EUROPEAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR CIVILIAN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

CODE OF CONDUCT

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1 The CoE Code of Conduct: Scope of application

This Code of Conduct applies to all contracted staff, seconded national experts, interns and trainees at the the European Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Civilian Crisis Management. For ease of readability, these individuals will hereinafter be referred to collectively as the CoE staff members.

Consultants contracted by the CoE must also adhere to the principles laid out in this Code of Conduct.

2 General principles

The CoE complies with the legislation and regulations of the Federal Republic of Germany. It also requires its staff members and partners to do the same. Staff members shall meet all contractual obligations towards third parties and observe voluntary commitments and policies of the association. In case of uncertainty, CoE staff members seek advice from their line management. Ultimately, the Director is responsible to take decisions and action.

This Code of Conduct seeks to contribute to integrity and transparency within the association and in relationship with CoE members, preferred partners, and external stakeholders. It is designed to help CoE staff members use their judgement and common sense to make the right decisions. All CoE staff members should, by implementing this Code of Conduct, strive to lead by example. The Code of Conduct is issued to all staff members and signed by them at the beginning of their employment/secondment/contract period. Violations of the Code of Conduct may lead to disciplinary measures, from oral warning to written warning up to dismissal of contracted staff, or request to apply disciplinary measures from a seconding entity.

4 Regulations

4.1 Prohibition of bribery and active or passive corruption

- Offering and accepting bribes and advantages

- The CoE's funds and other assets must not be used for improper purposes. CoE staff members do not offer bribes to anyone, nor do they make direct or indirect, e.g. via agents or consultants, improper payments to officials, including employees of state-controlled companies, or private individuals. CoE staff members do not grant any other advantages to intentionally influence current or future decisions of any person (e.g. generous invitations or monetary inducements), directly or indirectly.

Advantages are all benefits without prior entitlement which allow for a better economic, legal or personal position of the recipient or someone connected to the recipient. These may include private travel economic discounts, access to vehicles, individual discounts, consultancy agreements, and noteworthy entertainment or hospitality invitations.

To ensure that gifts and other advantages **given** to third parties are permissible, staff members must take note of the following:

- Gifts and advantages can exclusively be given as a gesture of hospitality.
- Gifts and other advantages given must not create an impression of dishonesty, impropriety, or indebtedness.
- Cash or voucher gifts are not permitted, irrespective of their value.

Staff members must be particularly attentive in interaction with government and public officials, including civil servants, judges, office holders in public law (such as ministers or deputy ministers), and individuals tasked with duties in public administration, such as election supervisors. CoE representatives may not pay or arrange for facilitation payments to be made by third parties.

Facilitation payments refer to illegal payments given to public officials, typically in minor positions, to expedite an official process. Such payments arise in situations where the payer is legally entitled to the actions being expedited, such as clearing customs.

Additionally, CoE staff members must not accept bribes or unsuitable advantages from third parties, such as suppliers, contractors, and agents. They must be careful not to create any perception of improper influence.

If a staff member **receives** gifts or other advantages, they must verify their permissibility by adhering to the following guidelines:

- Gifts and advantages can only be accepted as an act of politeness/hospitality. Staff members should reject or return any impermissible gifts or advantages.
- Accepting gifts or advantages should not give an impression of impropriety, dishonesty or indebtedness.
- Cash or vouchers must not be accepted, irrespective of their value.
- If there is any doubt about the acceptability of a gift or advantage, staff members shall not accept them.
- If a staff member cannot refuse a gift that is unacceptable, it shall be used by the CoE. Gifts and advantages can, for example, be contributed to a CoE internal prize draw.

For instance, accepting a bottle of sparkling wine on a special occasion is acceptable. Accepting cash, regardless of the amount, is never allowed under any circumstances.

- Staff discounts

- Staff members are permitted to accept staff discounts from third parties provided these are granted equally to all CoE staff members.
- The Director decides which staff discounts are acceptable if offered and are to be granted equally to the entire staff.

Staff discounts may include discounts on private hotel bookings, flight bookings or purchases, and are granted to members of the staff on the basis of their affiliation with the CoE, rather than for personal reasons.

- Accepting hospitality/invitations

- Accepting an offer for food or a drink is considered appropriate. If invitations are repeated, this could create the impression of undue influence and have to be rejected.
- The immediate line manager must be informed in writing about hospitality offers or invitations in advance. The line manager decides whether the invitation can be accepted. In case of doubt, consultation with the Director shall be sought.

- Reimbursement of travel expenses and/or costs for events by third parties

Third parties may only cover travel expenses and/or costs for staff members attending events as part of business travel in compliance with regulations such as the German Travel Expenses Act for reimbursement of travel expenses.

