



HELMEPA

## CODE OF CONDUCT

Guided by Values

Committed to Action

Doing What Is Right

Even When No One Is Watching

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## Our Ethos in Action

HELMEPA was established for a noble cause: to protect our seas and cultivate responsibility for the marine environment and all life it sustains. It is and has always been a voluntary commitment. Not an obligation, but a conscious choice. A true expression of what volunteering means: to care, to act, and to serve a greater good.

From the very beginning, we have been guided by *filotimo*, the uniquely Greek sense of honor, dignity, and goodwill. Today, as an association representing 370 companies (as of 2025) and thousands of maritime professionals, we are deeply aware of the responsibility we carry.

This Code of Conduct is not a formality; it is a living expression of our values, both our duty and our enduring commitment. It reflects the very *raison d'être* of HELMEPA: to lead by example, to act with professionalism, empathy, accountability, collaboration, and to walk the talk in everything we do.

It is more than a set of rules. It is a practical, values-based guide that supports us in acting consistently and responsibly, inside and outside the organization, with professionalism, care, and respect.

To all who are part of HELMEPA, members, volunteers, and colleagues, longstanding and new, may this Code be carried forward with pride, with integrity, and with the spirit that continues to define our shared commitment.

At HELMEPA, we understand what it means to lead through service. We step forward when needed, not for publicity, not for profit, not for recognition, but to stand with and by others. Quietly, purposefully, and with humility. We act to protect, to support, to strengthen. We lead by example, true to our cause and united by a collective will to secure a sustainable, beloved blue planet for all forms of life and the generations to come.

## Basic Principles

### **Filotimo**

We are guided by *filotimo*, the uniquely Greek sense of honor, dignity, and goodwill. It shapes how we treat one another, how we serve our mission, and how we lead by example. At HELMEPA, it means doing what is right, even when no one is watching.

### **Empathy**

We act with empathy. Listening first, supporting those in need, and choosing to serve the environment and society. Doing good is not a task but a mindset that underpins our actions and relationships.

### **Humility**

We act with humility. Acknowledging that no one has all the answers, learning from others, and remaining open to feedback and growth. We lead not through titles, but through service, listening, and the quiet strength of example.

### **Integrity**

We act honestly, ethically, and consistently, even when it's difficult. We take responsibility for our actions and decisions, and hold ourselves to high standards, always aligned with HELMEPA's mission.

### **Respect**

We treat everyone with dignity and fairness, regardless of gender, age, background, ability, beliefs, or role. We actively promote equality, inclusion, and accessibility. We value different perspectives and ensure that no one is left behind.

### **Professionalism**

We work with consistency, preparation, and high standards. We deliver quality programs and activities, meet deadlines with clear goals, apply ethical methods, and listen to diverse input. It is about doing what is right, even when no one is watching, to serve our mission with care, credibility, and long-term impact.

### **Accountability**

We take ownership of our roles and actions. We act peacefully and constructively, resolving conflict with respect and never tolerating violence, discrimination, or exclusion in any form.

### **Solidarity**

We support one another and create space for everyone to grow, especially newcomers and those facing challenges. We believe that collaboration makes us stronger, and that a spirit of solidarity ensures no one is left behind.

### **Knowledge Sharing**

We believe that doing good must scale. We promote innovation, open knowledge, and shared tools that contribute to global solutions, especially in maritime education, sustainability, and climate action. HELMEPA is a platform for sharing, not withholding.

## Healthy Competition

We believe in ethical competition as a driver of innovation and personal growth, not as a way to step over others. At HELMEPA, we learn from one another, grow through challenges, and support an environment where everyone is encouraged to improve, never to undermine.

## Transparency

We act with openness and honesty in how we work, manage, communicate, and deliver across our processes, outputs, and finances, and in how we share information with members, volunteers, companies, and society. Withholding information creates barriers and wastes energy. That is why we safeguard transparency as freedom because we have nothing to hide.

## Servant Leadership

We are inspired by the purpose we serve. Our leadership is not about publicity or position, it is about stepping forward when needed, standing with and by others as a quiet strength, leading by example, and serving the collective good.

## HELMEPA's Purpose and Mission

HELMEPA exists with a clear and unwavering purpose: **to save the seas**. This founding goal unites the maritime community through voluntary commitment, inspired by a shared sense of duty to protect the marine environment, ensure healthy and sustainable oceans and shipping, and safeguard all life they sustain. To serve this purpose, our mission is to prevent and eliminate ship-generated pollution, enhance safety at sea, and cultivate a lasting culture of safety, sustainability, and environmental responsibility across the maritime sector and society at large.

These principles also guide HELMEPA's work in advancing ocean literacy, promoting sustainability skills, and enabling the maritime community to lead the blue and green transition.

Through collective voluntary action, HELMEPA informs, raises awareness, educates, engages, mobilizes, and provides the tools and frameworks needed to empower people, the human element of the maritime community and society at large, to contribute meaningfully and with high value, creating measurable impact for the protection of the marine environment.

To fulfil this mission and purpose, HELMEPA works across multiple areas of action, bringing together stakeholders, building capacity, and turning voluntary commitment into coordinated and lasting progress.

- Inspires the human element of the maritime community to embrace an environmental mindset and a culture of safety, contributing to quality shipping in service of humankind.
- Cultivates environmental consciousness across all ranks of the maritime community through education, information, and motivation, delivered through the HELMEPA Academy, which serves not only seafarers but also shore-based professionals and the wider public.

