READ

Code of ethics
for designers
CODE OF ETHICS FOR DESIGNERS

Spanish Network of Design Associations

AAD, ADCV, AGA, Cuenca Diseño, DAG, di-Ca, DIEX, Dimad, DIP, DIS, EIDE, La Exprimidora

Approved at READ’s General Assembly in Soria on March 11, 22.
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1 Preamble

This code has been developed on the basis of the analysis of 24 codes of ethics of associations around the world, the study of codes of other professional fields, reading literature on applied ethics and participatory processes with people associated or are related to READ.

One of the ways that exist to defend the profession is to discuss the mission and vision of the associations and the principles and ethical values of design, and reflect the conclusions of these discussions in different types of documents. For this reason READ has undertaken the drafting of the Code of Ethics that we present and because, moreover, is a commitment contained in Article 6 of the Statutes of READ, November 12, 2010.

We hope it will serve to promote an analytical attitude and a critical debate that will help to consolidate the ethical culture of design.

READ is an association of design associations in the Spanish territory that defends the interests of the profession. It is currently composed of twelve design associations and is part of The Bureau of European Design Associations (BEDA).
2 Functions of the READ Code of Ethics for Designers

The deontological codes of design make explicit the moral responsibilities that come from the exercise of the profession and the good professional practices that all persons involved in the process are entitled to demand. At the same time, READ’s Code of Ethics fulfills the following functions:

DECLARATIVE
Formulates the fundamental values and principles on which the professional ethics of design is based, providing criteria for action.

IDENTIFICATION
It allows to give identity and social role to the profession, providing a model of ethical conduct and identifying good and bad professional practices in design.

INFORMATIVE
Communicates to society the ethical foundations and criteria on which the relationship between the people involved in the design process and society should be based.

DISTINCTIVE
Differentiates between morally acceptable and unacceptable acts in professional practice.

METHODOLOGICAL/VALUATIVE
Allows establishing and evaluating specific circumstances according to general criteria.

COERCITIVE
Establishes elements for the control of ethically negative behaviors, as well as to warn and sanction, if necessary, those who carry out a bad practice in the professional practice.

PROTECTIVE
Defends society, citizens and the professional collective itself from threats derived from professional malpractice.

PEDAGOGICAL
To the classic functions of the deontological codes, READ adds the pedagogical function for people who are being trained and those who already practice.
Values are a set of qualities that make a person to be appreciated. They are the social and cultural concepts that govern our behavior as professionals or organizations, the experiences or ideas that we have and that we want to preserve, transmit, project and teach, whether we are more conscious or less conscious. They guide our decisions within the framework of a common good purpose in order to generate tangible benefits for society. We learn them, by osmosis from other people’s behaviors or from lived experiences. The values that institutions proclaim must be the same values they practice.

This document draws on the values that often inspire the professional practice of people associated with READ and that were collected in various participatory workshops:
SUSTAINABILITY

Value that allows to implement the design without generating any irreversible danger to the dignity of people, society and the environment. Value that shifts the importance of profit, traditionally the ultimate motive for the production of goods, to a secondary position. It disproves the idea that where there is money there is no ethics and where there is ethics there is no money. Carrying out sustainable projects ensures the survival of human beings on Earth.

Value to conserve the environment.

CRITICISM

Value that makes it possible to analyze all forms of construction of the world through design and discuss them in an argued and justified way. Value that makes it possible to enumerate virtues, defects and patterns of all design models (traditional or innovative), of all design philosophies and of all design fields of action, with open eyes and minds, in order to improve the quality of life of all people.

Value to build a better future.

ENGAGEMENT

An attitudinal value that activates people to take part in the construction of reality, getting involved in changing the negative structures of the world we live in and transforming it positively through their abilities, skills, tools and design methods in the most coherent way possible. Coherence that has to do with fidelity to one’s own ideas; with seeking balance between what we think (project), what we say (communicate) and what we do (produce), beyond external pressures or individual interests, so common in design.

