18. GSF Code of Ethics

GSF Board Members and Volunteers adhere to a set of ethical standards in their behaviour and engagement with each other and the Board of the GSF.

1. Core Principles Guiding Our Actions
    - Respect for Diversity: We honor cultural differences and ethical norms across our member associations, ensuring inclusivity in all interactions.
    - Integrity: We act with honesty and openness in all dealings with GSF and its members, reflecting the Federation's values of trust and fairness.
2. Professional Conduct Expectations
    - Conflict of Interest: Board Members and Volunteers must disclose any personal interests that might conflict with their GSF duties and avoid such situations.
    - Confidentiality: We protect sensitive information about member associations, individuals, and GSF operations to maintain trust.
3. Responsibilities to the Federation
    - Compliance with Laws and Bylaws: We follow all local, national, and international laws relevant to GSF's work, as well as the bylaws and policies of our home associations.
    - Transparency in Leadership: We communicate openly about decisions impacting GSF and its members, ensuring clarity and accountability.
    - Inclusivity in Decision-Making: We create an inclusive environment, valuing diverse perspectives in all governance decisions.

18.1 Responses to Ethics Violations

18.1.1 Training and Education

Purpose: To provide insight into the issues concerned for Board Members and Volunteers.

Initial Action:

- Provide adequate onboarding training for existing and new Board Members and Volunteers.
- Provide tailored ethics training or workshops specific to any specific breach of the GSF Code of Ethics.
- Emphasise the standards and principles of GSF's Code of Ethics and to bring it to the attention of Board Members and Volunteers at each Board meeting and AGM.

Implementation:

- Promote and share GSF's Code of Ethics to Board Members and Volunteers when this is adopted and add it to the onboarding programme.
- Emphasise the standards and principles of GSF's Code of Ethics and to bring it to the attention of Board Members and Volunteers at each Board meeting and AGM.
- Discuss it in the Leader 2 Leader calls, post the Code of Ethics to the website and social media channels.

Goal:

- Equip Board Members and Volunteers with the knowledge to avoid potential breaches and strengthen overall ethical awareness.

18.1.2 Leadership Intervention

Purpose: To mediate and resolve any ethical issue while reinforcing GSF's ethical culture.

Initial Action:

- Attempt to defuse the situation with transparent dialogue with the Board Members, Volunteers or leadership of the members association to understand the root cause and address the concern.
- If necessary, assign a member of the PLT or create an ethics committee to assess the situation.

Steps to Consider:

- Issue a formal warning to the Board Members or Volunteers or to the members association itself, where appropriate, if the breach is minor and unintentional.
- Develop a corrective action plan that might include apologies, restitution, or public acknowledgment if appropriate.

Goal:

- Demonstrate accountability and align actions with GSF ethical principles without immediately resorting to punitive measures.

18.1.3 Suspension or Other Disciplinary Actions

Purpose: To address severe, intentional, or repeated violations where other measures fail.

Application:

- Where necessary when other measures have failed, the Board of GSF may consider suspension of a Board Member, Volunteers or a member association.
- The process will include:
    1. A preliminary investigation by an ethics review committee nominated by the President of GSF
    2. Notification of findings to all relevant parties.
    3. Temporary suspension from specific roles, voting rights, or federation activities while undergoing further investigation for the Board Member, Volunteer or a member association.

Possible Extensions:

- For individuals: Sanctions, such as removal from board position or volunteer role.
- For associations: Sanctions, such as removal from federation membership.

Goal:

- Protect the integrity of the GSF and provide a deterrent against ethical breaches.

18.2 Why a Code of Ethics

18.2.1 Establishes Standards of Conduct

A Code of Ethics provides clear guidelines for acceptable behavior and professional standards. It helps members understand what is expected of them in terms of integrity, respect, and professionalism.

18.2.2 Builds Trust and Credibility

Having a formal Code of Ethics enhances the Federation's reputation. It assures stakeholders, clients, and members that the organization prioritizes ethical behavior and accountability.

18.2.3 Protects Members and the Federation

A Code of Ethics can act as a safeguard against misconduct. It provides a framework for addressing disputes or grievances, ensuring fairness and consistency in resolving ethical concerns.

18.2.4 Promotes Unity and Shared Values

In a global organization a Code of Ethics can unify members from diverse backgrounds by establishing a shared set of principles that transcend cultural differences.

18.2.5 Guides Decision-Making

When faced with challenging situations, members can refer to the Code of Ethics to make informed and morally sound decisions.

18.3 Ethics Guidelines

The proposed Ethics guidelines are stated under the categories of:

- Core Ethical Principles
- Professional Conduct
- Member Responsibilities
- Governance and Leadership

18.4 Responses to Ethical Violations

There are 3 levels of response:

- Education
- Intervention
- Suspension

There are two subjects of responses, one for associations violating the guidelines and the other for an individual violating the guidelines.

18.5 Benefits to GSF association members

Increased assurance of the integrity of the actions of GSF as well as the Board Members and Volunteers, to enhance the reputation and value of their membership of GSF.

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