

INTERNAL CODE OF ETHICS FOR MEDIA

The National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority and the Newspaper Publishing Company (NPC) "Ruske Slovo", through the adoption of a joint Internal Code of Ethics, express their full commitment to the highest professional and ethical media standards, the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics, as well as numerous international and domestic acts guaranteeing freedom and pluralism of media and expression. The Internal Code of Ethics is based on the joint desire of the National Council and journalists and employees of the NPC Ruske Slovo to provide citizens with truthful, impartial, timely and complete information, and therefore this document establishes mechanisms and procedures that will enable the highest level of editorial independence and media professionalism at the NPC Ruske Slovo.

This document fully observes the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics, and in that regard it does not represent its replacement. On the contrary, this document is an annex thereto, taking into account the particularity of the media outlets and information in the languages of national minorities, as well as the relationship between the National Council and the media outlet it is, indirectly, the founder of.

With this document the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority and the NPC Ruske Slovo rely on the European Convention on Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to hold opinions, and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. They also build upon the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, which guarantees freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through speech, writing, art or in any other manner. Finally, they rely on the Law on Public Information and Media, which recognizes as the public interest the authentic, unbiased, timely and full information in the mother tongues of the citizens of the Republic of Serbia who are members of national minorities, as well as preserving cultural and religious identity of national minorities living on the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

1. Newspaper Publishing Company "Ruske slovo" - printed and on-line public service media of the Ruthenian national minority

Media outlets indirectly founded by national councils of national minorities are financed from public sources of the Republic of Serbia and represent one of the ways to achieve public interest in the field of public information, therefore it is natural and logical for them to function according to the principles of public media services. In that sense, the weekly "Ruske slovo" and the press agency "Ruthenpress" practically represent a kind of printed and on-line public service media of the Ruthenian national minority in Serbia.

Media outlets indirectly founded by national councils of national minorities are obliged to harmonize their reporting and content with the principles of public media services, or to be a guarantor of media pluralism on the minority media scene and of professional reporting, by establishing guarantees of editorial independence and improving information quality and media freedoms in the minority media outlets.

In line with the legal solution for public media services, NPC Ruske slovo will base its work on the following principles:

- 1) authentic, unbiased, full and timely information;
- 2) independence of editorial policy;
- 3) independence from funding sources;
- 4) prohibition of any form of censorship and illegal influence on the work of the public media service, editorial office and journalists;
- 5) application of internationally recognized norms and principles, and in particular respect for human rights and freedoms and democratic values;
- 6) compliance with professional standards and codes.

In the realization of the public interest in the field of information in the Ruthenian language, NPC Ruske slovo will be specifically guided by the need: for authentic, timely, full, unbiased and professional information of citizens and for enabling free formation and expression of opinions; to respect and encourage the pluralism of political, religious and other ideas and to enable the public to be acquainted with those ideas, without serving the interests of particular political parties and religious communities, or any other individual political, economic, religious and similar views or interests; for impartial treatment of political, historical, economic, social, health, cultural, educational, scientific, environmental and other issues, enabling confrontation of different views on an equal footing; to meet the information needs of all segments of society without discrimination; and for satisfying the needs of citizens for contents that ensure the preservation and

expression of cultural and religious identity, affirmation of national cultural values of the Ruthenian national minority and that strengthen interculturalism.

2. National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority and the NPC "Ruske slovo"

The National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority is obliged to provide NPC "Ruske slovo" with invitations, appropriate material and relevant information for all planned activities of the National Council, council members, boards and working bodies in a timely manner.

NPC "Ruske slovo" is obliged to provide professional, objective, timely, unbiased, quality, conscientious, critical and independent information, i.e. reporting and preparation of media content according to the highest standards and ethical norms prescribed by the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics, as well as other binding legal and self-regulatory acts.

The National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority is obliged to provide conditions for the unhindered development of professionalism and independent editorial policy of the media outlets it indirectly founded (within the NPC "Ruske slovo"). Media pluralism, establishing public dialogue and enabling the public to be informed about different ideas and opinions without serving any individual interest will be respected and encouraged, by ensuring respect for the editorial independence of the media outlets and the right to free and critical expression.

3. NPC "Ruske slovo" and HR policy

Mechanisms for protection of the independent editorial policy of the media outlets indirectly founded by the national councils of national minorities will be established through the improvement of procedures for election of the members of management bodies, editors and directors of the Newspaper Publishing Company.

This self-regulatory document sets up a mechanism that affirms and establishes the already existing practice of consultative voting of NPC "Ruske slovo" employees through secret ballot on the occasion of the elections for:

- Three members of the Management Board from the ranks of the NPC "Ruske slovo" employees,
- Editor-in-Chief of the weekly "Ruske slovo",
- Director of the NPC "Ruske slovo".

