



Balkans Forward Foundation

Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Balkans Forward Foundation (BFF) is an international foundation focused on building practical skills for new leaders, developing concrete solutions to move stalled parts of the European integration process, and creating safe spaces (both physical and digital) where change can happen. BFF approach takes a long-term perspective, is based on active field presence, regional expertise, and close collaboration with local partners.

Balkans Forward Foundation strives to strengthen community leaders, including those most at risk. Balkans Forward Foundation is conducting lobbying and advocacy work to effect change, influence public opinion.

BFF work is based on three values: **skills, empowerment and efficiency**. Its employees are highly committed to their work and do not shy away from difficult subjects or geographical regions where governments and authorities do not comply with basic human rights standards. Grants are not accepted from donors who wish to direct the operations or who do not support our objectives.

Balkans Forward Foundation has considerable expertise in our fields. Our analysis is based on solid research and international human rights standards. Balkans Forward Foundation always strives for high-quality work and seeks to support the development of staff and local partners' skills and expertise.

BFF is a results-oriented, lean organisation with tight financial controls and management. To ensure learning, accountability and transparency in the planning, monitoring and evaluation, we use a results-based management system. We can quickly adapt to changing, volatile situations and have a high degree of flexibility when required.

2. PURPOSE

The Code of Conduct, together with other Balkans Forward Foundation policy documents, sets out professional standards that Balkans Forward Foundation abides by. Board members, staff, interns, volunteers and long-term consultants who represent the organisation (hereinafter referred to as: employees or similar) are required to adhere to the Code of Conduct when representing Balkans Forward Foundation, including travelling or on assignment on behalf of Balkans Forward Foundation.

Employees or similar should at all times adhere to national and international human rights standards. The Executive Director and managers are responsible for implementing and administering the Code of Conduct. Non-compliance with the Code of Conduct will not be accepted and may, in accordance with applicable legislation, lead to internal disciplinary actions, dismissal and/or, reporting to the police or other relevant authorities.

3. REPORTING OF VIOLATIONS

Suspected cases of violations to the Code of Conduct should always be reported to the direct superior or to the Committee against Corruption (CaC) who will take appropriate action. Due to the sensitivity of such cases, it is essential that all parties treat the information with care. The internal whistleblower function can be used in order to get full anonymity. The following documents are relevant to the reporting of violations:

- Anti-Corruption Policy
- Whistleblower Policy

Intentional false accusations will lead to disciplinary actions against the employee or similar who made the accusations.

4. ABUSE OF POWER

Abuse of power is taking advantage of a professional position to gain benefit for oneself or another person. For examples of improper benefits, see below, Section 8.

Employees or similar may at no time abuse their position at Balkans Forward Foundation. This also applies when not officially representing Balkans Forward Foundation. Hence, it is essential that behaviour never be reasonably understood as if favours or benefits of any kind are expected. If an employee or similar engages in a close personal relationship that could amount to or reasonably seem to be a conflict of interest with his or her work obligations, the direct superior should be informed.

This could include a relationship with a colleague, an employee in a partner organisation of Balkans Forward Foundation, or a person with a professional relation to BFF. The supervisor will, together with the Executive Director, take appropriate action as needed to ensure that decision-making and work are not affected.

5. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

All forms of sexual exploitation and abuse are prohibited, as are all forms of sexual contact with a child. Child is defined in accordance with the definition in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, any child under the age of 18. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a valid justification for the misconduct.

6. HARASSMENT

At Balkans Forward Foundation, all employees or similar shall be treated with dignity and respect and shall treat partners and other professional contacts with the same level of respect.

Harassment refers to any unwanted conduct that occurs with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It is prohibited to commit any act or form of harassment and engage in any behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, that makes the recipient feel persecuted, vulnerable or powerless. Harassment that is related to gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, nationality, religion or other belief, sexual orientation, disability or age is a form of discrimination.

7. DISCRIMINATION

Balkans Forward Foundation condemns all forms of discrimination by any employee or similar.

Direct discrimination is when a person treats, or proposes to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic, such as gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, nationality, religion or other belief, sexual orientation, disability or age.

Indirect discrimination occurs when seemingly neutral practices, policies or conditions disadvantage persons with a personal characteristic.

8. UNETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Balkans Forward Foundation applies zero tolerance to financial irregularities and corrupt practices. BFF work must be subject to a high level of business ethics. Extreme caution shall always be applied when offered different types of benefits associated with contact networking or public relations activities.

