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# **CODE OF ETHICS**

## **AVSI FOUNDATION**



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## INTRODUCTION

The Code of Ethics (from here on referred to as: “Code”) is an official AVSI Foundation document (from here on referred to “AVSI” or “Foundation”), approved by the Board of Directors, which contains principles and rules of conduct to be followed by anyone who works or deals with the Foundation, such as partners, donors, beneficiaries.

The purpose of the present code is to declare and disseminate the values and rules of conduct that the Foundation intends to maintain as a reference during its activities.

The present code is binding and must be met by all staff members: this includes anyone who conducts activities on behalf of the Foundation, anywhere, both within Italy and abroad, anyone who fulfils roles of representation, administration or management of the Foundation, as well as collaborators and external consultants operating in the interest of AVSI.

Control over the compliance with the present Code is exercised by a Supervisory Authority as per the “Model of Organization, Management and Control” pursuant to Decree n. 231 of June 8, 2001 (from here on “Model”). The Supervisory Authority may propose changes to the Board to stay up-to-date with new laws and with potential new activities.

The present Code was adopted by AVSI Foundation Board of Directors on 2013, April 30 with immediate effect.

The present Code is available on the Foundation website and is displayed on the wall of the Foundation's headquarters.

All AVSI network members are required to adopt the present code or equivalent document stating equivalent principles binding for all their staff members.



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## GENERAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

AVSI Foundation was founded in 1972 as “Association of Volunteers for the International Service”.

It is a not-for-profit organization following the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church, its mission is the promotion of development cooperation activities – also abroad - volunteering and support to peoples in developing countries, transition economy countries and any country that experiences acute need or emergency situations. In some of these latter cases, it intervenes even on a humanitarian level.

It was recognized in 1973 by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a non-governmental organization for international cooperation (NGO); is registered as a PVO with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and holds General Consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in New York.

In 2004, the Council of Founders officially transformed AVSI from an association into a foundation, thus calling it “AVSI Foundation” and approving its statute.

AVSI is involved in more than 100 cooperation projects in 37 countries worldwide in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Asia. AVSI's main activity areas are education and social development, urban upgrading, healthcare, labor, agriculture, food security and water, energy and environment, humanitarian emergency and migrants and refugees

The general ethical principles that inspire the work of AVSI Foundation and to which it aims to adhere, represent the founding values through which it intends to achieve its mission.

These general principles are the following:

- Honesty
- Loyalty
- Fair conduct
- Solidarity
- Non-discrimination
- Trasparency
- Responsibility



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## **ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT**

The ethical principles stated hereabove, which orient the work of the Foundation, are elaborated in further detail in the following ethical principles of conduct. These will guide AVSI Foundation staff members towards more professional, moral and fair management.

### ***Legality***

AVSI's inescapable principle is respect of law and regulations in force in all countries where it operates. Employees, collaborators, providers, partners, donors and anyone who deals with AVSI must commit themselves to this principle. AVSI will not establish or maintain any relation with anyone who does not abide by this principle.

AVSI clearly states that no-one can violate the law by arguing that he does so in the interest of AVSI, as what is against the law is against AVSI.

### ***Equality and non discrimination***

AVSI Foundation will not favor, either directly or indirectly, any form of discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, political or union affiliation, language or health conditions.

### ***Safeguard and protection of the person***

The value of the person as such is a fundamental principle that guides AVSI's conduct. The Foundation's approach is based on listening and dialogue with the goal of improving solutions and services offered to users and stakeholders, as well as professionalism and skills of its own staff.

Throughout its work and projects, AVSI safeguards and promotes human rights within the range of its activities, by cooperating with and supporting other international organizations pursuing this goal. AVSI will not favor, either directly or indirectly, any abuse. On the contrary, it will report any abuse it comes to know of.

### ***Dutifulness***

AVSI Foundation will respect its employees and require them to always act with attention and accuracy in their work, through the best use of available resources and by avoiding undue burdens and waste of resources.

The Foundation will constantly provide training and development programs in order to increase professionalism of staff at different levels and improve their professional and management skills.



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### *Honesty*

AVSI Foundation requires its employees, partners, collaborators not to pursue any personal or company's benefit, against the law in force and the rules contained in the Code of Ethics and in the Code of Conduct. They are likewise required, not to do any actions that go against what common sense deems correct.

### *Trasparency*

The Foundation ensures and maintain as much transparency as possible in its activities: every operation and transaction is accurately recorded, authorized, verifiable, lawful, consistent and reasonable, according to the law in force and internal regulations. Bribery, corruption and complicity in such wrongdoing are prohibited. Anyone who has any relation with the Foundation must be provided with complete and accurate information on the activities they have to do with.

