

# CODE OF CONDUCT OF THE EUROPEAN PARENTS' ASSOCIATION (EPA)

*Standards of Ethics and Participation for General Assemblies, International Conferences, Webinars, and Workshops*

## Preamble

The EPA Value Statement is the foundation for this Code of Conduct, serving as the moral compass for our organization to ensure that our advocacy and collaborative efforts are consistently aligned with our core principles of integrity and equity.

**Bearing in mind** the mission of European Parents' Association (EPA) to amplify the voices of parents and improve education for all children regardless of background.

**Stressing** the shared commitment to the Ethics Procedure adopted in October 2025, which mandates transparency, accountability, and a child-centered focus in all organizational activities.

**Recognizing** that this Code establishes the essential standards of behavior required to maintain a culture of mutual respect and professional discipline during General Assemblies, international conferences, webinars, and workshops.

**The Association hereby adopts** these standards to protect its integrity and ensure that all members, staff, and participants act as credible representatives of the millions of parents we serve across Europe.

## Purpose

1. **Establish Clear Standards:** Define the behavioral expectations for all members and participants during General Assemblies, international conferences, webinars, and workshops.
2. **Operationalize Core Values:** Translate the EPA Value Statement, including its commitment to gender equality and child protection, into actionable ethical practices.
3. **Ensure Accountability:** Provide a transparent framework for identifying, reporting, and addressing misconduct or conflicts of interest.
4. **Maintain Professional Discipline:** Foster a safe, inclusive, and orderly environment for constructive dialogue in both physical and digital spaces.
5. **Protect Organizational Integrity:** Safeguard EPA's reputation with European institutions and stakeholders.

## Scope

6. This Code of Conduct is binding for all individuals acting for or representing the European Parents' Association (EPA), including:
  - **Governance:** Members of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Committee.
  - **Operations:** Staff members, interns, and consultants.
  - **Membership:** Delegates and representatives of EPA member organizations.
  - **Advocacy & Support:** EPA Ambassadors and members of the Pool of Volunteers.
  - **Guests:** External speakers and observers invited to EPA events.

7. These standards apply to all official Association activities, whether held in person or via digital platforms, including:
  - **Statutory Meetings:** General Assemblies and Extraordinary General Assemblies.
  - **International Events:** Annual conferences, seminars, and study visits.
  - **Digital Engagement:** Webinars, online workshops, and training sessions.
  - **Representation:** Any situation where an individual acts as a spokesperson or representative of EPA in public or with external stakeholders (e.g., EU institutions, media).
8. Participation in any of the above-mentioned activities, or the holding of a role within EPA, constitutes an agreement to abide by this Code. Non-members or guests who fail to comply may be asked to leave the activity immediately.

## General principles of behavior

9. **Primary Respect for Parents and Families;** Participants shall recognize and value the diversity of parental experiences across Europe. Every interaction must be characterized by dignity, fairness, and empathy, ensuring that parents are respected as the primary educators of their children.
10. **Active Inclusion and Gender Equality;** Participants shall foster an environment inclusive of all families regardless of gender, origin, or status. We are dedicated to an environment free of gender-based discrimination and bias.
11. **Child-Centered Focus;** The well-being, safety, and rights of children must be the primary consideration. Participants must safeguard the welfare of children involved in any activities and protect them from harm, abuse, or neglect.
12. **Integrity and Public Mindedness;** Participants shall act with honesty and high ethical standards. They must put the interests of the Association and the families it represents above any personal, political, or commercial gain.
13. **Transparency and Accountability;** Participants are accountable for their actions and decisions. They must be as open as possible about their activities and prepared to justify their actions to the EPA membership and the public, in line with the **Ethics Procedure (Oct 2025)**.
14. **Collaborative and Constructive Engagement;** In both physical conferences and digital workshops, Participants shall engage in constructive dialogue. This involves listening to different perspectives, refraining from disruptive behavior, and working toward consensus and mutual trust.
15. **Professionalism and Political Independence;** While EPA respects the diverse political landscapes of its members, Participants must ensure that EPA remains independent of political parties and commercial interests. Conduct should always reflect the professional standing of a leading European NGO.
16. **Social and Environmental Responsibility;** Participants should model responsible behavior by integrating environmental awareness into their conduct (e.g., minimizing waste at conferences) and promoting the social values of active citizenship.

## Rules of Conduct

17. Constructive Participation and Professionalism:

- **In-Person Meetings:** Participants shall respect the chair's authority, main professional boundaries, and ensure interactions with children are conducted in an open and observable manner.
- **Digital Environments:** In webinars and workshops, participants must use professional language, stay on topic, and ensure their contributions do not disrupt the learning environment or the flow of the session.
- **Orderly Conduct:** Any behavior intended to obstruct or unnecessarily delay the proceedings of a General Assembly is considered a breach of this Code.

## 18. Integrity and Conflict of Interest

- **Disclosure:** In accordance with the **Ethics Procedure (Oct 2025)**, any Participant who has a personal, financial, or political interest that may influence their contribution to an EPA decision must declare it immediately.
- **Recusal:** If a conflict of interest is identified, the individual shall abstain from voting or influencing the decision-making process related to that specific matter.
- **Political Neutrality:** While participating in EPA activities, individuals shall not act as representatives of political parties or commercial interests, ensuring EPA's independent voice is preserved.

