



## Code of Conduct

### of the General Assembly of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe 2024

Adopted by the CPCE Council on 22 February 2024

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## Preamble

The General Assembly of the Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe is a place of encounter. It brings together people from different churches and denominations, different languages and cultures. It is a space in which different positions in our communion can meet and be respected.

To ensure this, it follows the following Code of Conduct.

As people whose faith is rooted in the Gospel, we uphold the principle that each human being has received his or her dignity as a gift of God and therefore needs to be respected and protected. This fundamental insight, rooted in our faith, needs to be expressed coherently in the ways we meet and interact in events that bring us together.

- To this end, we aim to comply with the following fundamental ethical obligations and standards. These include: Respect for the dignity and integrity of all human beings
- Fair and just treatment of all, without discrimination, exploitation or harassment
- Responsible stewardship in the exercise of power and use of financial and other resources
- Respect for diversity, inclusiveness and participation, and transparency and accountability.

All employed by the organization and all CPCE events participants are expected to comply with these commitments.

These commitments call for special attention in international and multicultural work contexts where differences based on ethnicity, religion, gender, age or disability can lead to attitudes or practices that violate individuals' personal integrity or sense of what is appropriate. In view of different cultural manners, it is important to develop a sensitivity for the fact that there are different cultures for an appropriate degree of intimacy and distance.

There are temptations to misuse power, harass and exploit others, also in relation to sexuality, and therefore must be constrained. The CPCE Code of Conduct embodies zero tolerance with regards to sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, abuse of power, fraud and corruption in all of CPCE activities and responsibilities and applies rules and penalties for any breaches or violations.

These convictions are shared in the CPCE throughout all its activities. No one should be subjected to any misconduct from any participant at events organized by the CPCE.

**Participation in the CPCE's 9th General Assembly presupposes agreement and adherence to this code of conduct. The Assembly Code of Conduct is applicable at all times and in all places during the assembly, including any excursion.**

## A: How to be alert to abuse, harassment and exploitation of any kind during the CPCE General Assembly

- Treat all persons fairly and with respect, courtesy, dignity and according to the hosting country law, international law, and local customs.
- Behave respectfully towards others and do not misuse private, professional or any other relationships.
- Be aware of the special responsibility that any person in authority has.
- Be sensitive to cultural and social differences and practices.
- Do not cross boundaries set by others. If someone indicates "No", even without words, respect it.
- Be alert to contexts which may encourage unacceptable behavior for some being in unfamiliar circumstances away from home, for example, or drinking too much alcohol.
- Refuse any inappropriate gesture or contact. Show that such behavior is not welcome.
- Do not exchange money, goods or services for any kind of sexual favors.
- Never commit any act of fraud, corruption or unethical business practice, including conflict of interest during CPCE events.
- Do not accuse falsely people for harassment or exploitation of any kind for your own advantage.
- Be aware that such behavior should be respected not only in the meeting itself but also in social times, at meals, etc.

## B. Assembly Complaint Mechanism

All complaints will be treated with discretion, confidentiality and integrity. In all cases, Romanian law will be respected.

Complaints are received and reviewed by the Committee of Complaints for the General Assembly, which is made up of two ombudspersons (one woman and one man), a member of the pastoral care team and a specialist appointed by the committee of the host churches. At least one member of the CPCE Council is a member of the Committee of Complaints. Other persons may be appointed to the

Committee. Their role is to receive the complaints and jointly assess the complaint on a needs basis and recommend the way forward.

At the beginning of the General Assembly, the organizers should remind all participants about the Code of Conduct. Ombudspersons should be introduced at the first session. They shall draw the attention of the participants to the Code of Conduct principles and the commitment to uphold them.

Complaints related to a breach of the Assembly Code of Conduct will be handled according to the complaint's procedure given below.

## C. Procedure

Should anyone need to make a complaint, the following procedures shall apply:

1. approach a member of the Committee of Complaints at this event or fill out the Complaint Form available at the General Assembly to make a complaint found as ANNEX.
2. hand the filled-out complaint in English or German form to any member of the Committee of Complaints
3. or send an email to [complaint@leuenberg.eu](mailto:complaint@leuenberg.eu) (only accessed by the Committee of Complaints) or report misconduct via the website form [www.cpce-assembly.eu](http://www.cpce-assembly.eu).
4. All complaints will be carefully and promptly investigated, maintaining confidentiality, meeting privately with the subject of the complaint and the complainant (person making the complaint), and witnesses named in the complaint.
5. For the complainant (a person who has an issue and is making the complaint), counselling and pastoral care will be made available. In cases where the complainant wishes to report the incident to the relevant legal and/or ecclesial authorities, they shall be offered the relevant information and assist to connect them to the concerned authorities. The expert nominated by the Local Assembly Committee will provide information, links and expertise.
6. The subject of a complaint will also be offered the possibility of counselling and pastoral care.
7. The Committee of Complaints may in consultation with the General Assembly leadership, find it necessary to remove the subject of the complaint from the actual meeting or bar the person from functions or situations where the offence could be repeated. The subject of the complaint may be informed of the decision.
8. The Committee of Complaints informs the General Assembly Leadership about the initiation of complaints procedures and the proposed solutions.
9. CPCE will not provide legal representation to either party.

