

# **Code of Conduct**

## **Volt Belgium ASBL/VZW**

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“Volt is a progressive movement. We uphold principles that value equality, human dignity, and human rights no matter what: we will not compromise on our fundamental values, and will stand up for them in every corner of Europe, every time it is needed. We founded our movement on these pillars: we do not take decisions based on “what our background is” or “where we grew up”, we do not trump people’s rights because “it feels wrong” or because “we are scared”, we cannot hide from tough questions because “they make us feel uncomfortable” or because “voters will not like it.” For this reason, we will not back down from a fight necessary to advance, uphold or defend the rights of somebody just because it is unpopular with the electorate. Our fundamental values are formed based on the respect of human rights, the respect of others, justice, human dignity, solidarity, democracy, equality before the law, freedom, and the rule of law. In practice, here are some of the values that are fundamental to Volt, and upon which Volt was created: equality for all (which includes gender equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, principles of non-discrimination), freedom of religion, the belief in a secular state, abortion rights and refugee rights. This list is not exhaustive but it aims at depicting Volt’s commitment to the rights of every person in the European continent.”  
*Fundamental Values, Volt Europa.*

## Volt Principles

**Rights and Refuge:** Everyone deserves to feel welcomed in Volt. Volt is a sheltered environment, enveloped in our beliefs that everyone has inviolable dignity.

**Equality for all:** We're all different, and that's a celebration! In Volt we ensure that difference doesn't become a disadvantage, that difference enriches us, and ultimately makes us stronger.

**Respect of others:** Volt recognises the vitality of enthusiastic debate, and we commit to this with the ethos to build each other up, that we all have so much more to learn and that we're all on this journey together.

**Solidarity:** Volt subscribes to expansive cooperation, and we believe we grow fastest and best when we prioritise the growth of each other. Every citizen has leadership potential, and our citizens spread Europe-wide.

**Freedom:** You are your own person, and Volt protects that even when the Party itself forms collective decisions.

**Transparency:** 'A different way of doing politics', we tout this only because we practise this! Our operations and decisions are all about openness, whilst still preserving personal confidentiality. We run a political Party like no other!

**Created for everyone:** With so many rights come so many responsibilities, and in Volt we tackle this head on! We believe that responsibility and accountability are fair exchanges for a society that meets the needs of all.

# Volt Codework

## 1. Status

- 1.1. The Code of Conduct is an aspirational document, the purpose of both it and the Volt Belgium (hereinafter referred to as “The Association”) Mediation and Disciplinary Process are to foster a positive and welcoming environment for all Volt Members that is safe and empowering for all of its Members. Disciplinary actions are measures of last resort.
- 1.2. The Code of Conduct applies to all Members of the Association. It forms part of the chapter’s Volt Values framework as set out in the Articles of Association and Rules of Procedure of the Association.
- 1.3. The Articles of Association grant provisions that decree a serious breach of this Code of Conduct may constitute grounds for disciplinary action. When considering disciplinary action, it is the clauses in the section titled Volt Principles that shall be considered by the Arbitration Commission, in conjunction with the Boundaries and the Status. Documents that are formally attached to this Code, as set out below, are to be considered part of the Volt Principles section.

## 2. Boundaries

- 2.1. The document's purpose is to provide a clear set of standards that instigate disciplinary action if breached, and to guide Members (Effective and Associate) and non-members (volunteers, family, friends, etc) in how they are expected to conduct themselves. In the rest of this document the subsequent term ‘members’ includes non-member volunteers also.
- 2.2. The Code of Conduct also applies to all activities carried out for or on behalf of Volt, for which Volt members are responsible, including informal social activities, digital platforms and any other forms of interaction at which Volt members are present.
- 2.3. This Code of Conduct stands alongside and complements other governance documents of the Association, such as the Articles of Association and the Rules of Procedures of the Association.

### 3. Oversight

- 3.1. This document is to be kept under review by the entire membership of Volt at a General Assembly, and is a specific delegated competence of the Arbitration Commission to update, and propose revisions and attachments, under the conditions set forth in the Articles of Association and Rules of Procedure of the Association. This also extends when appropriate to the remit of a Governance Committee.

### 4. The process of updating, revising and attaching documents

- 4.1. Stated in the Articles of Association is the process of updating, revising, attaching, and removing documents. The Rules of Procedure should also be consulted in the scope of this process. The competency of the Arbitration Commission relating to this can be found in the Articles of Association.

### 5. Attached documents

- 5.1. Each attached document or segment is to be listed here, giving precise details of which the attached clauses are; the date of attachment; the means of or authority for attachment; and the date or version number of the attached document.
- 5.2. The following documents or sections of documents are attached to this Code. A breach of them constitutes a breach of this Code for disciplinary purposes.