Value that comes from interiority.
RESPECT

The value of respect implies the recognition of things, people and nature and treating them with care, nobility, dignity and admiration. Respect for otherness is important in design. Without people, design is meaningless. Others are a value in themselves and are absolutely necessary for the development of design. New design philosophies such as co-design, universal design or pluriversal design are based on the recognition of others as active values for the construction of the world. We design with others and for others.

It involves letting other people express themselves, recognizing the value of what they contribute and paying active attention, freeing ourselves from prejudices, in order to understand all the information they transmit to us and generate knowledge. Listening with respect implies making oneself available to the people who speak and who explain their experiences to us. Enriching the design involves active listening and critical reception of the different voices. By listening, we can establish a dialogue between people, being aware of what they think and thus be able to design better, contrasting ideas, finding different solutions and intermediate positions.

Value that comes from everyday life.

CREATIVITY

In design, the value of creativity is the ability to devise new ways of looking at reality, to reformulate questions and problems so that new paths emerge, and to provide adequate, ingenious, novel, unexpected solutions to the reality in which we live. For the designer, creativity is both an attitude and a working method.

Courage to build a better future.

RESILIENCE

It is the ability of people to persist despite the tensions or adversities they encounter along the way. People who are dedicated to design use their ingenuity, tenacity, effort, creativity and the ability to understand the environment to find solutions to the adversities they face in extreme situations.

Courage to face extreme situations.
READ Code of Ethics for Designers

VALUES

SUSTAINABILITY
*environment

ENGAGEMENT
*interiority

CRITICISM
*better future

RESPECT
*everyday life

CREATIVITY
*better future

RESILIENCE
*extreme situations
4 Structure of the READ Code of Ethics for Designers

READ’s Code of Ethics is organized in 3 levels:

**Level 1**, from article 1 to 6, aims to make explicit the **principles** that all **applied ethics** have, turning them into rules. In this way, the principles from which all reflection on applied ethics is based become tools to critically analyze the facts of everyday life. Level 1 allows us to analyze professional practice and to know whether a decision we make meets a basic ethical standard. At the same time, if someone wants to convert a professional action into a level 3 rule, he can ask himself whether the rule he drafts complies with the principles of applied ethics and is therefore appropriate for inclusion in the Code of Ethics.

- **Beneficence**: persons applying professional ethics seek to do good.
- **Non-maleficence**: when it is not possible to do good, we must involve ourselves in not doing evil.
- **Respect for autonomy**: every person must act autonomously, being responsible for himself/herself and not allowing guardianship or submitting to the authority of others without a justified reason. Autonomy implies doing good with the other people involved.
- **Rigor**: of global requirement, which covers the totality of the person and of social relations.
- **Justice**: to distribute equitably, with equal rights for all people and with impartiality.
- **Transparency**: avoiding any privilege, giving a voice to all people and showing clearly and smoothly the meaning of the choices made, with fairness, without infringing the principle of confidentiality.
Level 2, from article 7 to 13, aims to make explicit the general principles of all codes of ethics. The rules of a code of ethics should regulate how to comply with legality, professionalism, confidentiality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest and respect for all persons involved in the design process. In this way, level 2 also acts as a validation tool for level 3 rules.

- **Legality**: every code of ethics has legality as its framework, but can always go beyond it, guaranteeing rights that are not yet protected by law. Working for companies that market legal drugs is not forbidden by law, but the designer may choose, on ethical grounds, not to offer his services to these companies.

- **Professionalism**: this refers both to the subjects of the code of ethics and to the treatment of the user. The criterion of professionalism is universally governed by the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence.

- **Confidentiality**: data affecting third parties or that may damage honor and reputation are confidential, and in design, those affecting intellectual and industrial property. The requirements of the law are outside the principle of confidentiality.

- **Fidelity to specific responsibilities**: reaffirms professionalism in reference to one’s place in the company.

- **Good faith**: implies openness and honesty.

- **Avoidance of conflicts of interest**: such as nepotism, favoritism, confrontation between the interests of the company and those of the consumers, users, the country, etc.

