



**CODE OF ETHICS**  
ARCS ARCI Culture Solidali

Approved on 19 January 2011  
Second revision approved by the Executive Board on 22 May 2013  
Third revision approved by the Board of Directors on 7 February 2019

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## 1. MISSION

ARCS ARCI CULTURE SOLIDALI is a non-profit organisation of cooperation, solidarity and national and international voluntary service.

It is a non-government, socially useful organisation (NGO and non-profit association) registered as a subject listed under Art. 26 of Law 125/2014.

It is also registered in the national register of associations for social advancement (APS – Law 383/2000) according to decree no. 419/II/2011.

ARCS was founded in 1985, as part of the ARCI (Italian Cultural and Recreational Association) system, with the aim of affirming, within the context of solidarity, cooperation and international voluntary service, the process of citizens' active participation in democracy by promoting all forms of civil association, for a world of global rights and peace that is more fair and socially sustainable.

ARCS pursues its mission in full compliance with Community, national and international legislation and in compliance with the values expressed in the Charters and Codes it has endorsed. In particular, in addition to the conventions and statements already set out in the organisation's bylaws:

- **The Charter of Ethics of the AOI** – Association of Italian International Solidarity and Cooperation;
- **The Donation Charter of the IID** – Italian Donation Institute;
- **The Code of Conduct of the Transparency Register of the European Union**, a common instrument of the European Parliament and European Commission aimed at informing citizens about the organisations, legal persons and independent workers whose activities may influence European Union decision-making processes;
- **The Code of Ethics of the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development.**

According to what has been set out in the bylaws, ARCS's main aims are to:

- Affirm and implement the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Affirm equal gender opportunities;
- Struggle against poverty throughout the world and teach the Millennium Development Goals;
- Foster the social and cultural advancement of individuals, communities and peoples;
- Foster citizens' active participation in local development;
- Promote and strengthen community relations;
- Foster the appreciation of indigenous communities and cultures;
- Spread information on topics relating to socially sustainable development;
- Spread peace and global education;
- Build national, European and international networks of civil society;
- Promote and create initiatives, actions and programmes to disseminate, inform people about and promote the founding principles of the European Union;
- Promote and protect the environment for socially sustainable development;
- Defend common goods.

## **2. AIMS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS**

This Code of Ethics sets forth principles and values that must inspire, guide and regulate the behaviour and conduct of all ARCS personnel: employees, collaborators, consultants, volunteers and people in any way engaged in its missions.

ARCS also requests that firms supplying goods or services acknowledge and implement the ethical values expressed herein. The code of ethics sets out rules, responsibilities, duties and behavioural models – with respect to the value systems expressed herewith – that anybody operating on behalf of ARCS is obliged to respect and pursue.

Full compliance with the Code implies that it has been properly understood, is shared and that there is commitment to fulfilling the ARCS mission. The Code of Ethics aims to render the organisational, management and control model of the NGO explicit, transparent and effective in order to prevent liability risks, conflicts of interest and criminal offences to which it may be exposed as it carries out the activities associated with its mission.

The Code of Ethics, along with the Handbook of Internal Procedures, contains all the indications aimed at preventing detrimental events and criminal offences. All those to whom the Code of Ethics applies are required to strictly observe what is contained in the Code and the Handbook of Internal Procedures as it pertains to them.

This Code of Ethics was drafted and approved by the ARCS's Executive Board and any revisions or amendments, either total or partial, must be approved by the Executive Board itself.

### 3. WHO THE CODE OF ETHICS APPLIES TO

The code of ethics applies to statutory bodies, administrators, employees, collaborators, volunteers and anybody working temporarily with ARCS, both in Italy and abroad. Compliance with the rules and provisions expressed in the Code of Ethics constitutes an integral part of the contractual obligations deriving from employment relationships for employees, and from contractual regulations for collaborators.

Those to whom the Code applies, owing to the responsibility entrusted to them, shall see to it that proper information is provided to third parties (suppliers of goods and services, donors, etc.) regarding the obligations imposed by the Code and require that they be fulfilled.

### 4. ETHICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

ARCS undertakes, in each field of its action, to behave according to the principles of honesty, impartiality, loyalty, fairness, solidarity, non-discrimination, transparency, responsibility, respect and protection of minorities and the most vulnerable sections of the population, such as the disabled, the sick, minors, women, the elderly, disadvantaged individuals of all kinds, prisoners, the mentally ill, the homeless, the poor, foreigners and disaster victims.

