



Pursuant to Article 54 of the Statute of the Croatian Public Relations Association (hereinafter: CPRA), the Board of Directors, at its 16th session held on June 30, 2026, adopted the following:

REGULATIONS OF THE ANNUAL the! award
OF THE CROATIAN PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION

I. PREAMBLE

Article 1

The the! award is established to honor and award the most outstanding achievements of communication professionals in their field, thereby promoting and improving the overall state of the communications industry. The the! award of CPRA represents a recognition by the professional association of excellent public relations projects in South East Europe, intended for public relations experts employed by legal entities as well as independent experts in this field. The the! award aims to raise the reputation of the profession in the public, promote excellence in communication, continually review and improve the principles of good business practice and fundamental values of CPRA members, and encourage members to participate actively in the work of the association.

Article 2

the! award is organized once a year in accordance with the decision of the CPRA Board of Directors.

Article 3

The competition is announced publicly in accordance with the provisions of these Regulations.

Article 4

The selection procedure for choosing the winners of the award shall be carried out by public relations experts appointed to the expert jury, as provided for in Article 14 of these Regulations.

Article 5

The CPRA Board of Directors adopts the Regulations of the the! award, as well as its amendments, at its sessions based on proposals collected from members of the previous annual award jury, CPRA members, and applicants from previous annual competitions.

II. COMPETITION AND COMPETITION ENTRIES

Article 6

All entries are considered competition entries:

1. that are an own product of legal and natural persons supplying the entry, regardless of the market in which they are implemented
2. that are carried out in the calendar year stated in the Application form and Mandatory instructions (in the case of multi-annual projects, the applicants independently choose for which phase and which year they will submit the project, taking into account that the project, regardless of the number of phases, may be submitted only once)
3. that are accompanied by a duly completed, standardized application form
4. that correspond to the categories of the competition
5. that were sent in the form, format, and within the deadline stipulated in the conditions
6. that contain all the required information
7. for which the planned registration fee has been paid, with the attached proof of payment.

Article 7

Projects implemented over multiple years under the same title may be submitted for the award multiple times, provided they meet the following criteria:

1. activities and outcomes differ from previously submitted years, with the differences being clearly stated and described in the submission,
2. the new submission includes an analysis of outcomes from previous years that are relevant to evaluating the continuity and impact of the project.

Applicants independently choose for which phase and which specific year they will submit the project, taking into account that a project within the same phase may be submitted only once.

Article 8

The official competition is published on the CPRA website and partner PR association in the region. The CPRA may organize workshop for project applications.

III. COMPETITION CATEGORIES, AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Article 9

By communication, these Regulations mean methodologically designed, one-time or repeated communication with external or internal publics, using appropriate communication tools, in line with set goals and anticipated effects.

Article 10

The same project may be submitted for national awards and the regional the! award, following the specific rules for individual award entries.

Individual parts of the same project may not be submitted separately across various categories.

Article 11

The competition categories of the! awards are:

1. the! award for Strategic Communication Project/Program/Campaign

A strategic communication project, program, or campaign rooted in a comprehensive communication strategy. Submissions must demonstrate environmental and stakeholder analysis, clearly defined objectives, an overview of the tools used, and a review of the achieved outcomes. Special merit is given to projects that creatively and innovatively link communication activities with measurable business and social outcomes, deliver long-term impact, and successfully shift the perception, behavior, or relationships of key stakeholders.

2. the! award for Crisis Communication

A communication project predominantly and primarily focused on the field of crisis communication, demonstrating excellence in crisis management. The project must showcase successful strategic planning and communication essential for protecting reputation, business operations, and relations with the media and stakeholders during a crisis.

3. the! award for Integrated Campaign

Projects demonstrating the successful execution and integration of diverse communication channels and tools into a coherent whole. This encompasses integrated communication activities, content and video formats, and influencer relations.



4. the! award for employer branding/Internal communication

Communication projects or campaigns aimed at building and strengthening the employer brand, targeting either external or internal audiences. Key elements include the strategic integration of external and internal activities, consistency of messaging toward current and potential employees, and a clear contribution to business goals and organizational culture through multidisciplinary collaboration (Communications, HR, Marketing, Management, etc.).

5. the! award for advocacy, public policy communication, and political campaigns

Projects designed with the aim of influencing political decisions or communicating public policies, combining analytical work with strategic communication. This includes political communication projects focused on electoral processes and campaigns to promote candidates, parties, or political initiatives.

