



Ethics and Integrity Code

Business News Service SRL (BNS) applies, endorses, and aligns itself to the following Ethics and Integrity Code, which sets out the mandatory editorial and conduct guidelines for its affiliated persons represented by employers, employees, and freelancers:

1. BNS regards journalism as a form of business like any other activities that generate income and serve a public benefit; however, due to its profound impact on society and sensitiveness, this activity requires that journalists regard the public as the principal stakeholder and the most important consumer above all.
2. BNS believes that investigative journalism can be one of the best-selling services and that making profits from this sort of activity does not contradict the good practices and generally-accepted principles of journalism.
3. BNS shall defend and respect all points of view of its employers, employees, freelancers, readers, and story characters, which are expressed freely and are debated openly, irrespective of gender, race, nationality or ethnicity, social status, or religion. BNS shall protect its sources and journalists with all legal means provided by the laws in effect, local and international. However, BNS shall refrain from legal actions if they are not related to the professional activities of its journalists and managers, or does not infringe with this Ethics and Integrity Code.
4. BNS shall comply with and observe the principles standing beneath the commonsense standards of western journalism:
 - a) **Integrity and independence:** BNS is aware that companies and organizations which it deals with might be tempted to use the media for their own advantage and therefore shall not endorse any entities, legal or individual, or their products, activities or services in its reporting; BNS shall stay independent from government or private partisanship, business interest and it shall reject any kind of pressure.
 - b) **Accuracy and objectivity:** In maintaining its trustworthy, BNS shall provide well-sourced information based on solid evidence, double-

checked facts, confirmed from at least two first-hand and reliable sources; accuracy and quality shall prime over speed and promptness.

- c) **Impartiality, balance and fairness:** BNS shall cover events in a transparent, honest, fair and open-minded way, exploring all significant views and conflicting opinions, providing a balance of standpoints; BNS shall ensure that no significant thought, fact or event is under-represented. Those quoted as conflicting parties shall be given equal chances to express their views and opinions and they shall enjoy the right of reply.
 - d) **Privacy:** BNS shall respect and shall not invade the privacy of people unless it is an obvious matter of concern and action is required in the public interest. BNS shall act rigorously and promptly to investigate cases of corruption, fraud, injustice, crime, incompetence, negligence, or anti-social behaviour, in strict necessity with the public interest, even though such activities interfere within someone's private life. BNS shall respect the privacy of victims of crime and violence both in textual and graphic contents and of the witnesses who speak under the condition of anonymity.
 - e) **Interactivity:** BNS shall engage the audience in various opinion polls and questionnaires in order to learn and reflect public opinion and it shall react whenever necessary to cover topics of public interests; however, BNS shall not plan its activities according to the audience's preferences and shall not follow any governmental or private agenda.
 - f) **Decency:** BNS shall not use a language that offends or libels any party, under no circumstances; the quotes that require the exact meaning and are properly recorded shall be translated into a generally-acceptable language; people who are quoted shall be warned of the recording of their conversations. BNS shall abstain from racist, sexist, violent, pejorative, and offensive comments.
5. BNS shall organize, participate, and advertise activities of training nature such as seminars, round tables, conferences, or informal meetings, which aim at promoting the above-mentioned principles and at improving the quality of investigative journalism and business news writing in Moldova.
 6. BNS shall respect the copyright laws and practices; it shall reproduce the materials from other sources with the prior written consent of their authors or by quoting the source.

7. BNS shall collaborate with outside journalists, other media organizations and investigative groups in order to achieve deep impact stories, well-documented facts, and effective feedback from the public and relevant state authorities.
8. BNS shall upkeep the journalism ethics and integrity while endorsing products and services of commercial nature but shall not meddle with political activities. BNS puts a specific stress on avoiding the following phenomena or actions:
 - a) Promotional articles and product placement: BNS shall not accept that the stories and news products branded as its own get ordered or paid by other parties. However, BNS can accept sponsored articles and links from companies and individuals who were never spotted in corruption-related reports or were convicted of crime, fraud, injustice, or anti-social behaviour – those materials will be marked as “Publicity”. No reference to trade names, brands, slogans or logos shall be made in BNS stories unless strongly justified from the editorial point of view; no materials from advertising campaigns or promotions shall be published without revealing the source.
 - b) Social events and charities: BNS shall support those charities and social campaigns of cultural, educational and healthcare nature and are in a clear interest of the general public. BNS shall abstain from those social events and charities that are organized by the government, political parties or companies that attracted justified criticism for dubious or illegal activities, as well as from election awareness and fundraising campaigns.
 - c) Free materials, gifts or sponsored trips: BNS shall not accept or offer rewards in the form of cash, products or services, in relation to the professional activities of its employers and employees. BNS shall not accept sponsored trips, hospitality or meals, or anything else that requires a return service on behalf of its staff. This refers to paid interviews as well. BNS will accept however barter services under the terms provided in clause 9 below, when mutual payments are required, in order to avoid redtape and save resources.
 - d) Conflicts of interest such: BNS shall not hire persons who are engaged politically or are guided by criminal motives, or share financial/business interests with other groups – in this case BNS can make an exception if employees sign a disclaimer or a conflict of interest agreement stating that the activity of concern would not contradict the mission or goals of

BNS, would not inflict any financial losses, and would not harm BNS's reputation.

9. As a profit-making organization, bearing in mind its specific goals and mission, BNS shall advertise products and services offered by organizations, companies, and individuals on the condition that no reports exist on their implication in dubious or illegal activities; BNS stories about entities that advertise with BNS shall carry a footnote stating that the central subject / character of the story was never spotted in dubious or illegal activities until the publication of that article – this is the form of veiled support BNS intends to offer to companies and individuals who demonstrate their corporate and, respectively, personal integrity. There will be no partnerships of any kind with political parties. Following are the fields where business partnerships are possible with BNS:
 - advertising products and services;
 - subscribing news and events;
 - and supporting social events and charities.
10. BNS shall publicly admit the errors of transcript, accuracy, imbalance, and other nature immediately upon the reporting of those errors. Personal apologies in writing shall be issued to people who feel particularly offended and compensations may be awarded in a case of grave damage.
11. All journalists employed as staff members or freelancers at BNS are obliged to sign this Ethics and Integrity Code. BNS shall sanction for violating this Code by imposing punitive measures ranging from a 5% fine per monthly wage up to dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense. Those measures shall be decided by the BNS management and shall be applied in extraordinary circumstances as BNS prefers to deal with its journalists in a supportive and civilized manner.

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