



EUROPEAN CODE OF PUBLIC INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Code for Elected Representatives, Candidates and Holders of Public Office

1. PURPOSE AND STATUS

Public office is a **public trust**, not a private privilege.

Elected representatives and public officials exercise authority delegated to them by citizens and must therefore meet high standards of integrity, competence, transparency, independence and accountability throughout their mandate.

This Code establishes common standards governing:

ELIGIBILITY → CONDUCT → ACCOUNTABILITY → SANCTION → RECALL

Its purpose is to provide:

- citizens with clear criteria for assessing candidates and office-holders;
- candidates and public officials with binding standards of responsible public service;
- civil society and oversight institutions with transparent criteria for monitoring public conduct;
- competent authorities with a common basis for proportional sanctions and, in serious cases, procedures leading to resignation, removal or recall.

Where incorporated into constitutional or statutory law, the relevant provisions of this Code shall be legally enforceable. Where not yet legally incorporated, they constitute a public commitment undertaken by the candidate or office-holder.

2. SCOPE

The Code applies, according to the constitutional and legal system concerned, to:

- candidates for elected public office;
- members of parliament;
- members of governments;
- senior public officials;
- holders of constitutionally or politically significant public functions;
- other persons exercising substantial delegated public authority where provided by law.

Its principles apply irrespective of political affiliation, ideology, nationality, institutional position or level of government.

3. FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES



Every holder of public office shall act according to the following principles.

3.1 Public Interest

Public authority shall be exercised in the public interest and not for personal, family, partisan, commercial or other improper benefit.

3.2 Integrity

Office-holders shall act honestly, consistently and in accordance with the responsibilities attached to their mandate.

3.3 Independence

Public decisions shall remain free from improper political, commercial, financial, criminal or foreign influence.

3.4 Transparency

Citizens have the right to know how public decisions are made, what significant interests influence them and what relevant financial or organisational relationships public officials possess.

3.5 Accountability

Public officials remain accountable throughout their mandate, not only at elections.

3.6 Competence

Public authority shall be exercised with appropriate knowledge, preparation, diligence and willingness to seek relevant expertise.

3.7 Democratic Pluralism

Political disagreement is legitimate and necessary. Public office-holders shall respect competing political views and the right of citizens to challenge public authority.

3.8 Responsibility

Office-holders shall take responsibility for their decisions, their foreseeable consequences and failures occurring within their sphere of responsibility.

3.9 Service Before Power

Public office exists to serve citizens, not to preserve personal position, party power or institutional privilege.

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC OFFICE



Candidates for significant public office must satisfy minimum standards of transparency, integrity and constitutional eligibility.

Candidates shall:

- fulfil all constitutional and statutory eligibility requirements;
- disclose relevant professional experience, qualifications and significant public responsibilities;
- disclose relevant financial interests, assets and sources of income as required by law;
- disclose significant business interests and positions;
- disclose circumstances creating an actual or reasonably foreseeable conflict of interest;
- disclose significant contractual or financial relationships with foreign states, state-controlled entities or other actors where relevant to the independence of the office;
- provide truthful information concerning qualifications, professional history and material interests.

Candidates shall not conceal unexplained wealth or knowingly provide materially false declarations.

Criminal proceedings

A **final criminal conviction** for offences incompatible with the integrity of public office may constitute grounds for temporary or permanent ineligibility where prescribed by law.

The existence of an indictment or ongoing criminal proceedings shall not by itself establish guilt.

However, proceedings concerning serious corruption, abuse of public office, organised crime, serious financial crime or comparable offences shall be publicly disclosed where legally permissible and relevant to the office sought.

Any restriction of candidacy must respect:

legality + proportionality + presumption of innocence + due process + right of appeal.

5. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

An office-holder must not participate in a decision where a significant personal, family, financial or organisational interest could reasonably compromise independent judgement.

Where such a conflict exists, the office-holder must:

DISCLOSE → RECUSE → RECORD

The relevant disclosure and recusal shall be publicly recorded except where legitimate confidentiality requirements apply.

