

Influencer Guide¹

At what point am I an influencer? Which posts do I have to mark as #advertising? And what else should I pay attention to? These are questions that should be on the minds of everyone who regularly posts on social platforms and networks. This Influencer Guide by the Austrian PR Ethics Council is intended to provide answers to these questions and be a practical aid for all those who are already influencers or want to become one.

The questions in this guide are deliberately kept very short and should be easy to answer. For better understanding, here are a few detailed notes about it:

The post features a product/brand?

A posting in front of your favorite hairdresser, with your favorite outfit or a drink in hand. Often we do not even notice that company logos or products that can be clearly assigned to a brand are in the picture. Therefore, a first check whether a product or a brand can be seen on the selected photo.

Am I an influencer or a public figure? Do I know the majority of my followers personally?

Whether someone is actually an influencer or not is difficult to evaluate objectively. A decisive factor, which is evaluated quite clearly both scientifically and legally, is whether the posting is only directed at a small, limited circle of friends or a larger target group. This also includes, for example, whether a profile on Instagram is freely accessible or set to "private" or whether a posting on Facebook is visible to everyone or only one's friends.

Do I receive a financial, material or even immaterial remuneration for posting this product/brand?

Many people think of remuneration in terms of large sponsorship contracts with expensive fees. But quid pro quo starts with a hairdresser giving you a discount for mentioning her business in your Insta stories; or a smoothie store owner friend giving you drinks regularly and you sharing photos of yourself with smoothies across your social networks in return.

I often post about this brand/product. I benefit from the brand's strong image or the brand benefits from my image.

But even if there is no quid pro quo, you may be benefiting from a brand's image or vice versa. In this case, it is not clear whether this posting should actually be classified as advertising. In this case, we recommend a clear label about the relationship of you to this company, brand or product.

If the posting is advertising or if it appears that it could be advertising, then labeling is mandatory. The basis for this is the online code of the PR Ethics Council and the Media Act.

¹ This Guide was first published in 2019 by the Austrian Ethics Council (www.pr-ethik-rat.at)

Please note the following when labeling:

- It must be immediately and clearly visible.
- The labeling as #advertising must not be hidden under dozens of hashtags.
- The labeling must be one of these according to the media law: Advertising - Paid advertisement - Paid insertion.
- If it is a video, the advertising character must already be recognizable before opening the video as well as during the entire playback time.
- Also the linking to contents of other postings or pages against compensation in the form of remuneration must be marked as #advertising.

Further Information:

Online Code of the PR Ethics Council:

http://www.prethikrat.at/wordpress-dev/wp-content/uploads/Code-of-Conduct-Digital-Communication_EN_Version-2.0.pdf