

## The Code of Conduct of Europol

The nature of Europol as a European law enforcement agency delivering a public service requires EU citizens to have the confidence that Europol acts professionally, transparently and with integrity, in accordance with fundamental rights, the right to good administration<sup>1</sup>, as well as the public service principles for the EU civil service<sup>2</sup>.

This Code aims to promote an organisational culture that is consistent with the mission, vision and values of Europol. It outlines the high standards of integrity and of personal and professional conduct that staff are expected to meet in discharging their responsibilities, individually, towards colleagues and other stakeholders including the law enforcement community, cooperation partners and the public. Europol is committed to providing a work environment, which supports the implementation of this Code at all levels of the organisation.

The Code applies to:

- All Europol staff members who are subject to an employment contract awarded under the respective staff rules applicable to Europol,
- Seconded National Experts (SNEs),
- Interns and trainees from law enforcement authorities.

Europol also expects that all other persons working for or at Europol to conform to this Code.

### 1. Europol's values

As an EU Agency, Europol works in a collaborative and non-competitive fashion, bringing together a diverse range of backgrounds, skills, knowledge and abilities to deliver unique services for the primary benefit of EU Member States. In line with its mission and vision, Europol attaches utmost importance to the following **six values**:

1. **Service:** We deliver the outcomes our colleagues, partners, and stakeholders need. We do so diligently, effectively, and efficiently, and we adhere to the EU public service principles;
2. **Integrity:** We do the right thing. We do it consistently and reliably, with respect for others. We adhere to our Code of Conduct;
3. **Accountability:** We accept responsibility for our actions. We align our behaviour with the goals of our organisation. We collaborate to achieve desired outcomes;
4. **Initiative:** We pro-actively take action and bring about innovative solutions. We gauge our actions to continuously strive for improved performance;
5. **Partnership:** We build trust relationships across the law enforcement community and beyond. We provide agile operational support to Member States and cooperation partners;
6. **Diversity:** We foster diversity in the workplace. We uphold an inclusive corporate culture. We create and maintain conditions where we have equal opportunities to develop and contribute.

### 2. Guiding principles and obligations

The following reflects Europol's overall ethical standards, providing general guidance in relation to the professional and personal behaviour expected from all staff working at or for Europol. Europol expects everyone to behave with the highest standards of professional ethics, honesty and integrity

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<sup>1</sup> Article 41 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf)).

<sup>2</sup> The five public service principles: commitment to the European Union and its citizens, integrity, objectivity, respect for others and transparency (<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/publication/en/11650>).

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when carrying out their duties and during events or functions held at or organised by Europol. Everyone should refrain from any action or behaviour that may adversely reflect on their position and/or that of the agency.

The Directorate and line managers shall serve as an example, in following this Code, while providing direction and guidance to staff to whom this Code applies.

### **2.1. Professional performance**

- When interacting with cooperation partners or the public, anyone representing Europol must behave in a manner befitting their position and in accordance with this Code.
- Everyone shall fulfil their work with care, discipline, courtesy, efficiency and loyalty to Europol.
- Everyone shall follow established reporting lines, accept responsibility for own actions and remain accountable for their behaviour and for the performance of their duties. Outside work, the conduct and behaviour shall not impair the position of Europol.
- No one shall be on duty while being unfit, in particular when under the influence of intoxicants such as alcohol.
- Expenditure on behalf of Europol may only be committed with due authority, and the budget granted to Europol shall be spent responsibly, in line with the goals of the organisation.
- Europol follows a zero-tolerance approach to fraud.
- Europol facilities and equipment are to be used with due care by everyone.

### **2.2. Fairness and respect**

- Human dignity shall be respected at all times and everyone shall protect and respect fundamental rights.
- Interpersonal contact shall at all times be governed by fairness, respect, politeness and tolerance, regardless of individual viewpoints. A culture of inclusion shall be promoted and diversity shall be respected.
- No one shall subject others to discriminatory behaviour on any ground.
- Zero tolerance shall be exerted in relation to psychological or sexual harassment, any sort of physical and verbal violence shall not be accepted. A network of confidential counsellors is available to support staff who wish to raise or discuss issues in this regard.

### **2.3. Conformity to regulatory provisions**

- Everyone shall respect the law. Europol staff members may be immune from legal proceedings solely in respect of acts performed by them in their official capacity.
- Anyone placed under criminal investigation shall immediately give notice to Europol or the respective national authorities, based on the corresponding reporting lines.
- Where anyone believes they are being required to act in a manner that they deem to be irregular or illegal, they should report the matter without undue delay to their respective line management, or to the contact points for whistle-blowing at Europol, and follow the relevant rules in this regard.

### **2.4. Independence and impartiality**

- Everyone must prevent and avoid any potential conflict between their personal and work-related interests.
- Any activity outside the scope of professional duties shall not be such as to harm the confidence in the impartial performance of duties.
- No one shall either take or seek instructions from any government, authority, organisation or person outside Europol regarding the performance of duties.
- Everyone must perform their duties impartially and without favouring any particular individual, group, organisation or country and must avoid any conflict of interest.

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- Europol follows a 'no gift culture'. Staff shall not accept a gift item (gifts, favours or rewards, or payments of any kind)<sup>3</sup> offered in relation to their professional capacity.
- No one shall exploit their authority or position at Europol to obtain any personal benefit or privilege, also after having left the organisation.

### 2.5. Confidentiality and discretion

- Subject to Europol's specific security and confidentiality framework, no one shall disclose to any person or third party outside Europol, information that has been obtained in the performance of duties.
- All media requests and contacts shall be addressed to duly authorised Europol staff members.

### 2.6. Transparency

- In accordance with the confidentiality regime and with full respect for privacy, information shall be shared to the extent necessary in order to maintain a transparent working environment.
- Decisions and actions shall be communicated and explained as openly as possible and only be restricted for legitimate reasons.

## 3. Interpretation and implementation

This Code represents an overall complementary framework, the specific duties and responsibilities set out within the applicable regulatory documentation take precedence (an overview is available on the intranet of Europol under the Strategy and Ethics page).

While not all circumstances can be covered in this document, it is expected that the general guidance set out in this Code is applied across the agency. In case of doubt, everyone should seek guidance from line management or the applicable reference point (listed on the intranet of Europol under the Strategy and Ethics page). The Deputy Executive Directors, Heads of Departments, Units, Teams and Offices have a key role in communicating and supervising the implementation of this Code.

## 4. Handling of possible breaches

Europol will support anyone reporting a breach of this Code, unless such reports are found to be malicious or otherwise in bad faith. Reporting shall be done to the respective line management, unless specified differently in the applicable regulatory framework (e.g. for whistle-blowing or psychological or sexual harassment).

If relevant, breaches against this Code will lead to action by the Internal Investigations Service (IIS) of Europol, being supported by the Human Resources Unit, especially in relation to suspected instances of psychological and sexual harassment. Intentional misconduct will lead to an assessment of whether an administrative inquiry by the IIS or an internal investigation by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is initiated, with subsequent disciplinary action where applicable.

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<sup>3</sup> With the exception of cases established in Europol's specific guidance documentation