### 6. Volt Philosophy & Values

- 6.1. The Associations's approach to ethical conduct is guided by its humanitarian and core values, which are based in respect with the principles on which the European Union is based, as guarded in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)<sup>1</sup> and described by the preamble of the Lisbon Treaty<sup>2</sup> and Art. 2 TEU<sup>3</sup>; the protection of human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, equal opportunities, (European) solidarity, justice, respect for the rule of law and human rights, including the protection of minority rights.
- 6.2. Volt views the primary function of public service as action towards the benefit of the citizens and residents of the State. As members of the

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<sup>1</sup> The European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)  
[https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Lisbon, 13 December 2007, amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community

<sup>3</sup> Treaty on European Union, 7 February 1992

Association, and in the aim of providing a political public service, the code of conduct enshrines the aforementioned objective and will. As core tenants, the principles of management by objectives, transparency, accountability, citizen empowerment, and sustainability form cornerstones of the Party's formal operations.

- 6.3. Methodologically, Volt aims to operate in a science-informed manner, and to present our humanitarian-based values through calm and reasoned discussion.

## 7. Unique Political Family

- 7.1. The Association is or takes the necessary steps to be a member association within the Europe-wide political organisation Volt Europa. It is therefore in the interests of the Association to consider the wider networks and considerations of the family chapters and the broader umbrella level, Volt Europa. In this regard, Members are beholden to exact due diligence when interacting with other chapters, characterised by the responsibility to regard external chapter codes of conduct when involved in their legal jurisdiction.

## Volt Principles

Each clause below applies standards that must not be violated.

### 8. Rights and Refuge

- 8.1. The Association should be a political association and movement in which anyone internally or externally can feel safe, feel welcome and appreciate membership, at all levels of involvement.
- 8.2. Oppressive, abusive or discriminatory conduct should be stopped; this includes but is not limited to: sexism, racism, transprejudice (gender identity discrimination), and sexualism (sexual orientation discrimination), ageism, ableism (disability discrimination), or classism (economic discrimination). Any type of such behaviour is a violation of this Code.
- 8.3. Volt Belgium holds a policy of zero tolerance for physical, emotional and mental abuse. Members should not: shout at; be aggressive to; make damaging or insulting remarks about another member; or disrupt a discussion. This includes sexual harassment, which is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature whether it is verbal, non verbal or physical.
- 8.4. Volt members should not feel harassed for financial contributions, either a set fee is announced in advance of an activity or a donation method is used but in no circumstances are donations from members to be insisted upon or intimidation/coercive methods used.
- 8.5. Volt uses analogue and digital means of communication with and among members, caution and responsibility is advised in their use.

### 9. Equality for all

- 9.1. Diversity is a strength that should be welcomed in the Association and members should strive to accommodate the different needs of members wherever possible. This surrounds cultural backgrounds, and individual differences that members need to actively show consideration and respect for.
- 9.2. As the Association boasts membership from a wide range of backgrounds, contrasting political or philosophical perspectives will frequently emerge within discussions. Freedom of belief and the right for that belief to change, are fundamental individual human rights. Members should therefore exercise tolerance and respect in these discussionary instances.



- 9.3. Members should expect differing ideas and approaches to problem solving and conduct in a positive and open-minded dialogue to encourage collaboration and cooperation without suppressing others.
- 9.4. In disagreements members are expected to behave civilly and exercise greater caution not to display behaviour that could be perceived as provocative, intimidating or offensive.

## 10. Respect of others

- 10.1. It's Volt's ethos that in all interactions with colleagues, we assume the best of them. This includes being open-minded to potential misunderstandings, miscommunications and giving each other the benefit of the doubt.
- 10.2. The normative approach is to 'Attack the argument, not the person'. Criticism should not be used to humiliate, undermine or otherwise engage in personal attacks.
- 10.3. Members should communicate politely and with sensitivity towards other members, whether in-person or digitally. Members have the right to disagree but this should not translate into hostility or adverse treatment.
- 10.4. Members should not criticise fellow members publicly, whether internally or externally. If necessary, criticism should be given with due sensitivity and constructively delivered through the appropriate medium.
- 10.5. In public Volt spaces members are permitted to engage in honest and critical debates in accordance with 10.2, the aim being to reveal issues, misunderstandings, discuss topics and educate each other.
- 10.6. Offensive rumours, unfounded negative gossip or falsities about other members have no place within Volt.

## 11. Solidarity

- 11.1. Members should be inviting and inclusive, nurturing fellow members to become more confident and to participate. Collaboration is key within the entire Party.
- 11.2. Members should make sure that everyone requesting talking time is listened to properly, without unnecessary interruption. Decisions should be made by consensus of the attendees wherever possible. If not possible, there should be the possibility to vote and decide based upon a majority.

