



BALKAN
CIVIL
SOCIETY
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK

CODE OF CONDUCT

December 2017



PREAMBLE

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The BCSDN Code of Conduct is a set of principles and commitments on how we carry out our work and it sets out actions on how to improve our results. Applying these principles and commitments can help us hold our partners and ourselves accountable to a shared standard. It helps us explain to donors what they can expect when they support us in carrying out our initiatives. It establishes credibility for the network at all levels - with partners, the public, governments, and funders.

Building on international best practices and our national members' Codes and practices, the BCSDN Code of Conduct presents our understanding of accountability that drives learning and change, develops trust with our stakeholders, and enhances the legitimacy and credibility of CSOs.

Our **Code of Conduct** is at the core of what we regard as good practices in CSO accountability. BCSDN commits to respect and promote those practices.

Purpose

The Purpose of the Code is to improve our effectiveness and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of BCSDN.

Objectives

1

To enable high standards of practice by BCSDN members, governing and executive bodies.

2

To enable self-regulation and influence accountability practices within the sector.

3

To promote standards of good practices in our region.

(Use of terms: In this document, several different terms are used interchangeably to present the main subjects. The terms 'we', '(every) organisations' and 'BCSDN members' refer to all current and potential members of BCSDN, including the BCSDN Executive Office. Depending on the given situation, these terms present the actions and commitments that are and will be undertaken by the BCSDN member organisations in their regular work, their positions to the public and to other actors in the society. Mutual relations between BCSDN members and bodies are also subject of BCSDN Code of Conduct).

PRINCIPLES

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1

For BCSDN and its member organisations, the main value is **respect of universal human rights**, rights of all citizens: men and women of all nationalities, religions and cultures.

- 1.1. We will respect and promote international standards for protection of human rights, socio-economic development, and cultural prosperity.
- 1.2. We will promote equal rights for all and address all forms of discrimination.

2

Our value is also promotion and **fight for justice and equality**.

- 2.1. We will support people to know their rights and to hold accountable those responsible for respecting and fulfilling them – including our organisations.
- 2.2. In our further actions, we will promote and apply impartial and rightful relations towards every individual, no matter their nationality, political, ethnic or religious affiliation, gender, language, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability.
- 2.3. We will advocate for tolerance and respect of the right for differences between people.

3

Active participation of interested citizens and local community in all aspects of our work will be encouraged.

- 3.1. We will ensure decision-making processes at all levels reflect on, and respond to feedback, especially from people affected by our work.

4

We will care for the **environment and sustainable development**.

- 4.1. All our activities will be conducted in an environmentally sustainable way.

COMMITMENTS

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1 OPEN AND TRANSPARENT ORGANISATIONS

- 1.1. We will share information on who we are, what we do, how decisions are made, the resources we have, and the positive and negative impacts of our work.
- 1.2. We will share information in a timely and accurate manner.
- 1.3. We will provide opportunities for people to question our work and engage in constructive dialogue to reach a shared understanding where possible.
- 1.4. We shall be open and responsible in the work with institutions of the public sector, community partners, donors and all stakeholders.
- 1.5. We will make all of our work reports (final and progress), as well as financial reports, available to all stakeholders.

2 PARTNERSHIPS-DRIVEN ORGANISATIONS

- 2.1. We will share data, resources and knowledge, and take important decisions collectively.
- 2.2. We will regularly communicate in order to ensure equal representation of all partners, and that no organisation speaks in the name of another.
- 2.3. We will collaborate with different kinds of organisations to achieve maximum impact on shared goals.
- 2.4. We will provide assistance to other organisations, when appropriate, in order to empower them and improve performance in future work.

- 2.5. We will not negate the work of the organisations, or file false or incorrect statements to other organisations.
- 2.6. Timely reactions to the differences in the opinion among organisations only strengthen healthy partnerships. Partners should agree on how to resolve conflicts.

3 GOOD GOVERNANCE

- 3.1. We will be governed fairly and responsibly by an independent, active and informed governing body.
- 3.2. We will possess documents that clearly define our mission, vision, general goals, programs and governance structure.
- 3.3. We shall establish and periodically review a governance framework suitable for fulfilling our mandate. The framework shall include an appropriate governance structure and operations, relationship between the staff and the governing body, and decision-making processes.
- 3.4. The independent governing body of each organisation shall review and approve the organisational annual budget, significant policies, key financial decisions, plans and programs.
- 3.5. We will adopt a policy preventing and effectively managing conflict of interest situations.

- 3.6. We will have policies prohibiting discrimination and promoting gender equality and participation of disadvantaged group at all levels of the organisations.

