

## **Annex: BIRN Network Ethics & Code of Conduct**

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### Article 1:

This Annex regulates the values and standards of the association, the founding members of its assembly, and all personnel engaged in working for the BIRN Network.

### **Ethics:**

#### Article 2

The values of transparency, integrity and accountability shall be upheld. Thus, we shall

- undertake to be open, honest and accountable in our relationships with everyone we work with and with each other;
- provide accurate and timely reports of our activities to our stakeholders;
- be honest and impartial in dealing with our stakeholders;
- give priority to the common interests of the people of the Balkans;
- declare our position wherever a conflict of interest arises;
- exercise responsibility, accountability, and trustworthiness;
- not mismanage assets or abuse privileges;
- not compromise our personal and organisational integrity or cause disrepute to the Network.

#### Article 3

The values of independence, courage and responsibility shall be upheld. Thus, we shall

- refrain from any involvement in political processes, business affairs and disputes of and between any third parties that goes beyond responsible and objective journalistic enquiry;
- be democratic, politically non partisan and non sectarian in our work;
- only accept funding that does not compromise our ability to address issues freely, thoroughly and objectively, and that does not undermine our independence and identity;
- maintain our autonomy and resist conditionality that may compromise our principles;
- promote a culture of self-appraisal and conduct regular performance evaluation to monitor our activities;
- be open to constructive change and continuous improvement;
- promote the use of local resources and contributions from the diaspora community.

#### Article 4

We shall strive to create the fullest benefits and impact to all through our programmes and projects. Thus, we shall

- provide equal access to the benefits of our projects, irrespective of age, gender, nationality, religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation;
- continuously improve the quality of our projects and strive to fulfill unmet needs;

- base the positions we take on sound, objective and professional analysis and high standards of research;
- promote public engagement and education, build the capacity of beneficiaries, and make them aware of their rights and obligations;
- plan, design, implement, monitor and evaluate our programmes and projects by involving stakeholders;
- promote sustainable projects and a sense of ownership among beneficiaries;
- make our actions fruitful to the community and be relevant to their needs and priorities.

#### Article 5

The values of good governance and internal democracy shall be upheld. Thus, we shall

- base all our decisions on facts and logic;
- avoid domination and bureaucracy, by creating a favourable climate for internal democracy;
- respect agreements and policies shared with network organisations;
- develop effective and relevant organisational policies, procedures and systems;
- allow our stakeholders to have access to our project progress reports and financial statements;
- abide by our written statutes and by-laws that define our mission, objectives and organisational structures.
- observe a culture of written agreements for all important administrative, operational and financial matters;
- maintain proper financial procedures and accounting systems to regulate our financial practices;
- promote internal capacity building and training;
- portray our public image in a professional manner

#### Article 6

A spirit of respect, solidarity, participation and cooperation shall be maintained. Thus, we shall:

- value the culture, tradition, values, dignity and identity of our members, personnel and communities;
- maintain anti-discrimination and harassment policies;
- maintain mutual respect and consideration among members and personnel;
- communicate and consult with each other openly and collegially and in a manner that assists each of us to fulfil our duties and responsibilities faithfully and efficiently;
- strive for balanced and diverse representation on our governing bodies.
- exchange ideas and experiences with other members and partners;
- encourage sharing of information and resources;
- encourage teamwork, a spirit of cooperation, reciprocity and collaboration among members, personnel and stakeholders;
- consult actively with Network members in the development and implementation of policies and activities that have an impact on them;
- respond to all requests from Network members fairly and expeditiously;
- avoid duplication of efforts and discourage unhealthy competition;
- promote capacity building between and among members;
- resolve our conflicts amicably and avoid open confrontations;
- cooperate in fund raising and lobbying on behalf of the association and members;
- learn from each other and maintain a culture of dynamic organisations.

## Article 7

A sense of justice shall guide our work. Thus, we shall:

- exercise and promote fairness and equity in all our activities when dealing with communities, partners and general public;
- be guided by the principles of the universal declaration of human rights;
- honour and promote the rights of the disadvantaged;
- respect and encourage respect for fundamental rights and freedoms

## **Code of Conduct:**

### Article 8

The interests of the BIRN Network must be protected at all times and its image preserved.

