

## **CHARTER OF ETHICS**

*The fundamental principles on which Caritas is built mean the same to each and every one of us: “Respecting the ethical norms and acting with impeccable integrity.” The people we counsel (in Belgium and abroad) as well as the institutions and the donors who give us their trust all expect that we act in accordance with the values established in the deontological code and the code of conduct of the worldwide Caritas network.*

*Please take the time to read and comprehend the charter and the documents to which this text refers. By embodying and defending these values on a daily basis – by acting with integrity and ethical awareness – you will realise the ambition of excellence in the aid that Caritas is able to provide thanks to you.*

### **Code of ethics and code of conduct for the worldwide Caritas network**

These codes establish the correct attitude and behaviour that is expected of anyone associated with Caritas:

#### **Values, behaviour and ethics.**

- To respect human rights and ban discrimination, intimidation, abuse, negligence and exploitation at the expense of the rights of others.
- To respect the laws of the country in which they are active (as far as conscience allows this).
- To act in good faith, treat others with dignity and respect and create an environment which is beneficial to diversity.
- To show respect and open up to the local customs and culture, and to dress appropriately.
- To ensure that they and the people they are responsible for act in accordance with the safety precautions and precautions meant to protect individuals.
- To perform their duties competently and with love, without any form of discrimination or prejudice, and to adhere to Caritas’ priority to help people who live in poverty.
- To ensure impeccable personal and professional behaviour that is experienced as such.
- To engage in and build partnerships and relationships of solidarity with other organisations.
- To not make any private or public statements of a racist, sexist or otherwise offensive nature.
- To ensure that Caritas’ reputation is not brought into discredit.
- To respect the confidentiality with regard to professional information.

#### **Conflicts of interest, corruption and coercion**

- To refrain from abusing the power granted to employees of Caritas in order to exert pressure or obtain gifts or benefits on an economic, professional, political or sexual level.
- To formally disclose any potential or perceived instance of a conflict of interest (financial, private or familial) with Caritas’ work.
- To not accept (or offer) any unreasonable gifts, bribes or any other form of personal benefit from beneficiaries, partners or contracting parties, regardless of the circumstances.

### **Individual behaviour**

- To refrain from carrying weapons in all premises or locations of Caritas (irrespective of whether Caritas is the owner or tenant). This includes accommodation, offices, vehicles etc.
- To refrain from consuming drugs or excessive amounts of alcohol.
- To avoid inappropriate sexual behaviour at all times.

### **Protection of Caritas' goods and policy**

- To ensure that the assets and intellectual property of Caritas are not abused, and that they are protected against theft, fraud or any other form of damage.
- To respect the appropriate norms of honesty and integrity when handling finances.

### **Application of the charter**

The current charter applies to all employees of Caritas and Caritas entities in Belgium (including Caritas International, Caritas Vlaanderen, Caritas Francophone, Caritas Wallonie and Brabantia – Antenne Caritas). These conditions also apply to third parties, particularly to volunteers, partners, consultants and other participants.

Particular regulations are provided:

- For [the protection of minors and vulnerable adults](#) and with regard to the [fight against bullying](#).
- Against fraud and corruption.
- And the [charter of integrity of the Belgian Development Cooperation](#) (FR/NL).

Additional regulations are provided in Belgian law and in the conventions with the authorities that support us (for example: [Fedasil](#) (FR/NL) or [Sphere](#)).

It is the responsibility of all employees of Caritas and third parties to read and comprehend the codes and conditions to which this text refers, and to engage in respecting the stated principles. They are also obligated to take part in continuous training programs.

By signing this Charter, they engage to respect the code of ethics and the code of conduct. Each offence against the Code will result in disciplinary action, which may lead to dismissal. Each offence against the Code by third parties will result in the suspension of all contractual relations.

### **Agreement on word of honour**

I fully subscribe to the codes and norms of this charter and will engage to act with integrity and respect towards everyone. I will also report any problematic situation of which I am a witness or victim to the appropriate channels.

**Name, first name, signature and date:**

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### **Practical supplement**

#### **Asking advice or reporting a problem**

A warning system has been set up to involve every employee in preventing risks resulting from non-compliance with the code of ethics or its supplements.

To ensure the respect and integrity of every person associated with Caritas or Caritas itself, each stakeholder involved in the charter functions as an actor, in order to facilitate the reporting of incidents or suspicions, whether confidential or otherwise, or to gain a better insight into a particular situation.

This mechanism can be used, for example, to report: suspected theft or fraud, non-compliance with a legal or moral obligation, a legal error, a danger to the health and safety of people, a danger to the environment, the deliberate concealment of information, exploitation or inappropriate sexual behaviour, abuse or exploitation of minors...and, in general, any conduct considered inappropriate on grounds of the charter above.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to anticipate the ethical or legal issues that may arise in the context of Caritas' activities. The sole purpose of this charter and its supplements is to define the principles of professional integrity in general, in order to help you make the right decisions in the context of your work.

#### **Any doubts? Here you can find some questions to ask yourself when ethical issues are at stake:**

- Is the intended action potentially illegal or unethical?
- Does the transaction not serve any legitimate purpose?
- Does the intended action (or inaction) require me to lie or to hide any information?
- How would this decision be perceived if I explained it to my family, or if an article appeared about it in the press?
- Could the intended action harm Caritas' reputation?

If you have answered any of these questions in the affirmative, please ask for guidance and/or report the problem in question.

#### **Where to ask for advice, how to communicate or how to report a problem**

In case of doubt about the interpretation of the charter of ethics and its related annexes, the right conduct to adopt, or the application of these rules to a particular situation, contact the Caritas integrity manager via email ([ombudsman@caritasint.be](mailto:ombudsman@caritasint.be)).

If you observe or suspect a breach of the charter of ethics or any breach of integrity, please contact:

- Your reference person at Caritas or the department head
- You can also send an email to [ombudsman@caritas.be](mailto:ombudsman@caritas.be). A member of our Board of Directors (FR) and a member of our General Assembly (NL) have access to this address, this guarantees the anonymous treatment of any interpellation, internal and external. Complaints deemed admissible shall be placed in the register of complaints and shall be the subject of a discreet and appropriate examination; related information is only disclosed to persons and bodies with a legitimate reason to access it and/or where required by law