Since the Statute of the NPC "Ruske slovo" stipulates that three members of the Management Board (MB) of the company from among the employees are proposed by the Director of "Ruske slovo" (while six are appointed by the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority), and that the MB of "Ruske slovo" elects (based on public competition) and dismisses the editor-in-chief and director of the Company, obligatory consulting of employees / editorial office on the candidates for these positions is established as practice. Ahead of proposing / selecting candidates for these positions, employees of the NPC "Ruske slovo" will declare in a secret ballot their support for candidates for three members of the MB from that company, as well as for the director of the NPC "Ruske slovo", and the members of the editorial office for the editor-in-chief of the weekly "Ruske slovo", after they present their programs to the members of the staff before submitting the proposal for the director of the Company, i.e. after the end of the competition procedure.

In the procedure of proposing and deciding on the selection of candidates for these positions, the candidates who win the largest number of votes of the members of the staff/ editorial office would be considered as the candidates with the greatest trust of the employees. The opinion of the members of the staff will be taken into account with due respect when proposing and deciding on the selection of candidates for these positions, in accordance with fostering good practice and strengthening mutual trust between the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority and the employees of the NPC "Ruske slovo".

NPC "Ruske slovo" and the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority will comply with the current acquired practices and standards from the Systematization Act of the NPC "Ruske slovo", referring to the criteria for selecting members of the editorial office, editors, directors, administration and other employees based on their qualifications and work experience in line with the highest standards prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Serbia. This also applies to the recruitment and appointment procedures in accordance with the Statute of the Company and the laws of the Republic of Serbia.

4. NPC "Ruske slovo" and elections

During the election campaign activities, NPC "Ruske slovo" will strictly comply with the provisions of the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics (2010). It will be guided by the principle of impartial and equal representation of political parties, coalitions and candidates with confirmed electoral lists for republic, provincial or local elections (local communities) during the election campaign, and since elections for national councils of national minorities constitute a political process of the election to the highest body of cultural autonomy of national minorities in the Republic of Serbia, NPC "Ruske slovo" will pay special attention to these elections. During the election

campaign for the new convocation of the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority, in order to provide all candidates-lists with equal space, objective and impartial access to a sort of print public service media in Ruthenian language, the weekly "Ruske slovo" and the news agency "Ruthenpress" will re-establish a previous positive practice - to determine in advance the rules for the election campaign monitoring (the existing self-regulatory Fact sheet for monitoring the election campaign, of the NPC "Ruske slovo"), which will apply equally to all the electoral lists and will be familiar to all the participants.

Reporting during the election campaign will consistently comply with the provisions of the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics, according to which "a journalist does not report on topics in which he/she has a private (personal or group) interest", i.e. "participation in a political, electoral or media campaign (of a political party/company, etc.), cannot be performed in parallel with the journalistic/editorial work". Also, "political activity of the family members of journalists/editors could also cause a real or apparent conflict of interest". Accordingly, in case the journalists of the NPC "Ruske slovo" are candidates on the electoral lists, they will be obliged to inform the editor-in-chief. The basic approach in pre-election reporting will be that "open advocacy for one political party or option is incompatible with the journalistic profession."

In preventing internal conflict of interest, NPC "Ruske slovo" will comply with a guideline of the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics, according to which "a journalist/editor should not report on topics in which he/she has a personal, political or commercial interest, e.g. as a member of the management or supervisory body or the board of directors of a company/organization/club, etc."

Taking into account the provision of the Serbian Journalists' Code of Ethics according to which "work in PR and marketing agencies, lobbying agencies, public bodies and institutions, and political parties is incompatible with the journalistic profession", journalists and editors of the NPC "Ruske slovo" will be obliged to inform the management of the company in case of taking up a public office.

Members of the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority who are editors-in-chief, or deputy editors-in-chief of the NPC Ruske Slovo will not be elected to the Management Board of the NPC Ruske Slovo from among its employees (appointed by the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority) due to the conflict of interest, nor will they state their views and vote on its annual reports and plans in the relevant discussion in the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority.

5. Final provisions

The National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority and the NPC "Ruske slovo" are committed to including the key arguments from this document into the new National Strategy of the Ruthenians in the Republic of Serbia (until 2030).

After its adoption, the self-regulatory code of ethics will be a public document and will be published on the website of the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority, and of the NPC "Ruske slovo".

A four-member body will be formed to supervise the implementation, i.e. monitor compliance with this document, composed of nominated representatives of the NPC Ruske Slovo, the National Council of the Ruthenian National Minority (Information Committee) and professional journalistic associations - the Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina and the Ruthenian Journalists' Association. At least once a year, this body will release its analysis and assessment of compliance with the basic principles and concepts of the adopted self-regulatory code.

This body will also consider possible complaints that would be filed in case of violation of the basic principles of this self-regulatory document. Complaints may be filed by individuals, organizations or institutions who deem themselves affected due to non-compliance with the basic principles of the self-regulatory code.

The decisions of the body monitoring compliance with this document, as well as the decisions on possible complaints will be public and accessible on the website of the NPC "Ruske slovo".

Newspaper Publishing Company
"Ruske slovo"

Boris Varga, director

National Council of the
Ruthenian National Minority

Borislav Sakač, president

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(Translation OSCE – Dijana Jelovac)