If the benefit or favour is deemed improper, the recipient is guilty of bribery and the donor of corruption. In addition to dismissal, the issue of compensation also arises. Anyone who has influence in a case may find himself or herself exposed to attempted bribery. Bribery may be committed before, during and after employment.

Examples of appropriate favours:

- working meals of an everyday character
- congratulations on round-number birthdays and other days worthy of special note, provided these are moderate in relation to the individual circumstances
- ornaments without substantial market value and other reasonable souvenirs to mark the organisation's anniversaries or similar.

Receiving or offering the above favours does not normally constitute bribery or corruption. It is safe to assume that simple gifts valued at less than EUR 50 are permitted. However, caution should be applied to meals, which do not have an immediate connection to work, such as Christmas lunches. If husbands/wives/partners are also invited, there is an increased risk that the favour is improper.

Examples of improper favours:

- gifts in the form of cash, bonds, securities etc.
- cash loans
- guarantees or funding
- remission of a purchase consideration, claim, instalment payment or interest
- private commission and bonus arrangements
- secondary deliveries of goods or services from the organisation's suppliers (e.g. building materials, transport/craft services)
- engagement of the organisation's suppliers in a private capacity at non-market rates
- access to vehicles, boats or leisure accommodation for private use
- wholly or partially paid pleasure trips or holidays. Any employee or similar offered services, gifts or other favours, which might be considered improper, must contact his/her supervisor for a decision.

The principal rule is not to accept offers of this nature.

Any exceptions must be justified, documented and approved by the Executive Director. Project cooperation which involves financial support from Balkans Forward Foundation not be undertaken with organisations in which an employee or similar or an employee's relative is a member of the management group (e.g. as a director) or holds some other position which could, or could be seen to, affect independence or lead to a conflict of interest. It is also not permitted to engage on behalf of any company belonging to employees or similar or closely related parties.

Any requests for exemption from this rule must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director for approval.

9. ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

BFF employees are encouraged to participate in activities arranged by other organisations which are in some way related to our work (for example holding seminars and writing articles). Such participation should generally be perceived as part of our work.

If remuneration is paid and the assignment is made on duty or in connection to duty, the remuneration should go to Balkans Forward Foundation. It should also, where appropriate, clearly be stated that the employee or similar is representing BFF.

Assignments or activities which are not related to work or which are not made on duty or in connection with duty, so-called personal assignments, need to be approved by the supervisor when there can reasonably seem to be a conflict of interest due to competitiveness, risk of damaging confidence and/or hindering of work.

10. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

It is prohibited for BFF employees or similar to be involved in any type of criminal activity.

Organised crime is an illegal behaviour that is planned and carried out by groups of people in a systematic fashion, such as trafficking in people and trade in cheap capital goods in the black market. Trafficking in human beings can include, for instance, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Employees or similar shall not engage in activities that are criminalised under national law, except for situations when national law contradicts international human rights standards or other norms in a democratic society, and such activities are strictly related to work and carried out in agreement with the supervisor.

11. ALCOHOL

Balkans Forward Foundation has a restrictive approach to alcohol and the consumption of alcohol. During work hours, consumption of alcohol by employees or similar is only permitted in exceptional cases, like official dinners and similar events or in other situations where the use of alcohol is expected. Alcohol consumption must, in such circumstances, be modest so as not to affect the work or jeopardise the reputation of Balkans Forward Foundation. Consumption in connection with driving is strictly prohibited.

12. PORNOGRAPHY

No pornographic material is allowed in the workplace. This includes all types of technical equipment. It is not allowed to use any equipment or material that belongs to Balkans Forward Foundation to access pornographic material or disseminate it. All dealings with child pornography are strictly prohibited.

13. NARCOTIC SUBSTANCES

Unless authorised by medical staff all forms of involvement or contact with preparations classified as narcotics are prohibited.

14. SECURITY

Employee security or similar is a top priority for Balkans Forward Foundation. Balkans Forward Foundation will do all that it reasonably can to meet the highest security standards. Security is an individual and organisational responsibility. It is strictly prohibited for any employee or

similar to use or carry weapons or ammunition as well as to drive a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substance.

Balkans Forward Foundation Security Policy guides how to ensure security and must be followed by all staff, volunteers and the Board.

15. UNDERSTANDING THE CODE OF CONDUCT

By signing this document, the signatory understands Balkans Forward Foundation's Code of Conduct, assures that s/he will follow these rules and accepts that any violation of any of the above provisions may have consequences.

Employees or similar are only bound by provisions in the signed version of the Code of Conduct. Any amendments or changes to the Code of Conduct decided by the Board become effective in relation to an employee or similar upon signature.