



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Director for Human Resources
Vienna, 14 December 2020

Staff Instruction No. 31

Subject: On the Personal Use of Social Media

1. Reference

This Staff Instruction is to be read in conjunction with Staff Regulation 2.01 on the Conduct of OSCE Officials; Staff Regulation 2.02 on the Disclosure of Information and the OSCE Code of Conduct (Appendix 1 to the OSCE Staff Regulations and Staff Rules).

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this Staff Instruction is to set out the provisions and principles applicable to the personal use of social media by OSCE officials and non-OSCE staff and to provide guidance for the responsible use of social media.

2.2 Furthermore, this Staff Instruction aims to prevent the OSCE and its officials from being brought into disrepute as a result of the inappropriate personal use of social media.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Staff Instruction

3.1 *Social Media* includes online forums, social networking sites and services, blogs, wikis, chatrooms, messenger apps and any other similar site and/or service that allows the sharing of information with other users in a contemporaneous manner.

3.2 *Personal Use* refers to the use of social media, including past use, prior to the appointment/assignment to, or engagement by the OSCE, done in a capacity not linked with the individual's official or contractual functions. Personal use includes posting content, sharing, liking or any other form of interaction on social media.

3.3 *Communication Focal Points* are staff/mission members responsible for communication and/or public information in the executive structure.

4. Applicability

4.1 This Staff Instruction applies to all OSCE officials in the Secretariat, Institutions and Field Operations.

4.2 Persons engaged by the OSCE, who are not subject to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules (*'non-OSCE staff'*), e.g. consultants (Staff Instruction No. 23), daily hourly staff (Staff Instruction No. 18), and interns (Staff Instruction No. 25), shall be made aware of this policy, as set out in their respective contractual arrangements and shall be bound to abide by it.

5. Effective Date

This Staff Instruction shall take effect on 1 January 2021 and in cases of inconsistency shall prevail over any provision of instructions¹ promulgated in the Secretariat, Institutions or Field Operations.

6. Rationale

6.1 It is acknowledged that the OSCE appreciates the role of social media as an important instrument of communication and the commitment of the OSCE to the freedom of expression is reaffirmed. It is further acknowledged that the personal use of social media by an OSCE official, or non-OSCE staff, is a personal matter.

6.2 It needs to be understood, that whereas communication on social media may be a personal matter, the communication itself might not be private and may be accessible to a wider audience.

6.3 OSCE officials and non-OSCE staff are solely responsible for their personal use of social media and they have contracted an obligation to regulate their conduct with the interests of the OSCE in mind.

6.4 Upon appointment, assignment or engagement with the OSCE, they are required to review their activities on social media and ensure to the extent possible and reasonable that no information compromises the interests of the OSCE or their obligations under the Staff Regulations, and Staff Rules, the Code of Conduct and/or relevant Staff Instructions.

6.5 OSCE officials and non-OSCE staff should carefully review information about their status as OSCE officials upon separation and avoid any wrong representation of their employment in social media.

7. Principles for the Personal Use of Social Media

¹ Defined as the third layer of the CRMS as set out in [PC.DEC/705](#).

7.1 OSCE officials and non-OSCE staff

- Are expected to anticipate the manner in which their activities may be viewed, and the potential and/or actual impact these activities may have on the image or reputation of the OSCE or themselves, to the extent possible and reasonable.
- Are expected to monitor and remove inappropriate content posted by others on their own social media profiles. They should also scrutinize for appropriateness all other social media accounts they decide to be associated with.
- Should not brand their personal social media accounts using OSCE visual identity material or intellectual property without seeking prior authorization, with the exception of what is automatically added by professional social networks.

7.2 Any social media content that OSCE officials, or non-OSCE staff, decide to be associated with through personal use should in particular, but not exclusively, adhere to the following:

Retaining integrity befitting the status of an international civil servant

- Reflect professional discretion and good ethical judgement;
- Avoid political or other controversial statements, or criticisms of any government or government official that may negatively affect the OSCE's reputation; and
- Avoid discriminatory remarks, harassment, threats of violence or similar content.

Regulating conduct with the interests of the OSCE in mind

- Not disclose confidential or proprietary information in relation to the OSCE and its officials or non-OSCE staff;
- Not disclose photos, audio or video recordings of OSCE officials on duty or in OSCE-branded clothing and of the OSCE operation, unless it directly serves the purpose of supporting an official OSCE activity bearing in mind safety and security aspects; and
- Not make use of the social media in a manner that may cause harm to an OSCE official or non-OSCE staff or create a hostile working environment in contravention of the OSCE Policy on the Professional Working Environment (Staff Instruction No. 21).