- **Respect**: the entire code is at the service of consumers and users, who are taken into account as social agents.
Level 3, from article 14 to 52, is a guide of moral behavior created from the compilation in participatory processes of the professional experience of different people and the transformation of that experience into rules that aim to promote good practices and avoid bad practices in design. With this 3-level structure, ranging from the general principles of applied ethics to the concrete rules of professional design practice, the aim is to create a tool for understanding how the rules of the code are formulated without the need to be experts in applied ethics.

Any design professional who is faced with a dilemma or conflict of interest that is not covered by the rules of level 3 (from article 14 to 52) can make ethical decisions during professional practice based on the general principles of the READ Code of Ethics for Designers (level 2: from article 7 to 13), or on the general principles of applied design ethics (level 1: from article 1 to 6). In this way, we contemplate both the complexity of the professional world and the simplicity of ethical rules.
5 READ Code of Ethics for Designers

Article 1
Designers members of READ will seek to do good in the intimate/personal, professional/work, organizational/associative and civic/social spheres.

General principle of ethics applied to design.

Article 2
Designers members of READ will avoid doing any evil in the intimate/personal, professional/work, organizational/associative and civic/social spheres, as long as they cannot do good.

General principle of ethics applied to design.

Article 3
Designers members of READ will act from professional autonomy, which consists of the freedom to make decisions within the limits of current legislation, respect for priority rights, compliance with social contracts and the practice of universal ethical principles.

General principle of ethics applied to design.

Article 4
Designers members of READ will be rigorous in the exercise of their profession, promoting quality, demand, tenacity, effort, the search for the optimum and the will to improve.

General principle of ethics applied to design.
Article 5

Designers members of READ will be fair throughout the design process, including the entire life cycle of their designs, attending to fairness, equity, balance and proportionality between people and in the use of limited resources.

General principle of ethics applied to design.

Article 6

Designers members of READ will be transparent and promote transparency in all the actions they perform in the intimate/personal, professional/work, organizational/associative and civic/social spheres, to make their work, processes and methods understandable, as well as to avoid privileges, conflicts or tensions and to guarantee the right to freedom of expression.

General principle of ethics applied to design.

Article 7

Designers members of READ will act in accordance with the law, respecting basic human rights and universal ethical principles.

General principle of ethical codes.

Article 8

Designers members of READ will act in accordance with professionalism, exercising their activity with rigor, ability, effort, knowledge, high skills, autonomy and public service; doing good and avoiding evils to those who have some kind of involvement in the design process.

General principle of ethical codes.

Article 9

Designers members of READ will maintain the confidentiality of all information and data acquired during their work that may damage the reputation, honor, affect the intellectual/industrial property or involve a disadvantage with respect to others involved in the profession. The principle of confidentiality shall cease to be in force when required or imposed by a court order.

General principle of ethical codes.
**Article 10**

Designers members of READ will act with fidelity to their specific professional responsibilities in reference to the workplace they occupy or the functions performed in the company.

**General principle of the codes of ethics.**

**Article 11**

Designers members of READ will act in good faith, thinking of others when projecting and producing, from the truthfulness, transparency, good intentions and honesty.

**General principle of ethical codes.**

**Article 12**

Designers members of READ will avoid conflicts of interest, preventing any nepotism or favoritism and avoiding the confrontation between the interests of a person or company and the interests of other people involved or professionals.

**General principle of ethical codes.**

**Article 13**

Designers members of READ will act with respect, ensuring autonomy and recognition of the integral value of all people, institutions and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN), with special emphasis on social and environmental protection.

**General principle of ethical codes.**

**Article 14**

Designers members of READ will observe human rights and therefore will not act in a way that promotes discrimination against any person based on race, ethnicity, religion, social status, gender identity or any other reason set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Principles to which the rule attends: respect, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest.**
**Article 15**

Designers members of READ will comply with and respect the laws contained in international treaties, European Union legislation, the Constitution, organic and ordinary laws, legislative decrees and decrees laws, regulations of the State and the autonomous communities or the place where they work.