Deliberate concealment of a material conflict of interest constitutes a serious breach of this Code.



6. TRANSPARENCY OF INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE

Office-holders shall disclose, according to law:

- significant assets and financial interests;
- relevant outside income;
- significant gifts and benefits;
- relevant business interests;
- lobbying contacts where required;
- conflicts of interest;
- significant external positions;
- relevant sources of political or campaign financing.

Citizens should be able to identify significant interests seeking to influence public decisions.

Transparency requirements shall protect legitimate privacy but shall not be interpreted so broadly that material political or financial influence remains hidden.

7. USE OF PUBLIC AUTHORITY AND RESOURCES

Office-holders shall not:

- solicit or accept bribes;
- engage in clientelism or corrupt exchange;
- misuse confidential information;
- misuse public funds or property;
- use public office for improper private enrichment;
- grant unjustified advantages to associates, donors or affiliated organisations;
- manipulate public procurement or appointments for improper purposes;
- use administrative authority to unlawfully disadvantage political competitors or critics.

Public resources shall be used exclusively for lawful public purposes.

8. RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Public officials possess the same fundamental right to political opinion and expression as other citizens, subject to the responsibilities arising from public office.

They shall distinguish, where materially relevant, between:

verified information
political interpretation
personal opinion
official institutional communication.

They shall not knowingly disseminate materially false information with the intention of deceiving citizens or manipulating democratic decision-making.

A factual error alone does not constitute an ethical violation.



The relevant standard requires consideration of:

knowledge + intent + materiality + repeated conduct + opportunity to correct.

Public authorities shall never use this provision to establish an official political truth or suppress legitimate disagreement.

9. DEMOCRATIC CONDUCT

Office-holders shall:

- respect constitutional democratic procedures;
- respect the dignity and equal rights of other persons;
- reject political violence, intimidation and unlawful discrimination;
- tolerate legitimate criticism and political opposition;
- participate responsibly in the work of the institution to which they were elected or appointed;
- maintain reasonable accessibility to citizens;
- provide truthful explanations for major public decisions;
- respect lawful decisions while retaining the right to seek their democratic revision.

Political disagreement, criticism of institutions and advocacy of constitutional or legislative change shall never in themselves constitute violations of this Code.

10. PERFORMANCE OF THE MANDATE

An elected mandate creates obligations as well as rights.

Office-holders shall:

- perform their duties with reasonable diligence;
- participate in institutional work;
- avoid persistent unjustified absence;
- disclose relevant performance information;
- account for major commitments made in the exercise of their mandate;
- cooperate with lawful oversight procedures.

Accountability concerns the responsible exercise of the mandate, not ideological conformity or compulsory fulfilment of every electoral promise.

11. TERM LIMITS

As a general democratic safeguard against excessive concentration and professionalisation of political power, elected office at the same level should normally be limited to:

a maximum of two full consecutive terms, unless the constitutional system provides otherwise.



This rule should be defined constitutionally or by law rather than applied retrospectively through ethical adjudication.

I would phrase this as a **systemic rule**, not as an individual ethical offence.

12. PUBLIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Public officials should contribute to the long-term quality and resilience of the political community.

Their public responsibilities include support for:

- rule of law and separation of powers;
- democratic participation;
- equal application of law;
- effective public institutions;
- responsible management of public resources;
- education, science, research and innovation;
- long-term social and economic sustainability;
- protection of legitimate national and democratic sovereignty.

However, the Code shall **not prescribe a mandatory political programme**.

Questions such as redistribution, taxation, economic organisation or particular social priorities remain matters of democratic political competition.

13. LEVELS OF VIOLATION

Violations shall be classified according to:

intent
severity
material consequence
personal benefit
frequency
concealment
abuse of public power
damage to democratic integrity.

Minor violation

Isolated failure with limited consequence and no significant dishonest intent.

Significant violation

Material breach of transparency, accountability, conflict-of-interest or official responsibility.

Serious violation



Intentional or grossly negligent misconduct involving substantial abuse of office, corruption, concealment, unlawful influence or serious violation of public trust.

