

Preamble

Our democracies depend on our trust in politicians who are elected to serve the people and who have the common good in mind. Without this trust and acceptance, a representative democracy is unimaginable.

Political parties are of central importance to our democracies. The actions of political parties, their leaders, elected representatives, candidates, volunteers and paid staff make a significant contribution to the vibrancy and integrity of democracy. Politicians are held to a higher standard than most, and rightly so. Rigorous criteria are therefore needed for all political representatives mentioned above, not only regarding the perception of their public service but also their general behaviour; they must accept full ethical responsibility for their decisions, actions and omissions and strive to serve the common good.

During the last decade, we have witnessed a growing decline in trust among the general public towards democratic institutions due to scandals involving corruption, bribery and conflicts of interest, which have damaged the reputation of politicians all over the world, including in Europe at various levels. All political forces have been affected by this. Foreign influence on parties and elections is also an increasing source for concern.

Breaches of citizens' trust by public office holders and politicians represent an ongoing challenge to the legitimacy of democratic institutions and processes. They negatively affect public accountability and political credibility, and they must be addressed at all levels of society.

To strengthen people's confidence in politics, the European People's Party (EPP) is committed to playing a key role in the fight against corruption and conflicts of interest, together with upholding the duty to preserve the highest standards of integrity.

The EPP is not willing to accept unethical behaviour within our political family, and we will maintain a clean and transparent culture of politics at the service of our citizens. The EPP, therefore, has decided — in addition to existing statutory regulations pertaining to the EPP's political representatives, member parties, applicant parties, groups and associations — to adopt this Code of Conduct.

As a guideline, this Code of Conduct not only affirms the central principles of our party, but also provides guidance in case questions arise vis-à-vis citizens, media, interest groups or businesses. These core values shall guide the conduct of all our member parties, groups, member associations and their representatives.

Article 1 Scope

This Code of Conduct shall apply to all EPP Ordinary Member Parties, Associated Member Parties, Member Associations, Observer Member Parties, associated entities, Groups in Parliaments and Assemblies and the representatives of all those entities - such as the leaders, elected representatives, candidates, volunteers and paid staff - as well as individual supporting members (all the aforementioned shall be further referred to as "Members of the EPP"). It is based on Article 25 of the EPP Statutes.

Article 2 Principles

Members of the EPP shall act in their respective functions with independence, impartiality, integrity, transparency, dignity and respect for diversity.
Common principles and values which guide our actions:

- Politicians should have the common good in mind and be at the service of the people;
- Politicians must be independent and incorruptible;
- Those who exercise power must be bound by a higher moral standard;
- Politicians must respect the rule of law;

- Politicians should be able to balance and weigh competing interests;
- Politicians need to be balanced in their approaches and not be consumed by extremism or populism;
- Politicians should be able to take unpopular decisions if these are in the interest of the people; they must be able to take long-term decisions if our democracies are to advance;
- Compromise and consensus are an integral part of politics; all political discourse should be guided by respect;
- Politicians should act responsibly and exercise diligent control over all assets and resources employed or entrusted to them.

Article 3

Impartiality and conflicts of interest

1. There should always be a clear separation between party and public responsibility;
2. There should be no waste of public funds;
3. Those who hold public office shall exercise the duties assigned to them in the public interest and with impartiality and refrain from obtaining or seeking to obtain any direct or indirect benefit or reward;
4. Members of the EPP shall avoid any situation liable to give rise to a direct or indirect conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists where a politician has a personal interest that could improperly influence the performance of his or her duties.
5. Donations and financial support from private individuals and institutions have to be in line with the applicable European or national legislation; this support must be transparent and not tied to conditions or individual expectations;
6. Politicians should take decisions based on their political convictions and never be influenced by a gift or favour; it is important to avoid conflicts of interest which could arise from financial or non-financial gifts or benefits;

Article 4

Integrity

1. Members of the EPP shall exercise the duties assigned to them in the public interest and with integrity, without soliciting, accepting or receiving any direct or indirect benefit or reward in exchange for any specific behaviour in the scope of their work, and consciously avoiding any situation which might imply bribery, corruption, or undue influence.
2. Members of the EPP shall always be deemed to be exercising their duties when they participate in meetings of the constituent bodies of the EPP, events held on its premises, events held outside of its premises but supported by it pursuant to its own rules, and events at which they represent the EPP. Members of the EPP should act with honesty and integrity at all times.

Article 5

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct

1. The President of the EPP Ethics Committee and its members shall ensure that this Code of Conduct is observed and that it is applied in accordance with the Internal Regulations of the EPP Ethics Committee in good faith and with due consideration for the principle of proportionality;

2. In case of infringement and following an evidence-based inquiry of a member (according to the definition in Art. 1 of this Code of Conduct) who does not comply with the EPP Code of Conduct, the Presidency can, upon recommendation of the EPP Ethics Committee, recommend to the Political Assembly the suspension or exclusion of that member, according to the procedures stated in Article 9 of the EPP Statutes and Article 10 c of the EPP Internal Regulations. In this case, the Political Assembly shall examine the alleged violations of the EPP Code of Conduct, invite the member concerned to a hearing and render a reasoned decision.

3. The EPP expects that – following a recommendation of the Ethics Committee and a decision by the Political Assembly – the concerned EPP Group, Member Party or Member Association acts against the individual that fails to comply with this Code of Conduct;

4. Every new applicant party, during the application process, will be carefully checked for its compliance with the EPP's Code of Conduct, following a procedure to be outlined by the Ethics Committee.

5. In the EPP Political Assembly, the EPP Presidency will update the members regarding the status of signatory parties and their commitment as pertains to the EPP Code of Conduct: by signing this Code of Conduct, Members of the EPP accept the responsibility to act in order to maintain and enhance public confidence in the integrity of the political process.

Article 6 **Infringements and Complaints**

Alleged infringements or complaints should be addressed to the President of the EPP Ethics Committee in writing: ethicscommittee@epp.eu.

Article 7 **Entry into force**

This Code of Conduct shall enter into force on the first of the month following its adoption in the EPP Political Assembly.

**If you have any question
you would like to ask
please contact us.**

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