4 ORGANISATIONAL INTEGRITY

- 4.1. The affairs of the organisations shall be conducted with integrity and transparency. The organisations shall make full, open, and accurate disclosure of relevant information concerning goals, programs, finances, activities, results, effectiveness and governance to the public.
- 4.2. We will comply with applicable laws and regulations in the countries in which we are based and/or operate.
- 4.3. We will be fair, impartial and properly manage shared resources, and will not abuse the given rights and position.
- 4.4. We will allow no advertising or imposition of political parties, groups, attitude, or attempts of political influence on others. Political discontent must not interfere with our work.
- 4.5. We are independent in our work and cooperate with the state institutions, donors and other entities based on the principle of equality, in accordance with our statutory goals.

5 ETHICAL FINANCE, FUNDRAISING AND HANDLING THE RESOURCES

- 5.1.** We will acquire resources in ways that align with our values, mission, independence and goals.
- 5.2.** We will conduct our finances in such a way as to ensure appropriate use of funds and accountability to donors. We shall operate according to a budget approved by the governing body and have sound internal controls and documented financial policies and procedures.
- 5.3.** We will publish the financial information in the annual reports in an appropriate and easy to read form, and make it available to all interested parties.
- 5.4.** We will use the donations the way it is pledged in the application for a grant, as the donor intended. When funds are collected from the public for a specific purpose, organisations must clearly state their intentions in the case of surplus of raised funds.
- 5.5.** We will use the resources for the causes they were provided for, and in ways that maximise impact towards long-term positive change. Donors will have access to information about their donations.
- 5.6.** We will conduct fundraising in the spirit of partnership. BCSDN member organisations will support each other in fundraising. For regional and national initiatives when appropriate, each organisation shall primarily look for partners from the network.

- 5.7.** We will acquire funds with respect and promotion of locally driven knowledge. Advantage and leading role will be given to local organisations (from a given country) when potential for fundraising exists. If an organisation from another country tends to apply for the same portion of funds in other country, the local member organisations must be informed.
- 5.7.** The BCSDN Executive Office will not act as a competitor to any member organisation in the fundraising efforts. Where possible, BCSDN (Executive Office) shall be a partner of member organisations in fundraising activities.

6 WELL-HANDLED HUMAN RESOURCES

- 6.1.** We will have clear, well-defined, written policies and procedures related to the employees, and ensure that the policies protect the diversity and right of each individual.
- 6.2.** We will provide employees and volunteers with job descriptions and duties that detail the organisation's expectations. Compensations and benefits will be clearly described and communicated.
- 6.3.** We will invest in the staff and volunteers to develop their full potential in achieving our shared goals.
- 6.4.** We will involve people at all levels of our organisation in the planning and decision making, and will encourage leadership.

7 RESPONSIBLE ADVOCACY

- 7.1.** We will make sure that our advocacy is based on principles and evidence, and is informed by local voices and affected people. Advocacy efforts in a particular country should be driven by and agreed with the local members, and should be based on their experience and knowledge of the situation on the ground.
- 7.2.** We will conduct advocacy initiatives in the spirit of partnership and joint responsibility. Joint statements and advocacy campaigns will be first confirmed by the Board and will be developed and implemented with local members and CSOs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE

The BCSDN Code of Conduct is self-regulatory, which means that the responsibility for compliance with the Code rests primarily with BCSDN Members who self-assess against a set of verifiable indicators available in the **BCSDN Accountability Framework**.

The **Code of Conduct Committee** will be the body that will ensure compliance with the Code. Each self-assessment will be verified by the Code of Conduct Committee.

1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT COMMITTEE

The Code of Conduct Committee operates in accordance with the BCSDN Code of Conduct provisions and has the following responsibilities:

- 1.1.** Will verify compliance of all members with the BCSDN Code of Conduct.
- 1.2.** Will assess BCSDN Executive Office compliance with the Code.
- 1.3.** Will develop the BCSDN Accountability Framework with set of verifiable indicators for self-assessment of the member organisations.
- 1.4.** Will monitor adherence to the minimum reporting standards necessary for a member organisations to maintain its compliance with the Code of Conduct, and report to the BCSDN Council in case of failure of any organisation to adhere to these requirements.

