

# Guidelines - SECOM's Communication Manual

## **Guidelines for the Social Communication Secretariat of the Federal Senate**

This manual reinforces the integration and uniformity in the planning and performance of the areas of the Social Communication Secretariat (SECOM) by the definition of guidelines.

These rules establish SECOM's policy of action in 13 cross-cutting themes: from professional conduct to quality standards, from information management to social responsibility.

The guidelines differ from the other rules in the manual in that they are more comprehensive in nature and are common to all SECOM's areas. The rules apply to all areas of the secretariat or, at least, have an impact on more than one. They must therefore be observed and followed by everyone.

### **Institutional actions**

Institutional actions are those that have an impact on the way citizens perceive the Federal Senate, contributing to the consolidation of its reputation, identity, and image. The planning and implementation of such actions must be guided by the public interest, technical rigor, and ethical commitment.

The actions developed by SECOM should aim to foster and strengthen the Senate's dialogue and relationship with its various publics, promote understanding of the House's role in the political system, and add value to its institutional image.

SECOM must systematically publicize services, projects, activities, and actions developed by areas of the Senate that meet the objectives of institutional actions.

Institutional actions must be based on data and facts, which cannot be created or distorted.

Institutional actions must be accessible and easy for stakeholders to understand.

Activities aimed at personal, party, electoral or commercial promotion are not the object of institutional actions.

Suggestions for institutional actions received from senators' offices, parliamentarians, civil servants or any other sources should be evaluated on the basis of the criteria defined in this manual.

## News coverage

Journalistic coverage is the result of teamwork and the relationship between professionals must be cordial and respectful.

SECOM's media should cover parliamentary work, the legislative process, matters related to the Federal Senate and the National Congress, and issues of public interest.

Priority should be given to legislative activity.

Collegiate decisions (of the Plenary and committees) have priority over matters relating to individual parliamentary activity.

The greater the public interest in the topic, the more relevant it is for coverage. Matters of national interest take priority over regional or local issues. Legislative activity, over institutional matters.

It is in the coverage of content related to the legislative activity that the material and human resources of SECOM's media should be allocated as a priority.

To the extent of its capabilities, the coverage by SECOM's media should encompass, considering material and human resources, the activities of oversight, inspection, and monitoring of the Senate and the Congress, as well as all stages of the legislative process, including the processing of proposals in the Chamber of Deputies, presidential sanctions or vetoes, the issuance of provisional presidential decrees, enactments, and matters related to the federal Judiciary, and the dissemination of actions and duties of the Federal Court of Accounts in its role as an auxiliary body to the National Congress.

The coverage of SECOM's media may also include:

- Events that take place outside the Plenary and committees, in or near the Congress building: when they are related to parliamentary and legislative activity and contribute to a better understanding of the news by citizens.
- On-site monitoring of parliamentary missions and external public hearings: at the discretion of SECOM's director, taking into account the possibility of material and human resources.
- Debates and decisions by the Chamber of Deputies, the Federal Court of Accounts, the Superior Courts, and the federal government: when the subject is of public interest. In these cases, the coverage should focus on the repercussions of the issue in the Senate.
- Parliamentary group meetings: only if they are related to the Senate's activities, such as the choice of leadership or guidance for voting on projects.
- An issue external to the Senate that is related to legislative or institutional activity: coverage should focus on the repercussions of the matter in the Senate.

- Issues external to the Senate that affect the lives of the population: coverage should focus on the repercussions of the matter in the Senate.
- Facts from senators' personal lives: as long as they are related to parliamentary activity or have an impact on it. These facts should be disclosed according to official manifestations, such as a speech in Plenary, in a committee, an official note, a press conference by the senator or profiles on social networks, always indicating the source.
- Complaints, accusations, and police or judicial investigations against senators: after the fact has been the subject of an official manifestation, such as a speech in Plenary, in a committee, an official note, a press conference by the senator, profiles on social networks or after a complaint has been formalized in some instance of the House, such as the Council of Ethics or the Disciplinary Board.
- Decisions of an administrative nature, arising, for example, from the Directing Committee, members of the Board, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Disciplinary Board, the Directorate-General and the Secretariat-General of the Board: when in the public interest.
- Internal matter relating to the Senate or SECOM: when it is justified as an institutional action and is in the public interest.
- Institutional actions in the public interest.

