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# The Ethical Guidelines of the Finnish Prosecution Service



## Ethics and good practice in the prosecution service

The ethical basis of the Finnish Prosecution Service's activities is laid down in its rules, values and principles. These norms set out the minimum requirements for ethical operations. The basic level defined by various provisions – laws, codes and regulations – constitutes the Finnish Prosecution Service's service pledge to society.

Not everything can be regulated by law, and regulations cannot be issued for every situation. Ethical principles and values are also required. These describe the ideals that guide operations and behaviour, and go further than rules. Such ideals can be based on international recommendations or guidelines, and on the decisions taken by the supreme guardians of the law and the Prosecutor General.

A prosecutor adhering to good prosecutor practice is guided by not only statutory obligations, but also the ethics of the prosecutor's profession. The good practice of other professional groups within the prosecution service are also based on ethical principles. Supervisors set an important example with their own actions.

The values of the Finnish Prosecution Service are fairness, competence and well-being at work. Values and ethical principles act as a compass when difficult choices need to be made. They are the best way to promote good practice.

The prosecution service holds a special position and role in our democratic, constitutional state. People employed by the Finnish Prosecution Service operate on its behalf and in its name. Unethical conduct is always deeply inconsistent with the prosecution service's position in society and the trustworthiness that such a position requires.

### Equality and fairness

Our activities are closely bound with the equality of everyone before the law, which is guaranteed by the Constitution of Finland. We treat everyone equally and seek the truth and the right outcomes in the criminal cases we handle. We do not discriminate against or favour anyone. No person related reasons could justify unequal treatment on our part, unless stipulated by law.

### Independence, impartiality and conflicts of interests

We work and make decisions free of external and inappropriate influences. In our decisions and work processes, we strive to act in an objective and uniform manner.

Independence means freedom from conflicts of interests. Our independence is also assessed by external parties. It is a question of how external parties see things. Our free time and private lives involve various relationships with people and communities. These may also cause situations where our professional impartiality could be questioned.

If necessary, we know when to withdraw from handling a case and refer it to someone else, without further involvement in it.

We know that we must not engage in extra-judiciary activities that disqualify us from doing our work, or hamper the performance of our duties.

## Transparency

People's trust is essential to us. Transparent operations increase the trust people have in us. We share accurate and up-to-date information, on a fair and voluntary basis, about our activities and our operating environment.

We respond to queries about our decisions, operations and the matters we handle without delay

We adhere to statutory confidentiality requirements.

## Trust and confidentiality

We are trusted and want to be worthy of such trust every day. We enhance this trust through ethical conduct and by making justifiable decisions that ensure the realisation of legal protection and criminal responsibility. We understand that the trust we enjoy will be eroded if any aspect of our operations provides grounds for criticism.

As part of our work, we process many issues that involve confidential information. We understand this and adhere to the related responsibilities both at work and in our free time.

We do not ask questions or access documents, registers or use any other means to acquire confidential information on matters that we are not personally handling.

We know that we must also adhere to confidentiality requirements after our service relationship has ended.

## Responsibility

We remember that our operations are funded from tax revenue. We want to work cost-efficiently and serve our customers.

We use the feedback we receive and actively assess our activities. We develop them voluntarily in line with our goals and the expectations set for us.

We use our tools and time appropriately and effectively.

We focus on the essential and prioritise our tasks, if necessary. We strive to reach our goals and take responsibility for the outcomes of our work.

## Competence

We know how to do our work. The work we do has various impacts on our customers, our stakeholders and our own work community. Our competence requirements are constantly changing, as our operating environment, statutes, instructions and working methods change. Competence also plays a key role when the nature and volume of our tasks change.

Competence includes an active approach to work and various work community skills. Competence is one of the values of the Finnish Prosecution Service.

Ultimately, everyone is personally responsible for learning new skills and information, acquiring sufficient competences and professional expertise, and keeping them up to date. If necessary, we shall ask for help and provide assistance. The superiors and employer support everyone's development of professional skills in various ways. Superiors take account of competences when distributing tasks.

## Working as a community

We understand that we always work as part of a work community. We are different people and personalities, and our personal behaviour affects our work community and its atmosphere.

Well-being at work is one of the values we share. Our conduct towards everyone in our work community is businesslike and polite. We participate in collective events. We do not accept sexual harassment, racism or discrimination, or any other forms of inappropriate behaviour in our workplace. A cheerful appropriate brightens up other people's day.

We make ourselves available. If necessary, we can focus on our work in peace.

We can discuss the rules of our work community with our colleagues and superiors.

## Language and communication

Our oral and written communication have an impact on the external image we project as individuals and as an organisation. Our communication is appropriate, calm and clear. The grounds of our decisions are understandable and transparent. We avoid being provoked.

Our social media conduct is in line with our social media etiquette.

We regularly follow our internal communications (intra) and public website. This enables us to stay up to date with many matters that affect our work and working environment, and to prevent rumours.

## Gifts and benefits

We are aware of the threat corruption poses to the judicial system. Our position requires a clear emphasis on impartiality.

We have no obligation, and in some cases no right, to accept a gift or benefit offered to us in connection with our work, or to ask for one. Gifts or benefits may compromise people's trust on our impartiality.

We can accept one-off benefits of minor value, unless doing so we might run the risk of reducing public trust in our operations. In unclear cases, we refuse the benefit.

We do not offer gifts or other benefits which the recipient could not accept on similar grounds.

## Conduct and appearance

In spite of our individual freedom, we remember that, in various social situations, people may draw conclusions about our work based on our behaviour and appearance. We do not want to give conflicting signals, or ones that might lead people to question their trust in us, with our clothing, accessories or jewellery.

We also remember the importance of gestures, facial expressions and other non-verbal communication and also court etiquette.

## Conduct outside work

We understand that people have expectations towards our conduct outside work as well. In our private lives, we behave in a way that will not reduce trust in the Finnish Prosecution Service.

We do not invoke our professions or status outside our work, in order to gain advantages or personal benefit.