6. the! award for multi-stakeholder and multi-sector collaboration

Excellence in communication resulting from the successful collaboration of different organizations, sectors, or stakeholders, requiring a joint submission by all participating parties. Rewards strategically designed projects realized through partnerships (public, private, non-profit, academic) that achieve results far exceeding what any single organization could accomplish independently.

7. the! award for social impact and sustainability

Outstanding communication projects in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability. Focus is placed on strategic communication that successfully engages key stakeholders and promotes values that extend beyond core business operations.

8. the! award for digital, social media, and AI-driven communication

Projects predominantly focused on digital channels, social media, and other digital tools used innovatively within public relations. Evaluation emphasizes innovation in utilizing digital platforms and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for data analysis, content creation, and audience targeting, as well as their contribution to increased efficiency, personalization, and reach.

9. the! award for event communication

Communication of an organized and executed event, covering a wide spectrum of formats such as conferences, festivals, as well as sports and cultural manifestations.

Article 12

Awards in individual categories are granted based on the applications received. In each category, gold, silver, and bronze awards can be presented. Based on the evaluations of the jury, a category may feature multiple award winners at the same tier or no award winners at all if minimum quality benchmarks are not met.

The condition for receiving an award is reaching the minimum percentage based on the sum of the average grades of all criteria within the following defined score ranges:

- **91 - 100%** – Gold
- **81 - 90%** – Silver
- **71 - 80%** – Bronze

The final range of points for gold, silver, and bronze is determined such that the highest number of points awarded after the final round of voting represents the median for gold, from which the operational brackets are calculated.

The calculation of these ranges is the responsibility of the Executive Director, verified and confirmed by the Board of Directors before the official ceremony.

Article 13

Prizes are officially presented to the winners at the annual awards ceremony.

IV. JURY

Article 14

The jury consists of representatives from all participating States. Jury members are nominated by partnering public relations associations from South East Europe and appointed by the CPRA Board of Directors prior to the launching of the public call for the current year.

Each participating State is entitled to a minimum of 1 (one) and a maximum of 3 (three) members on the jury.

The exact number of jury members from each participating State for the current year is determined proportionally to the number of applications received from that State in the previous calendar/award year.

All nominees must have a minimum of 10 (ten) years of relevant professional work experience.

Current members of CPRA governing bodies are ineligible to serve on the jury.

Article 15

Members of the jury are appointed for a term of one or two years, in accordance with the public call. A jury member may serve for a maximum of 2 (two) consecutive terms. After completing two terms, they are ineligible to serve on the jury for the next 3 (three) years, unless they are appointed as President for an exceptional third term.

The terms of office for the President and the Deputy President shall be limited to a maximum of one term in each position. By decision of the Board of Directors, the Deputy President of the jury automatically becomes the President of the jury the following year.

Article 16

The decisions of the jury are valid if at least 75% of the total jury members evaluate the projects. Remote evaluation of projects may be organized for all members of the jury via secure electronic communication channels at the discretion of the President of the jury.

Article 17

Every member of the jury is obliged to sign a confidentiality agreement, committing to keeping all competition data confidential and strictly adhering to non-disclosure provisions regarding third parties.

Article 18

Prior to judging, all jury members must sign a declaration committing to objective evaluation based solely on the designated criteria. To prevent conflicts of interest, jury members cannot evaluate projects involving:

- Their own work
- Any organization (company, agency, institution, or association) where they, a family member, or a close business associate/major client is employed
- Any entity affiliated with their current or past employers.

Reporting and Recusal Procedure

Jury members must immediately report any potential conflict of interest to the Executive Director. Before evaluation begins, the Executive Director will officially document and determine recusals, notifying the rest of the jury without disclosing the underlying reasons. A recused jury member is completely excluded from both the evaluation and any discussion or commenting within that entire category.

Specific Political Recusal

Jury members who hold an official position or active membership in a political party are automatically recused from evaluating and discussing projects within the political communication category.



Doubts and the Court of Honor

If a jury member is uncertain whether a conflict of interest exists, they must request an opinion from the Court of Honor, which shall issue its binding decision within 72 hours.

Anti-Lobbying

Lobbying by applicants and sharing insider data by jury members are strictly prohibited. Any jury member who becomes aware of such behavior is required to report it immediately to the CPRA Court of Honor.

Article 19

Acting outside the framework of the signed statement and the rules set out in these Regulations is considered unethical and harmful conduct that undermines the jury member's credibility and integrity, harms the jury's objectivity, and may result in adverse consequences or disciplinary actions by CPRA.

V. EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

Article 20

The evaluation of all competition entries is based on the following fundamental principles:

PRINCIPLE OF ORIGINALITY

Annual awards are granted to continuously improve quality in the design and implementation of public relations.

PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY

CPRA guarantees equal access to application and evaluation to all entities and individuals engaged in public relations under the conditions prescribed by these Regulations.

PRINCIPLE OF OBJECTIVITY

CPRA guarantees the independent application of all evaluation criteria adopted by the Board of Directors, ensuring no applicant receives preferential treatment.

PRINCIPLE OF CONFIDENTIALITY

CPRA guarantees the consistent application of these regulations and the absolute confidentiality of voting results until the winner is officially announced.

VI. EVALUATION PROCESS

Article 21

Prior to the content evaluation process, all submitted applications undergo a mandatory administrative review. The President and the Deputy President of the jury, with the operational support of the Executive Director, jointly determine the technical compliance of each application. This process verifies the completeness of documentation, compliance with technical formats, and adherence to deadlines.

Only technically compliant applications are forwarded to the jury for substantive evaluation.

Article 22

Following the administrative review, jury members receive the valid materials for consideration. During secret voting, all eligible jury members evaluate the entries on a prepared ballot, respecting the conflict-of-interest boundaries set out in Article 18.

Article 23

Jury members must discuss the entries before finalizing their scores. In the event of ambiguities regarding the applications, the jury may request clarification or a supplement from the applicant, which must be submitted within 24 hours.

The evaluation process is conducted anonymously and in secrecy, managed under the direction of the President of the jury.

Article 24

Each jury member evaluates the entries independently and absolutely, in line with their professional knowledge and authority. A jury member who fails to fulfill their agreed evaluation obligations cannot be re-appointed to the jury and may be suspended from the active panel.

If a member is suspended, the jury continues its work provided it maintains the minimum 75% quorum.

Article 25

The jury retains the discretionary right to reassign a submission to a category different from the one initially chosen. This right specifically applies in the event of only a single application within a category, provided there is a logical link between the project and the new category.

Any relocation must be approved by a public majority vote of the jury members present, and the applicant must be notified in writing with the stated grounds for the decision.

Article 26

Jury members shall submit their completed evaluation forms to the Executive Director after each evaluation round for each competition category.

Repetition of a finalized vote is not allowed.

Article 27

There will be two evaluation rounds provided there are at least 2 (two) submitted projects within a category.

Article 28

In the first evaluation round, finalists are selected based on scoring from 0 to 15/25/30 depending on criteria 1–4 of the applicable Procedure.

To qualify for the finals, a project must achieve a sum of average points at least equal to or higher than 51% in each individual criterion and/or at least 60% of the total maximum possible score based on the active jury pool.

Finalist projects automatically move into the second round.

Article 29

No later than 5 (five) days after the first evaluation round is completed, the finalists for each category shall be publicly announced on the CPRA website and notified via email.

All finalists are invited to participate in the Finalists' Showcase, where they present their projects and answer the jury's questions.

Article 30

Following the Showcase, jury members rescore the projects from 0 to 5/15/25/30 based on criteria 1–5 in Table IV. The Executive Director compiles the final scoring sheets, and the validity of the winner calculation is verified and confirmed by the President and Deputy President of the jury.

Article 31

The overall project score is formed by the total sum of the average scores obtained for each individual criterion (maximum 100 points). Depending on the registration category, one of three separate evaluation procedures applies:

Criterion	EVALUATION PROCEDURE 1	EVALUATION PROCEDURE 2	EVALUATION PROCEDURE 3	MAXIMUM POINTS
1	Research, Context, and Positioning	Communication Challenge and Strategic Approach	Communication Challenge and Strategic Approach	0 – 30
2	Target Audiences, Stakeholder Engagement, and Messaging	Evaluation Benchmark and Achieved Objectives	Evaluation Benchmark and Achieved Objectives	0 – 25
3	Channels and Platforms	Innovativeness in Approach	Innovativeness in Approach	0 – 15
4	Measurement and Learning	Social Value and General Relevance	Creativity in Implementation	0 – 25
5	Presentation of the Implemented Project	Presentation of the Implemented Project	Presentation of the Implemented Project	0 – 5
	TOTAL SCORE:			Maximum 100

Table – Evaluation Procedures for the second evaluation round

Article 32

Depending on the registration category, the evaluation for the Award is based on the following criteria:

Article 32.1.

