

CODE OF CONDUCT

Members of the Austrian Public Affairs Association (OePAV) commit themselves to comply with the principles of the OePAV code of conduct.

PREAMBLE

Representation of interests and exchange of information are key elements of a healthy and prosperous democracy. They need to be supported in the interest of all participants of the political arena. Interest groups and public affairs experts of companies, associations, NGOs, trade associations and agencies are valuable mediators between the economy, politics, the administration and civil society. A high sense of personal integrity, social sensitivity and transparency is necessary to conduct public affairs.

The Austrian Public Affairs Association (OePAV) developed a code of conduct binding its members. The OePAV code is based on international role-models. In enacting a code of conduct, the OePAV shows its commitment to transparency and quality standards to politics, civil society, clients and the public.

SELF-PERCEPTION

OePAV members regard their work as conveying information and representing interests. They are convinced that they make significant and legitimate contributions to basic democratic processes like defining opinion and making decision. In their work, OePAV members support and comply with all applicable laws particularly the freedom of speech, the right to information, the independency of the media and the protection of personal rights.

Integrity, transparency and compliance with the basic democratic order are requirements for the work of OePAV members and are integral parts of their self-conception.

PRINCIPLES

MEMBERS OF OEPAV COMMIT THEMSELVES TO COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES IN THEIR BUSINESS LIFE:

ARTICLE 1: HONESTY AND TRANSPARENCY

OePAV members must be honest and accurate in their interrelations with clients, political institutions, the legislative and executive bodies, the media and the public. They must not mislead by using inaccurate or incomplete information. Members of the OePAV must pay attention to transparency. They must disclose their clients' identity when acting on their behalf.

ARTICLE 2: CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

OePAV members are committed to discretion in their work. Meetings with politicians or members of the administration must be confidential unless otherwise agreed.

Consultants must protect confidential information and protect privacy rights of their current and former clients. Confidential information concerning current and former clients must not be passed on without the clients' explicit approval. OePAV members must not accept an assignment that may cause conflicts of interest.

ARTICLE 3: DISHONEST METHODS

In representing their clients' interests, OePAV members must refrain from any dishonest or illegal behavior. They must not give direct or indirect financial incentives. If a client requested an illegal action from the consultant, the consultant would have to decline the request and inform the client about the reasons for his decline.

ARTICLE 4: NO DISCRIMINATION

OePVA members must not discriminate against gender, religious beliefs, ethnical backgrounds, age, disabilities or sexual orientation. OePAV members must not participate in discriminatory actions.

ARTICLE 5: RESPECT

OePAV members must treat their clients, colleagues and contacts respectfully. They must consider their personal and professional reputation and strengthen it whenever possible.

ARTICLE 6: INCOMPATIBILITY

The work of public affairs professionals is not compatible with a function in administrative or executive bodies including bodies of the European Union.

ARTICLE 7: PROTECTING AND ADVANCING THE PROFESSION; COMPETITION

OePAV members must avoid any behavior that damages the reputation of the public affairs business, the OePAV or its members.

ARTICLE 8: COMPENSATION

OePAV members must sign written contracts with their clients determining the terms and conditions for their services, including a reasonable payment. Commission payments must not be offered nor accepted.

GENERAL TERMS

OePAV members accept the code in its current version when joining the OePAV. They actively contribute to its compliance, circulation and refinement.

The OePAV releases a list of members regularly to comply with the principle of transparency.

OePAV members may use their membership publicly to assure clients their quality standards.

The OePAV board of directors must evaluate the code of conduct every two years.

PROCEEDINGS

Any violation of Articles 1 to 8 may lay the ground for a proceeding. A proceeding may result in sanctions ranging from a formal written warning to a complete exclusion from the OePAV. Exclusions are executed by the board of directors. The individual sanction is determined by the degree of unlawfulness of the action and the extent of reputation damage for the public affairs business.

Violations of the code may be notified to the board of directors by OePAV members, political decision makers, media representatives or individuals. Notifications cannot be done anonymously. Notifications must be sent to office@oepav.at or to the official mail address. Notifications must include their justification with inclusion of facts and specify the violated article. If these prerequisites are met, the board must immediately forward the notification to the code of conduct committee. Members of the committee are two unbiased members of the board of directors and one external legal expert.

If a proceeding is initiated, the code of conduct committee judges the case and gives recommendations to the board of directors. The affected individual is entitled to be heard. The committee has to deliver its recommendations within a period of 8 weeks after notification. Recommendations have to be made in written form. The board of directors decides by majority. Its decisions have to be published in written form.

The procedure shall also be applied analogously to OePAV non-members who have submitted themselves to this code.

(Version from 5. Dezember 2016)