SECOM's media do not cover events in which the participation of senators is not related to their work in the Senate, such as mayors' meetings, solemnities, award ceremonies or party conventions. The exception is coverage of the official agenda of the President of the Senate.

Even if they are not part of the usual journalistic coverage, what happens behind the scenes and moments of negotiation, as well as demonstrations near Congress, can also be part of a photographic coverage or image production.

Special coverage and coverage of issues that involve major national mobilization, such as general and municipal elections, the inauguration of the President of the Republic and of senators, should be planned further in advance.

Coverage of the Senate Presidency should primarily be based on the official agenda published by the President's office.

Suggestions for agendas received from senators' offices, parliamentarians or any other sources should be evaluated on the basis of the criteria defined in this manual.

The coverage of legislative activities remotely, through the live transmission available through the service known as VIP or the Senate TV, for example, should not be adopted as a rule. This resource may be necessary due to transfer difficulties and the simultaneous carrying out of activities in different committees and in the Plenary.

Audio, video and photo resources generated by portable audio and video equipment such as cameras, recorders, cell phones and tablets may be used subject to editorial evaluation.

What media outlets can still publish, based on the editorial criteria of this manual:

- Institutional materials from Internal Communication, as long as they are of interest to the Senate's external public;
- Audio, text, photos, videos, and infographics produced by third parties, provided that the rights of use are duly respected;
- Legislative activity material produced by House bodies and the offices of senators, leaderships, and the Senate Presidency.

The use of material produced by third parties must meet the technical quality standards of SECOM's media.

## **Internal institutional coverage and dissemination**

The news coverage and content production carried out by Internal Communication covers the following actions promoted by the Federal Senate and aimed at the internal public:

- institutional and administrative actions;
- services offered to employees;
- educational and institutional events and projects;
- actions to value the staff;
- information and clarification actions.

The Internal Communication is responsible for defining the topics to be covered and the content to be produced according to the criteria of institutional and internal public interest, taking into account the availability of the sector's material and human resources.

Coverage can cover the following topics:

- activities, products or services offered by Senate bodies;
- administrative rules, employees' rights and duties;
- institutional or employee training programs promoted by the Senate or partner institutions;
- official participation of civil servants in events;
- institutional campaigns to enlighten employees;
- actions of public recognition or awards for the institution or employees as a result of activities carried out in the Senate;
- activities that value and promote the integration of employees;
- historical and commemorative dates related to the Senate.

The dissemination of information in institutional spaces managed by Internal Communication, which only require data to be entered into the system, is restricted to the following spaces on the intranet:

- classified ads;

- employees' birthdays;
- schedule of courses and events of Senate bodies.

Journalistic coverage, content production or institutional dissemination by the Internal Communication does not include:

- legislative and parliamentary activities;
- personal, party-political activities or activities related to the political functioning of parliamentary offices;
- employee initiatives that are characterized solely as personal promotion;
- communication initiatives made on employees' personal pages or social networks;
- activities, brands, and communication initiatives of public or private institutions that do not have a formal partnership with the Senate;
- activities of bodies that are not part of the Senate structure.

Any cases not covered by this Communication Manual will be defined jointly by SECOM's departments involved in the issue.

## **Professional conduct**

SECOM's workers must treat their colleagues and the public with respect and civility. Relations with senators must be guided by the decorum and seriousness that the position demands.

SECOM's workers must not use their status as part of the Senate's staff to obtain advantages for private purposes, in a manner that is contrary to decorum.

They must remain neutral in relation to party-political, religious or ideological influences, in order to guarantee impartiality in their activities.

