

Preamble

Since 1991, the Code of Ethics of the French Association of Lobbying and Public Affairs Consultants (*Association Française des Conseils en Lobbying et Affaires Publiques – AFCL*) has been the focal point around which consultants sharing a common, rigorous and innovative ethical vision of their activity have gathered. The Code of Ethics, which has been updated several times, has always sought to uphold the principles of transparency, integrity and respect for the independence of the public decision-making process. The 2017 revision of the Code of Ethics aimed in particular at taking into account the definition of interest representatives as foreseen by the French law of 9 December 2016.

Article 1: Definition

Lobbying and public affairs activities aim to represent the interests of a company, professional organisation, association or public body to those involved in the public decision-making process by sharing contradictory and balanced information.

The lobbying and public affairs consultant advises companies, professional organisations, associations or public bodies and offers strategic and operational support to assist them.

The consultant deploys various areas of expertise relating to the representation of interests but also to relations with stakeholders, monitoring, the development of argumentation and, more generally, strategic communications.

Practice of the profession

Article 2: Professional status

The lobbying and public affairs consultancy profession can be undertaken individually, as a partner or as an employee in a consulting firm.

Article 3: Professional probity

Lobbying and public affairs consultants conduct their activities with probity and integrity.

Article 4: Professional incompatibilities

The practice of lobbying and public affairs consulting is incompatible with:

- any elective political mandate at national or European level, within a regional, departmental or metropolitan council, within the Paris council or the Lyon or Marseille municipal councils;
- any employment within the Presidency of the Republic, the staff of ministers or parliamentary assemblies, or within the executive bodies of local and regional authorities, within a public office, an independent administrative or public authority or within a political party.

The lobbying and public affairs consultant holding a local elective mandate shall abstain from any mission related to his or her electoral territory.

Article 5: Absence of remuneration of elected representatives and public officials

Lobbying and public affairs consultants are forbidden to pay, either permanently or temporarily, and in any form whatsoever:

- any person holding an elective political mandate at national or European level, within a regional, departmental or metropolitan council, within the Paris council or the Lyon or Marseille municipal councils;
- any collaborator of the President of the Republic, staff member of ministers, parliamentary collaborator, member or collaborator of an executive body of a territorial authority, an independent administrative or public authority or a political party.

With regard to ad hoc expertise missions of public officials or to the recruitment of former civil servants, the lobbying and public affairs consultant complies with the applicable rules.

Article 6: Obligation of means

Lobbying and public affairs consultants recommend the strategy and means necessary to achieve the objectives of their clients. They contribute to the implementation of missions defined jointly with their clients. They are subject to an obligation of means.

Relations with institutions

Article 7: Registration, publicity and control

Lobbying and public affairs consultants register to the digital directory of interest representatives, declare the identity of their clients when they undertake activities to represent interests that meet the criteria set out in the texts, as well as any other information required.

In addition, they shall comply with the principles and rules of professional conduct associated therewith and shall submit to the supervision of the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP), as well as of the Parliamentary Assemblies, and to the rules applicable to interest representatives aforementioned.

Article 8: Transparency in contacts and access to institutions

In their contacts with public officials and elected officials, lobbying and public affairs consultants declare their identity and the interests they represent.

Lobbying and public affairs consultants do not demand special or privileged access to institutions.

They shall comply with the rules on access and free movement that are in force within public institutions, in particular those applicable to interest representatives.

Article 9: Compliance with regulations and codes of conduct

Lobbying and public affairs consultants comply with the legislation in force, the internal rules of representative assemblies and national, European and international institutions, as well as with the deliberations of the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP).

They comply with opinions from the High Authority for Transparency in Public Life (HATVP) and from deontologists of Parliamentary assemblies.

Article 10: Official documents, colloquia, clubs and invitations

Lobbying and public affairs consultants respect the rules in force for obtaining and disseminating official documents and refrain from distributing them for profit.

They are also forbidden to organise colloquia, meetings, clubs and events within public institutions at which external participants would be invited to speak subject to financial participation.

They shall not make any commercial use of any official logo or reference to an institution, such as the term '*parliamentary*', for a conference, club or event.

They ensure a pluralistic, non-partisan, transparent and equitable approach in the conditions of registration or membership of the colloquia, clubs and events they may organise.

They commit to make public the names of the financial partners of these events, on a website or at the location of these events.

Finally, they undertake to inform parliamentarians and public actors of the cost of invitations sent to them so that they can comply with their own reporting obligations.

Requirements

Article 11: Conflict of interest between missions

In the event of a potential conflict of interest between clients on similar or competing objectives, the lobbying and public affairs consultant undertakes to inform and address this conflict in coordination with the clients.

Article 12: Obligation of confidentiality

Due to the strategic nature of the issues dealt with, the lobbying and public affairs consultant is bound by a duty of discretion, an obligation of confidentiality and, often, professional secrecy.

Article 13: Compliance with good practices, laws and regulations

The lobbying and public affairs consultants alert their clients when their objectives or the means envisaged to achieve them are inappropriate or disproportionate, even without running contrary to any rule or practice.

When they are contrary to good professional practices or the regulations and laws in force, the consultant alerts the client and refrains from contributing to these activities.

Article 14: Integrity of transmitted information

The lobbying and public affairs consultant undertakes to disseminate or relay only the most honest and rigorous information available, based on what companies, professional organisations, associations or public bodies employing them put at their disposal.

Article 15: Compliance with the Code of Ethics and possible sanctions

Each member of the AFCL undertakes to respect the principles set out in this Code of Ethics in each of the missions entrusted to him or her and to ensure that they are respected within his or her consulting firm.

Failure to comply with these principles may result in a suspension of membership by the AFCL Board or even a termination of membership by the AFCL General Assembly.