



## **Code of Conduct for Public Affairs Professionals - Lobbying**

### **Introduction**

Democracy requires professional representation of interests. Representing various interests and exchanging information are important elements for a healthy, thriving, and prosperous democracy.

The opinion and experience of economic actors and civil society contribute to speeding up political decisions. Therefore, the effort of Public Affairs-Lobbying to build bonds between private and organised interests as well as between politics and the public is both legal and significant action within a political, social, and democratic system.

Special interest groups and public affairs consultants of companies and associations are significant intermediaries between the economy, politics, government, and society. However, in order to practice the profession of public affairs, integrity of character, high levels of personal and social sensitivity, transparency, and commitment to principles are needed when conducting professional public affairs activities. Therefore, the above principles must be supported by all players in the political arena.

Recognising the importance of impeccable conduct in the implementation of public affairs, national and pan-European associations of public affairs (Society of European Affairs Professionals (SEAP), European Public Affairs Consultancies Association (EPACA), Public Affairs Community of Europe (P.A.C.E, Platform for the cooperation of national associations for Public Affairs) have prepared codes of conduct for their members aiming to upgrade the profession. At the same time, the European Commission and the European Parliament have agreed on a code of conduct for the European Transparency Register.

The "Cyprus Association of Public Affairs Consultants-Lobbying," following the example of the associations of EU countries, has prepared a code of conduct for its members aiming to contribute to the upgrade of the public affairs profession, but mainly to contribute to transparency and the reduction of corruption in Cyprus. This Code is based on the principles of the Code of Conduct of the Public Affairs Community of Europe (P.A.C.E) and the Code of the European Transparency Register.

In this way, it demonstrates its commitment to transparency, to high standards of conduct in politics and civil society, both towards the clients of its members and the public in general. The members of the "LPAP" Association acknowledge the fundamental importance of the following basic principles for the exercise of Public Affairs at the local, regional, national, European, and international levels and are committed to upholding them.

### **Article 1 - Legality**

The members of the Association must:

- Adhere to the provisions regarding The Transparency in the Procedures to Make Public Decisions and Related Matters Law of 2022 and the respective Regulations in force at any given time.

### **Article 2 – Sincerity**

Public Affairs consultants, when providing services to their clients, must be sincere, honest, correct in their relationships with their clients, political institutions, legislative and executive authorities, media, and the public. They must refrain from misleading others by presenting inaccurate or incomplete information under any circumstance.

Specifically, they must –

- Refrain from knowingly disseminating false or inaccurate information.
- Make efforts to ensure the accuracy of information before proposing it to their clients or on behalf of clients and organisations they represent.
- Be sincere regarding their position, contacts, and potential engagements with officials and political bodies.
- Not claim to represent any interest without authorisation from their clients or organisations.
- Ensure the general interest.

### **Article 3 - Transparency**

Members of the Association must respect transparency. They should declare their name, organisation, company, and the interests they represent.

### **Article 4 - Fairness**

Public Affairs professionals must –

- Avoid any illegal or dishonest behaviour or methods when conducting their activities or when attempting to obtain information.
- Use arguments when attempting to influence decision-making processes and refrain from offering direct or indirect exchanges, particularly financial incentives.
- Discourage their clients or the organisations they represent from engaging in any illegal, unethical, or unprofessional actions that may contradict the code of conduct or the principles of public relations professionals and the national Public Affairs Associations.

### **Article 5 - Dishonest Methods**

During the representation of their clients' interests, members of the Association must avoid any illegal or dishonourable actions and must not provide direct or indirect financial incentives. If a client requests an illegal act, they must refuse and inform the client of the reasons for their refusal.

### **Article 6 – Respect**

Members of the Association should conduct themselves with respect towards clients, colleagues, and individuals with whom they come into contact, as this will contribute to enhancing the reputation of their profession.

### **Article 7 - No Discrimination**

Members of the Association must not discriminate based on gender, religious beliefs, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability, nor participate in actions governed by discrimination.

### **Article 8 - Incompatibility**

The work of Public Affairs consultants is not compatible with holding public positions in government, legislative bodies, or the EU.

Members of the Association should separate their professional activities from any personal involvement in politics, including political positions, mandates, and actions.

They should avoid professional conflicts of interest and disclose them to their clients if such potential exists.

### **Article 9 - Confidentiality**

Members are committed to maintaining confidentiality in their work. Meetings with politicians or officials should be confidential unless otherwise agreed upon. Public Affairs consultants are obliged to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy rights of both current and former clients. Disclosure of confidential client information is prohibited without the explicit consent of the clients. Public Affairs consultants should refrain from representing clients in cases where a conflict of interest exists.

Public Affairs consultants who have worked in the Government or in the Parliament must adhere to the confidentiality regulations required by these bodies.

### **Article 10 - Dedication**

Public Affairs consultants understand that violating the principles outlined in this code can damage not only their personal reputation but also have negative repercussions on other public affairs professionals and their work, as well as on the public image of the profession as a whole.

### **Article 11 - Defence and Promotion of the Profession**

Members of the Association must avoid behaviour that could tarnish the reputation of the public affairs profession.

### **Article 12 - Compensation**

Members of the Association must sign agreements outlining the terms of their service offerings and the agreed-upon payment. Members are obligated not to receive any payment as commission.

### **General Rules**

Upon becoming members, individuals must adhere to the Association's code of conduct, thereby actively supporting its principles.

The association discloses its members to comply with the principle of transparency. Members may state their affiliation with the Association to assure their clients of their quality standards.

The Association's Board of Directors is responsible for annually updating the code of conduct.

### **Violations**

Any violation of the code warrants the initiation of disciplinary proceedings. Disciplinary action may range from an official warning letter to expulsion from the Association. Any expulsion is carried out by the Board of Directors. The severity of each penalty depends on the degree of the violation and the extent of damage to the profession's reputation.

In case of any complaint, the ethics committee adjudicates the matter and provides recommendations to the board of directors. The member who has been accused is entitled to be heard. The committee consists of two independent members of the board of directors and an external legal advisor. The committee must render a decision on the complaint within 8 weeks of its submission. Decisions of the board of directors on this matter are made by majority vote, and the decisions are published in writing.