

Meetings Held Under the Chatham House Rule

The information here that relates to the Chatham House Rule has been taken from the Royal Institute of International Affairs who devised the Rule and who may choose to amend its definition from time to time. Further information on both the Institute and the Rule can be found at <http://www.riia.org>

Definition

“When a Meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.”

EURIM’s Application of the Rule

EURIM tends to use a less strict variation of this rule, whereby participants are free to use the information received at the meeting and the identities of those present at the meeting may be revealed in the minutes, but no comments are attributed to any one individual. Working groups can use any interpretation they wish provided it is made clear at the beginning of the meeting, or at the beginning of that part of the meeting to which it applies. Some EURIM meetings are run completely “off-the-record” on occasions when the Chatham House Rule is not strict enough.

Explanation of the Rule (by RIIA)

The Chatham House Rule originated at the Royal Institute of International Affairs with the aim of guaranteeing anonymity to those speaking within its walls in order that better international relations could be achieved. It is now used throughout the world as an aid to free discussion

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. When was the Rule devised?

A. In 1927, then refined in 1992 and amended in 2002.

Q. Should one refer to the Chatham House Rule or the Chatham House Rules?

A. There is only one Rule.

Q. What are the benefits of using the Rule?

A. It allows people to speak as individuals, and to express views that may not be those of their organizations, and therefore it encourages free discussion. People usually feel more relaxed if they don't have to worry about their reputation or the implications if they are publicly quoted.

Q. How is the Rule enforced?

A. Chatham House can take disciplinary action against one of its members who breaks the Rule. Not all organisations that use the Rule have sanctions. The Rule then depends for its success on being seen as morally binding.

Q. Is the Rule used for all meetings at Chatham House?

A. Not often for the larger meetings (so called General Meetings); more frequently for smaller ones, for example where work in progress is discussed or when subject matter is politically sensitive.

Q. Who uses the Rule these days?

A. It is widely used in the English-speaking world - by local government and commercial organisations as well as research organisations.