Evaluation Procedure 1 (For entries in Category 1)

1. Research, Context, and Positioning

This criterion assesses whether the communication project is firmly grounded in verified data and analysis, ensuring the strategy is not based on assumptions. A deep understanding of the operating environment and the target audience is crucial for the project's success. The project must demonstrate that strategic planning derived from a detailed insight into the current situation. A comprehensive analysis must be attached, covering the social, economic, cultural, and political landscape affecting the project. Evidence of relevant market research, as well as the clear identification, analysis, and profiling of all key stakeholders critical to the project's success, must be provided.

The foundation of the project must consist of concrete data regarding stakeholder needs and expectations. An analysis of similar initiatives must ensure the project's strategic distinctiveness in the market. Along with a clearly defined purpose and long-term impact, a core narrative must be developed that clearly explains the project's significance. Planning must also incorporate alignment with market trends, the legal framework, and sustainability standards (ESG).

2. Target Groups, Stakeholder Engagement, and Messaging

This criterion evaluates the effectiveness and precision in defining target groups, crafting strategic messages, and planning engagement activities. The project must demonstrate a clear and structured approach to reaching target groups. Target groups and stakeholders must be precisely defined and categorized. Accordingly, the designed target communication messages and the choice of appropriate communication tools must be presented. The project must include a detailed communication plan with a clear structure and timeline for all envisioned activities.

The project must plan for ongoing stakeholder engagement. It must be demonstrated that the engagement approach is strategically tailored to the specific needs, motivations, and interests of the identified stakeholders. The design and planning of clear engagement objectives for the phases before, during, and after the project launch must be showcased, with the goal of building long-term involvement. The narrative should be supported by practical examples and explain the process of internal employee and leadership activation in detail.

3. Channels and Platforms

This criterion assesses the strategic selection and effectiveness of the communication channels and platforms used. It is crucial to prove how they ensure maximum visibility and credibility for the project. The project must demonstrate the optimal utilization of available platforms for consistent communication and engagement. The utility and

justification of the chosen communication channels (owned, earned, paid) to achieve the objectives must be proven. The effectiveness of using owned channels for consistent communication must be displayed, along with a detailed description of the activities designed to engage the audience. In the case of collaborations or partnerships with relevant bodies or organizations, their strategic use to ensure maximum visibility and enhance project credibility must be demonstrated.

4. Measurement and Learning

This criterion evaluates the process of continuous measurement, evaluation, and adaptation of the communication project. It is essential to prove the project's impact and utilize the collected data to ensure its long-term success. Clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) must be defined to monitor the level of audience and stakeholder engagement, as well as the reputational strength of the project. The project must be accompanied by measurable data and evidence of engagement, and the evaluation must encompass outcomes, results, or long-term impact. The project must demonstrate the ability to learn from data and optimize its strategy. It must be proven how measurement and evaluation results are actively used to refine the communication strategy and adjust messages and channels during and after project implementation. It is necessary to explain how each measurement and learning cycle ensures the long-term and sustainable impact of the project.

Article 32.2.

Evaluation Procedure 2 (For entries in Categories 2, 5, 6, and 7)

1. Communication Challenge and Strategic Approach

A description of the strategic approach to a specific problem, as well as the method of problem-solving and project implementation. This includes preparatory actions for project realization, project planning, and management, including an analysis of the situation, the problem, and the environment. It also covers conducting initial research and selecting research methods (if research was conducted), identifying target groups and key stakeholders, and shaping communication messages alongside a timeline.

2. Evaluation Benchmark and Achieved Objectives

Project quality is proven through precision in planning and measurable results. Submissions must contain clearly defined SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and show their strong link to the organization's business goals. The measurement methodology and effectiveness in addressing the set challenges are evaluated. Results must be presented in accordance with the internationally recognized Barcelona Principles. In line with professional standards, the AVE (Advertising Value Equivalent) model is not an acceptable format for proving project success.

3. Innovativeness in Approach

This criterion focuses on the innovativeness and uniqueness of the project compared to standard practice. The selection process for communication tools and channels is evaluated, as well as the way the public was involved in shaping the strategy. Special emphasis is placed on developing innovative solutions that increase project efficiency, create new value, and clearly link the set objectives to their realization.