**Principle that serves the rule: legality.**

**Article 16**

The persons who are members of READ will defend with their professional activity the status, honor, dignity and integrity of the design by observing good professional practices, ethical principles, the needs of people, the objectives of the profession and of the current projects, rules, standards, regulations, recommendations, decisions, opinions, labor agreements, principles or directives of READ, of the associations of which they are part or of other institutions related to the current project.

**Principles to which the rule is based: legality, professionalism, confidentiality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.**

**Article 17**

Designers members of READ will inform the association of malpractices by any person involved in the design process that conflict with the laws or the general principles of applied ethics and codes of ethics.

**Principles to which the rule is concerned: legality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, avoiding conflicts of interest.**

**Article 18**

Designers members of READ have the responsibility to propose solutions and alternative paths to the bad practices generated by the people involved in the design process, and to collaborate, together with these people, in its effective implementation.

**Principles to which the rule is based on: professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities.**
Article 19

Designers members of READ will seek to acquire knowledge and professional competence recognized by the educational and/or professional community through research, continuing education and work experience and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge of the people in their care.

Principles to which the rule serves: professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities.

Article 20

Designers members of READ will demonstrate their knowledge and experience with documents recognized by the educational and/or professional community when this is required by persons involved or derives from a legal requirement.

Principles to which the rule refers: legality, professionalism.

Article 21

Designers members of READ will comply with tax, financial and accounting obligations with all persons, public or private institutions involved in their professional practice (associations, official associations, workers, suppliers, public administrations, governments).

Principles to which the rule is based: legality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, professionalism.

Article 22

Designers members of READ will carry out the assignments in a reciprocal and collaborative relationship with the client within the limits of professional duty and the legislation of the country and the autonomous community, above personal interests.

Principles to which the rule is based on: legality, professionalism, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.
**Article 23**

Designers members of READ will share with the client the responsibility for the transmission or communication of the messages of the product, system or service designed. If during the evolution of the project the Designers members of READ do not share the values with the client, they may leave the project by mutual agreement. At the same time, the designer can execute the client’s project and disassociate himself/herself from the publication of his/her name as author.

**Principles to which the rule serves: professionalism, good faith, respect.**

**Article 24**

Designers members of READ will act prioritizing the optimal conservation of the ecosystem and the environment, with full respect for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (UN).

**Principles to which the rule attends: legality, professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.**

**Article 25**

Designers members of READ will promote the different philosophies of design, new areas of design and methodologies that prioritize cooperation between people for the optimal conservation of the ecosystem and the environment. In particular, philosophies such as sustainable design and its variants (emotionally durable, slow design, sustainable aesthetics, cradle to cradle, sustainable local development design), user-centered design, open design, universal design, pluriversal design, transitional design, design for social innovation, inclusive design for all or co-design.

**Principles to which the rule attends: legality, professionalism, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.**

**Article 26**

Designers members of READ will observe the “triple bottom line” and promote positive social, environmental and economic impacts in the intimate/personal, professional/workplace, organizational/associative and civic/social spheres.

**Principles to which the rule refers: good faith, respect.**
Article 27
Designers members of READ shall not perpetuate religious, political, racial, class, country, gender identity, sexual and physical stereotypes in the intimate/personal, professional/work, organizational/associative and civic/social spheres.

Principles to which the rule attends: good faith, respect.

Article 28
Designers members of READ will promote high standards of practical, aesthetic, symbolic and ethical quality in the phases of design, production, sale and consumption or use.

Principles to which the rule is based on: professionalism, good faith, respect.

Article 29
Designers members of READ will help and educate students, new graduates and new professionals in the entry into working life, developing to the maximum possible extent their skills and abilities.

Principles to which the rule attends: professionalism, fidelity to concrete responsibilities, good faith, respect.

Article 30
Designers members of READ will act in the interest of the client and/or user within the limits of professional duty and the legislation of the country and the autonomous community, above personal interests, provided they do not go against the general interest.