Systematic or repeated serious violation

A pattern demonstrating that the office-holder can no longer reasonably be considered capable of exercising the mandate consistently with the obligations of public trust.

14. PROPORTIONAL SANCTIONS

Sanctions must be proportionate to the established violation.

They may include:

- 1. Correction or mandatory disclosure**
- 2. Formal warning**
- 3. Public finding of violation**
- 4. Administrative or financial sanction where provided by law**
- 5. Recusal or temporary restriction from a specific decision-making function**
- 6. Loss of an appointed function or institutional position**
- 7. Referral for judicial, administrative or parliamentary proceedings**
- 8. Request for resignation**
- 9. Initiation of a recall procedure**
- 10. Temporary or permanent ineligibility for specified public office**, but only where established by law and subject to due process.

No sanction should be imposed merely because an office-holder adopted an unpopular political position.

15. RECALL

Recall is an instrument of democratic accountability and must not become a tool for routine political harassment.

A recall procedure may be initiated through two distinct routes.

15.1 Citizen-Initiated Recall



A defined threshold of eligible citizens may request a recall vote under conditions established by law.

15.2 Integrity-Based Recall Trigger

A competent independent authority may initiate the legally defined recall procedure where there is a substantiated finding of:

- serious abuse of public office;
- serious corruption;
- deliberate concealment of major conflicts of interest;
- serious violation of constitutional duties;
- systematic or repeated serious violations of this Code.

An oversight authority may **trigger** a recall procedure but shall not itself remove a directly elected representative where the constitutional system reserves that decision to citizens.

The final decision shall be made through the constitutionally prescribed democratic or judicial procedure.

16. INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT AND DUE PROCESS

No political majority, government or party should possess unilateral authority to determine violations of this Code.

Oversight must be:

independent
impartial
transparent
evidence-based
subject to review.

Every person accused of a violation has the right to:

- know the allegations;
- examine relevant evidence;
- respond;
- receive a reasoned decision;
- challenge conflicts of interest among adjudicators;
- appeal a sanction.

Every decision must identify:

RULE → EVIDENCE → FINDING → PROPORTIONAL CONSEQUENCE

This mirrors the same anti-arbitrariness principle we introduced into the **Civic Funnel**.

17. CIVIL-SOCIETY OVERSIGHT



Civil society, media and citizens have the right to monitor compliance with the Code, publish documented assessments and submit complaints.

However:

Civil society may identify and document violations; legal sanctions must be imposed only through procedures established by law.

This prevents both governmental monopoly over oversight and informal public accusation from becoming punishment without due process.

18. APPLICATION THROUGH THE TRANSITION TO INTEGRATED DEMOCRACY

The Code can evolve together with the democratic system.

STAGE I — CIVIC DEMOCRACY

The Code functions primarily as:

- a public candidate commitment;
- a transparency standard;
- a civil-society evaluation framework;
- a voluntary standard where no binding legislation yet exists.

STAGE II — ADVANCED DEMOCRACY

Core provisions become legally or institutionally enforceable:

- disclosure;
- conflicts of interest;
- transparency;
- independent oversight;
- sanctions;
- defined recall triggers.

STAGE III — INTEGRATED DEMOCRACY

The principles of public integrity become part of the constitutional democratic architecture.

Eligibility, accountability, sanctions and recall operate under constitutionally protected rules and due process.

19. DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

Every candidate or holder of office to whom this Code applies shall make the following declaration where required:



I recognise public office as a public trust. I have read and understood the European Code of Public Integrity and Responsibility and undertake to comply with its applicable principles and obligations, to disclose relevant conflicts of interest and to accept the accountability procedures established by democratic law.

Full Name: _____

Office / Candidacy: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

20. FINAL PRINCIPLE

The purpose of the Code is neither to create a morally approved political class nor to determine acceptable political opinions.

Its purpose is to ensure that those entrusted with public authority meet transparent standards of integrity and remain accountable to the citizens from whom their authority derives.

Political choice belongs to citizens.

Public authority requires integrity.

Violations require evidence.

Sanctions require due process.

Delegated power must remain accountable and revocable.