They should be properly identified as SECOM's workers by using the badge that guarantees free access to the Plenary and other areas of the House; its use to obtain undue advantage inside or outside the Senate is prohibited.

SECOM's workers must take care of their personal presentation and respect the rules regarding appropriate attire for the workplace.

The participation of SECOM's workers in personal activities of a party-political nature must not interfere with their professional responsibilities, take place during working hours or in the working environment, use Senate resources or cause conflicts of interest.

While freedom of expression is guaranteed, party-political campaigning in the workplace is prohibited.

Participation as a speaker or moderator at seminars, congresses or other events must be notified in advance to the immediate supervisor when the invitation is related to the activity carried out at SECOM.

It is recommended that academic studies related to subjects regarding the Senate Communication be shared with SECOM. The secretariat must organize a database of the academic works it receives.

Any type of public statement related to the function or position held at SECOM, including granting an interview, must be authorized by the immediate supervisor.

It is not recommended to associate party-political opinions expressed on social networks with the position held in the Senate, even outside working hours. The public often confuses personal image and opinion with professional activity, which can damage the perception of the impartiality and credibility of the Senate Communication.

When traveling on business, workers must conduct themselves in accordance with the principles set out in this manual.

All partnerships with external institutions, whether public or private, for the development of any products for the SECOM must be formalized in advance with the Senate.

The sources and interviewees chosen for SECOM's news stories and productions must represent the plurality and diversity of Brazilian society, to not reinforce stereotypes or prejudices.

The use of the institutional e-mail and access to Internet via the Senate's network must comply with the House's rules. All civil servants must periodically check the e-mail box and other official forms of official communication from the Senate.

The use of clandestine methods to obtain information, including hidden cameras or microphones, is not permitted.

## **Publicizing SECOM's products and services**

SECOM must adopt a strategy of cross-promotion of its products and services.

The launch of new products and services must follow SECOM's guidelines.

The agenda for plenary sessions, committee meetings, and other legislative activities, especially those whose topics are of greater public interest, must be made public in advance.

SECOM must inform the public when its products are the result of a partnership, agreement or sponsorship.

## **Information management**

At SECOM, information management routines are everyone's responsibility and should be treated as a system, not as the specific responsibility of a sector.

The products produced or received as a result of the activities of SECOM's areas must be recorded on a storage media that makes it possible to archive and retrieve them in the future. These products, regardless of their medium, are considered public documents and, consequently, public heritage and must be managed in accordance with article 216, paragraph 2 of the Federal Constitution and Law No. 8159 of 1991.

SECOM's management of documents must guarantee its organization, through the use of classification codes, following the standardization adopted by the Senate.

In addition, it must include the control of what should be eliminated or preserved. SECOM's areas must comply with filing and disposal deadlines, which must form part of a selection and disposal policy. The deadlines must be proposed by SECOM itself, approved by the Senate's Standing Committee on Documents and included in the Senate's Temporal Table of Documents.

SECOM must adopt a set of metadata to identify and retrieve any product for use in archival description.

The organization of files on common networks and intranet drives in SECOM's media and services must reflect the functions performed by the unit and consider products and processes.

The manifestations received from the external public and the respective responses should be archived for possible consultations or proof of the service provided.

## **Audiovisual identity**

The audiovisual identity of SECOM's products and services must be produced and applied in accordance with the Federal Senate's Visual Identity Manual.

Products and services intended for external audiences must have their own audiovisual identity, but with cohesion between SECOM's areas to facilitate recognition of the institution and assimilation of content.

Administrative units should not have their own visual identity, in accordance with the Federal Senate's Visual Identity Manual.

Products and services with similar objectives should follow the same audiovisual identity standard, taking into account the communication objectives and the technical characteristics of the media.

Changes to the audiovisual identity of SECOM's products and services must be preceded by planning that considers the need and feasibility.

The creation of new projects or products should take into account SECOM's audiovisual identity archive as a research tool.