### Article 9

Members of the BIRN Network shall pay due care and attention to the needs and interests of its beneficiaries. Where relevant, information on them shall be kept confidential.

### Article 10

All BIRN Network business data is considered confidential, except for reports explicitly produced for the public or other third parties, or required by legal authorities and contracting parties.

Information on the BIRN Network can only be disclosed to the public by authorised persons.

No misinformation shall be spread about the BIRN Network, nor information disseminated with the intention to harm the interests or image of the BIRN Network.

BIRN Network personnel shall not use business or confidential information for personal interest.

### Article 11

No BIRN Network business shall be discussed other than in the proper forums specifically created and held for that purpose.

#### Article 12

Personnel shall maintain a professional approach during all contacts with beneficiaries and other third parties.

Any personal relationships with BIRN Network personnel, beneficiaries or other relevant third parties shall be declared, where necessary to guard against conflict of interest.

#### Article 13

Criticism of the business of other organisations in front of third parties shall be avoided whenever possible. Such criticism shall never be made maliciously.

#### Article 14

At all times, BIRN Network personnel shall serve as a positive example to their peers and subordinates, as well as to beneficiaries and other relevant third parties.

#### Article 15

Responsibility for the BIRN Network is in the chain of command, and must be respected at all times.

#### Article 16

Personnel shall ensure acceptance of this code by all further associates, consultants, etc involved in BIRN's work.

Persons in management positions shall treat all staff equally and distribute tasks based on job descriptions and contracts, as well as on results achieved. Staff shall be praised and rewarded for success, and warned for mistakes, within the procedural framework.

#### Article 17

Personnel shall only accept tasks they are fully able and qualified to accomplish.

All personnel shall observe working hours; accomplish tasks to the best of their knowledge; produce appropriate activity reports; observe guidelines referring to their tasks; and take all available steps to improve themselves professionally.

#### Article 18

All personnel are obliged to take proper care of BIRN Network premises, equipment and office materials, paying special attention to the handling of technical equipment.

#### Article 19

All personnel shall without fail reply to telephone, fax and email messages.

All forms of written communication and public presentation shall use the approved version of the BIRN logo.

#### Article 20

Personnel shall not create unreasonable expectations of the BIRN Network among staff, beneficiaries, donors or other relevant third parties.

#### Article 21

Personnel shall refuse any offer of compensation or financial benefit from beneficiaries of third parties that is not an integral part of a budget or contract agreed by the responsible member of staff.

### **Non-discrimination:**

#### Article 22

This policy regulates the maintenance of a safe work environment from all forms of discrimination. All applicants have equal employment opportunities and all employees have the equal opportunity for promotion in their respective fields of work.

#### Article 23

The BIRN Network offers equal opportunities to all its employees and applicants regardless of their race, skin colour, sex, religion, age, marital status, disability, veteran status or national background

in: recruiting, employing, appointing, transfer, promotion, demotion, training opportunities, dismissal, concluding service, salary, evaluation, benefits, compensation and other personnel measures.

#### Article 24

The BIRN Network shall not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of his/her disability, regardless of the position applied for.

#### Article 25

Any person, employee or applicant who believes that he has been discriminated against should appeal to the relevant staff member or organisational body. Appeals can be delivered in written form or in person. The appellant will be advised of every investigation, measure of solution.

#### Article 26

The BIRN Network shall not tolerate any sort of discrimination and shall undertake necessary measures, including dismissal, against any person proved to be in violation of this policy;

#### Article 27

The BIRN Network shall not discriminate against any person for standing up or pressing charges for illegal employment or discrimination, testifying, aiding or participating in any form of investigation, procedure or hearing related to employment procedure.

### **Sexual Harassment Policy:**

#### Article 28

Sexual harassment shall not be tolerated in the BIRN Network.