- Financial transactions

Theft, embezzlement, fraud, or other criminal acts are not tolerated in any way at the CoE. The CoE Director, Senior Management Team and Head of Administration are obliged to make sure that the CoE is not misused for money laundering or other illegal financial transactions. Tax fraud or other tax offences are strictly prohibited.

4.2 Conflicts of interest

- Description of conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual or institution can no longer act impartially due to competing obligations, ties, or objectives. While it is not always possible to prevent conflicts of interest from arising, staff members must ensure they are managed appropriately.

Conflicts between personal interests and the association's interests may occur. Should these conflicts or potential conflicts of interest arise, or if there is uncertainty about whether any such conflicts exist, they must be disclosed immediately to the line manager and/or ombudspersons and handled carefully by the line manager or ombudspersons whilst consciously weighing all risks attached. If in doubt, the situation must be discussed with the Director.

- Dealing with conflicts of interest

It is essential to separate business and private matters. Conflicts of interest may stem from financial or other involvements, including indirect ones, or from personal connections to a project, business partners, competitors (including their organizations or employees), or target groups. Additionally, conflicts can arise if staff members are connected to certain individuals, such as spouses, lifetime partners, relatives (of either the staff member or their spouse/partner), or individuals living in the same household.

When a conflict of interest is identified by a staff member, their line manager is to be informed and measures are taken on a case-by-case basis by the relevant line manager to ensure that the individual(s) involved have no influence on relevant business decisions, such as those related to contract awards. Employing or awarding contracts to connected persons is strictly prohibited if it would result in a business relationship where they can make decisions affecting each other, such as in performance appraisals. Employment within a direct management line between connected persons is especially not allowed.

- In these situations, both the staff member and their line manager must ensure there is no appearance of undue influence. The manager is responsible for documenting the situation, assuring that business and private matters are separated and that the staff member concerned is not involved in any decision-making process in this regard.
- Individuals at the CoE require prior written consent of the Director to undertake employment outside of the company or take up public functions. The duty of allegiance to the CoE shall take precedence.

- Balancing professional and private activity

Sometimes it becomes difficult to differentiate between what individuals say and do in their professional work and as private individuals. There is no general rule of thumb for such situations, each individual scenario needs to be looked at specifically. In general, an employer is not entitled to comment on private statements or actions. However, with a view to social media and modern communication technologies, lines become blurred. This requires staff members to act with caution, sensitivity and a sense of loyalty and to take account of the CoE's well-justified interest in avoiding damage to its public reputation. CoE representatives must show loyalty to the Centre, both in professional as well as private contexts.

The CoE advocates for freedom of speech and political participation, recognizing that freedom of (political) expression is a crucial aspect of this. This freedom extends to social media, where the reach of communication is often unpredictable, and the accuracy of statements can be difficult to verify. However, it is equally important to protect the interests of the association, requiring careful judgment, particularly in politically sensitive matters. In case of doubt, the line manager, once learning about a case in point, takes a decision on the communication whilst informing the Director. The Director has the ultimate say in case of doubt.

4.3 Prohibition of (sexual) misconduct and harassment as well as bullying

The CoE does not tolerate any form of harassment or sexual harassment, nor bullying. The CoE has a Complaints handling approach in place which defines in detail (sexual) harassment and bullying, and explains how to report and deal with such instances and suspected cases to the CoE ombudspersons. The CoE gender strategy and action plan entails necessary measures to inform CoE staff members and help prevent any form of (sexual) harassment and bullying.

The General Act on Equal Treatment defines sexual harassment as the "*'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature'* with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of the person concerned, in particular where it creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment". It lists "unwanted sexual acts and requests to carry out sexual acts, physical contact of a sexual nature, comments of a sexual nature, as well as the unwanted showing or public exhibition of pornographic images" as equating to it. Sexual harassment is a criminal offence.

4.4 Dealing with confidential information and data security

Confidential, non-public information concerning the CoE must remain confidential. Without the expressed written approval of the management, no information, documents, or data storage devices etc. belonging to the CoE may be passed on to third parties. As a matter of principle, no comment shall be made about CoE non-public information or rumours be passed on to members, preferred partners, or other stakeholders.

