

## The Parliament and CIC sign an Agreement to Defend Journalistic Ethics and Combat Disinformation in Catalonia

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Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025

The Parliament of Catalonia and the Catalan Press Council (CIC) signed yesterday an agreement to "establish a stable framework for institutional collaboration to evaluate, advise, and protect the proper exercise of the right to information within the parliamentary domain." The agreement between the institution of popular sovereignty and the entity that ensures compliance with the Code of Ethics of the journalistic profession symbolizes the commitment to fight disinformation and the spread of hate speech.

The unethical practices employed by certain media outlets represent a threat to the integrity of journalism and also to parliamentary work. This shared concern has led to a collaborative effort to preserve democratic quality.

The agreement between the Parliament and CIC is linked to the approval, at the meeting of the Board on May 6, 2025, of the Accreditation and Access Rules for media outlets in the Parliament of Catalonia. These rules establish that journalists must sign "their commitment to comply with the Code of Ethics of the journalistic profession in Catalonia." The CIC considers it very positive that ethical compliance constitutes the essential criterion for accreditations. Because without ethical standards, we cannot talk about journalism but rather about instruments that degrade democratic life. Therefore, within the agreement, the CIC commits to "provide opinions and advise the Parliament on the Catalan media ecosystem, particularly regarding the distinction between outlets that adhere to journalistic ethics criteria and platforms or channels that act outside these principles, among other aspects."

The text of the Rules explicitly states that "accreditation is granted to journalists, photographers, and filming teams who work for *bona fide* media outlets committed to the ethical principles of the journalistic profession and the Code of Ethics of Catalonia." Similarly, when granting accreditations, having the CIC's seal of commitment to journalistic ethics is considered a valuable factor.

As the Parliament acknowledges, the CIC "is an independent entity for the self-regulation of the journalistic profession in Catalonia, aimed at ensuring compliance with the principles of journalistic professional ethics contained in the Code of Ethics." The CIC, as recalled in the agreement, grants the Seal of Commitment to Journalistic Ethics "to all media outlets that voluntarily adhere to it. This seal certifies that these media outlets commit to respecting the Code of Ethics, recognize the CIC's moral authority, and accept its mediation with citizens who believe their right to ethically crafted information has been violated."



In this context, the agreement stipulates that "if any accreditation request raises doubts about its granting, the Parliament may request a prior report from the Information Council of Catalonia, which will be submitted to the Board for consideration before making a final decision." The advisory agreement goes beyond specific requests like these and establishes that the CIC commits to "providing technical or methodological support for joint initiatives that promote the right to truthful, verified, and professionally crafted information."

### **A Thousand Resolutions in 28 Years**

Catalan journalists have been pioneers within Spain in taking initiatives to defend ethics. From the CIC, we consider the agreement with the Parliament another example of this willingness to meet the social demands of each moment. The Second Congress of Catalan Journalists, held in October 1992, produced the Code of Ethics, "an instrument expressing their will to defend free and responsible media within a pluralistic and democratic society."

The Code of Ethics is a declaration of principles that, based on twelve criteria, seeks to encourage constant self-critical reflection on the ethical values that should prevail in the practice of journalism. The antecedents of this desire for self-regulation can be found in the Press Councils of countries with long democratic traditions.

The Code, voluntarily subscribed to and adopted by professionals and media outlets in Catalonia, already foresaw in its final declaration the need to establish an arbitral body,

representative, pluralistic, and independent of public powers, which, apart from the judicial authorities, would exercise moral authority and ensure compliance with the twelve criteria set out in the document.

The College of Journalists of Catalonia, which had already been the promoter and inspiration of the Code, decided to promote an entity that could effectively fulfill this mission of moral authority from within society itself, which was the custodian of the constitutional right to freedom of information and expression. Thus, the Information Council of Catalonia was born in 1997.

This council was composed of a group of men and women whose mission was to judge violations of journalistic ethics as outlined by journalists themselves in the Code. The diversity of its members guaranteed their independence of judgment: jurists, sociologists, professors of ethics, deontology, and communication, civic organization leaders, and journalists.

After two years of operation, and with the aim of granting the Council its own legal personality, the College of Journalists decided to transform the CIC into a Foundation. The governing body of the Foundation is a board composed personally by members of the College of Journalists of Catalonia, social media outlets in Catalonia, universities, civic organizations, and professional associations. With the Information Council of Catalonia, Catalan journalists place in society's hands a tool that guarantees the effective exercise of freedom and responsibility, rigor, efficiency, pluralism, and professional independence.

The Information Council of Catalonia (CIC) achieved an important milestone last year: receiving its thousandth complaint regarding possible violations of the Code of Ethics since its creation 28 years ago. Each complaint represents an opportunity to reflect on and improve journalistic practices, thereby contributing to a better-informed and more critical society. Many of them have served to create jurisprudence and establish the foundations of journalistic ethics.

Moreover, the CIC's activities have not been limited to receiving complaints: they have included issuing recommendations and statements on current issues, organizing events to analyze key ethical concerns, and conducting consultations among sector professionals.