For the purposes of this policy, "harassment" is defined as visual, verbal, or physical conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

"Sexual harassment", is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the same purpose or effect. This may include:

- Abusive names, insults, bad jokes or discrediting comments, unwanted sexual advances, invitations, or comments;
- Suggestive stares, making sexual gestures, displaying derogatory and/or sexually suggestive objects or pictures;
- Assault, impeding, or blocking movements, or any unwanted touching or physical contact directed at an individual's sex or any other protected status;
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other loss, offers, or employment benefits in return for sexual favors, or making threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances; and
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.
- Sexual advances by an official who is in a position to influence the career or employment conditions of the recipient of such attentions shall result in immediate termination, following the necessary investigatory procedures.

#### Article 29

The BIRN Network shall protect its personnel as much as possible from harassment by third parties.

#### Article 30

Any personnel who feels that he/she has been harassed or discriminated against in accordance with this policy's definition is encouraged to take action promptly to resolve the problem at an early stage and, where possible, inform the offender directly, firmly, and promptly that his/her behaviour is inappropriate.

Should informal approaches not be feasible or not result in a solution of the problem, the personnel affected may contact the Regional network director, or another relevant member of the organisation, to undertake concrete measures. An ad hoc Board of Inquiry appointed for that purpose shall investigate the case without delay. This Board shall make a detailed report together with any recommendations it may deem appropriate, including disciplinary actions which may range from a verbal warning to summary dismissal in the case of serious or repeated offences. If the complaint is manifestly fraudulent or made in bad faith, the Board may close the proceedings at anytime, and consequently shall open proceedings against the individual issuing the complaint based on false evidence.

If the personnel is convinced that his/her complaint is not properly addressed, he/she may write to the BIRN Assembly president.

#### Article 31

Any employee who harasses another shall be subject to disciplinary procedure, including warning, suspension or dismissal. All persons who harass are responsible to the law.

#### Article 32

Each manager is responsible for this policy implementation in his/her department.

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

#### Article 33

Every person associated with the BIRN Network must avoid or manage any potential real or perceived conflict of interest (inter alia by refraining from any decision making or voting on matters subject to a potential conflict of interest), and openly acknowledge any potential or actual conflict of interest, which arises through his/her association with the BIRN Network.

Board members and personnel are required to acknowledge their personal or professional affiliation with any organisation or company with which BIRN conducts business.

#### Article 34

BIRN shall not purchase goods or services from companies where BIRN Board members or employees and their families are owners or co-owners. Family members include parents, brothers, sisters, spouses, and children.

#### Article 35

Assembly and board members throughout the BIRN Network are not allowed to benefit financially or materially from their engagement as such, except for being reimbursed for costs incurred during related activities. These costs may include travel, per diem, phone calls, and fax.

#### Article 36

Failure to comply with the above conflict of interest policy shall result in disciplinary measures for Assembly/Board members and personnel. Any alleged conflicts of interest shall be turned over to the relevant organisation's board or assembly, which shall determine the appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken against the respective Assembly/Board member or personnel.

**Article 37**

Potential conflicts of interest should be identified and declared by the person in potential conflict, or reported by other members of the BIRN Network, as soon as they become aware of such potential conflict of interest.

Such disclosure or report should be made to the president of BIRN or of the respective member organisation or to another suitable senior officer or director.

The evaluation of a potential conflict of interest must be made by the BIRN Assembly or regional network director, or the member of the advisory board. The evaluation may determine the absence of a conflict of interest, or it may lead to the conclusion that (i) the respective person should not go ahead with the evaluated activity or that (ii) he/she should recuse him/herself from participating in decision making by BIRN or any of its member organisations with reference to the matter in conflict.

The presidents of BIRN and its member organisations respectively are responsible for ensuring that all persons associated with the activities of the BIRN Network are made aware of the policy and procedures regarding conflict of interest.

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I, the undersigned, \_\_\_\_\_(print your full name), by my signature confirm that I have read and understood the BIRN's Ethics and Code of Conduct and that I shall conduct my tasks in accordance with these rules and that breach of these rules presents the ground for my immediate dismissal.

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(signature of the incumbent)

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(date, place)