

Electronics Watch Code

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The Electronics Watch Code sets out the Commitments of the Contractor in relation to the provision of Goods and/or Services provided on the Contract. These Commitments are based on the relevant laws, International Standards and related guidances. The Electronics Watch Contract Conditions oblige the Contractor to fulfil the Contract in accordance with the Commitments in the Code. Although these two documents are designed to be used together, the Code also functions as a stand-alone document as it serves as the basis for monitoring undertaken by Electronics Watch and its partners.

The Code is intended for inclusion in contracts between the Client, a contracting or framework authority that is an Affiliate of Electronics Watch, and the Contractor, involving the provision of Goods and/or Services that are within the scope of monitoring performed by Electronics Watch. It may be used as a general reference to support the development and implementation of socially responsible public procurement.

In an effort to harmonise standards in the market, the Code draws heavily on other codes of conduct, particularly the ETI Base Code.¹ For each area, the requirements in the Code either align with or exceed those in the ETI Base Code.



1. Definitions

1.1 Terms used in the Electronics Watch Code (hereafter, the Code), the Electronics Watch Contract Conditions (hereafter, the Conditions), and the corresponding explanatory texts are defined in Appendix I. For terms defined in the singular form, the same meaning shall apply in the plural form.

2. Application

2.1. The provision of Goods and/or Services on the Contract covers all stages of the production process, including assembly, the manufacture of component parts, and the extraction and transformation of raw materials. The Commitments listed in sections 3 – 6 of the Code, therefore, apply to all operations in the supply chains of the Goods and/or Services provided on the Contract.

2.2. The International Standards that are relevant to the Commitments in sections 5 – 7 and indicative examples of related rights violations will be made available in a separate guidance, which can be used to support compliance with the Code and the monitoring thereof.

2.3. Whenever international and domestic standards differ, the standard that affords the greater protection to Rightsholders shall apply unless doing so directly violates domestic law in the relevant jurisdiction.²

¹ The Ethical Trading Initiative (2016). “The ETI Base Code” available at <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/-insights/resources/eti-base-code>.

² Electronics Watch only monitors compliance with the Commitments in relation to the impact of business enterprises on Workers and other Rightsholders.

3. Legal commitments

- 3.1. The Goods and/or Services provided on the Contract shall be produced in compliance with all applicable laws in all jurisdictions where the works and services rendered under the Contract are performed. Such laws include but are not limited to those regulating child labour, discrimination in hiring and employment, forced labour, the freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, occupational health and safety, recruitment and employment conditions, termination of employment, violence and harassment, wages, benefits, and working hours.

4. Human rights commitments

- 4.1. The Goods and/or Services provided on the Contract shall be produced with respect for all internationally recognised human rights, as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in a manner consistent with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

5. Workers' rights commitments

- 5.1. The employment of a Worker shall not be terminated without a valid reason connected to their capacity or conduct or based on the operational requirements of thereof.
- 5.2. No discrimination is practiced on the basis of race, caste, national origin, immigration status, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, union membership, or political affiliation in hiring, compensation, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement.
- 5.3. Working hours are not excessive and must uphold obligations defined in national law, collective agreements, and whichever of the following provisions affords the greater protection to Workers.
- 5.3.1. Working hours shall be defined by the contract. Regular working hours shall not exceed 48 hours per week. Where overtime is offered or requested and voluntarily accepted, it shall not exceed 12 hours per week.
- 5.3.2. Workers shall be provided with at least one day off in every seven-day period or, where allowed by national law, two days off in every 14-day period.
- 5.3.3. All overtime shall be voluntary and compensated at a premium rate. Overtime shall not be used to replace regular employment.
- 5.4. Child Labour shall not be used and young Workers shall not be exploited.
- 5.4.1. There shall be no recruitment of Child Labour.