4. Social Value and General Relevance

This criterion focuses on the actual impact of the project on society or a segment of it. It is necessary to describe the positive changes and added value the project brings to the community, regardless of its scope of implementation. Special emphasis is placed on long-term sustainability – evaluating whether it is a temporary solution or a project with potential for further development and lasting positive impact. The contribution may manifest as a positive impact on the broader community, but also through protecting the legitimate interests of a specific group, stabilizing relations, preventing conflict escalation, mitigating negative consequences, or responsible and professional crisis management. Long-term value may be demonstrated through developing a procedure or standard applicable to future situations, which will mitigate risks over the long term and make the company/organization more resilient to incidents that could cause crises.

Article 32.3.

Evaluation Procedure 3 (For entries in Categories 3, 4, 8, and 9)

1. Communication Challenge and Strategic Approach

A description of the strategic approach to a specific problem, as well as the method of problem-solving and project implementation. This includes preparatory actions for project realization, project planning, and management, including an analysis of the situation, the problem, and the environment. It also covers conducting initial research and selecting research methods (if research was conducted), identifying target groups and key stakeholders, and shaping communication messages alongside a timeline.

2. Evaluation Benchmark and Achieved Objectives

Project quality is proven through precision in planning and measurable results. Submissions must contain clearly defined SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and show their strong link to the organization's business goals. The measurement methodology and effectiveness in addressing the set challenges are evaluated. Results must be presented in accordance with the internationally recognized Barcelona Principles. In line with professional standards, the AVE (Advertising Value Equivalent) model is not an acceptable format for proving project success.

3. Innovativeness in Approach

This criterion focuses on the innovativeness and uniqueness of the project compared to standard practice. The selection process for communication tools and channels is evaluated, as well as the way the public was involved in shaping the strategy. Special emphasis is placed on developing creative solutions that increase project efficiency, create new value, and clearly link the set objectives to their realization.

4. Creativity in Implementation

Evaluation is based on the inventive and strategically justified manner in which the project was realized. The original use of existing tools and channels is valued, alongside the project's ability to differentiate itself from the competition and advance current practice through innovative approaches. It is crucial to prove the successful application of creative solutions in context to create additional value, all of which must be grounded in a strategy that defined and subsequently achieved the objectives.

Article 33

In the second round of evaluation, regardless of the entry category, an additional criterion is the project presentation, which is an integral part of the project submission. The content of the presentation of the implemented project is evaluated, as well as the communication effectiveness of the presenter in delivering key messages clearly, professionally, within the time limit, and while highlighting those aspects that make the project excellent.

The project presentation may contain up to 15 pages, including photographs and video content, while the oral delivery is limited to five minutes. Video content must not exceed 2 minutes in total. Additional links within the presentation itself are not allowed.

Article 34

No later than 5 (five) days after the evaluation is completed, the finalists for each of the Award competition categories shall be publicly announced on the CPRA website. This information shall also be officially sent to the email addresses of the project applicants and CPRA members.

Article 35

All award finalists are invited to participate in the Finalists' Showcase, where they present their projects to the jury members and answer the jury's questions.

Article 36

Following the Finalists' Showcase, jury members rescore the projects with points from 0 to 5/20/25/30 based on criteria 1–5 in Article 31, Table

Upon completion of the secret ballot evaluation, all scoring sheets must be handed over to the Executive Director.

Article 37

Based on the submitted scoring sheets and in accordance with these Regulations, the Executive Director calculates the winners for each category. The validity of the calculation is verified and confirmed by the President and the Deputy President of the jury.

VII. LEGAL REMEDIES AND FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 38

All decisions and final evaluation scores of the jury determined in accordance with the provisions of these Regulations are final and binding.

Article 39

The President of the jury is authorized to interpret the provisions of these Regulations during the evaluation process. If an individual jury member is dissatisfied with the interpretation, they may request a formal written ruling from the CPRA Board of Directors, which holds final authority over structural interpretations.

Article 40

Following the publication of each round of voting results, applicants may file an objection to the evaluation procedure with the Board of Directors within 7 days. The Board of Directors must, within 15 days of receiving the complaint, obtain a written clarification from the jury and deliver the final resolution to the applicant.

Article 41

Personal data collected during the application process are processed in accordance with applicable European and Croatian regulations, specifically Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR). Submissions are utilized strictly for evaluation and award promotion. Personal archives containing the core winning



entries and names of involved professionals are kept permanently by CPRA, while all other supplementary documentation is securely destroyed 6 (six) months following the conclusion of the award cycle.

Article 42

The Regulations of the annual the! award enter into force and are valid from the day of their adoption.

Zagreb, June 30, 2026

PRESIDENT

Mario Aunedi Medek