## **Integration**

SECOM's areas must act in an integrated and synergistic manner, with the aim of rationalizing resources and avoiding duplication of work.

In order for both news coverage and institutional actions to reflect integration, mechanisms must be in place to ensure effective communication between the various areas, common orientation, joint planning of activities and complementary and supplementary action.

Actions that are characterized as integration must be gathered in the Agenda and Production Center with the respective guidelines for joint or shared action.

When defining responsibilities for products or services, whether they are routine or part of new projects, the expertise of each area of SECOM must be taken into account. No product or service should be created without the input of the area of the Secretariat with expertise in the subject.

Any new product or service created by SECOM's areas must first be authorized by the Secretariat's management and then presented at a meeting of directors.

Sound and image capture, on any medium, must be of a quality compatible with the technical requirements of each media.



SECOM areas must adopt forms and working hours that favor integration, respecting the process flow and the specificities of each sector.

Work involving more than one area of the Secretariat must follow an integrated production flow.

SECOM should encourage the work of multimedia professionals in its vehicles, characterized by the ability to work in different media and produce content in multiple formats. To this aim, a way of working that is in line with conventional routines must be adopted, as well as a training program.

## **Social media**

SECOM's areas should consider joining social media platforms on the internet.

SECOM's communication on social networks must be guided by an annual strategic plan, to be drawn up jointly by the secretariats that manage profiles on the networks, taking into account the secretariats' annual planning, the material and human resources available, and the potential of each platform. The document must establish for each platform: the content planning, the distribution of activities among the teams, the visual identity, and the criteria for publication, interactivity, monitoring, creation, management, and closure of profiles. The annual strategic plan should be published and updated in the Routines section of the manual.

The actions of social media operators must follow the standard defined in the Social Media Use Policy and the specific determinations for each area of the Social Communication Secretariat.

The purpose of the social networks managed by SECOM is to broaden dialogue with society and publicize the legislative and institutional work of the House and SECOM's products.

Social media should be used to:

- disseminate the programs and news stories produced by SECOM's media;
- publish news coverage of the Senate's legislative and institutional activities;
- publicize the Senate's institutional campaigns, programs and services;
- encourage citizen participation by opening up channels to dialog with society;
- publicize actions to promote the Senate's image;
- monitor the presence of the Senate and legislative issues on social media.

Profile coordinators and social media operators must keep a close eye on the emergence of new platforms, in order to guarantee the domains of the profiles of SECOM's areas and media, even if there is no activity on that network.

The profiles of the various areas will seek interactivity, either reactively, by responding to messages directed to the profile, or proactively, by identifying mentions of the Senate or legislative issues related to the House.

Sharing posts from other Senate profiles is allowed and can be used as a communication strategy according to the profile's planning, as long as it follows SECOM's editorial line. Shared content must relate to the content of the profile.

SECOM must make its policies clear on the internet and social media. Each area must maintain a document setting out its usage policy and publish it on the social media pages. The use policy of each area must have common general rules and take into account the specificities of each area in line with the guidelines established in this manual.

When replying to users, it should preferably be in the form chosen by the person who sent the message: public or private.

SECOM's areas should adopt a single database of frequent replies, constantly updated, to facilitate and standardize work and avoid errors.

There is no maximum number of posts per day, but it is recommended that the profiles of news outlets have at least one post on working days, showing that the account is active.

Account or profile closures must be communicated to the public in advance. Alternative forms of contact should also be offered.

Social media coordinators and operators must receive training and undertake to comply with and enforce the guidelines set out in this Communication Manual, in the Social Media Use Policy and in the planning drawn up for the profile in which they carry out their activities.

The strategic planning should foresee the types of content that should be covered or avoided in each SECOM profile.

It is not allowed to publish opinions, value judgments, subjects unrelated to the profile, offenses or threats.

Posted content must be in accordance with this Communication Manual, especially the principles and other guidelines.

Social networks must be constantly monitored, based on metrics and quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results, and recorded in reports shared between areas.

