



Code of Ethics of the “Visit Emilia” Destination

Approved by Resolution of the General Assembly of Members No. 3 of 29 April 2026

Short Narrative Version

1. Background and Purpose

Visit Emilia promotes and coordinates the tourism development of the destination, upholding the local identity, the quality of life of its residents, and the authentic experience of visitors. This Code of Ethics sets out the core values and expected conduct required of Visit Emilia, its public and private partners, participating operators, and all stakeholders contributing to the promotion and enjoyment of the region.

Its purpose is twofold: on the one hand, to ensure **a responsible, inclusive, and transparent** tourism model; on the other, to safeguard Emilia’s natural, cultural, and social heritage, thereby contributing to fair and sustainable economic growth.

2. Scope of Application

This Code applies to:

- Visit Emilia (governing bodies, staff, external associates, and consultants);
- partners and operators utilizing the destination's communication channels (portals, campaigns, events, and press tours);
- suppliers and subcontractors involved in services and projects promoted or coordinated by Visit Emilia;
- public and private stakeholders who formally endorse the Code as a condition of membership or participation in initiatives.

3. Core Values

Visit Emilia subscribes to the following values, which guide every strategic and operational decision:

Integrity: we act with honesty, consistency, and accountability.

Respect: we value people, communities, cultures, and landscapes without exploitation or trivialisation.

Quality: we promote high standards of hospitality, safety, and the protection of the visitor experience.

Transparency: we communicate in a clear, verifiably, and in a non-misleading way.

Sustainability: we strive for a balance between economic benefits, environmental impacts, and social well-being.

Inclusion: we ensure equal dignity, accessibility and non-discrimination.

4. Ethical Principles and Commitments

4.1 Centrality of Local Communities

Visit Emilia recognizes residents as co-protagonists of the destination and commits to:

- Promoting tourism that is compatible with the rhythms and spaces of daily life;
- Fostering the distribution of tourist flows across time and space, avoiding overcrowding and excessive strain;
- Supporting local supply chains and micro-enterprises, countering extractive dynamics (profit generated without return to the local area);
- Actively listening to communities (through regular meetings, feedback mechanisms, and consultations on events and campaigns).

4.2 Protection of Cultural and Identity Heritage

The destination safeguards the authenticity and integrity of both tangible and intangible heritage by:

- Promoting respectful, contextualised, and non-stereotypical narratives;
- Discouraging practices of "folklorisation" or cultural appropriation;
- Working alongside museums, archives, licensed guides, associations, and custodian communities of local traditions;
- Adopting visitor codes of conduct for sensitive locations (historic villages, places of worship, and rural areas).

4.3 Environmental and Climate Responsibility

Visit Emilia is committed to reducing the environmental impacts generated by tourism and promoting responsible practices by:

- Prioritising low-impact mobility (rail, cycling, walking trails, intermodality), and communicating concrete alternatives to private cars whenever available;
- Promoting the protection of biodiversity and respect for natural areas, establishing clear visitor rules and guidelines;
- Encouraging waste reduction (plastic-free where possible), the efficient use of water and energy, and responsible procurement practices;
- Supporting local initiatives for climate adaptation, landscape stewardship, and regeneration.

4.4 Hospitality, Rights, Safety, and Non-Discrimination

The destination promotes hospitality built on dignity, safety, and equal opportunities by:

- Rejecting all forms of discrimination (gender, age, origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background);
- Supporting physical, sensory, and information accessibility (clear language, reliable information, and services tailored to specific needs);

- Combating harassment, exploitation, and abuse through dedicated reporting and response procedures;
- Promoting safety standards for outdoor activities, events, and tourism services, in compliance with applicable regulations.

4.5 Decent Work and Fair Supply Chains

Visit Emilia recognises the quality of work as an integral part of overall tourism quality and commits to:

- Prioritising partners and suppliers who comply with employment contracts, workplace safety standards, working hours, and compliant remuneration;
- Discouraging social dumping practices and contractual irregularities;
- Promoting ongoing training on hospitality, sustainability, inclusive welcoming practices, and safety.

