



**Gender Budget Watchdog Network**  
for a gender equal region

## **GENDER BUDGET WATCHDOG NETWORK**

# **CODE OF CONDUCT**

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## **Preamble**

The Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) Code of Conduct is a document of principles adopted by GBWN members.<sup>1</sup> The Code promotes the professionalism and effectiveness of its members as non-profit, public-interest groups. It also provides for a coordinated approach and action towards the institutionalization of gender responsive budgeting and furthering gender equality in Western Balkans and Republic of Moldova. The principles in this Code can be used as a guide for network members to better deliver on the network's mission and vision, improve internal relations among members and employees, ensure financial transparency and accountability, and seek new relationships with community members and other organizations. Also, by implementing this Code, organizations demonstrate their dedication to openness and accountability.

All GBWN members must agree to implement the Code when they become members. Violations of the Code may result in the discontinuation of membership, based on a decision taken by the Executive Committee.

## **About GBWN**

GBWN was established in 2019 as a network of women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) experienced in gender responsive budgeting from throughout the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova. As a network of organizations working to solve issues impacting women and communities, GBWN provides a venue for such organizations to share information and learn from one another's experiences in the region. Moreover, GBWN provides a support mechanism through which members with shared concerns can unite quickly toward a common cause. GBWN provides advocacy support to its member organizations, joining multiple member organizations together to write advocacy letters and apply pressure, as needed, at municipal, national, regional, and international levels. Towards the achievement of this Code, and a strong, membership, GBWN provides support services, including information, training, mentoring, and professional advice to help its members further their organizational capacities.

### ***Mission***

GBWN is a regional network that seeks to further gender responsive budgeting in the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova, towards more efficient, effective, transparent and just use of resources that benefit diverse women and men. The Network achieves its aims through expanding knowledge and acceptance of feminist economics, research including gender analysis, experience exchanging, coalition-building with other stakeholders, furthering capacities for gender responsive budgeting, advocacy, and monitoring.

### ***Vision***

GBWN envisions a region where resources are distributed in an effective, transparent, just, and equitable way that benefits and meets the needs of diverse men, boys, women, and girls.

## **Principles**

This Code is comprised of main principles and best practices that civil society organizations should follow, these principles include . It includes sections related to Mission and Vision; Civic

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<sup>1</sup> This document was inspired by the Kosovo Women's Network *Code of Conduct*, based on research of other such existing codes, and then revised based on discussions held and input received from GBWN members.

Responsibility; Human Resources; Financial Transparency and Accountability; and Partnerships and Networking, while the principle of Integrity pervades all of the aforementioned.

### ***Mission and Vision***

- GBWN members have an organizational mission and vision.
- These are established by their board and/or members, and reviewed and updated regularly, as needed, based on changing context.
- Their mission and vision guides their organizations' work, and organizations carry out activities that contribute directly to the fulfillment of their mission and vision.
- Their mission and vision do not involve any form of discrimination against any person or group, any political party affiliation, or any religious affiliation.

### ***Civic Responsibility***

- A GBWN members exists to serve diverse women, men, girls and boys, whom the organization has identified as its constituents.
- A GBWN member openly communicates its aims.
- A GBWN member makes its goals, decisions, and activities independently. It is not used by any political party, public institution, religious group, or private firm for its interests, which would jeopardize its independence, autonomy, or ability to act in the public interest.
- A GBWN member regularly updates the media and public about its actions through social media, press conferences, press releases, announcements, campaigns, data, publications, seminars, websites, and other information sources to be accountable and transparent with constituents and stakeholders.
- When releasing information to the public, a GBWN member must ensure that it offers sufficient information for the public to understand the problem and that any data supplied is complete, accurate, and truthful to the best of the organization's knowledge. It does not exaggerate or underestimate the human and material needs of the individuals it helps, particularly when it comes to fundraising.

### ***Human Resources***

- A GBWN member organization has policies (or commits to establishing them with GBWN support within one year of joining the network) that specify its relations with paid and voluntary staff members. These include, at minimum, anti-sexual harassment policies, labour rights protections including related to work-life balance, standards for employee conduct, complaint mechanisms for staff and beneficiaries, and methods for regularly evaluating staff members' performance.
- A GBWN member organization does not discriminate against any person in hiring, promotion, programs, services, or communication due to their age, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, education, financial means, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability.
- When representing the organization to other employees, volunteers, or the public, staff members act professionally and favorably.
- Staff members do not engage in dishonesty, fraud, or false presentation of the organization or its activities.
- Staff members do not engage in public criticism of the organization or of any other GBWN member. They present criticisms of the organization to the organization directly and its representatives first, before taking issues to outside parties.

### ***Legal Compliance, Financial Accountability and Transparency***

- A GBWN member is aware of and complies with all applicable laws in the country where they operate, including those related to registration, financial accountability, human

resources, lobbying, political advocacy, and taxation. Members periodically review their compliance with known existing legal, regulatory, and financial reporting requirements.

- A GBWN member opposes and does not take part in partisan influence, personal gain, corruption, bribery, or any other financial misuse in its activities. It acts promptly and firmly if any of its staff or Board members are involved in any form of financial misuse.
- A GBWN member is transparent and open with its budget, making it available annually for the public and all stakeholders.
- In all its work, a GBWN member uses human, financial, material, and natural resources responsibly, considering the needs of present and future generations.
- GBWN members will not receive funds from funding sources that are engaged in breaking laws and/or violating human rights.

### **Membership Verification Process**

- Organizations wanting to be a member of GBWN, apply through the GBWN website.
- Before becoming GBWN members, representatives of organizations must confirm that they have read and will ensure that they and other staff members of their organization will abide by this GBWN Code of Conduct.
- GBWN members are responsible for ensuring that their staff members have read and will follow this Code of Conduct.

### **Complaint Process**

- If a GBWN member or one of its staff members feels that the member or another GBWN member has violated this Code of Conduct, they may submit a written complaint documenting the violation to the GBWN Executive Committee. If a GBWN Executive Committee member or members are the subject(s) of the complaint, the complaint may be submitted to the other members of the GBWN Executive Committee. If all members of the Executive Committee are the subject of the complaint, the complaint may be submitted to the Oversight Board.
- The complaint shall name the organization accused of violating the Code, the complaining organization(s), and the reasons for the complaint.
- The Executive Committee shall then contact the organization accused of violating the Code of Conduct to inform them of the complaint and to discuss the complaint with them. The organization shall be provided with the opportunity to address the violation within a period set by the Executive Committee.
- If they address the complaint, as requested by the Executive Committee, to the Committee's satisfaction, the matter will be closed and the complaining organization(s) informed.
- If the organization does not address the complaint within the timeframe set by the Executive Committee, then they will be notified of termination of their GBWN membership in accordance with the GBWN Statute.
- The member shall have the right to appeal the decision once (1) to the GBWN Oversight Board by submitting their appeal to Board.
- The Oversight Board shall determine whether or not the member may remain a member or not based on the evidence provided and share its decision and reasoning with the Executive Committee.