SECOM does not approve, endorse, declare or guarantee the integrity, veracity, accuracy or reliability of any message, manifestation or comment published by a user, nor does it endorse opinions expressed on their social media profiles.

Any violation of usage policies, legislation, and constitutional rules that is not identified by SECOM can be reported to the Federal Senate Ombudsman's Office for action.

## **Quality standards**

It is a SECOM permanent objective to strive for excellence in its professionals and products.

In order to achieve the quality standard considered ideal, SECOM's Communication Manual must be complied with.

Critical analysis of the activities carried out and the products offered must be encouraged and systematized in order to allow for collective learning and constant improvement.

SECOM's areas must draw up and periodically publish productivity reports detailing their activities in quantitative and qualitative terms.

The monitoring of the proper application of the provisions of this manual and the necessary updates are the responsibility of the Quality Department, specially created for this purpose with a representative from each area of the Social Communication Secretariat.

## **Quality of information**

At SECOM, the quality of information, a basic rule for combating disinformation, must be characterized by clarity, correctness, plurality, and completeness, regardless of the formats and content adopted.

All media must ensure that their information is rigorously investigated. Data and facts cannot be created or distorted.

SECOM's professionals must always be attentive to the correctness of the information they receive. Preference should be given to official sources. They should always cite the source of opinions and information that have not been officially confirmed. Numbers and data should be checked and, if in doubt, consult the Reference Guide of this manual.

Journalistic texts must:

- contain objective information, without interpretations or value judgments, so as to provide the necessary elements for citizens to analyze and form their own opinions;
- be produced in language accessible to different audiences;
- be produced and disseminated quickly;
- consider a plural and balanced dissemination of the various issues under debate in the National Congress.

All the professionals involved in drafting, editing, proofreading, and publishing the texts are responsible, at each stage of production, for ensuring that the material complies with the writing and style standards and formats set out in this manual.

Any errors in material released by SECOM should be corrected as soon as they are confirmed and technically possible. Corrections should encourage the revision of processes, where necessary, to avoid similar occurrences in the future. The errata must be produced and published in accordance with the accessory rule.

The work of SECOM's areas must not favor any political party, parliamentary bloc, leadership, senator, deputy or authority. The exception is coverage of the official agenda of the President of the Senate.

Cases in which news involving social and human dramas have repercussions in the Senate must be dealt with without sensationalism and with respect for human dignity, human rights, and current legislation. The focus in these cases should be on the debates and legislative decisions on the subject.

SECOM's products must not contain any information that has a commercial connotation, except in the following cases:

- when there is a formal contract with the Senate;
- when the marketing has an institutional nature, or is carried out by the Federal Senate itself, as in the case of products sold by Technical Editions;
- when the company is mentioned in parliamentary activity, for example, as a participant in a public hearing or in the investigation of Parliamentary Committees of Investigation;
- when it involves sponsorship or support for an audiovisual work and is included in the credits and cards, as an integral part of the work financed by requests for proposals or cultural incentive laws;
- when the quote is intended for cultural dissemination.

It is forbidden to sell space in SECOM's media.

Press-releases can be an important source of information for the coverage, supporting the preparation of news stories. However, they should not be published in their entirety or in their original format, even if prepared by sectors of the Senate, or even by some area of the Social Communication Secretariat, unless they are identified in this way and the source is cited. In SECOM's media, information

from releases must be adjusted to the standards of this manual for publication.

Archived material must be clearly identified as such.

The aim of the technical edition is to make it easier for citizens to understand the information. However, it cannot modify the content of the statements.

The political positions of SECOM's professionals should not influence the coverage or writing of news stories. The edition cannot reflect a position in favor of or against any political tendency.

When publicizing opinion polls, the source, method, scope, target audience, period and, where applicable, the requester must be informed, considering the characteristics of each media.

SECOM must define precise guidelines for action during each electoral period, establishing how the legislation in force must be adopted.