4.6 Transparency, Accurate Communication, and Responsible Marketing

Destination promotion must be credible and verifiable by:

- Avoiding greenwashing and unsubstantiated claims;
- Clearly distinguishing editorial content from sponsored content or commercial partnerships;
- Communicating limitations and visitor guidelines (booking requirements, expected conduct, capacity limits, and seasonality);
- Using imagery and messaging that respect people and places, without sensationalising poverty, marginalisation, or vulnerability.

4.7 Data Protection and Digital Responsibility

Visit Emilia processes data lawfully and respectfully by:

- Minimising data collection and protecting data with appropriate technical and organisational measures;
- Ensuring transparency regarding processing purposes, retention periods, and data subject rights;
- Using digital tools and AI in accordance with principles of fairness, avoiding manipulation and deceptive practices.

4.8 Relations with Public Administration and Prevention of Conflicts of Interest

Visit Emilia adopts conduct grounded in legality and impartiality by:

- Preventing actual or perceived conflicts of interest in selections, public calls, partnerships, and procurement;
- Adopting clear criteria for supplier selection (quality, impact, traceability, and compliance);
- Refusing gifts or undue advantages that could influence decisions or communications.

5. Specific Commitments for Participating Operators (Charter of Adherence)

Operators adhering to the Destination commit, where applicable, to:

- Guaranteeing clear information on prices, terms and conditions, services, accessibility, and policies;
- Reducing waste, promoting sustainable behavior among customers;
- Promoting local products and suppliers where possible, and representing them accurately;
- Handling complaints and reviews with respect, transparency, and a solution-oriented approach;
- Treating employees and collaborators fairly, in compliance with workplace safety standards and employment contracts.

6. Governance, Implementation, and Continuous Improvement

To make the Code operational, Visit Emilia establishes:

- An **Ethics Officer** (or Ethics Committee) with guidance and monitoring functions;
- A **confidential reporting** channel (a dedicated email address or web form) for non-compliant conduct, guaranteeing confidentiality;
- An annual **monitoring** process (minimum key indicators: complaints/feedback, information accessibility, event sustainability, and communication quality);
- An **improvement** and training plan, including periodic updates to the Code.

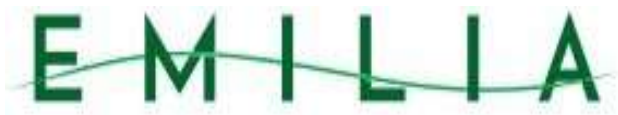
7. Reports, Management of Non-Compliance, and Measures

Reports are collected, evaluated, and managed within a reasonable timeframe in accordance with principles of impartiality. In the event of confirmed violations, graduated measures may be applied, such as:

- Request for compliance within a specified deadline;
- Temporary suspension from destination campaigns or promotional channels;
- Revocation of adherence in the case of severe or repeated violations.

8. Adoption and Publication

The Code is approved by the competent governing bodies of the DMO, published on its official channels, and signed by participating entities.



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SECTION I – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Preamble

Visit Emilia considers ethics not as an ancillary issue, but as a structural component of the destination's quality. The tourism reputation of a territory is built over time and can be rapidly compromised: inaccurate communication, opaque practices, discriminatory behaviour, stereotyped narratives, or initiatives that generate conflict with local communities are all it takes.

This Code of Ethics was created to establish a clear and shared framework: it defines the values guiding the destination's actions and establishes the standards of conduct expected from anyone operating within its scope, in any capacity. Its purpose is not "punitive", but preventive and cultural: to provide concrete benchmarks for making decisions and acting in a consistent, recognisable, and credible manner.

2. Nature and Function of the Code

The Code of Ethics is a guiding and self-regulatory document that:

- defines rights, duties, and responsibilities of the Destination towards its stakeholders;
- guides the governance of internal processes (decision-making, resource management, communication);
- establishes criteria of conduct in relations with operators, suppliers, visitors, and partners;
- serves as a reference for managing reports and non-compliance;
- complements and inspires operational procedures, guidelines, and regulations.