- 11.3. Members should work in a time-conscientious manner to achieve the objectives listed in their responsibilities. Clear time-frames should be communicated and reasoned flexibility used in circumstances that prevent a task from completion within this specification, as well as foresight, to reach out for further support or delegation if necessary.
- 11.4. Members should afford each other appropriate levels of trust in the enactment of their responsibilities, allowing them room for initiative and leadership. Whilst there should be encouragement to seek support when needed and offered it when appropriate.
- 11.5. Members should be aware when reaching out to other members that they have jobs, family and/or other time-constraints, and exercise patience whilst awaiting a response. Members should also not put pressure on fellow members to volunteer their time or overwhelm them with work or responsibilities beyond their capacity. Communication is operative in managing a work-life balance.
- 11.6. As part of the Volt Europa umbrella, the Association's members also adhere to the Volt Europa charter, Rule Book, and also to any further EU level codes of conduct set forth by the EU level in accordance with their set procedures.
- 11.7. Members who fail to abide by the EU level Codes will fall under EU level disciplinary jurisdiction.
- 11.8. Disciplinary procedures involving one or multiple members of the Association at the EU level will be supported by the Association and its Arbitration Commission, to advise, and enforce sanctions if necessary.
- 11.9. In the case of a dispute between Association levels (Volt Europa-Association or Association-Association), the Articles of Association, Rules of Procedure of the Association and Code of Conduct prevail due to the current circumstances surrounding legal jurisdiction.

## 12. Freedom

- 12.1. Members' right to freedom of thought, conscience and belief should be observed, following the European Convention on Human Rights.
- 12.2. Members in a position of responsibility must meet the legal obligations of the Association, keeping adequate and accessible records of decisions and communications. Failure to provide these records, as required by the Association, is a breach of conduct.
- 12.3. When engaging actively as a Volt member, (physical or digital) communications about the Association's policies must not conflict with

actual policy of the Association. If there is personal opposition to the political policy, members should either explicitly state their opinion as their own or voice both the Association's policy as well as their own perspective. Personal opinions and criticisms should be detached from Volt communications.

- 12.4. Members who voice viewpoints in situations where their membership of the Association is known must be careful not to negatively impact the Association's public standing.

## 13. Transparency

- 13.1. Members have an honour-bound obligation to excuse themselves from decisions in which they have an interest, this interest must also be declared.
- 13.2. Members should, as elected representatives of the Association, consider their private actions when said actions affect the reputation of the Association.
- 13.3. Members are required to be honest about themselves and their history when offering their candidacy to represent Volt on Belgian territory. This includes opposition to any of Volt's policies, guiding ethics or values. Disclosures should be given due confidentiality and submitted via the appropriate channels. This transparent duty continues throughout any appointment.
- 13.4. Those responsible in the selection, appointment, co-option or election process, must ensure disclosures are obtained as set out in the preceding clause.
- 13.5. All written communication sent 'on behalf of Volt Belgium' must not be used for personal gain or go against the Association. This applies to digital, physical or verbal communications.
- 13.6. Even as an Association committed to transparency, there are circumstances where members are required to respect individual confidentiality and privacy in accordance with European fundamental rights. Complaints must be taken through the appropriate internal channels, specified in the Articles of Association and the Rules of Procedure of the Association, these include: concerns, grievances, complaints, and appeals, and not discuss these in an ordinary meeting agenda, or publicly.

## 14. Created for everyone

- 14.1. Members are obliged to respect the consensus formed within the Association, at any level: local, national, or any other Association organ or group through the Association's democratic process. Individual opinion and speech is still maintained and encouraged internally.
- 14.2. Members have a duty to familiarise themselves with all procedures and policies relevant to their role in the Association and the wider Volt network.
- 14.3. Members should act in accordance with professional and civil standards of conduct, internally and externally, including political rivals; and non-members when acting in an Association's capacity, or when identifiable as a Volt member.
- 14.4. No member or Association organ may try to persuade another member to surrender or violate a statutory right or obligation.
- 14.5. Requisite authority is required when acting on behalf of the Association. Members must not exceed their entrusted level of authority, nor act in a manner which assumes greater authority than that which was entrusted, or misleads other members.
- 14.6. Individuals holding a mandate within the Association are responsible for proactivity in the identification of circumstances where behaviour entailed in clause 8.2 is taking place, and taking the necessary steps alone or jointly with others to ensure remedial actions are taken.
- 14.7. Association activities must be adequately accessible and inclusive; providing for linguistic needs is priority, and no member should feel isolated for a lack of language or level, provisions must be made available to accommodate, and in alignment with Articles of Association.
- 14.8. Members organising or hosting events and activities have a duty of care to act inclusive and civil. Due diligence must be taken to avoid harm through negligence or failure to assess risks.
- 14.9. Making a clearly provoking or malicious complaint; utilising the complaint as a form of harassment; openly abusing the complaint process to attack an individual grudge, a rival or another member within Volt Belgium are all breaches of conduct.