Each person who is part of the Organisation specifically undertakes to perform their working activities with professionalism, moral rigour and proper management, complying with the principles of:

**Lawfulness:** each person is required, within their area of activity and competence, to know and comply with the codified regulations (laws, equivalent acts, regulations) issued by International and National Institutions and especially the rules regulating accounting records and financial statements, the rules protecting personal data, health and safety and the rules regarding work.

**Fairness:** each person, within their area of activity and competence, must have conduct inspired by the common sense of substantial justice.

**Non-discrimination:** Each person, within their area of activity and competence, must ensure uniform treatment regardless of differences in age, sex, race, physical handicaps and religion.

Each person must guarantee the principle of non-discrimination also by using language that excludes expressions of prejudice and stereotypes.

Each person undertakes to understand, appreciate and respect each form of diversity. Each person must support, promote and cultivate the principles of diversity, gender equality, impartiality of treatment, as sources of personal and professional enrichment.

**Gender equality:** Each person must become the representative of an inclusive approach towards gender differences. Each person must guarantee equal rights and opportunities without distinction, at the same time keeping in mind specific needs, necessities, rights and priorities that the acknowledgement of diversity – for instance, between men and women – implies.

**Equal opportunities:** Each person, within their area of activity and competence, must condemn any kind of discrimination relating to gender, religion, race and ethnic origin, disability, sexual or political orientation. Each person must ensure the full respect of the principle of equal opportunity in all the phases in the management, selection and training of human resources and must ensure equal participation in decision-making processes. Each person must condemn and report any episodes that may be characterised as a manifestation of mobbing.

ARCS supports processes that affirm and protect equal opportunities and gender empowerment, and endorses the principles of the International Convention on the elimination of any type of discrimination towards women adopted by the Assembly of the United Nations (CEDAW 1979).

ARCS guarantees the equal treatment of women and men in the criteria adopted to set out a system for career and remuneration advancement. In accordance with the principles promoted by the Beijing World Conference (1995) and especially with that of gender mainstreaming, ARCS also promotes equality between the genders not only within its own organisation but also by planning international cooperation interventions and programmes aimed at eliminating gender inequality.

**Protection, safeguarding and appreciation of childhood:**

Each person, within their area of activity and competence, must be a spokesperson for the struggle against social inequality and discrimination among children. Each person can provide their contribution in the processes aimed at affirming or strengthening the freedom of expression, the principle of equality and non-discrimination, the right to health, dignity, safety, gender equality and education of children.

**Protection, safeguarding and appreciation of the disabled:**

Each person must guarantee solidarity and equal opportunity and help provide support, protection and assistance to each person with a handicap. ARCS acknowledges the right to the independence and social integration of the disabled, guarantees compliance with the rules regarding their protection and undertakes to ensure they have access to information tools and work environments.

**Safeguarding and appreciation of the individual:** Each person must guarantee, as they carry out their work, respect for the individual and the appreciation of individual abilities.

**Diligence:** Each person is called to perform their tasks carefully and accurately.

**Honesty:** Each person must undertake, in performing their duties, to avoid pursuing personal gain or gain for the Organisation at the expense of the existing laws and the rules set out in the Code of Ethics, or doing things that, according to the common consciousness, are in contrast with righteous behaviour.

**Transparency:** Each person, within their area of activity, is called to perform their tasks so that their work is fully intelligible to anybody. Each step of each action must be easily identifiable so that all the relationships are understandable and the respective acts are justifiable.

**Impartiality:** Each person must act and make judgements objectively and with equanimity, avoiding favouritism due to feelings of friendship or animosity, kinship or various types of affinity.

**Confidentiality:** Each person must avoid spreading any of the Organisation's data (whether it be technical, logistical, strategic or economic in nature). All the existing rules must also be complied with relating to the processing of personal data.

**No conflict of interest:** Any decision relating to the policies of the Organisation (supply contracts, partnerships, the selection of personnel, etc.) must be based on sound assessments and must never be dictated by interests or by either direct or indirect personal advantage.

## 5. RULES OF CONDUCT

In relations with donors, partners, suppliers, employees/collaborators, beneficiaries, the press and media, regulatory bodies and judicial authorities, the following rules of conduct, based on the ethical principles given above, must be observed.