Bearing in mind Safety and Security

- Not compromise the safety and security of the OSCE, its staff or any other individuals, in particular through disclosing information about the OSCE operation;
- Not refer to internal sensitive information, including unconfirmed news stories from non-OSCE sources, especially during a crisis situation; and
- Not be associated through any form of interaction with any politically sensitive insignia.

7.3 OSCE Field Operations and Institutions are encouraged to issue administrative issuances on the personal use of social media, identifying specific conditions for the personal use of social media taking into account the operational and security context of the respective Field Operation or Institution.

8. Reporting Obligation

8.1 Any incident that may amount to a violation of this Staff Instruction should be communicated to the respective communications focal point and may also be reported through the Oversight Hotline, in accordance with FAI 10.

8.2 If you are unsure whether any social media content is in line with this Staff Instruction, please seek advice from COMMS in the OSCE Secretariat at press@osce.org.

Annex I:

Staff Regulation 2.01 on Conduct of OSCE Officials:

“(a) OSCE officials shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the status of an international civil servant. They shall not engage in any activity which is incompatible with the proper performance of their duties with the OSCE. They shall avoid any action and, in particular, any kind of public pronouncement which may adversely reflect on their status as well as on the integrity, independence and impartiality of their position and function as officials of the OSCE.

(b) By signing the letter of appointment or terms of assignment, OSCE officials shall agree to discharge their functions and regulate their conduct with the interests of the OSCE only in mind and neither to seek nor accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the OSCE. In the performance of their duties, staff/mission members shall be subject to the authority of and be responsible to the Secretary General and their respective head of institution or head of mission. OSCE officials shall undertake to abide by the OSCE Code of Conduct set out in Appendix 1 of these Regulations and Rules, of which the Code of Conduct is an integral part.”

Staff Regulation 2.02 on Disclosure of Information

“ OSCE officials shall observe maximum discretion with regard to all matters relating to the activities of the OSCE. They shall at no time use, disseminate and/or publish information known to them by reason of their official position, except in connection with the discharge of their functions. They shall maintain due discretion regarding the matters related to the activities of the OSCE upon separation from the Organization.”

OSCE Code of Conduct

Paragraph 1 on OSCE Officials’ Conduct

“ OSCE officials shall conduct themselves at the highest personal and professional level at all times, while on duty and off duty, in order to successfully represent the OSCE. OSCE officials shall not act in a manner which is likely to bring discredit to the Secretariat, institution or mission to which they are assigned, to its staff and to the OSCE in general. They shall comply with the principles, norms and commitments of the OSCE and adhere to the mandate of their respective institution or mission in performing their duties.”

Paragraph 3 on Impartiality

“ OSCE officials shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the status of an international civil servant. They shall refrain from any action that might cast doubt on their ability to act impartially. OSCE officials shall not engage in any activity which is incompatible with the proper performance of their duties with the OSCE or may adversely reflect on their status, as well as on the integrity, independence and impartiality of their position and function as OSCE officials.

OSCE officials shall ensure that their own personal views and convictions, including their political and religious convictions do not adversely affect their official duties or the interests of the OSCE.”

Paragraph 6 on Professional working environment

“ OSCE officials shall abstain from any action which may be contrary to the OSCE policy on professional working environment. All OSCE officials are treated equally and with respect, regardless of gender, race, religion or belief, nationality, ethnic or social origin, age, sexual orientation, marital status or other aspects of personal status.”

Paragraph 9 on Discretion

“Staff/mission members shall observe maximum discretion with regard to all matters of official business. They shall at no time use, disseminate or publish information known to them by reason of their official position nor may they publish anything based thereon, except with the written approval of the Secretary General or their head of institution/mission. Staff/mission members shall also not communicate such information to third parties, except in connection with the discharge of their functions.

Except as part of official duties, staff/mission members are required to seek prior approval of the Secretary General or their respective head of institution/mission for performance of any one of the following acts, if such act relates to the purpose, activities or interests of the OSCE or involves the use of information known to them by reason of their official duties:

- Issue statements to the press, radio or other media of public information;
- Accept speaking engagements;
- Take part in film, theatre, radio or television productions or presentations;
- Submit articles, books or other material for publication; or
- Disclose, duplicate or transfer any information for uses other than those specified by the Secretary General or the head of institution/mission to any person, Government or authority.

These obligations shall not cease upon separation from the OSCE.”