



**COLEXIO
PROFESIONAL
DE XORNALISTAS
DE GALICIA**

GALICIAN JOURNALISM CODE OF ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

The freedom of speech and press and the right to information are two substantial foundations of democratic society. Both are rights included and protected by our Constitution. The existence of a plural and independent public opinion, indispensable requirement for a good development of public life and plenty of democratic system, depends on the energy, respect and full validity of these principles.

Guaranteeing the rights of citizenship requires the defence of plural and critical MEDIA, open-minded to the society they have to serve. The importance of the social function given by the journalists through the media, as the principal element for the exercise of these rights, demands the permanent safeguarding of these principles against any attempt of restriction or coercion from every kind of authority, as well as against their possible degradation due to eventual inobservance or adulteration by the media themselves or by people working at them.

The information professionals, playing their role of principal actors of the exercise of a fundamental right, received by all the citizenship, may develop their function attending to a double commitment of responsibility, derived from their important work, and the command of their own consciences, according to the constitutional ordinance and to the ethical principles of journalistic profession.

To fully keep these principles, the journalists may defend and apply strictly the rules on which they build their activity, attending to the following.

CRITERIA

1. Always observe a clear distinction between facts and opinions or interpretations, avoiding every confusion or intentional distortion of both, as well as spreading of suppositions or rumours. The first duty of journalists is to look for the truth, and its essence is the discipline of verification.

2. Spread only solid information, avoiding at any case vague or groundless affirmations and details that could injure or despise the dignity of some people and cause unjustified damage or bring disrepute into public and private institutions and entities, as well as avoiding the use of injurious expressions or labels. First of all, the journalists owe loyalty to the citizenship.

3. Correct diligently and with adequate treatment the news and opinions that had been proved as false and, because of that, turned out harmful for the legitimate rights and interests of affected persons and/or organizations. The journalists will not avoid to apologize, if needed, independently of what laws order regarding to this subject.
4. Use honourable methods to obtain information or images, without resorting to illicit procedures. Buying information is the opposite of journalistic ethics.
5. Respect the off the record material when specifically invoked, according to the usual practice of this rule at a free society.
6. Recognize the rights of individual persons and/or legal corporations of not providing news nor answering questions, without detriment of the journalists' duty attending the right of citizens to be informed. With regard to matters related to public service, the fundamental right of information may always prevail over any restriction that damage in a unjustified way the principle of sharing of information that they are forced to respect.
7. Never accept compensations or rewards from a third party for promoting, directing, influencing or having published news or opinions. At any case, never keep both activities as a journalist and another job incompatible with journalistic ethics, as publicity public relations and image advisor, either at institutions or public services or as private activities. The journalists may keep their independence from the ones they inform about, and practise a professional control independent from the power.
8. Never use, for their own benefit or other person's interests, privileged information obtained in a confidential way, as journalists, while practising their informative function.
9. Respect the right of the people to their own privacy and image, especially in the events that may cause situations of affliction or pain, avoiding gratuitous meddling and unnecessary speculations about their feelings and circumstances, particularly when affected persons specifically demand that.
10. Observe thoroughly the principle of presumption of innocence at news and opinions related to current lawsuit or penal procedures
11. Be especially tactful in treating every news affecting under-aged people, avoiding to spread their identification when they appear as victims —except when homicide is assumed—, witnesses or accused in criminal lawsuit, above all at matters with a special social transcendence, as sexual crimes. Besides, they will avoid to identify against their will close persons or innocent relatives of accused or convict people at penal procedures.
12. Act with special responsibility and severity in the case of news or opinions with contents that could provoke discrimination by reasons of sex, race, belief or social and cultural origin, as well as incite to use violence, avoiding expressions or testimonies that could be humiliating or damaging for personal condition of people and their physical and moral integrity.

FINAL DECLARATION

The journalists must have at their disposal the indispensable means and instruments in order to develop their work with full independence, freedom, initiative and sense of responsibility, either in the professional field or in the strictly working one.

This way, and looking for full guarantees of their individual rights and the commitment with the citizenship, the information professionals may be protected by the conscience clause and the professional secrecy, within the legal framework, as covered at current Constitution.

Besides, we consider necessary to establish the statutes of editorial staff as the most adequate instrument to delimit their rights and duties in the firms, and in order to get, as a last resort, a greater transparency in the practise of their function before the citizenship.

Professional entities and representative organizations must watch over a good image of journalistic profession, trying to avoid abusive and corrupt practices that violate the essential principles of journalistic ethics, as well as the attempts of restricting the right of citizens to the freedom of speech and press, through acts or opinions directed to restrict or have a damaging influence on the free activity of media and of people working at them.

In order to a best and more faithful execution of this work, we should considerate the setting-up of a *Galician Communication Council*, understood as a representative, plural and independent of public authorities organization of arbitration that, not forgetting the constitutional rights of the people and the firms, and staying apart from the attributions of court administration, deal with this function in a permanent way.