Principles to which the rule serves: legality, professionalism, good faith, avoiding conflicts of interest, respect.

Article 31
Designers members of READ will not work simultaneously for clients or perform assignments that are in direct competition with each other without first obtaining the informed consent of the client, except in cases where no harm is generated to either of the two clients involved.

Principles to which the rule serves: good faith, avoid conflicts of interest, respect.
Article 32

Designers members of READ will not transfer entire commissions to other designers without the informed consent of the client.

*Principles addressed by the rule: professionalism, confidentiality, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.*

Article 33

Designers members of READ will supervise the tasks entrusted to auxiliary staff and/or collaborators to respect good professional practices throughout the design process.

*Principles to which the rule serves: legality, professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoiding conflicts of interest, respect.*

Article 34

Designers members of READ will maintain the confidentiality of all information available to them about their clients or orders (intentions, production methods, business organization, etc.), except when they have a court order and/or have the consent of the client. If the designer perceives that the client wants to commit or has committed an illegality, he/she may only break the confidentiality rule before legally authorized personnel (police, inspectors, lawyers, prosecutors and judges).

*Principles to which the rule serves: legality, confidentiality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, respect.*

Article 35

Designers members of READ will be responsible for the compliance of their work team with the confidentiality rule.

*Designers members of READ will be responsible for the compliance of their work team with the confidentiality rule.*

Article 36

Designers members of READ will respect and enforce the rights of colleagues and all those involved in the design process to avoid injustices.

*Principles to which the rule is based on: legality, professionalism, good faith, avoiding conflicts of interest, respect.*
**Article 37**

Designers members of READ will observe the mission, functions and ethical values of design throughout the process: project, production, sale or implementation, consumption, use or use.

*Principles to which the rule attends: legality, professionalism, confidentiality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.*

**Article 38**

Designers members of READ will seek assignments and jobs in an honest, dignified, truthful and transparent manner, based on their professional merits, their rigor, their hard work, their skills, their efficiency, their skills, their availability and their ability to make a good project proposal, without incurring in unfair competition with other colleagues through price wars or other bad professional practices.

*Principles to which the rule is based on: legality, professionalism, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.*

**Article 39**

Designers members of READ shall advise their clients not to incur in bad professional practices.

*Principles covered by the rule: legality, professionalism, confidentiality, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoiding conflicts of interest, respect.*

**Article 40**

Designers members of READ will refuse an assignment, at any stage of the project, if they are forced by any of those involved to comply with additional abusive, illegal, immoral, unpaid or unfair demands.

*Principles to which the rule applies: legality, professionalism, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest.*
**Article 41**

Designers members of READ will respect and enforce copyright (intellectual property and industrial property) and have a duty not to plagiarize, consciously or under instructions from third parties, ideas, projects or works of other colleagues.

*Principles to which the rule attends: legality, professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, respect.*

**Article 42**

Designers members of READ will claim or renounce the authorship of an individual or collective project depending on the degree of participation they have had and the degree of respect for originality to their initial professional proposal.

*Principles to which the rule is based on: professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, respect.*

**Article 43**

Designers members of READ will be fair in criticizing the work of colleagues, using knowledge and technical and rational arguments, without denigrating or belittling the work or reputation of those involved in the design process.

*Principles to which the rule attends: professionalism, good faith, respect.*

**Article 44**

Designers members of READ will present, previously and in writing, the contractual conditions. Conditions that should incorporate the detailed description of the project, the cost estimate or basis on which the fees are calculated, the terms and conditions of realization or production, the method of payment of the assignment, the conditions of use, reproduction rights, the assignment or ownership of the assignment, the costs of unforeseen changes and the corresponding schedule.

*Principles to which the rule is based: legality, professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities, respect.*
**Article 45**

Designers members of READ shall perform their professional services in exchange for fees. They may only reduce or eliminate fees to charitable or non-profit organizations, provided that such reduction is not detrimental to the profession and / or is part of a donation of services to that entity.