SECOM must be committed to adapting information content to the various segments of the public, whether lay or specialized, adopting different formats, languages, and approaches, including accessibility, with a view to effective communication.

All material from SECOM must respect the current grammatical norms of the Portuguese.

## **Relationship with the public**

SECOM must establish forms of contact with the public and publicize them using the tools at its disposal.

SECOM's areas must be committed to respond to the demands of any of the Senate's publics, quickly, clearly and cordially.

Requests that cannot be fulfilled must receive an official notice from the area explicitly explaining to the interested party the reasons for the impediment, including an optional way for the user to find a solution to the request.

Offensive statements containing bad language should not be replied to.

Comments or manifestations containing threats should, once identified, be immediately directed to the Legislative Police Secretariat of the Federal Senate.

SECOM must be committed to serving citizens primarily through the communication tool they have chosen.

The different types of public should receive the same attention when it comes to service. No segment should be privileged to the detriment of others.

Priority should be given to replying to disputes or requests to correct information released by SECOM.

SECOM must be guided by the search for a unified discourse. Citizens should receive the same information content, albeit in different formats and by different means, regardless of the area they come into contact with.

SECOM must permanently improve the mechanisms for interaction with society, maintaining spaces that allow citizens to participate directly, either individually or in organized groups.

Interaction with the public must be based on the principle of integrated action by all SECOM's areas, be it for the production of content, the adoption of dissemination tools or the offer of products and services. Guidance for this integrated action should come from the Journalism Department.

Requests from external press should be sent to SECOM's Press Office, which is responsible for the interlocution on matters of institutional, legislative, administrative, and social communication nature in the Senate.

## **Social responsibility**

The use of SECOM's material and human resources must follow the principle of efficiency in public administration.

The way SECOM works and its products must be based on the principle of promoting ethical, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable practices.

SECOM's products and services must be secular in nature.

The training of SECOM's professionals should be encouraged.

Channels should be maintained and publicized to receive suggestions from SECOM's professionals aimed at improving routines and the working environment.

Contracts and partnerships must not serve private interests, cause harm to the public administration, and disrespect the rights or compromise the working conditions of outsourced employees.

The use of SECOM's structure, such as human resources, equipment, and facilities, must be in line with the objectives of the Secretariat.

SECOM should promote and encourage partnerships with other legislative communication systems, especially that of the Chamber of Deputies, to rationalize the use of resources and enable the exchange of experiences.

Issues related to copyright of all content published by SECOM should be included in a separate guide.

The content produced, broadcast and distributed by SECOM should preferably be produced by the Secretariat's own workforce and with its own resources.

When designing products, SECOM should aim to reach different types of audiences, according to the communication objectives. To do this, it must adopt mechanisms that guarantee accessibility to the content.

SECOM's areas do not publish photos, images, illustrations or audio that violate human dignity, damage the image of the institution or exploit or distort personal characteristics.

SECOM must develop specific journalistic and institutional content to combat disinformation, as well as fact-checking information about the Federal Senate and clarifying and guiding citizens with the aim of recognizing and preventing the spread of false or inaccurate news, in line with its mission.

## **SECOM Principles and Values**

**Ethics:** conduct that adopts the standards of honesty, morality, universality, probity, and clarity as commitments in the development of professional tasks.

**Citizen information and social responsibility:** commitment to the citizen's right to clear, correct, and impartial information, in order to contribute to a more just, harmonious, and environmentally balanced society.

**Innovation and technical-professional excellence:** permanent search for new technologies, media, languages, and content, as well as the constant professional and technical improvement of staff and collaborators to guarantee quality public communication.

**Interactivity:** commitment to improving and broadening the channels of communication between the institution and society, in order to increase citizen dialog with the Legislature.

**Transparency and political-partisan impartiality:** acting in a non-partisan, fair, and impartial manner when carrying out professional tasks, to guarantee the availability of legislative information.

**Valuing the Legislative Branch:** commitment to enlightening society about the role of the Senate and the Legislative Branch as essential for democracy and improving the lives of citizens.



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