

# Code of Conduct

Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER)



**HEKS**  
**EPER**  
Bread for all.

*This Code of Conduct is an integral part of the HEKS/EPER employment contract and every service/consulting/partner agreement.*

HEKS/EPER's credibility is heavily dependant on the public trust placed in it. Anyone working on behalf of HEKS/EPER plays a part in maintaining this trust.

The Code of Conduct sets out the provisions which all employees and engaged parties are obliged to comply with. They are the HEKS/EPER compliance provisions and the standards of the national and international networks of which HEKS/EPER is a member.

## **1. Scope of application**

This Code of Conduct applies to anyone who works on behalf of HEKS/EPER, whether as an employee, volunteer, Board of Trustees member, contract partner, consultant or service provider in Switzerland and worldwide. All of these persons are hereinafter referred to as 'employees and engaged parties'.

## **2. Basis**

HEKS/EPER's organisational culture is based on a universally trustworthy approach from the employer towards employees and engaged parties who play a decisive role in HEKS/EPER's success.

The HEKS/EPER Code of Conduct incorporates the values and core principles as defined in HEKS/EPER's mission statement and based on the rights and obligations of employees.

Penalties are imposed in the event of non-compliance with the Code of Conduct, see section 12 'Violations of the Code of Conduct and penalties'.

## **3. Duty of care**

### **3.1 Compliance with national and international law**

Employees and engaged parties comply with national and international law as well as with the contractual obligations of HEKS/EPER.

### **3.2 Health and safety**

Employees and engaged parties shall comply with HEKS/EPER's health and safety provisions at all times.

They shall not consume alcohol during working hours or work under the influence of alcohol. They shall not consume illegal substances at HEKS/EPER sites or in vehicles. The trading and sale of illegal drugs by employees and engaged parties are prohibited.

They shall not carry or use any weapons.

### **3.3 Equipment**

Employees and engaged parties shall treat the property of HEKS/EPER – such as equipment, vehicles and premises, etc. – with due care. Use for private purposes requires the approval of the line manager.

### **3.4 Theft**

Funds, goods and investments assigned to HEKS/EPER, contract partners or project participants shall not be illegally withheld by employees and engaged parties nor used for purposes other than those for which they are intended.

### **3.5 Environment**

Employees and engaged parties are aware of their responsibility towards the environment. In their activities they shall endeavour to minimise HEKS/EPER's harmful impact on the environment.

## **4. Conflict of interests**

Employees and engaged parties shall notify their line managers in good time if personal relationships (friendship, family, collegial or intimate relationships) with employees, project participants, engaged parties, suppliers, partner organisations, service providers, etc. could lead to dependencies or conflicts of interest. Employees and engaged parties shall not take part in consultations and decision-making directly affecting people with whom they have a personal relationship.

## **5. Rejection of abuse of power and corruption**

Employees and engaged parties shall not obtain any advantage from their position by refusing support or through preferential treatment, for example by obtaining advantages, such as sexual services, gifts or financial advantages, or advantages of any other kind.

Employees and engaged parties shall not offer any bribes, kickbacks, gifts or other favours and shall reject them if they are offered. In social contexts, this excludes small gifts as a token of appreciation provided they do not lead to dependency or conflicts of interest. Employees shall notify their line managers of any small gifts accepted.

## **6. Prohibition of discrimination and bullying**

Bullying is systematic, repeated, intentional injury, degradation or exclusion of a person or group by another person or group where an imbalance of power exists in the relationship. It can take place face to face or online.

Nobody may be degraded, harassed, humiliated, bullied or disadvantaged due to personal traits such as gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, social or other background (including racial and ethical discrimination), language, religion or economic or other characteristics. Typical bullying behaviour includes the spreading of false information, assignment to meaningless tasks, the threat of violence, exclusion or constant criticism of performance at work.

Interpersonal conflicts that arise from and/or due to differences of opinion are not generally considered to be bullying or discrimination. They require specific solutions and the involvement of the next most senior line manager.