The Code applies across the board: as a general principle, it prevails over practices or customs inconsistent with its content. When questions of interpretation arise, the most prudent, transparent, and respectful approach towards the collective interest of the destination must prevail.

3. Who We Are

Destinazione Turistica Emilia (also Visit Emilia) is the territorial public body that promotes and coordinates tourism promotion across the three provinces of western Emilia, enhancing its cultural, landscape, food and wine, and identity heritage. The destination is not an isolated “product”: it is an ecosystem composed of communities, businesses, institutions, associations, places, and narratives.

For this reason, Visit Emilia acts as a liaison and guarantor entity: it creates consistency between narrative and reality, incentivises the quality of the offering, strengthens competitive positioning, and, at the same time, safeguards the authenticity of the territory.

4. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Code is to ensure that tourism development takes place according to criteria of:

- **balance** (between growth and the territory's carrying capacity),
- **responsibility** (towards the environment and local communities),
- **fairness** (in conduct and communication),
- **shared value** (benefits distributed along the supply chain).

The operational objectives are:

- prevent conduct that damages the destination's reputation;
- improve the quality of relationships with stakeholders and visitors;
- strengthen transparency and impartiality in decision-making;
- promote common standards, without placing undue burdens on operators;
- make improvement measurable through periodic monitoring.

5. Recipients and Scope of Application

The addressees of the Code are:

- steering and governance bodies of the Destination;
- staff, collaborators, consultants, and volunteers involved in its activities;
- participating operators (accommodation, catering, tourist services, guides, events);
- suppliers and technical partners;
- entities involved in projects, campaigns, promotional activities, and initiatives featuring the Visit Emilia brand.

Each addressee is required to be familiar with the Code and to apply it proportionately to their role. Joining the network or using the brand implies acceptance of the principles set forth herein.

6. Dissemination, Awareness, and Individual Responsibility

Visit Emilia ensures the dissemination of the Code through publication on official channels, distribution to addressees, presentation sessions, and essential training. Knowledge of the Code is not optional: each addressee has a duty to stay informed and seek clarification when necessary.

The Code is effective only if it becomes part of daily operations: for this reason, Visit Emilia promotes practical tools (guidelines, checklists, communication formats, examples) consistent with these ethical principles.

SECTION II – OUR VALUES

1. Legality and responsibility

Visit Emilia bases its actions on respect for rules and individual responsibility. Legality also means substantive fairness: avoiding wrongdoing is not enough; conduct that is "formally compliant" yet substantively opaque, unfair, or harmful to the collective reputation must also be avoided.

Each addressee is accountable for their choices and their impact: towards colleagues, partners, visitors, and the community.

2. Integrity and anti-corruption

Visit Emilia rejects any form of corruption, undue pressure, or improper exchange. Integrity requires maintaining independence of judgment, avoiding shortcuts, and not subordinating decisions or advantages to personal relationships, gifts, benefits, or favours.

The following are incompatible with the destination:

- soliciting, offering, or accepting benefits that influence decisions;
- promises of visibility, inclusion, or advantages in exchange for benefits;
- opaque practices in the selection of suppliers, partners, or operators.

3. Transparency and traceability

Transparency applies to decisions, processes, and communication. Visit Emilia is committed to ensuring that criteria and rationales are clear and understandable, particularly regarding: selection processes, partnerships, campaigns, assignments, sponsorships, and projects.

Traceability means documenting in an orderly and verifiable manner: what was decided, why, according to what criteria, and using which resources. It is a quality safeguard, not bureaucracy for its own sake.

4. Confidentiality and protection of information

Visit Emilia safeguards confidential information: internal data, strategies, non-public content, and information regarding partners, operators, and visitors. Confidentiality must not be used to conceal questionable choices, but rather to protect people, relationships, and processes.

Those who handle information must do so with prudence, avoiding improper dissemination, unauthorised sharing, use for personal purposes, or communications inconsistent with official editorial guidelines.

5. Fairness and impartiality

Visit Emilia acts with fairness: clear criteria, non-discriminatory opportunities, and equal treatment under comparable conditions. Impartiality applies above all in contexts where the destination can grant visibility, access to initiatives, participation in campaigns, or reputational advantages.