4.5 At CoE premises

The CoE management is committed to creating a supportive work environment that respects the personal needs of staff members. To facilitate this, staff members shall refer to the following guidelines, making sure that all activities mentioned take place within a reasonable extent:

- Private communications: Making personal phone calls, sending private emails, and charging private cell phones in the office is permitted as long as these remain within a reasonable time frame. The activities must not result in disturbances of one's own workflow or of the work of colleagues.
- Use of technologies and internet for private matters: In exceptional cases, staff members may utilize workplace technologies and the internet to manage personal tasks. No data security shall be infringed upon and the use of CoE bandwidth must be kept to a minimum.
- Non-attendance at staff processes: At times, personal obligations prevent attendance at all-staff processes. The CoE accommodates to these needs as long as they do not exceed the justified conditions. Staff members shall always communicate non-attendance through the regular channels in advance.
- Use of CoE premises: Staff members may, as an exception, ask the Director to use CoE premises for purposes only indirectly linked to the CoE (an example of such events can be a meeting of a professional association a CoE staff member is a member of). No private events are permitted and no CoE resources, in particular personnel, shall be involved in any such events, with the exception

of the staff member initiating it. The staff member initiating such an event at the CoE premises shall be held liable for any damage to CoE property occurring in conjunction with this event.

4.6 Promoting diversity, combating discrimination – Fairness and protection of personal rights

The CoE deeply values the diversity of staff, believing that the variety of experiences, skills, and contributions staff members bring enhances the work of the CoE and leads to better outcomes. The CoE actively promotes diversity within the association and fosters a corporate culture where respectful and appreciative language and actions are the norm. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. The CoE expects all staff members to work in a manner that avoids discrimination based on race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, juniority or seniority, or sexual orientation. In line with the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG, German Law), the CoE is committed to taking the necessary—and preventive—measures to ensure protection against discrimination on these grounds.

Discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favorably than someone else in a similar situation based on any of the aforementioned grounds. However, discrimination is not always immediately apparent. For example, treating part-time employees less favorably could constitute discrimination against women, as part-time work is predominantly performed by women. Furthermore, unequal treatment may be justified if there are legitimate and reasonable grounds.

Safety and sustainability as well as personal and environmental protection are also high priorities at the CoE. The relevant safety and worker protection, as well as standards of environmental protection are to be followed in their entirety. The CoE always makes decisions carefully and in due consideration of the risks associated with its mandate. All CoE colleagues are committed to their personal responsibility and own safety, and notify managers, ombudspersons, staff representatives of any safety gaps or potentially hazardous work practices.

5 Implementation

Every CoE staff member is personally responsible for compliance with the Code of Conduct, following it in their day-to-day work activities and taking appropriate measures to prevent others from non-compliance. All line managers set an example in implementing the Code of Conduct through their own personal conduct. It is essential to create a work environment in which everyone is familiar with the contents of the Code of Conduct and where its compliance is taught, lived, and monitored by every staff member.

Any breach of this Code of Conduct can cause harm – whether it be to individuals at the CoE, external stakeholders or the CoE as an association. If any individual at the CoE has reason to believe that a violation of the Code of Conduct has occurred, they are encouraged to report this immediately to line management or to the CoE ombudsperson(s). The ombudspersons will evaluate the circumstances, fully maintaining confidentiality where possible, offer advice and action and consult experts where appropriate (such as the legal advisor, the CoE chair or the DE MFA[1]). Line managers have the responsibility to take action if they notice or are informed of violations of the Code of Conduct, especially for cases of corruption, conflict of interest and (sexual) harassment. Disciplinary

[1] These persons outside the CoE may be directly contacted if it is the Director or one of the Ombudspersons who are alleged to be involved in misconduct or other forms of breach of this Code of Conduct.

measures may consist of an oral warning to a written reprimand up to dismissal of contracted staff, or request to apply disciplinary sanction from a seconding entity. Violations of law may also have criminal implications. Anyone who reports (suspected) violations of the Code of Conduct in good faith must not be disadvantaged in any way.

Measures against misconduct:

• The CoE deals rigorously with infringements of the above principles.

• All plausible reports of misconduct are followed up and the material facts identified as far as possible.

• Every instance of non-compliance with this Code of Conduct is assessed in relation to (employment) law in order to gauge the severity of misconduct in each case and identify the appropriate measure to be taken under employment law.

• Compliance with CoE principles is enforced if a violation occurs. The CoE document on the Complaints handling approach describes all steps in detail if a complaint needs to be filed.

6 Effective date and publication

This Code of Conduct is published in English on the CoE's website and shared with members and preferred partners. The Code of Conduct was approved by the CoE General Meeting in November 2024 and put into effect by the Director in April 2025.

Contact details of the CoE ombudsperson:

Kathrin Czirr kathrin.czirr@coe-civ.eu

The CoE is currently searching for an external ombudsperson.