


EQUALITY
IN PUBLIC


COMMUNIC ICATION



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG



Joint project of the Ministère d'État (Ministry of State), the Ministère de l'Égalité des chances (Ministry of Equal Opportunities), the Office luxembourgeois de l'accueil et de l'intégration – Ministère de la Famille et de l'Intégration (Luxembourg Reception and Integration Office – Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration) and the Service information et presse du gouvernement (the government's Information and Press Service).



Carried out in collaboration with the Luxembourg Federation of Marketing and Communication Consultants, MarkCom ASBL.




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1. PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

The purpose of public communication is different from that of the communications of private sector organisations.

Indeed, within the many services that they provide to society, public services must ensure that the information they give out is correct, precise, reliable and accessible to all. Public communication should be impartial and guarantee a balanced representation of the target audiences, as well as refrain from any discrimination against such audiences.

All government employees must respect the code of ethics established in the civil service code, which imposes specific obligations upon them, in particular the duty of integrity and impartiality. Civil servants are *“under an obligation to act with dignity and courtesy both in contacts with their superiors, colleagues and subordinates and in contacts with persons who use the services of their departments, whom they shall treat with understanding and consideration and against whom they shall not discriminate in any way”*.

When issuing statements of general interest, persons responsible for public communications must assume social responsibility as intermediaries between the state and society.

The provisions set out in these guidelines have been drafted in a spirit of self-regulation and therefore represent recommendations intended for civil servants in charge of carrying out communication campaigns and drafting official statements in general, as well as for any other person outside of the civil service in charge of creating and disseminating such statements or campaigns (advertising agencies, advertisers, publishers, etc.).

Before any dissemination to the general public, all parties involved are encouraged to test such statements on groups whose composition should ideally reflect the diversity of the target audiences for whom the statements are intended.

1.1 IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSABILITY

2. AREAS OF APPLICATION

The present guidelines apply to all official statements, regardless of their form, whether they be issued by the state or on behalf of the government, of ministries or of administrative and other public bodies, and regardless of the media used (e.g. print media, audiovisual media, billboards, Internet, mobile communications, brochures, leaflets, mailshots, events, etc.).

These guidelines have been drawn up as an aid to self-regulation, in order to establish the criteria to be applied to official statements in view of their probable influence on the public and the positive role that the state is called upon to play.

An official statement issued by the state must respect individuals' dignity and sensibilities, regardless of their gender, age, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs and socio-economic status.

An official statement must convey the specific moral and social responsibility that is incumbent on the state given its duty of protection and social cohesion, its responsibility as a role model and its influence on public opinion.

An official statement shall adhere strictly to the rules safeguarding privacy, in particular by refraining from the use of documents of a personal nature for advertising purposes. An exception may be made if the person or persons quoted or shown in the statement have expressly given their permission, as in testimonials. From a creative perspective, moreover, the general impression given by a statement or campaign must not be contrary to the principles of equality and respect for the individual nor reinforce existing stereotypes. The dissemination of official statements should be as wide as possible in order to enable everyone to have access to the information and to serve the general interest.

3. PRINCIPLES TO BE ADHERED TO

3.1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

More specifically, an official statement must, first and foremost:

1. ensure an egalitarian and balanced representation which takes the diversity of today's society into account;
2. avoid any statements or images likely to hurt or offend people due to terms, attitudes, behaviour, gestures, sounds etc. which may violate human dignity and public decency;
3. avoid value judgements which are not necessary for the purpose of providing information or raising awareness;
4. show decency by taking into account how easily people's feelings can be hurt and by complying with generally accepted standards of behaviour;
5. avoid all forms of discrimination and prejudice based on gender, age, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion and beliefs as well as on membership of a given socio-economic group;
6. avoid any statements or images which may cause alarm if the latter is out of proportion with the message being delivered;
7. avoid any statements or images which may encourage superstition;
8. avoid statements or images which may trivialise any kind of violence, whether implied, moral, direct or indirect.

