

GUIDELINES FOR COOPERATION WITH BUSINESSES



HEKS
EPER

Guidelines for cooperation with businesses

Solving social problems together

The work of HEKS/EPER is guided by core values and universal human rights. Human rights also apply in the private sector. This lends it considerable influence. It provides people with work and income, produces goods and services and invests in research and development. In this way it contributes significantly to the development of society and to the well-being of people.

A business sector that is also oriented towards the needs of people and the greater good must also conform to ethical principles in addition to economic ones. It must therefore be measured not only by the amount of profit it garners, but also by the means and business practices through which it does so, as well as its utility to society.

HEKS/EPER believes that there is an ethical framework within which it can cooperate with business in the pursuit of its mission as an aid agency. The aim must be to create added value for underprivileged people through stronger commitment by the business sector to global societal concerns, for example, poverty alleviation or climate protection.

At the same time, HEKS/EPER is convinced that private sector players too have a vested interest in such cooperation. When the business sector takes part in solving social problems it also strengthens its foothold in and appeal to society and by extension also its economic success.

Aims of cooperation

In cooperating with the business sector, HEKS/EPER is basically striving to obtain direct or indirect support for project work as well as to disseminate and mainstream in the businesses community the issues being addressed through project work. The following specific aims are being pursued:

- Awareness raising among enterprises regarding HEKS/EPER values, causes and issues.
- Mutual exchange of expertise between HEKS/EPER and businesses
- generating contributions to the funding of HEKS/EPER project work
- joint development and implementation of cooperation projects.

General criteria for cooperation

As a general rule, an individual assessment is always required for the forms of interaction/cooperation with firms listed below. The comprehensiveness and depth of this assessment depends on the type and scale of the cooperation.

The following overarching criteria invariably apply to all the forms of interaction/cooperation with companies mentioned:

- HEKS/EPER project work is promoted and supported and is not jeopardized either in Switzerland or abroad.
- In the best case, the image of HEKS/EPER is enhanced through visible interaction/cooperation with the business sector, while damage to image or reputation can be excluded.
- HEKS/EPER must not find itself in a situation of conflict of interests or be limited in its freedom of action.

Assessing enterprises

HEKS/EPER assesses enterprises with which it wishes to enter into partnerships within the scope of its possibilities. In appraising enterprises, it may draw on media reports, the annual reports of companies, empirical case studies from research, or databases of rating agencies. In other words, in assessing companies, HEKS/EPER officers rely mainly on information accessible via the Internet. If this throws up critical aspects of a company's business practices, it may be invited directly to comment on the matter. If necessary, outside parties may be commissioned to undertake more in-depth clarifications.

Simple evaluation

Company donations up to CHF 10,000: Donations are accepted unless they are obviously the proceeds of illegal activities or tax evasion, and the general criteria for cooperation are met.

Corporate donations of over 10,000 francs, corporate sponsorship up to an amount of 10,000 francs, contributions from company foundations, short-term assignments by volunteers, work placements in companies for participants in HEKS/EPER projects at home: In addition to the above-mentioned criteria, these cases are all specifically subject to the exclusion criteria of the HEKS/EPER investment regulations, i.e., donations are accepted only from companies whose main business activity is not in one of the following fields: the weapons and war industry, the nuclear industry, the tobacco industry, the sex industry, trade in genetically modified organisms, industries and businesses that systematically violate economic, social and cultural human rights (e.g. child labour), as well as industries whose actions systematically run counter to nature conservation, animal welfare and environmental protection.

In-depth evaluation

Where **cooperation with an enterprise is longer-term and of strategic importance to HEKS/EPER**, if it goes beyond mere participation in project funding and has a high profile, particularly meticulous evaluation is needed. This also applies to **corporate sponsorship of more than 10,000 francs, joint appeals for funds or other forms of strategic partnership**. Firms wishing to enter into such a partnership with HEKS/EPER must also meet the following requirements, in addition to the simple evaluation criteria:

Compliance: The company declares its compliance with legal frameworks in Switzerland and abroad as a corporate principle and also observes this in practice.

UN Global Compact: The manner in which a company should discharge its social responsibility is best summed up in the UN Global Compact. It lists ten principles to which enterprises should adhere:

- Support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights
- make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses
- uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour
- the effective abolition of child labour
- the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation
- support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges
- Business practices that do not contravene laws, treaties and standards for the protection of the environment, public health and safety
- encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies
- work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery

HEKS/EPER expects that enterprises with which it enters into close cooperation have joined the UN Global Compact or adhere to its ten principles. This should be appropriately reflected in their annual reporting on their business activities.

For smaller enterprises, which generally do not commit to the UN Global Compact, its principles will apply by analogy.

Furthermore, HEKS/EPER expects firms to comply with the provisions of competition and tax legislation and to ensure health and safety at work.

Lastly, in partnering with enterprises, HEKS/EPER assumes that they are open to dialogue and able to discuss issues. Their response to criticisms should be convincing and transparent and they should show willingness to accept justified criticism and take action to correct the situation that is being criticized.

Strategic cooperation projects with firms

In the framework of cooperation projects, HEKS/EPER can offer several possibilities of engagement to the staff of companies that have been rated positively in an in-depth appraisal:

- a) Engagements in specific project work (corporate volunteering),
- b) harnessing specialized know-how of companies for its project work (skills-based volunteering), and/or
- c) deploying company staff for fundraising activities.

Other aspirations are to create dialogue on the core concerns of HEKS/EPER as well as secure financial support for HEKS/EPER project work. In their communication regarding a cooperation project, firms may use the HEKS/EPER logo and describe the volunteer assignment. In its publications, HEKS/EPER mentions the cooperation projects in which it is involved and names the firms with which these projects are being undertaken. The nature, scale and duration of the cooperation are set out in a contractual agreement.

Joint project implementation

Firms that have been positively evaluated in an in-depth appraisal and which share common strategic goals with HEKS/EPER may, in close cooperation with HEKS/EPER project officers, take over aspects of project implementation and will bear the costs incurred as a result. The overall responsibility for a project remains with HEKS/EPER. The concrete contribution to be made by firms as well as the manner in which cooperation with HEKS/EPER is organized are laid out in a contractual agreement. In their communication, both firms as well as HEKS/EPER may refer to this cooperation and also use each other's logo in so doing.

Monitoring cooperation

To ensure the utmost transparency and to detect any shortcomings in good time, HEKS/EPER evaluates its corporate partnerships on a regular basis. Depending on the intensity of the partnership, the evaluation findings are discussed with the corporate partner. The outcome of the analysis determines whether the cooperation is continued.

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