## 5.1 Donor relations

Relations with donors must always be characterised by the utmost fairness, transparency and completeness of information, in line with what is set out in the Donation Charter of the Italian Institute of Donation, which ARCS endorses. Specifically:

- The Organisation must ensure that the information available to donors about the Organisation, the initiatives to support, the purposes of fundraising and the results achieved is complete and transparent;
- Giving, offering or promising money or other benefits or favours is prohibited;
- Unlawfully exerting pressure in order to persuade donors to donate is prohibited;
- Submitting untrue statements in order to obtain public funds, contributions or financing is not allowed;
- The Organisation indicates the donations it has received;
- The source of donations must be clearly identified;
- The Organisation undertakes to ensure donor confidentiality;
- The Organisation refuses both material and money donations from companies that patently do not respect human rights and the rights of workers and the environment, that produce or trade in arms, pornographic materials and anything intended for human or environmental degradation.

Allocating sums received as funds, contributions or financing for purposes other than those for which they were assigned is prohibited. Careful management of the funds used is required, and no more than 20% of the funds used may be allocated to structural costs.

## **5.2 Partner relations**

**Partners are chosen to carry out joint activities on the basis of the following criteria:**

- The joint activities are not for profit;
- They share the same ethical principles and mission of social advancement and the protection of human rights as the Organisation.

The Organisation also undertakes to avoid giving, offering or promising money or other benefits and favours.

## **5.3 Supplier relations**

Where the necessary good quality of goods, works and services provided is ensured, the Organisation must give precedence to the technical and economic operators of the country where it is intervening.

When choosing suppliers, during tendering procedures to purchase goods, work and services, objective assessment must be made according to the criteria of competitiveness, quality, inexpensiveness, price and honesty.

Giving, offering or promising money or other benefits or favours is prohibited.

Suppliers are required to comply with national laws.

## **5.4 Relations with employees, collaborators, volunteers and statutory bodies**

**The Organisation has the following obligations:**

- Respect minimal international standards regarding working conditions and the fundamental rights of workers, including: freedom of association, the right

to organisation, collective bargaining, the abolition of forced labour, equal opportunities and treatment and other standards promoted and pursued by the International Labour Organisation (ILO);

- Offer all workers the same opportunities for professional growth, according to criteria based on merit and avoiding any form of discrimination in terms of sex, age, disability, religion, nationality or racial origin and political and union opinions;
- Strive to continuously develop each person's expertise by fostering training and by employing working methods and strategies that are innovative and increasingly more effective;
- Ensure that the expertise and contribution of each person to achieving shared goals is acknowledged and appreciated;
- Ensure that the work environment is adequate and suited to the activities that are to be carried out;
- Respect the principles in the Universal Declaration and in the European Convention on Human Rights, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Guarantee compliance with the rules of civil law, criminal law and labour law especially concerning the sexual abuse of minors. In addition, the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which ARCS acknowledges and implements, are given below:

**1.** "Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.

**2.** Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief regarding the age of a child is not a defence.

**3.** Exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.

**4.** Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.

**5.** Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow workers, whether in the same agency or not, he or she must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.

**6.** Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.”<sup>1</sup>

- Ensure that the Code of Ethics and the procedures are disseminated;
- Ensure the protection of privacy;
- Ensure rules regarding the protection of health and safety are complied with;
- Ensure adequate information is provided on the living and safety conditions in the countries where the worker will be employed, as well as on the preventive health measures that must be undertaken.

## 5.5 Duties of workers

### Each worker must:

- Respect fundamental human rights, especially in regard to the rights of children and women and the elimination of all forms of discrimination;
- Behave and dress appropriately, respecting the environment and the workplace, colleagues, partners, suppliers, direct beneficiaries and the customs, cultures and local creeds and in a way that always reflects the dignity of the worker's role, aligned with the principles of the Organisation;
- Ensure the Organisation's assets are properly used;
- Respect the rules of conduct in terms of safety, privacy, accounting and the contracts established by the Organisation.

### Each worker is always and in any case prohibited from:

- Involvement in military or similar operations;
- Possessing arms or keeping arms in the facilities and motor vehicles;
- Behaving in a way that causes harm to the Organisation, even just to its image;
- Employing workers who are minors;
- Using psychotropic substances;
- Behaviour that may be considered as moral violence and abuse of authority through threats, oppression or psychological persecution that offends the dignity and psychophysical integrity of subordinate workers or aims to erode the working climate;

- Any form of harassment;
- Engaging in sexual relations with minors;
- Engaging in fraud.