HEKS/EPER adopts a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of discrimination, exploitation, abuse and harassment.

HEKS/EPER endeavours to create a positive atmosphere and respectful culture in all programme and project units. Employees and engaged parties are entitled to be treated politely, respectfully, fairly and without discrimination.

## **7. Prevention of sexual violence and child abuse**

HEKS/EPER does not tolerate any form of sexual violence and makes every effort to create an environment where such behaviour is prevented.

HEKS/EPER also recognises that children have a right to protection against abuse.

Employees and engaged parties shall not carry out any form of abusive behaviour and any form of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment of persons of any age is prohibited.

Employees and engaged parties shall not commit any sexual acts or forms of degrading behaviour in exchange for money, employment, goods, services, support or through exploitation of an imbalance in power of any kind.

Employees and engaged parties are obliged to protect children from harm regardless of whether they are project participants or not.

Employees and engaged parties shall not commit sexual acts with children, i.e. persons under the age of 18 years. Incorrectly assuming a person's age shall not provide protection against penalties.

## **8. Rejection of human trafficking, modern slavery, people smuggling and forced labour**

HEKS/EPER does not tolerate human trafficking, modern slavery, people smuggling or forced labour either in its own projects and programmes or in those of its partner organisations. Employees and engaged parties shall not support or tolerate such activities.

## **9. Duty of confidentiality**

Employees and engaged parties shall maintain the confidentiality of business information which they have access to as part of their work or for other reasons. This also applies to sensitive information or confidential projects of external partners or colleagues.

The duty of confidentiality also applies after the end of the employment relationship with HEKS/EPER.

## **10. Data protection and ICT security**

HEKS/EPER respects privacy and protects the personal data of employees, project participants, donors and partners, etc.

Employees and engaged parties shall comply with the applicable legal provisions on data protection and the internal guidelines on data protection and ICT security. In particular, they shall ensure the protection and integrity of sensitive personal data in their unit.

They shall ensure, in their day-to-day activities and in the units over which they have influence, that the ICT systems of HEKS/EPER are not compromised. In particular, passwords shall be treated as strictly confidential and suspicious emails are to be reported immediately to the ICT department.

## **11. Reporting process**

Employees and engaged parties are jointly responsible for creating a working environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying. In particular, this applies to employees in management roles. They take the concerns of people who make complaints seriously and take appropriate measures in cooperation with them and the HR department.

The persons concerned or witnesses shall immediately report relevant violations of the Code of Conduct for investigation. The following reporting options are available (see also handbook document 1f-B\_203.d Whistleblowing):

- Reports as part of projects or programmes are made via hotlines, complaints boxes, audit visits, etc.
- Otherwise, reports are made to:
  - Line managers
  - The management
  - The HR department
  - The Integrity Office at head office or at the national offices
  - HEKS/EPER Integrity Line <https://heks.integrityline.org>
  - Via email to [whistleblowing@heks.ch](mailto:whistleblowing@heks.ch), [whistleblowing@eper.ch](mailto:whistleblowing@eper.ch) or [whistleblowing@heks-eper.org](mailto:whistleblowing@heks-eper.org)

## **12. Violations of the Code of Conduct and penalties**

If employees or engaged parties are accused of violating the code of conduct, the person concerned is given a hearing. A fair investigation takes place before penalties or other measures are imposed. There is a presumption of innocence until the outcome is reached.

In the event of violations of the Code of Conduct, HEKS/EPER can impose one of the following penalties:

- Written warning up to termination of contract
- Termination of contract without notice depending on the circumstances and criminal charges and/or financial compensation
- Termination of contract with service providers, partner organisations, etc.

## **13. Implementation of the Code of Conduct**

Employees and engaged parties are aware of and understand the HEKS/EPER Code of Conduct and confirm this with their signature.

**Confirmation:**

I have read and understand this Code of Conduct. I confirm that I shall comply with the Code of Conduct during the period in which I work for HEKS/EPER or am perceived as a representative of HEKS/EPER. I am aware of the consequences of violating the code.

Place/date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



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