**Principles to which the rule is based on:** professionalism, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.

**Article 46**

Designers members of READ shall maintain autonomy and independence with respect to suppliers, agents, companies, relatives and any interest group involved or related to the profession.

**Principles to which the rule refers:** legality, professionalism, fidelity to specific responsibilities, good faith, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.

**Article 47**

Designers members of READ will not accept commissions or payments of any other kind for the simple fact of recommending a person for a job or assigning an assignment.

**Principles to which the rule is based on:** respect, avoidance of conflicts of interest, good faith.

**Article 48**

Designers members of READ will not participate in any contest whose bases do not respect the values of this code of ethics.

**Principles to which the rule serves:** legality, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.

**Article 49**

Designers members of READ will inform and await the approval of the client if the designer wants to compete or publish the results of the work commissioned by the client, even if the authorship rights allow its use without the need to do so.

**Principles to which the rule is based on:** respect, good faith, confidentiality.
**Article 50**

Designers members of READ shall not work or collaborate with a member sanctioned by READ or member associations if he/she refuses to rectify a malpractice in the current or subsequent projects.

Principles addressed by the rule: legality, professionalism, avoidance of conflicts of interest, respect.

**Article 51**

READ associations shall warn or sanction any person who violates the rules of the Code of Ethics repeatedly.

Principles to which the rule refers: legality, fidelity to specific responsibilities.

**Article 52**

People who have leadership positions in READ shall not take advantage of such positions, as well as the prestige of the associations belonging to READ, for their own benefit.

Principles to which the rule is addressed: legality, good faith.
Final clauses

• First. READ’s Code of Ethics is subject to be modified according to the changes and transformations experienced by the Spanish society and also according to the evolution of the mission, objectives, values and functions of the profession. READ’s board of directors, or an ethics committee constituted by READ, must ensure that the code is updated, when appropriate, so that it remains a useful and efficient educational tool for all persons involved.

• Second. The board of directors of READ, or an ethics committee constituted by READ, must ensure the dissemination of the code of ethics among all READ associations, as well as among all people involved in the design process. READ is responsible for the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of this code of ethics.

• Third. The board of directors of READ, or an ethics committee constituted by READ, must develop a pedagogical dissemination function within society of the content of this code of ethics.

• Fourth. This code of ethics shall enter into force from the day following its approval in READ Assembly.
Collaborators in different phases of implementation of the Code of Ethics:

READ’s Code of Ethics has been drafted by Professor Antoni Mañach-Moreno (ESDi-URL/ ULL) in a collaborative process with different professionals related to design. We thank all of them for their time, advice, experience and contributions.

- Dr. Ramón Alcoberro (UdG)
- Jesús Ángel Alonso (DIS/READ)
- Ricardo Antón (EIDE/READ)
- Santiago Blanc (Di_MAD/READ)
- Pedro Boj (DIP/READ)
- Xavi Calvo (ADCV/READ)
- José Antonio Campoy Espinosa (DIP/READ)
- Dr. Bernardo Antonio Candela Sanjuan (ULL)
- Cristina Cavaller Serrano
- Cristina Cavaller Agustín (La Exprimidora)
- Myriam Cea (DI_MAD)
- Mario Contessotto Avilés
- Kike Correcher (ADCV/READ)
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- Francisco del Campo (AGA/READ)
- Dr. Jesús del Hoyo Arjona (UB)
- Sonia de la Iglesia García (DIP/READ)
- Juanjo Díaz López (DIP/READ)
- Mari Carmen Estevan (ADCV/READ)
- Rodolfo Fernández
- Vicente Gallega García (ADCV/READ)
- Irene García Reyes (DAG/READ)
- Eva García Robles (La Exprimidora)
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- Ginés Muñoz Pérez (DIP/READ)
- Maríà Navarro (ADCV/READ)
- Dra. Raquel Pelta (UB)
- Uqui Permui (DAG/READ)
- Paz Quintero López
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- Dr. David Vallespín (UB)
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