Fairness also requires listening to diverse voices: small operators, peripheral areas, and emerging entities, and preventing the destination from becoming the sum of a few dominant interests.

6. Value of people

People are the primary factor of quality. Visit Emilia recognises the dignity, competence, and contribution of everyone: staff, collaborators, operators, and the community. This underpins the commitment to promoting healthy professional relationships based on respect, clarity, fairness, and active listening.

Conduct that demeans, intimidates, or devalues is unacceptable. The organisational climate is part of ethics: it determines the quality of decisions and external credibility.

7. Diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities

Visit Emilia promotes a welcoming, accessible destination that respects diversity.

Inclusion means: non-discriminatory language, attention to the accessibility of information, respect for personal identity, and combating stereotypes and barriers.

Equal opportunities also mean ensuring that collaboration, assignments, and visibility do not depend on affiliations, personal relationships, or attributes irrelevant to professional merit.

8. Protection of destination and organisational assets

Assets are not purely financial: they include the brand, reputation, relationships, archives, content, data, know-how, and credibility. Each addressee is a custodian of these assets and must avoid their misuse: misappropriation of content, unauthorised use of the brand, disclosure of strategies, or actions that harm the destination's image.

9. Fairness, loyalty, and collaboration

The destination thrives on collaboration. Visit Emilia promotes fair and loyal conduct: respect for agreements, clarity of roles, constructive conflict management, and accountability regarding timelines and commitments.

Loyalty is also internal: not fueling unnecessary conflict, not spreading distorted information, and not "shifting responsibility" onto others. Collaboration is not acquiescence: it is the ability to work towards a common goal while preserving quality and integrity.

10. Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest can be actual, potential, or perceived. Perception also matters: if a decision appears to be influenced by personal relationships, reputation suffers.

Typical examples include: shareholdings in involved companies; family relationships with candidates or suppliers; conflicting external assignments; benefits received.

In such cases, disclosure, transparency, and recusal from decision-making are required.

11. Responsibility in the use of resources and sustainability

Destination resources (financial, human, communication) must be used with restraint and effectiveness. Waste and inefficient choices harm the territory. Visit Emilia adopts sustainability as an operational criterion across all areas: mobility, events, materials, procurement, and communication decisions.

Sustainability is not a label: it is a decision-making criterion. Every project should ask: "What impact does it generate? Is it consistent with the local identity? Does it deliver widespread value?"

12. Responsibility towards the community and the territory

Visit Emilia works towards the development of the territory in its broadest sense: economic, cultural, and social. The destination cannot grow against its residents: it must grow with them. This requires listening, dialogue, and careful attention to side effects: overcrowding, disturbance, loss of authenticity, and cultural trivialization.

13. Safety, protection, and risk prevention

In its promotional activities, events and experiences, Visit Emilia prioritises the safety of participants and the responsible management of risks (organisational, reputational and environmental). Prevention is achieved through clear communication, the selection of reliable partners and the appropriate management of critical issues.

14. Responsible communication and reputation

Destination storytelling is an act of responsibility. Visit Emilia is committed to portraying Emilia authentically, avoiding stereotypes, simplifications, and unrealistic promises. Reputation is built on consistency: what is communicated must be capable of being truly experienced.

SECTION III - STANDARDS OF CONDUCT TOWARDS PERSONNEL, PARTICIPATING OPERATORS AND THIRD PARTIES

1. General principles of conduct

All addressees must act with diligence and good faith, respecting roles, processes, and commitments undertaken. Ethical standards apply to both internal and external relations: in the office, during events, at trade fairs, online, and in relationships with media and influencers. Conduct that may cause reputational damage to the destination is prohibited: aggression, misconduct, unauthorised communications, and disrespect towards communities and places.

2. Management of employment and working relationships

Visit Emilia promotes clear professional relationships: defined assignments, explicit objectives, consistent responsibilities, and transparent communication. In external collaborations, professionalism, reliability, and alignment with the values of the Code are required.