In particular, all accounting must be adequately reported so that it is possible to assess the actual financial performance of the Foundation and monitor a not-for-profit conduct, in compliance with the Foundation's Statute.

### *Equality and impartiality*

AVSI Foundation will act with equality and impartiality and provide equal treatment to anyone it has to deal with, maintaining adequate distinction between the different roles of the subjects.

AVSI requires objectivity and fairness on the part of its employees and collaborators in their work and in the judgments that they express, regardless of any personal relationship (family or otherwise).

### *Protection of privacy and confidentiality*

The Foundation ensures compliance with laws on privacy and confidentiality. Data protection and data security are also guaranteed at all times according to Decree n.196/2003.

All personal and sensitive data are processed in a lawful and fair way, thus preventing third parties from accessing them.

Foundation staff and collaborators are prohibited to use personal information for any purpose other than their specific employment activities.

### *Absence of conflict of interest*

Through the course of their activities, employees and collaborators must avoid situations in which they may have or seem to have a conflict of interest.



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A conflict of interest occurs when a person to whom the present Code of Ethics applies, pursues an interest other than the Foundation's mission or engages in activities that may interfere with their ability to make decisions in the sole interest of the Foundation.

Just as an example, a conflict of interest occurs in the following situations:

- direct and indirect ownership of shareholding or financial interests in supplier, competitor and client companies;
- acceptance of positions of any kind at supplier, donor or partner companies.

In case of conflict of interest, the employee to whom the present Code of Ethics applies must immediately inform the person in charge.

### ***Sustainable Development***

AVSI Foundation respects the principle of sustainable development and fosters a fair social environment, particularly in the management of trade relations with Africa, South America and all the fields in which AVSI operates.

Furthermore, AVSI protects the environment as a primary asset and aims to ensure compatibility between projects and environmental necessities in the countries in which the project is implemented, by encouraging the use of environmentally friendly technologies.



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## **RULES OF CONDUCT FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS**

The rules of conduct, deriving from the general ethical principles and the ethical principles of conduct regulate the relations within and between:

- Donors
- Partners
- Suppliers
- Employees/collaborators/volunteers/internal bodies
- Beneficiaries
- Press and media
- Auditors
- Public Administration

### ***Relations with Donors***

Transparency and fairness are ensured through relations with donors, to this end:

- it is prohibited to give, offer or promise any money or other non-cash benefit;
- it is prohibited to exercise undue pressure;
- it is prohibited to submit untruthful statements with the purpose of receiving public funds or benefits;
- accounting procedures must clearly identify donations as well as their sources;
- it is prohibited to use money received as donation for any purpose other than the ones for which it was originally given;
- the funds must be used in such a way that operational costs are kept to a minimum and as many resources as possible are allocated to the beneficiaries;
- activities must ensure productive employment of facilities, economic resources and local staff with the purpose of reaching a concrete and lasting development in the country.

AVSI Foundation will reject any donation in materials, money, services from companies that manifestly violate human rights, the rights of workers or the environment, that produce or trade weapons, pornographic material or any other material that would degrade the human person and the environment.



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### ***Relations with Partners***

Partners (agencies or associations) are carefully chosen for common activities according to the following standards:

- the partner must not pursue profit goals through the common activities;
- the partnership must observe the principles contained in the Foundation's Code of Ethics;

### ***Relations with Suppliers***

When choosing its suppliers, AVSI Foundation:

- favors technical and economic subjects in the local countries where a decent quality of goods, labor and services is maintained;
- appoints a subject in accordance with tender procedures for goods, works and services, on the basis of objective evaluations and in full compliance with the standards of free competition, quality and low price.
- Demands respect for laws, ethical clauses and rules dictated by the Foundation.

### ***Relations with Employees, Collaborators, Volunteers, Members of Internal Bodies***

- AVSI's main asset is its human resources; the Foundation promotes their skills, aspirations and professionalism.
- Relations with employees, collaborators, volunteers and members of internal bodies must be conducted with maximum respect and must be based on a codified set of rights and duties. In particular:
  - ***Duties of AVSI Foundation***
  - offering everyone equal opportunities of professional development, with no discrimination based on gender, age, disability, religion, nationality, ethnicity or political and union affiliation;
  - observing the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the European Convention on Human Rights, in the Declaration of Rights of the Child and in the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
  - complying with the international standards on working conditions and workers' rights, of which we can mention: freedom of expression, of association, the right to collective bargaining, abolition of forced labor, equality of opportunity and treatment and other standards set by the International Labor Organization (ILO).
- ensuring adequate and functional work environment;



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- avoiding any form of discrimination and abuse: all decisions related to human resources must be made according to merit and ability, without favoring any individual.
- rejecting any form of irregular work, forced labor or exploitation;
- pursuing constant improvement of everyone's skills, by favoring training and development opportunities and perfecting operational methods and strategies;
- acknowledging everyone's skills and contributions to the common goal;
- ensuring circulation of the Code of Ethics and procedures;
- ensuring privacy;
- ensuring compliance with laws and regulations concerning health protection and work safety;
- providing adequate information on life and safety conditions in the country where personnel are employed, as well as on sanitary prevention practices to be followed.