Gender

- An official statement must avoid any assertion or image likely to offend the sensibilities of women and men through the use of stereotypes that call equality between the sexes into question.
- An official statement must respect the dignity of women and men. It must not reduce a human being to the status of an object. It must refrain from conveying anything offensive, belittling or insulting about the female and male genders.
- An official statement must not hinder gender equality, specifically by taking the constant evolution of the social environment and human relations into account, as well as the diversity of roles, positions and behaviours taken on by both genders.
- Any representation of the human body must be decent and without negative or sexist connotations. The depiction of sexual organs is only justified if it is necessary to convey the message of the official statement.

3.2. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

Age

- Any official statement aimed at a variety of young audiences must take into account the need for additional explanations, given these audiences' lack of knowledge and experience.
- An official statement must not exploit the trust, lack of experience or particular sensibilities of children and adolescents.
- Girl and boy actors must be shown in a physical and emotional environment that corresponds to that in which they usually live.
- An official statement must not hold up as an example for dangerous actions or situations likely to be imitated by young people.
- Any official statement must avoid stereotypical representations of people. Elderly people must be depicted without negative or discriminatory connotations.
- Any official statement made must grant special attention to audiences which can experience difficulties in accessing information, such as the elderly.

Disability

- An official statement must not endorse the exclusion of people because of their disabilities, whether they be sensory, mental, physical or psychological, nor the idea that they are inferior because of their disabilities.
- Any official statement must be made with particular attention to audiences that may have difficulty in gaining access to information, such as people with disabilities.

Ethnic origin

- An official statement must avoid any statements or images likely to offend people because of their ethnic origin through the use of stereotypes.
- An official statement must not endorse the exclusion of people because they belong to a certain ethnic group, nor the idea that they are inferior, especially by downplaying their role and responsibilities in society.

Sexual orientation

- An official statement must avoid any statements or images likely to offend people because of their sexual orientation through the use of stereotypes.

Religion and beliefs

- An official statement must avoid any statements or images likely to offend the general public through the use of stereotypes linked to religious faith and/or beliefs.

4. THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN

Who can complain ?

Any individual or legal entity can submit a complaint.

Composition of the monitoring groupe

Complaints can relate only to official campaigns or statements. All complaints must be submitted by registered letter marked for the attention of the chairman of the monitoring group and sent to the following address :

Ministère d'État
Monsieur **Manuel Dillmann**
Guide « L'égalité dans
la communication publique »
L-2910 Luxembourg

If required, a sample letter is available from the Ministry of Equal Opportunities or can be downloaded from the Ministry of Equal Opportunities Website www.mega.public.lu

A group responsible for monitoring the present guidelines has been set up within the Ministry of State and is made up of members of the relevant administrative bodies (Ministry of State, Ministry of Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Family Affairs and Integration, Ministry of Justice, the Luxembourg Reception and Integration Office, Service des médias et des communications [Department of Media and Communications] and the government's Information and Press Office).

The monitoring group issues opinions on whether the principles set out in the present guidelines have been complied with and handles potential complaints regarding public campaigns.

Procedure for handling complaints

1. The monitoring group examines complaints about official statements in the light of the present guidelines in order to determine, as a first step, whether the request is admissible and relevant.
Where appropriate, a letter confirming receipt of the complaint is sent to the complainant to provide information or to request further details. At the same time, the relevant minister is informed of the beginning of the procedure.
2. The file is then sent to the Conseil de la publicité du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg (Advertising Council of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, CPL) for its opinion. The Advertising Council is asked to issue a written notice within a reasonable timeframe.
3. This notice is then returned to the Ministry of State monitoring group, which takes note of it, informs the relevant minister and asks her or him to issue a statement if necessary. The monitoring group notifies the complainant of the decision taken. In every instance, a notification is sent to the government officials responsible for communication. The procedure also provides for such information to be forwarded to the Luxembourg Federation of Marketing and Communication Consultants, MarkCom ASBL.

Version française disponible sur le site:
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