The CPCE reserves the right to take any action it deems necessary to ensure application of the principles upon which this Assembly Code of Conduct is based. The CPCE, as an organization, its leadership, staff and individuals participating in these processes, assume no responsibility directly or indirectly, for any action or inaction taken with respect to this Code of Conduct and shall under no

circumstances be made liable for any expense incurred or loss suffered as a consequence of application of the procedures of the Code of Conduct.

Complaints can be submitted within 30 days of the incident via the e-mail address [complaint@leuenberg.eu](mailto:complaint@leuenberg.eu) and will be dealt with by the CPCE Council. All complaints for which a solution cannot be found during the time of the meeting itself or which need to be followed up will be dealt with by the CPCE Council.

## D. Key Terms

### Abuse of power

Viewed positively, power is the ability to act, especially in ways that respect and empower rather than dominate and oppress others. Those in positions of authority or trust are expected to carry this out in responsible and just ways that do not take advantage of others, especially those who are more dependent or vulnerable. Abuse of power is manifested in how those with less social power are treated physically, psychologically, emotionally, and/or sexually. Sexual activity, even when consensual, between those of unequal power in this sense is an abuse of power.

### Bullying

Bullying is the use of force or coercion to abuse or intimidate others. The behavior can be habitual and involve an imbalance of social or physical power. It can include verbal harassment or threat, physical assault or coercion and may be directed repeatedly towards particular victims, perhaps on grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, or ability.

### Corruption

As a particular form of the abuse of power, corruption is the abuse of one's position for private gain, such as misusing the financial and other resources of the organization. The offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may improperly influence the action of any person is also to be considered as corruption.

### Discrimination

Discrimination means exclusion of, treatment of, or action against an individual based on social status, ethnicity, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability.

### Gender and power

Gender is the English word being used to describe cultural/societal differences between males and females in terms of roles and responsibilities, expectations, power, privileges, rights, and opportunities. "Gender" refers to the differences between males and females that are rooted in culture, tradition, society, and religion. Gender is something that is learned from infancy. An individual or society's gender perspective can change. Unequal power relationships provide the basis for sexual exploitation and abuse.

## Fraud

An intentional distortion, deceit, trickery, and perversion of truth or breach of confidence, relating to an organization's financial, material, or human resources, assets, services and/or transactions, generally for the purpose of personal gain or benefit.

## Harassment

Harassment means any unwelcome comment or behavior that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behavior that fails to respect the dignity of an individual.

## Intimidation

Intimidation (also called cowing) is intentional behavior that "would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities" fear of injury or harm. It's not necessary to prove that the behavior was so violent as to cause terror or that the victim was actually frightened.

## Protection

Ensuring that individual basic human rights, welfare and physical security are recognized, safeguarded and protected in accordance with international standards.

## Sexual exploitation

Sexual coercion and manipulation (includes all types of sexual acts) by a person in a position of power providing any type of assistance in exchange for sexual acts. In these situations, the potential victim believes she/he has no other choice than to comply; this is not consent and it is exploitation. Exploitation is using one's position of authority, influence or control over resources, to pressure, force or manipulate someone to do something against his/her will or unknowingly, by threatening them with negative repercussions such as withholding project assistance, not approving an employee's work support requests, threatening to make false claims about an employee in public, etc. Sexual exploitation is any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

## Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment means any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, touch, joke, gesture, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, written or visual, by any person to another individual within the scope of work. Sexual harassment may be directed at members of the same or opposite sex and includes harassment based on sexual orientation.

## Sexualised violence

Sexualised violence is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

## Zero tolerance

The principle and practice of not tolerating any instance of sexual exploitation and abuse, harassment, abuse of power, fraud, and corruption in all our meetings and conferences and applying rules and penalties for breaches or violations.

## ANNEX

### CONFIDENTIAL

#### CPCE General Assembly Complaint Form

*This form should be completed by the person wishing to lodge a complaint or documented by a third party. All information must be held securely and confidentiality must be maintained at all times.*

#### A: General data

Name of the person lodging the complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel/Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the person you wish to lodge a complaint against (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred communication channel: phone ; email ; in person: \_\_\_\_\_

#### B: What is the complaint?

*(State the nature and key issue of the Complaint)*

#### C: Brief description of the incident or concern:

*State what exactly happened, trying to follow the sequence of events from start to finish. If the incident location is not well known, describe the location based on your memory of it. Give a description of the 'subject of complaint' if you do not know her/his name.*

#### D: Name of witnesses:

*(if any) Supply the names of witnesses and where they can be contacted, if known.*

#### E: Solution options:

*State what kind of a response you expect from CPCE and how you wish to see the matter resolved:*

Name and Signature of Complainant: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by the Committee of Complaints:

Date and time of receipt: \_\_\_\_\_

Dossier number: \_\_\_\_\_

Persons handling the complaint:

Name and function: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and function: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Case referred to: \_\_\_\_\_ Date referred: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe action taken

*(provide detailed information example, if medical assistance has been provided, what psychosocial care has been provided and whether a report has been made to the Police):*

Name and Signature of representative of Committee of Complaints: \_\_\_\_\_