties, which means that even 'insider' information may never be used to the disadvantage or harm of others or for personal gain.
- 2.5 Public affairs professionals and lobbyists do not obtain information by dishonest means. They will not knowingly or recklessly disseminate false information, but will exercise due diligence in checking information for reliability, accuracy and truthfulness. They do not intrigue. Section 9 of the German Communications Code also applies here.
- 2.6 Financial benefits to persons working in politics and civil servants are not permitted. All forms of financial benefits that go beyond the compensation of verifiable expenses are deemed to be inducements.

3. Political communication in online media

3.1 Irrespective of the content and purpose of their professional activities, they are required to conduct them in a fair and professional manner across all channels, including social media, as provided for in Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the German Communications Code.

3.2 In general, the DRPR's Online Guidelines also apply to political communication via online channels.

4. Framework provisions

4.1 The above rules as well as the German Communications Code apply as an extension of the legal regulations for all organisations and persons active in the political field who act in the public sphere in the German Federal Republic or in Europe.

Persons, agencies and law firms engaged in political consulting and lobbying should be registered in the register of the German Bundestag and thus disclose their activities.

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