



WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION POLICY

Balkans Forward Foundation

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Whistleblower Protection Policy is to ensure that concerns about wrongdoing within Balkans Forward Foundation (“the Foundation”) can be raised safely, responsibly, and without fear of retaliation.

The Foundation is committed to maintaining a culture of integrity, accountability, and transparency. Early reporting of concerns helps prevent harm, protect the organisation’s mission and resources, and strengthen trust with partners, donors, and the public.

This policy establishes clear standards for reporting concerns, handling disclosures, and protecting individuals who speak up in good faith.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals involved in the work, governance, management, or representation of the Foundation, including the Founder, Board members, Executive Director, staff, consultants, interns, volunteers, external experts, evaluators, and any other person acting on behalf of or representing the Foundation.

It also applies, where relevant, to partners, contractors, grantees, and other third parties who may report concerns related to the Foundation’s work.

3. What Can Be Reported

A whistleblower may report any reasonable concern about wrongdoing, misconduct, or risk related to the Foundation.

This includes, but is not limited to, suspected corruption, fraud, bribery, theft, misuse of funds or resources, conflicts of interest, abuse of authority, harassment, discrimination, safeguarding concerns, serious breaches of internal policies, violations of law, or actions that may harm the Foundation’s reputation or operations.

Concerns may relate to past, ongoing, or potential future conduct.

4. Reporting in Good Faith

Reports must be made in good faith. This means that the person raising the concern reasonably believes that the information is true or that there is a genuine risk of wrongdoing.

A report does not need to be proven at the time it is made. Honest mistakes or incomplete information will not result in consequences if the report was made in good faith.

Knowingly false or malicious reports may lead to appropriate action.

5. How to Report

Concerns should be reported as soon as reasonably possible through appropriate channels within the Foundation.

Reports may be made to the Executive Director or the President of the Board, depending on the nature of the concern and the position of the person involved.

Where the concern involves senior management or where independence is required, the report should be directed to the Board.

The Foundation may establish confidential reporting channels, including email or other secure mechanisms.

Anonymous reporting is permitted. However, providing contact details may assist in effective follow-up and clarification.

6. Confidentiality

All reports will be handled with appropriate confidentiality.

Information will be shared only with those who need it for legitimate organisational, legal, or compliance purposes.

The identity of the whistleblower will be protected to the extent possible, unless disclosure is required by law or necessary for a fair investigation.

Confidentiality must not be used to conceal wrongdoing.

7. Protection Against Retaliation

The Foundation strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against a person who raises a concern in good faith or participates in a review, inquiry, or investigation.

Retaliation includes dismissal, demotion, loss of opportunity, harassment, intimidation, discrimination, or any other adverse treatment.

Any act of retaliation will be treated as a serious breach of organisational rules and may result in disciplinary action.

8. Handling of Reports

All reports will be reviewed promptly, fairly, and proportionately.

The Foundation may conduct an internal review, appoint an independent reviewer, or refer the matter to the Board, donor, auditor, legal counsel, or competent authority, depending on the seriousness of the concern.

All persons involved are expected to cooperate and provide truthful information.

The whistleblower will, where possible, be informed that the report has been received and, to an appropriate extent, of the outcome.

9. Responsibilities

All persons covered by this policy are responsible for speaking up when they become aware of potential wrongdoing and for cooperating in any review process.

The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that reporting mechanisms are in place, that reports are handled appropriately, and that protections are applied.

The Board is responsible for oversight, especially in cases involving senior management or matters of significant risk.

10. Relationship with Other Policies

This policy should be read together with other relevant Foundation policies, including the Anti-Corruption and Fraud Prevention Policy, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and any applicable legal requirements.

11. Review of the Policy

This policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect legal standards, organisational needs, and good governance practice.