- 1.5.** Will promote peer learning and will support each interested member organisation in improving accountability practices and meeting the principles of the BCSDN Code of Conduct.
- 1.6.** Will prepare set of documents and an official form for feedback when petitions or complaints are submitted.
- 1.7.** Will consider and decide on petitions or complaints about non-implemented principles established by the Code, submitted to BCSDN by members or others.
- 1.8.** Will prepare an opinion to every legitimate complaint and present it to the BCSDN Council.
- 1.9.** In cooperation with the BCSDN Board, will promote the Code of Conduct to relevant stakeholders, donors, and the wider public.
- 1.10.** Will provide advice to the BCSDN Board and BCSDN Council on areas in which the Code needs to be strengthened or developed further.
- 1.11.** Will report on the activities of the Code of Conduct Committee and key aspects of Code compliance to the BCSDN Council, and will present the Code of Conduct's report annually at BCSDN Annual Meetings.
- 1.12.** Will adopt a Rulebook that will define the procedures, changes and standards of its operations.

2 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

- 2.1.** The Committee is composed of three (3) members, elected by the BCSDN Council.

3 ELECTION PROCEDURE

- 3.1.** Members are elected for a two (2) year term, and may serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms. One of the members will be appointed as a Chair by the BCSDN Council. The mandate of the Chair will be two (2) years.
- 3.2.** All BCSDN members will have the right to nominate their candidate.
- 3.3.** The candidate could be an employee, volunteer, board member of, or a partner or consultant to a BCSDN member organisation.
- 3.4.** If an elected member of the Code of Conduct Committee represents an organisation that is subject to a Code of Conduct complaint, the member will stand down from their position when the complaint is received until the outcome of the complaint is known.

- 3.5.** The selection of the first composition of the Committee members will start one (1) month after the adoption of the Code by the BCSDN Council. Each next procedure for selection of the members will start two (2) months before the end of the term of the current composition of the Committee.
- 3.6.** BCSDN Executive Office will administrate the procedure for selection of the candidates for the members of the Committee.
- 3.7.** The call for nomination will be prepared by the Executive office, consulted with the Board member.
- 3.8.** The call should consist all organisational and personal criteria listed in article 4 of the Code of Conduct.
- 3.9.** BCSDN Executive Office will prepare the candidate list. If some documents are missing, will give seven days to each organisation and candidate to provide.
- 3.10.** BCSDN Executive office is sending the final list to the Council, which decides with majority votes in the period of two weeks (this process can be conducted electronically)

4 CRITERIA

4.1. Organisational criteria

As to ensure that the candidates are coming from organisations who have already fulfilled the standards, certain organisational criteria will be considered, such as:

- The organisation must be a member of BCSDN;
- The organisation has relevant written policies, has clear separate governance and management bodies; is doing regular annual independent audit; and has an internal Code of Conduct;
- Beside membership in BCSDN, the organisation is a member of platforms, networks, coalitions on national and international level, or has strong relationship with other organisations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR THE ORGANISATION:

- Organisational profile that will contain: vision, mission and goals; information for the organisational structure; relevant written policies; audit report for the previous two (2) years.

4.2. Criteria for the candidates

- Has minimum ten years of working experience or volunteering in civil society;
- Has minimum university education. Post-graduate diploma is an advantage;
- Has expertise in management and organisational development, financial and/or legal issues and policy-making, including relevant knowledge of transparency, accountability and good governance. This should be supported by minimum number of conducted projects as an expert, number of publications on the topic, comparative expertise, etc.
- Demonstrates knowledge of the BCSDN work, civil society and good governance;

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR THE CANDIDATES:

- CV of the candidate;
- Motivation letter;
- Plan on how the candidate will solicit input from the interested parties and report about the developments in the body and outcomes from the work;
- Written confirmation for active work (professional and/or volunteering) of the candidate in civil society for the last ten (10) years, signed by the organisation which nominates the candidate or other organisation(s);
- Recommendations/references (if requested).

5 MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

- 5.1.** Regular meetings of the Code of Conduct Committee will be held at least three (3) times a year (could take form in physical or online meetings/calls). The agenda for the meetings may be proposed by the Code of Conduct Committee members, each BCSDN member organisation and the Executive Office.
- 5.2.** All members of the Committee shall participate at the meetings.
- 5.3.** For its work, the Committee will propose the Rulebook that will be enacted by the BCSDN Council.
- 5.4.** BCSDN Executive Office will call upon the Committee once an official complaint is received. The Committee will discuss the complaint on a meeting (physical or online) and can call upon the designated member/body or plaintive side to provide evidence or case study to be presented in the final opinion issues by the Committee and presented to the BCSDN Council.
- 5.5.** The Committee shall prepare an opinion to every legitimate complaint. Firstly, the opinion will be presented to the BCSDN Council, which in the case of not implementing the Code of Conduct provisions will give a minimum of six (6) months for improving the situation.

■ Skopje, 08.02.2018



As decided on the 9th Council Meeting
(Extended online session)

