

Social  
Democrats

# Members' Code of Conduct

**UPDATED**

Adopted by National Executive, 27th April 2021

*Pursuant to the provisions of the Social Democrats' Constitution, this Code has been adopted on 27th April 2021 and issued by the National Executive as part of the rules and regulations that are expected to be complied with by members of the Party. The National Executive may amend or supplement this Code at any time.*

**A. Introduction**

The objectives of the Social Democrats Party is to work towards the realisation of a just society, a strong economy, an open, transparent and accountable government, and sustainable, economic, social and environmental planning and decision-making, guided by the best available evidence.

Those who share these objectives are welcome to participate in our movement and support our work and our representatives by becoming members of our Party.

Our members are all volunteers who give willingly of their time, ideas, knowledge and expertise, energy and enthusiasm so that our shared objectives can become a reality for all our people. The contribution and support of every individual member is valued and respected.

Our Principles of Equality, Progress, Democracy and Sustainability are not just lofty notions written into our Constitution. Because we seek to have government adopt best practice in terms of decision-making and planning, favour honest, respectful and collegial political engagement and insist on public accountability, we too wish to adopt high standards for our own behaviour as Party members.

This Members' Code of Conduct sets out the guiding principles and specific practices that are required of all members. It establishes the framework for ethical, collegial and inclusive conduct expected of all members of the Social Democrats. The Code is part of the governing documents of the Party.

## B. Guiding Principles for all Members

### (i) Teamwork and Collaboration –

Members are committed to working collectively and cooperatively to further the objectives of the Party and our shared vision for Society.

### (ii) Behaving with Integrity –

Members aim to be open and honest in both public and internal Party engagement, to honour commitments made and undertakings given, and to earn and maintain the trust and confidence of the public.

### (iii) Being Accountable –

Members understand that that if we fail to comply with the provisions of this Code or fail to honour its spirit and intentions, we must be held to account in accordance with the provisions of the Party's Constitution, this and other applicable codes, and governing documents, including the Party's Disciplinary Procedures which provide for sanctions on a scaled level including the long-term termination of membership.

## c. General Obligations of Members

### (i) Members owe duties of care to, and support of, the Party.

This means that members are expected to publicly support Party representatives, Party structures, Party officers, Party policies and Party decisions. Where a member disagrees with a statement or action of a Party representative, Party structure, Party officer or with a policy or decision of the Party, that member is entitled to express that disagreement directly with the representative, structure or officer involved and/or through the normal Party channels. Members are strongly encouraged to pursue such differences of opinion/disagreements internally.

Members are entitled to publicly express their personal disagreement with the statements or actions of a Party representative, structure or officer or with a policy or decision of the Party while also publicly accepting the mandate of the Party representative, structure or officer and the valid adoption of the Party's policies and decisions.

### (ii) All members are expected to be familiar with all governing documents.

This means that members are required to read the Party's Constitution, this Code of Conduct, the Party's Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures, and related documents issued or made available to members from time to time ("the governing documents"). Members are expected to familiarise themselves with the standards of behaviour that are expected from those who join the Social Democrats Party.

### (iii) When engaged in Party activities, members are expected to act in the best interests of the Party.

### (iv) Party members are expected to act in a way that is consistent with the principles, objectives and Codes of the Party, and must not act in a manner which brings, or may bring, or may tend to bring the Party into disrepute.

## D. **Specific Obligations of Members**

The following examples are indicative of the types of acts and behaviour that are expected from members of the Social Democrats. The examples are intended to show members how they should conduct themselves in relevant circumstances. These examples are not, therefore, a definite or exhaustive list of “rights and wrongs”. They serve only as a guide to individual action.

