

Code of Ethics of Civic Society Organizations

Preamble

Georgian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who:

Aspire for the establishment of a democratic and legal state, civil society, and the rule of law;

Act in accordance with international standards and Georgian legislation; and

Aim for transparency of activities undertaken by Civil Society Organizations, thereby enhancing the trust between the Georgian people and CSOs;

hereby ***unite*** to protect the principles of freedom, tolerance, equality, diversity, pluralism, benevolence, partnership, mutual gratitude, respect, social activism, openness, transparency, professionalism, and democratic governance.

Chapter I General Principles (of Action)

Social Activism and Concern

1. Civil Society Organizations stand against social inequality, and protect democratic values and constitutional rights.
2. Civil Society Organizations do not engage in or condone violence in order to achieve their aims.

Responsibility and Accountability

3. Civil Society Organizations acknowledge the importance of accountability for their actions in accordance with internationally recognized principles.
4. Civil Society Organizations regularly undergo audits.
5. Civil Society Organizations issue annual reports about their activities.

Openness and Transparency

6. Information about the mission, members, and finances of CSOs is available to the public, and their activities and work are transparent.
7. Civil Organizations do not act anonymously.
8. All regulations and policies of CSOs are transparent.

Independence

9. Civil Society Organizations define goals, make decisions and act independently, free from outside interference.
10. Civil Society Organizations are independent of any political parties or any private companies or other civil society organizations; such independence ensures their ability to act on behalf of citizens' welfare.

Recognition and Respect

11. Civil Society Organizations respect all written or verbal agreements

12. Civil Society Organizations respect copyrights of other organizations on any ideas, documents or other proprietary materials.
13. Citizen and volunteer participation is considered by CSOs as the basis of Civil Society; CSOs respect activities undertaken by volunteers and citizens.

Tolerance

14. Civil Society Organizations are ready to listen and consider new and diverse ideas for achieving goals through mutual cooperation.
15. Civil Society Organizations recognize diversity of thinking and differences among organizations and their aims.
16. CSOs respect other organizations, their representatives and views.

Chapter II

Internal Relations in Civil Society Organization

Democratic Governance

17. Civil Society Organizations have clearly defined missions. The administration and functioning of CSOs is based on Georgian legislation, statute of the organization, and internal regulations.
18. Civil Society Organizations are voluntary organizations made up of members from the society. They ensure democratic regulation within the organization and accountability of ruling bodies, with mechanisms to respond to any violations thereof.
19. Civil Organizations act in a professional way to achieve aims and tasks defined by their mission.

Internal Structure of the Organization

20. Civil Organizations are governed by an independent Board. The Board is free from any external influences in decision making.
21. The Board of the organization assembles at least once a year.
22. CSOs have mission statements and internal regulations, which describe in detail the mechanisms that govern the functioning of the organization. This document is approved by the Board.
23. The budget of CSOs is approved by the Board of the organization. The approved budget includes the exact expenditures on program activities and administrative costs.
24. Civil Organizations and their members avoid conflicts of interest. CSOs have mechanisms to avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. The Board regulates and oversees policies on conflicts of interest.

Financial Administration

25. Organizational finances are spent wisely and prudently and according to the approved budget.
26. The regulation of finances is made by the Board of the organization. It: a) approves the annual (administrative) budget; b) approves financial procedures; and c) controls fundraising policies.
27. The financial report of the organization should include the: a) total amount of annual income; and b) annual budget, consisting of program and administrative expenses.

Control

28. Civil Society Organizations control their own activities through a Board of Trustees, a Board, an Assembly of Members, and an annual financial audit.

29. Activities undertaken by CSOs should be based on the principle of maximum transparency, and mechanisms should be in place to assure this.

Assessment

30. CSOs have Mission statements that are stated clearly and are achievable. CSOs consistently assess their current activities to ensure compatibility with their stated mission.
31. CSOs have internal regulations to analyze and assess the effectiveness of their activities. Results of this assessment should be open for public scrutiny.

Chapter III
External Relations of Civil Society Organizations

General Principles

32. Civil Organizations aspire towards open cooperation within the civil sector as well with other institutions.
33. CSOs offer society and all interested individuals (including government officials) the experience, knowledge and operational abilities that the organization has for achieving its goals, based on the principles that are stated in the preamble of this document.

Public Relations

34. Civil Society Organizations express and represent the needs of different sectors and interests of society.
35. CSOs encourage citizens' participation in civil society development through activities that educate, promote democracy, and defend citizens' interests.

Relations with Government (agencies)

36. CSOs cooperate with governmental agencies by: a) implementing mutual projects; b) participating in policy development; c) participating in implementation of governmental initiatives; d) informing citizens about policies and initiatives undertaken by the government. CSOs offer the government alternative ways for problem solving and participate in the implementation of democratic reforms.
37. CSOs use the rights guaranteed by Georgian legislation and internationally recognized regulations to help state agencies to act transparently. CSOs conduct monitoring of governmental activities and quickly react to any violation of democratic principles.

Relations with Political Parties and Movements

38. CSOs cooperate with political parties and movements against any violation of democratic principles and human rights, if this cooperation does not contradict the principles of independence as established in the Code.
39. Each member of a CSO has the right to uphold his/her own political sympathies. During elections CSOs should not openly express their political preferences in order to maintain their independence.

Relations with Other Civil Society Organizations

40. CSOs promote an atmosphere of cooperation and joint work within the sector, as the guiding principle for relations between organization and clients.
41. CSOs exchange information, experiences and best practices to achieve mutual goals.
42. CSOs support the establishment of fairness within the sector, to stimulate its future development.

Relations with Donors

43. Relations of Civil Society Organizations with donors or other entities that provide financial or other support should be based on the principles of accountability, openness and cooperation.
44. Donors, or other organizations that provide financial or any other kind of assistance, have the right to have clear information about how that assistance will be utilized concerning the activities, the period of implementation, and the expected financial expenses.
45. CSOs do not cooperate with those donors whose principles are in contradiction with the principles stated in the preamble of the Code of Ethics.

Chapter IV
Principle of Unification with the Code,
Execution and Responsibility Mechanisms

Structure

46. All organizations in agreement with the Code are given certificates that confirm their agreement and willingness to uphold the principles contained herein.
47. The process of implementation of the principles is guided by the CSO Forum.
48. The CSO Forum is not an institutionally established structure. Every Civil Society Organization which declares its agreement with the principles stated in the Code becomes a member of the Forum.
49. The CSO Forum members share information, and through e-mail receive information that may interest citizens, the civil sector or any civil organization.

Disputes and Relations

50. Each organization that is a member of the Forum has the right to express its own vision about any dispute that may arise. Every CSO acts according to the principles declared in the Code and retains the right to express its own views.

Reaction

51. In case of any violation of democratic principles, CSOs working in the relevant sector can bring this to the attention of the CSO Forum, with which other CSOs might be in agreement.
52. Statements and reactions about any violations of such principles shall be made through consultations with every interested and affected party.
53. No member of The Forum has the right to act independently on behalf of the Forum.

Procedures

54. Adherence to the Code is possible through signature or written statement. At that time, CSOs automatically become a member of the Forum.
55. CSOs have the right to leave the Forum if they determine that they do not share the values and principles of the Code. In addition, each member of the Forum has the right to establish new relations with any organization that chooses to leave the Forum.