### **5.6 Relations with beneficiaries**

In addition to what has been set out regarding partners and collaborators, beneficiaries must be fully informed regarding the activities, donors and the resources employed in the activities involving them and must share ARCS's mission of social advancement and protection of human rights. Moreover:

- Beneficiaries are entitled to an effective, efficient and fair use of the resources made available to them;
- The Organisation must ensure beneficiaries' personal data remains confidential;
- The Organisation must avoid political, racial, ideological, sexual and religious discrimination when choosing the beneficiaries of the cooperation projects and international solidarity activities.

### **5.7 Press and Media Relations**

**External communications must be:**

- Truthful;
- Verifiable;
- Non-aggressive;
- Respectful of individual rights and dignity.

## 5.8 Regulatory Bodies

Relations with the bodies performing regulatory and auditing tasks must be characterised by principles of:

- Promptness;
- Fairness;
- Transparency;
- Information sharing:

Full cooperation must be offered to the regulatory bodies and any kind of obstructionism must be avoided. Concealing information or providing false documentation or documentation attesting to things that are not true or in any case preventing or hindering regulatory or auditing activities is prohibited.

## 5.9 Judicial Authority

Trying to influence the person summoned to provide statements before the Judicial Authority to persuade him or her not to provide statements or to provide false statements is prohibited.

Helping the person who has committed a crime in order to avoid investigation by the authority or to avoid being searched for by the authority is prohibited.

## 5.10 Measures taken when the code of ethics is violated

All infringements of what is set out by the Code must be reported to the Supervisory Board. The Organisation, to protect its image and its assets, reserves the right to adopt the necessary measures both in legal terms (termination of the contract Art. 1453 Italian Civil Code) and in terms of penalties, as provided in the individual work contracts.

ARCS has an internal auditing system that promptly identifies possible conduct that may in any way:

- Negatively influence its activities;
- Hinder the achievement of its goals;
- Offend human dignity;
- Undermine principles of non-discrimination and gender equality.

ARCS undertakes to ensure working environments are suited to protecting the safety and health of employees, in compliance with the respective national and international laws.

## **6 GOVERNANCE**

To ensure Governance, the Organisation has:

- A set of rules and procedures guiding workers towards transparent, responsible conduct;
- A control system implemented to ensure the quality and effectiveness of institutional activities through: the Board of Auditors, Board of Appeals and Supervisory Board.

### **6.1 Board of Auditors**

According to what is set out in the bylaws (Art. 13), the Board of Auditors, elected by the Congressional Assembly, is made up of 3 full members and 2 substitutes with a term lasting four (4) years.

The Board of Auditors:

- a) Checks how the economic and financial management of the Organisation is progressing and ascertains whether the administration and accounting are functioning well;

- b) Expresses its opinion on the financial statement;
- c) Verifies and expresses its opinion on the annual economic-financial plan;
- d) Meets periodically to perform its tasks.

## **6.2 Board of Appeals**

According to Art. 14 of the bylaws, the Board of Appeals, elected by the Congressional Assembly, is made up of 3 full members and 2 substitutes with a term lasting 4 years and performs the following functions:

- a) Takes action to settle disputes arising within the corporate bodies, among shareholders and the same bodies, and regarding the interpretation of this statute, on the recourse of the parties;
- b) Meets, when necessary, to perform its tasks on the basis of what is indicated in the national internal “Regulation”;
- c) The Board of Appeals is tasked with taking action regarding the interpretation of this Statute at the request of the shareholders and governing bodies.

## **6.3 Supervisory Board**

ARCS’s Executive Board has appointed a Supervisory Board that is independent and has full autonomy of action and control. Its activities are characterised by professionalism and impartiality and aim to:

- Oversee the implementation and effectiveness of ARCS’s Code of Ethics;
- Formulate decisions regarding infringements of the Code of Ethics;
- Spread information and awareness among ARCS’s associates regarding the contents of the Code of Ethics and the Handbook of Internal Procedures.

All those involved are required to report, anonymously and either verbally or in writing, any non-compliance and infringements of this Code of Ethics.

All reports must be addressed to the Supervisory Board. Those making the reports are protected against possible retaliation for having reported misconduct, except where required by law.

The content of the policies and rules is brought to the attention of ARCS's personnel using specific communication tools aimed at fostering awareness of ARCS's ethical principles and rules.

The Code of Ethics is annexed to the contract and the people to whom it applies are informed of any amendments and changes.

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