## How we participate within the Party:

- Party members will participate in the development of the Party and the achievement of its objectives to the best of their ability.
- Party members will support the Party's public representatives to the best of their ability.
- Party members will support the Party's candidates in all external elections to the best of their ability.
- Party members will respect the validity of the Party's adopted policy positions and actively support and promote those policies to the best of their ability.
- Party members will participate in branch activities and communications in a collegial, constructive and positive manner.
- Party members will not represent the Party without authority and will not misrepresent the stated objectives, principles, values, strategies or policies of the Party.
- Party members must not disseminate, publish or disclose any information reasonably considered to be confidential to other Party members, groups or the Party itself.
- Party members will be honest in their dealings with the Party, including avoiding making statements that are, or may be, misrepresenting the truth or omitting to disclose the full facts.
- Party members will cooperate with the structures and procedures of the Party and respond in a timely manner when contacted by officers of the Party or those appointed, employed or retained to act on their behalf.
- Party members will, in a timely fashion, inform the Party of any serious wrongdoing or activity in which they have been, or are, involved or may be associated with that may be considered relevant to the Party and its interests and objectives, or that may tend to bring the Party into disrepute.
- Party members will honour and comply with any member pledge, candidate pledge or other undertaking given by them to the Party.
- Party members will conduct themselves in a professional manner during political debate, respect the legitimate democratic interests of all, and focus upon criticising policies rather than persons.
- Party members will work towards a politics of courtesy, consensus, cooperation and collaboration with others in areas where we share common values and beliefs.

## How we engage with other Party members:

- Party members will respect the dignity of all members and will not use insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language or behaviour when engaging with other members.
- Party members will respect that diverse ideas and opinions are essential to ensuring the growth of progressive politics in Ireland and will show respect and tolerance for those who express opposing views.
- Party members will try to settle disagreements through discussion, reconciliation, restoration and mediation.
- Party members will conduct themselves in a manner which tends to maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the Party.
- Party members will avoid any potential conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalty and must disclose any conflict of interest that arises and absent themselves from the decision-making process involving that perceived or actual conflict, and must not interfere, or attempt to interfere, with that decision-making process.
- Party members will not behave in a manner unbecoming of a member of the Social Democrats.

## E. Some Specific Prohibited Acts

Some actions and types of behaviour are, by their very nature, deemed unacceptable to the Social Democrats. By way of examples only, and being only indicative of the type of acts and behaviours that are considered unacceptable, the following examples are provided, in no particular order:

- Membership of, or advocacy for, another political party operating in Ireland.
- Bullying involving repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, that undermines a person's right to dignity.
- Harassment including targeting a person with behaviour or communication that causes distress, fear, alarm or torment.
- Sexual Harassment including unwanted sexual behaviour, differences in behaviour and treatment and other conduct related to gender.
- Engaging in discriminatory conduct based on any of the following grounds: gender, civil status, family status, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, membership of the Traveller community or social status.
- Physical violence, threatened violence, or behaviour that constitutes a threat to another/ others or causes persons to be fearful.
- Active membership of an organisation, association or informal group whose objectives, publications, statements or activities are reasonably considered inconsistent with core policies of the Social Democrats or clearly inconsistent with our principles and objectives.
- Purporting to represent the Party without formal authority to do so.
- Failure to comply with the Party's governing documents or Party decisions or a failure to cooperate with those charged with implementing those documents and decisions on behalf of the Party.



## F. **Scope of Members' Code of Conduct**

- (i)** This Code applies to all members of the Social Democrats Party, irrespective of their period of membership or position within the Party.
- (ii)** It applies to all members in their capacity as members when acting, or failing to act, as members of the Social Democrats or as representatives of the Social Democrats, whether engaging with members or non-members.
- (iii)** Additionally, this Code applies to the external actions and omissions of members that bring, may bring, or tend to bring the Party into disrepute.
- (iv)** Additional codes, standards and guidelines may be established in respect of candidate selection, internal elections, the use of social media, and other specific matters. A possible breach of any other code may be considered to be a possible breach of this Code.
- (v)** Members who are elected as public representatives or appointed to public office are also subject to, and expected to comply with, the applicable Codes established or adopted by the Party, by the Standards in Public Office Commission or other applicable bodies.

## G. **Being Accountable**

Party members are deemed to have agreed, upon joining the Party, to comply with this Code of Conduct. Members understand and agree to be held accountable to the ethical and behavioural standards and expectations expressed in this Code. Members understand that adherence to this Code represents a condition of membership for the Party and that violations of this Code or non-compliance with this Code may result in disciplinary measures up to and including the long-term termination of membership.



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