Every relationship must be managed avoiding ambiguity and overlaps: the boundaries between personal interests and official roles must remain distinct.

3. Selection, Assignments, and Evaluation

The selection of staff and collaborators, as well as the assignment of roles, must be based on skills, experience, and suitability for the role. Favoritism, nepotism, and non-objective criteria are prohibited.

In decisions involving choices between comparable parties, Visit Emilia must make the criteria clear and maintain a record of the key evaluations.

4. Expected Conduct and Duties of Diligence

Addressees must:

- respect timelines and commitments;
- avoid offensive or discriminatory language;
- manage disagreements professionally;
- report critical issues responsibly;
- safeguard entrusted information and assets.

Diligence also entails attention to detail: incorrect information, inaccurate content, or an unfulfilled promise can compromise both experience and trust.

5. Gifts, Hospitality, and Benefits

Gifts and hospitality can create actual or perceived influence. Therefore:

- only courtesy gifts of modest value that align with transparent practices are permitted;
- benefits that could influence decisions (assignments, selections, visibility, partnerships) are prohibited;
- in case of doubt, the addressee must inform their manager and adopt the most prudent course of action (refusal or return).

Press tours and hospitality for media and influencers must be managed according to clear criteria: transparency regarding conditions and a distinction between editorial and sponsored content.

6. Use of Assets, Tools, and Information Systems

Assets and tools (accounts, devices, databases, social media platforms, images, archives) are intended for institutional purposes. It is prohibited to:

- use destination assets for personal or unauthorised purposes;
- share credentials or access rights;
- publish unverified or unapproved content;
- install or use unauthorised tools that expose the organisation to risk.

7. Information and Content Management

Published information must be accurate, up to date, and verifiable. This applies especially to: prices and conditions, accessibility, rules of use, opening hours, capacity, bookings, environmental constraints, and safety.

Artificially "embellishing" the territory through misleading narratives (greenwashing or overpromising) is prohibited. Images must respect people and places: there must be no sensationalising of vulnerabilities, marginality, or private situations.

8. Relations with Visitors and Users

Relations with visitors must be grounded in respect, clarity, and active listening. Visit Emilia promotes a welcoming approach that goes beyond mere "service", enhancing culture and identity.

Complaints and feedback must be managed with a constructive approach: avoiding defensiveness, acknowledging responsibility where necessary, and implementing improvements. The quality of the response is an integral part of ethics.

9. Relations with Suppliers and Third Parties (Procurement, Assignments, Partnerships)

In relations with suppliers and third parties, the following are required:

- objective selection criteria (quality, reliability, value alignment);
- clarity regarding requirements and expectations;
- transparency in terms and conditions;
- prevention of improper dependencies or dominant positions.

Using one's relationship with the destination to obtain personal benefits (discounts, favors, unauthorized complimentary services) is prohibited. Payments and agreements must be consistent with actual and documentable performance.

10. Protection of Image and Use of the Visit Emilia Brand

The use of the logo, trademark, and wording associated with the destination must comply with official guidelines. It is prohibited to:

- use the brand to promote inconsistent offers or messages;
- imply unauthorized endorsements;
- associate the brand with discriminatory or misleading content or content that conflicts with the destination's values.

Visit Emilia may request the immediate removal of improper uses and adopt measures against adhering entities.

SECTION IV – EXTERNAL RELATIONS

1. Relations with institutions and public entities

Visit Emilia maintains fair and collaborative relations with institutions. The destination promotes transparency, impartiality, and respect for roles. Every interaction must be managed with a clear mandate: those representing the destination must adhere to official positions and must not use institutional relationships for personal or partisan purposes.

2. Relations with the Market and Fair Competition

Visit Emilia works to enhance the territory without distorting competition among operators. The destination must not become a vehicle to systematically favor certain entities to the detriment of others. Promotion must be based on explicit criteria: quality, product consistency, organizational capacity, reliability, and territorial representativeness.

Arbitrary exclusion practices, opacity in selection, or promises of "preferential treatment" are considered unfair conduct.