- Promotes upskilling and reskilling opportunities for seafarers and maritime personnel, equipping them for the green and digital transitions.
- Supports regulatory compliance and collaboration by encouraging adherence to national and international laws ratified by Greece, assisting the Greek State on international marine legislation, and promoting coordinated efforts with governments, agencies, civil society, and international partners to amplify environmental impact.
- Develops training programs, open-source data, and research tools to address marine pollution, biodiversity loss, climate change, and sustainability challenges.
- Fosters innovation, knowledge-sharing, and digital transformation in maritime education and environmental engagement, while facilitating the exchange of expertise, know-how, and collaborative solutions among maritime professionals, academia, civil society, and institutions.
- Raises awareness through education, outreach, advocacy, and ocean literacy, targeting all segments of society.
- Empowers citizens, especially youth, starting from early childhood, to become ocean stewards and future leaders of the blue and green transition.
- Engages the wider public through experiential learning, volunteering, cleanups, and field-based environmental activities.

HELMEPA serves as a trusted voice and a dynamic open platform for Greece's collective contribution to saving the seas, with an impact that extends far beyond national borders. Through its international outreach, HELMEPA has inspired the MEPA movement, empowering sister associations in multiple countries to join forces in protecting the marine environment. HELMEPA cultivates an ecological mindset that transcends campaigns and calendar dates, a conscious, enduring choice to protect and sustain all life on our beloved blue planet.

### **Who This Code Applies To & How It Works**

This Code of Conduct applies to everyone connected to HELMEPA: the Board, Management, staff, interns, volunteers, and external associates. Each of us, regardless of role or seniority, carries the shared responsibility of living by its values and contributing to a culture of trust, inclusion, and ethical behavior.

The Code is also shared with member companies as part of their participation in HELMEPA, trusting that their own principles align with these values and contribute to our collective mission of protecting the seas.

This Code is designed to guide our actions across all areas of our work, whether at sea, on shore, or in collaboration with others. It is grounded in HELMEPA's values and principles, and supported by more detailed internal policies and procedures, where additional clarity or technical guidance is required.

In all cases, this Code serves as our ethical compass: helping us act with consistency, transparency, and integrity, even in complex or uncertain situations.

## General Behavior & Everyday Ethics

Our actions shape how others see HELMEPA and how we serve our purpose. Everyone who works within HELMEPA including Board members, staff, interns, volunteers, and external associates, is expected to:

- Act with honesty, respect, and professionalism in every interaction.
- Uphold the values and vision of HELMEPA, even beyond the workplace.
- Distinguish between personal opinions and organizational responsibilities.
- Be aware of and comply with all relevant legal, environmental, and ethical standards.
- Contribute to a positive, safe, and inclusive work culture.
- Disclose any conflict of interest that could affect decisions or create bias.
- Avoid bribery and accept only modest, culturally appropriate gifts with prior approval.

This shared commitment to ethical behavior reflects who we are, what we stand for, and how we work together to protect the marine environment and serve society.

## Everyday Commitments: What We Do

At HELMEPA, our values guide our actions, not only in principle but in daily practice. All those who work with HELMEPA are expected to:

- Maintain confidentiality regarding any activity, strategy, or information entrusted to us, during and after our involvement.
- Use our time and resources efficiently and responsibly.
- Use HELMEPA's data, tools, and technology responsibly, only for legitimate purposes, and protect confidentiality in line with privacy laws.
- Communicate absences transparently and give timely notice when unable to attend work or engagements.
- Uphold the standards of our work environment, including health, hygiene, and safety.
- Show respect for colleagues in shared spaces (e.g. limiting noise, choosing appropriate spaces for private conversations).
- Treat all individuals fairly and support equal opportunities for professional development.
- Maintain a professional appearance, aligned with our values and role.
- Respect differing views, contribute constructively, and promote teamwork.

- Return all materials, documents, or equipment that belong to HELMEPA upon completion of our cooperation.
- Support newcomers, offering guidance and encouragement to help them integrate smoothly.
- Incorporate sustainability into daily actions, reduce waste, conserve energy, and promote eco-friendly practices.

These behaviors reflect a culture of shared responsibility and commitment, not only to what we achieve, but to how we achieve it.

### **Everyday Commitments: What We Avoid**

At HELMEPA, we are equally clear about what is not acceptable. These behaviors contradict our values and compromise the integrity of our work:

- Engaging in or facilitating any activity related to bribery, corruption, or criminal conduct.
- Manipulating, deceiving, or misleading others in any form.
- Discriminating against or harassing colleagues, partners, or stakeholders in any context.
- Disclosing or withholding confidential or sensitive information without authorization.
- Misusing organizational resources or privileges for personal gain.
- Being absent without cause or without timely communication.
- Letting political, ideological, or personal beliefs interfere with objective and respectful evaluation of others.
- Acting based on stereotypes, prejudices, or favoritism.
- Following instructions that go against HELMEPA's policies, principles, or values.
- Making public statements on behalf of HELMEPA without prior approval.
- Ignoring safety procedures or failing to report hazards that could put others at risk.

Avoiding these behaviors helps protect the integrity of our collective work, and preserves the trust that society, our members, and each other place in HELMEPA every day.

### **Implementation & Continuous Learning**

The Code of Conduct is introduced to all new members, volunteers, and staff during onboarding and revisited regularly through workshops, refreshers, and discussions so it stays practical and meaningful in daily work. It is reviewed periodically to remain relevant and effective to reflect evolving laws, standards, or HELMEPA priorities.

HELMEPA also provides safe ways to raise concerns and protects anyone who speaks up in good faith from retaliation or unfair treatment.

Guided by *filotimo*, and by living this Code, we safeguard HELMEPA's integrity, uphold its noble cause to save the seas, and fulfill our duty to care for the Association, for all who are part of it, and for the life sustained by our seas and planet, today and for generations to come.

