

# EXPERTISE CENTRE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNICATION

## Communication codes outside the development cooperation sector

Apart from the rise of communication codes within the development sector, over the years many companies and organizations outside the sector have also created their own communication codes of ethics. Already in 2003, for example, the Global Alliance (GA) for Public Relations and Communication Management, a confederation of the world's major PR and communication management associations and institutions, adopted such a code and updated it in 2018. Within the Netherlands, it seems that in recent years, in part inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, cultural institutions and media organizations in particular have developed various diversity and inclusion codes, including attention for communication. For example, in 2019 the female interest group WOMEN Inc released the 'Incomplete Styleguide' committed to inclusive language and imagery use, and in 2021 the Diversity & Inclusion Code was published as a code of conduct by and for the Dutch cultural and creative sector committed to diversity and inclusion, including a guideline with 'Values for a New Language'. This guideline focused on a 'safe, inclusive and accessible language for everyone in the arts and cultural sector.' At the same time, individual journalistic platforms such as OneWorld published a 'Language Dossier' with various articles about their neocolonial use of language (and how they aim to stop with that), and individual television stations such as VPRO and HUMAN created an internal 'Inclusive Hand-Out' with attention for ethical communication. All these communication codes of ethics are usually formal 'statements of intent to practice communication ethically.'<sup>1</sup> As in the development cooperation sector, this by and large means that these communication codes are tools of education that cannot be enforced. On the one hand, this could make these codes non-committal and non-binding; on the other hand, it is the question to what extent communication codes 'relieve practitioners from the need to take personal responsibility for their ethical decision-making.'<sup>2</sup> Are such codes able to provide 'ethical guidelines for the nuanced and situational nature of communication practice in the 21st century'?<sup>3</sup> Still, notwithstanding this open question, the development cooperation sector could definitely learn from (the best practices of) the communication codes developed in other sectors and fields.

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<sup>1</sup> Derina R.Holtzhausen, "The Unethical Consequences of Professional Communication Codes of Ethics: A Postmodern Analysis of Ethical Decision-Making in Communication Practice," *Public Relations Review*, 41.5 (2015): p. 769.

<sup>2</sup> Derina R.Holtzhausen, "The Unethical Consequences of Professional Communication Codes of Ethics: A Postmodern Analysis of Ethical Decision-Making in Communication Practice," *Public Relations Review*, 41.5 (2015): p. 769.

<sup>3</sup> Derina R.Holtzhausen, "The Unethical Consequences of Professional Communication Codes of Ethics: A Postmodern Analysis of Ethical Decision-Making in Communication Practice," *Public Relations Review*, 41.5 (2015): p. 769.