3. Relations with the Media and Public Communication

Relations with media and content creators must be managed responsibly. Visit Emilia:

- communicates verifiable data and information;
- distinguishes between information, promotion, and sponsorship;
- respects editorial freedom, avoiding improper pressure;
- safeguards the image of the territory, avoiding stereotypical or sensationalist narratives.

4. Relations with Local Communities, Associations, and the Cultural Sector

Visit Emilia considers local communities and the cultural sector strategic allies. Tourism promotion must respect the spirit of places and traditions, avoiding cultural appropriation, folklorisation, and caricatured representations.

When working on events and heritage tied to identity, Visit Emilia encourages the involvement of knowledge holders: associations, cultural institutions, and custodian communities.

5. Relations with Academia, Research, and Innovation

The destination supports research, measurement, and innovation projects (visitor flow data, sustainability, accessibility, customer experience), promoting methodological integrity, accuracy in communicating results, and data protection.

6. Relations at Events, Trade Fairs, Press Tours, and Promotional Activities

In all public contexts, destination representatives must maintain conduct consistent with the Code. In particular: respect, restraint, clarity of communication, and attention to impacts. Events must be designed with care: information accessibility, attention to waste and materials, consistency with local identity, and prevention of reputational risks.

SECTION V – REPORTS, VIOLATIONS AND CONSEQUENT MEASURES

1. General Principles

The Code is effective if tools exist to identify critical issues and correct them. Violations must not be managed through automatic punitive approaches, but with a proportionate method: understanding, correcting, preventing recurrence, and protecting the destination.

2. Reports and Channels

Visit Emilia provides dedicated channels (email address or online form) to report conduct inconsistent with the Code. Reports must be substantiated, containing elements useful for evaluation. Good-faith reporting is encouraged, in the interest of the destination.

3. Investigation and Handling

Reports are evaluated with impartiality and confidentiality, ensuring:

- hearing the parties involved;
- evidence collection;
- traceability of decisions;
- reasonable processing timelines.

4. Subsequent Measures and Sanctions

Measures are scaled based on severity and recurrence. By way of example:

- formal warning and request for compliance;
- temporary restrictions on brand usage;
- exclusion from specific promotional initiatives;
- suspension or revocation of membership (in severe or repeated cases).

5. Protection Against Retaliation and Confidentiality

Visit Emilia protects the confidentiality of the reporting party and does not tolerate retaliation against those reporting in good faith. Personal protection is an integral part of the ethical framework.

6. Measures Concerning Participating Operators and Third Parties

When conduct involves operators or third parties, Visit Emilia favors an improvement-driven approach (corrective action plan) while preserving collective reputation: if necessary, it adopts measures for suspension or termination of the relationship.

SECTION VI – IMPLEMENTATION METHOD AND UPDATING

1. Ethics Committee

Visit Emilia designates an Ethics Committee with the following tasks:

- promoting an ethical culture;
- providing interpretative support;
- managing and guiding reports;
- proposing updates to the Code;
- acting as a liaison with destination governance.

2. Dissemination and Training Plan

The Code is disseminated through:

- publication on the website;
- delivery to adhering entities;
- information sessions (including online);
- practical application tools (guidelines and templates).

3. Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Visit Emilia establishes periodic monitoring based on reasonable (non-bureaucratic) indicators: reports, complaints, communication consistency, operator participation, perceived quality, and the impacts of events and campaigns. The results may be summarized in a brief report.

4. Revision of the Code

The Code is subject to periodic review to remain up-to-date and consistent with the evolution of the destination. Revisions take place through a formal act of the competent governance body.

5. Entry into Force

This Code enters into force on the date of approval by Resolution of the General Assembly of Members No. 3 of 29 April 2026 and applies to all specified addresses.

Publication on the official channels of Visit Emilia is hereby ordered;

Dissemination, interpretative support, report management, and updating proposals are entrusted to the Ethics Contact Person/Committee;

It is established that network membership and the use of the Visit Emilia brand imply acceptance of the Code.

Parma, 29/04/2026

Manager
Pierangelo Romersi