## 19. Gifts, Benefits, and Improper Influence

- **Prohibition:** Participants shall not solicit or accept any gift, favor, or benefit that could be perceived as an attempt to influence their votes or professional judgment.
- **Threshold:** Any gift received in an official capacity with a value exceeding **€200** must be reported to the Secretariat and entered into the Association's gift register.

## 20. Respectful Communication and Anti-Discrimination

- **Inclusive Environment:** Participants must communicate in a manner that is respectful of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the EPA membership.
- **Zero Tolerance:** Harassment, hate speech, or discriminatory remarks regarding ethnicity, migration background, disability, gender, or religion are strictly prohibited. Participants must refrain from any form of physical discipline or abusive behavior toward children. This applies to both verbal communication and written interactions in digital chatrooms or forums.

## 21. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- **Internal Matters:** Participants shall respect the confidentiality of internal EPA deliberations, including Board discussions and sensitive committee findings, unless authorized to disclose them.
- **Privacy:** In digital workshops and webinars, the privacy of other participants must be respected. Recording sessions or sharing personal contact information without explicit consent is prohibited, in line with **GDPR standards**.

## 22. Responsible Use of Resources

- **Association Assets:** EPA funds, intellectual property, digital platforms (Zoom, Teams, etc.), and conference facilities must be used only for official Association purposes.
- **Integrity of Representation:**

- Individuals shall not use the EPA name, logo, or letterhead for personal gain or to endorse external commercial products or political candidates.
- EPA strives for gender balance in all decision-making bodies and leadership roles.

## Observance of the Code of Conduct

### 23. Responsibility for Observance:

- **Individual Responsibility:** Every individual covered by the Scope of this Code is personally responsible for understanding and adhering to these standards. Ignorance of the Code is not an excuse for non-compliance.
- **Leadership Responsibility:** The EPA Board of Directors and the chairs of workshops or webinars have an additional duty to lead by example and ensure that meetings are conducted in a manner consistent with these principles.

### 24. Reporting Breaches:

- **Good Faith Reporting:** Any participant who witnesses or is subjected to a breach of this Code is encouraged to report the matter. Reports must be made in "good faith," meaning the reporter has reasonable grounds to believe the information is true.
- **Reporting Channels:**
  - **During Events:** For immediate issues during a General Assembly or conference, concerns should be raised with the President or the presiding Chair.
  - **Formal Complaints:** Written reports should be submitted to the EPA Board or the designated **Ethics Officer** (as per the October 2025 Ethics Procedure).
  - **Webinars/Workshops:** Digital participants should use the official contact channels provided at the start of the session or message the moderator privately.

### 25. Protection from Retaliation

- In line with the **Ethics Procedure (2025)**, EPA strictly prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports a concern or participates in an investigation in good faith. Any act of retaliation will itself be treated as a serious breach of this Code.

### 26. Confidentiality

- All notifications and subsequent investigations will be handled with the highest degree of confidentiality possible. The identity of the reporter and the accused will only be disclosed to those strictly necessary for the resolution of the matter.

## Investigation and Sanctions

### 27. Preliminary Review:

- Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the EPA Board (or a designated Ethics Committee/Officer) shall conduct a preliminary review to determine if the complaint falls within the scope of this Code and warrants further investigation.
- If the breach is minor or a first-time occurrence, an informal resolution through dialogue may be attempted, as per the **Ethics Procedure**.

28. Investigation Process:

- **Fairness and Due Process:** The Participant(s) concerned shall be informed of the allegations and provided with a fair opportunity to respond and submit evidence in their support.
- **Proportionality:** Any investigation will be conducted with a focus on the severity and impact of the alleged violation.
- **Independence:** Investigations will be carried out objectively. If a Board member is the subject of the complaint, they must recuse themselves from all related deliberations.
- All allegations of abuse or misconduct will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly in cooperation with relevant authorities where required.

29. If a breach of this Code of Conduct is confirmed, one or more of the following sanctions may be imposed, depending on the severity and frequency of the misconduct:

- **Level 1: Warnings**
  - Informal guidance or a verbal warning.
  - A formal written warning recorded in the Association's files.
- **Level 2: Participation Restrictions (Statutory & Digital)**
  - **Temporary deprivation** of the right to speak or be enrolled on the list of speakers during a General Assembly or conference.
  - **Temporary deprivation** of the right to vote or participate in the drafting of official resolutions.
  - **Immediate removal** from a webinar or workshop for disruptive behavior.
- **Level 3: Representation & Office Restrictions**
  - A temporary or permanent bar from acting as an office-holder (Board member, Ambassador, or Volunteer) or representing EPA in any external capacity.
  - A temporary or permanent bar from attending future EPA General Assemblies or International Conferences.
- **Level 4: Membership & Legal Action**
  - A recommendation to the General Assembly for the withdrawal of membership status for the organization represented by the Participant.
  - Termination of contract or volunteer agreement.
  - Referral to legal or regulatory authorities in cases of financial fraud or illegal activity.

30. Individuals or member organizations subject to a sanction have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 days and will be reviewed by an independent panel or the General Assembly, as outlined in the **EPA Internal Rules**.

## Final Provisions and Acceptance

31. **Continuous Improvement:** This Code shall be reviewed every two years by the Board of Directors to ensure it remains aligned with European legal standards and organizational needs.

32. **Acceptance;** By attending an EPA event (physical or digital) or participating in an EPA project, all Participants acknowledge their commitment to these standards.