### ***Duties of Employees***

- observing the fundamental rights of the person, especially the rights of the child and avoiding any form of discrimination;
- behaving and dressing with decency, showing respect for local colleagues, partners, habits, cultures and religions within the dignity of one's role and in accordance with the principles of the Foundation;
- employing the Foundation's goods in a fair way;
- showing respect for work environment and premises;
- reporting any conflict of interest that may arise in the course of one's work.

### ***Staff are prohibited to:***

- participate in military operations and the like;
- own and carry weapons;
- participate in political activities without explicit consent from the Foundation;
- act in a way that damages the Foundation or its image;



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- employ underage workers;
- use psychotropic substances;
- act in a violent/abusive manner through threat, oppression, psychological harassment which offend dignity and psychophysical integrity of lower-level colleagues or which degrade the work environment;
- exercise any form of harassment;
- have sexual relations with underage people;
- effect payments and transactions in an unfairway and against the anti money-laundering laws;
- make and circulate false money, even if it was received in good faith;

### ***Relations with Beneficiaries***

Beneficiaries must be fully informed on the ethical principles that inspire the collaborators and partners, as well as on the activities, donors and resources used in the activities that affect them.

### ***Relations with Press and Media***

Outbound communications must be truthful, verifiable, not aggressive and respectful of rights and dignity of the person.

### ***Relations with Auditors***

Relations with auditors must be conducted rapidly, fairly and with transparency. Auditors must be provided full cooperation and obstructionism must be avoided. It is prohibited to conceal information, provide untruthful documents and obstructing the auditors in the performance of their duties.

### ***Relations with the Public Administration and Judicial Officers***

Relations with the Public Administration, including Supervisory Agencies, must be managed by those in charge of such relations and with transparency, fairness, completeness and traceability.

AVSI commits itself to:

- not receiving any funds or contributions from the Public Administration by means of false and untruthful declarations or by omitting due information;
- not using funds or contributions for any purpose other than the ones for which they were originally given;
- not pursuing any other benefit by defrauding the Public Administration.



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As far as relations with judicial officers are concerned, it is prohibited to exercise any form of pressure on the person called to testify with the purpose of preventing such testimony or making it untruthful.

It is prohibited to help a person who has carried out an act of legal significance to avoid the investigation of the authorities, or to escape their investigations.



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## **RULES ON THE APPLICATION AND VIOLATION OF THE CODE OF ETHICS**

### ***Adoption and circulation***

The board of directors is the sole internal body that can adopt and modify the Code of Ethics.

The Code is made available to all the employees and circulated to all key stakeholders; it is also available on the Foundation's website [www.avsi.org](http://www.avsi.org).

### ***Field of application***

The principles of this Code apply to everyone who works with AVSI Foundation: administrators, auditors, managers, employees, collaborators, partners, suppliers, donors and beneficiaries.

### ***Supervision***

The Supervisory Authority, established under Decree 231/01, is in charge of promoting and monitoring the compliance with the Code of Ethics.

In particular, the Supervisory Authority:

- promotes the implementation of the Code through ad hoc procedures;
- proposes changes to the Code;
- examines reported violations and submits the outcomes of such inquiries to the body in charge.

### ***Violations***

Compliance with the Code of Ethics is part of the contractual obligations of anyone who works with AVSI Foundation.

In case a violation of the Code of Ethics is confirmed, and in case they are employees, AVSI must prosecute those responsible for the violations, according to the contract in force; in case they are external subjects, it must resort to all necessary/appropriate measures in order to prevent such violation from ever happening again. Measures can include dismissal (resolution of contract according to Law 1453c.c.) or interruption of commercial/professional activities with a supplier/collaborator, with consequent mandatory compensation.

Suspected violations of the Code of Ethics must be reported in writing to the Supervisory Authority at the following address:

*Organismo di Vigilanza D.Lgs. 231  
Fondazione AVSI  
Via Legnone 4  
20158 Milan*



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or by e-mail to: [organismodivigilanza@avsi.org](mailto:organismodivigilanza@avsi.org)

AVSI Foundation monitors the compliance with the Code of Ethics, through adequate means of information, prevention and control and ensuring transparency of activities and conduct, and it implements correctional measures if deemed appropriate.

The Code of Ethics is integral part of the Model of Organization, Management and Control adopted by the Foundation as per Decree 231/2001.