- 5.4.2. The Contractor develops or participates in and contributes to policies and pro-programmes that provide for the transition of any child found to be performing child labour to enable them to attend and remain in school until they come of age.
- 5.4.3. Workers under 18 years of age shall benefit from the same levels of pay as adults but shall not work overtime, at night, in mines, or in hazardous conditions.
- 5.4.4. Work performed by students as part of an apprenticeship, internship or traineeship shall be related to their studies.
- 5.5. Employment is freely chosen.
- 5.5.1. Workers shall undertake all work voluntarily, which means that Workers shall have:
- free and informed consent to take a job, and
 - the freedom to leave a job at any time with reasonable notice.
- 5.5.2. Work may not be coerced under the menace of penalty.
- 5.6. Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected.
- 5.6.1. Workers have the right to join or form trade unions of their own choosing and to bargain collectively.
- 5.6.2. The Contractor and the Employer demonstrate an open attitude towards the activities of trade unions and their organisational activities.
- 5.6.3. Worker Representatives are not discriminated against and have access to carry out their representative functions in the workplace.
- 5.6.4. The Employer respects its obligations under collective agreements.
- 5.6.5. Where the freedom of association and/or the right to collective bargaining are restricted under law, the Employer facilitates, and does not hinder, the development of parallel means for independent and free association and bargaining with proactive encouragement by the Contractor, according to its leverage, if the two parties are not the same.
- 5.7. Living wages are paid.
- 5.7.1. At a minimum, wages paid for normal working hours, excluding overtime and bonuses, shall be enough to meet the basic needs of Workers and their families, to afford them a decent standard of living, and to provide some discretionary income.
- 5.7.2. Deductions from wages as a disciplinary measure shall not be permitted, nor shall any deductions from wages not provided for by national law be permitted without the express permission of the Worker concerned. All disciplinary measures should be recorded in writing.

- 5.7.3. Living wage calculations and methodologies shall be made accessible to Workers, disclosed publicly and both time and place specific. The latter includes being updated at a regular interval to account for changes in the cost of living.
- 5.8. Regular employment is provided.
- 5.8.1. To every extent possible work performed must be on the basis of recognised employment relationship established through national law and practice.
- 5.8.2. Obligations of the Employer to Workers under labour or social security laws and regulations arising from the regular employment relationship shall not be avoided through the use of labour-only contracting or sub-contracting, or through apprenticeships or on-the-job trainings, or internship schemes unrelated to students' areas of study or otherwise not meeting legal requirements, nor shall any such obligations be avoided through the excessive use of fixed-term contracts of employment.
- 5.9. Recruitment, contracts and employment conditions are fair.
- 5.9.1. All Workers shall have access to free, comprehensive and accurate information regarding their rights and the conditions of their recruitment and employment, including information about their wages and any benefits to which they are entitled. Workers shall furthermore receive detailed information about the particulars of their wages for the pay period concerned each time that they are paid. This information must be provided in writing in a language that they understand before they enter employment.
- 5.9.2. Workers shall not be subjected to abusive or fraudulent practices in employment, including those that result in precarious conditions.
- 5.9.3. Workers shall not be required to pay Recruitment Fees or related costs, regardless of their country of origin.
- 5.9.4. Workers' identity documents and contracts shall not be confiscated, destroyed or retained and their freedom of movement shall be respected.
- 5.9.5. Recruitment should not serve as a means to displace or diminish an existing workforce, to lower labour standards, wages, or working conditions, or to otherwise undermine decent work.^{3,4}
- 5.10. Working conditions are safe and hygienic.
- 5.10.1. A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, in conformance with relevant ILO Conventions and bearing in mind any hazards specific to the industry and operation. Adequate steps shall be taken by the Employer to prevent accidents and injury

³ General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment & Definition of recruitment fees and related costs. International Labour Office - Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch, Labour Migration Branch – Geneva: ILO, 2019

⁴ This clause may not be used to defend prior discrimination in recruitment.

to Workers' physical, psychological and reproductive health arising out of, associated with, or occurring in the course of work, and to prevent the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment.

- 5.10.2. Workers shall be informed, in a form and language they understand, of hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals and their effects, and provided with appropriate personal protective equipment when needed.
- 5.10.3. The Employer shall respect the Worker's right to remove themselves from a situation that presents an imminent and serious danger to their life or health and, for Workers who are pregnant, the life or health of the foetus.
- 5.10.4. Workers shall receive regular, documented health and safety training, in a form and language they understand, and such training shall be repeated for new or reassigned Workers.
- 5.10.5. Workers shall have free access to clean toilet facilities and potable water.
- 5.10.6. Accommodation, where provided, canteens, washrooms, and other facilities provided to Workers shall be clean, safe, and meet their basic needs.
- 5.11. Violence and harassment are prohibited.
 - 5.11.1. Workers shall not be subjected to any abuse or harassment, whether physical, verbal, psychological, sexual or gender-based, or intimidation.
 - 5.11.2. Additional special measures shall be taken to protect Workers that are particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment.

6. Environmental rights commitments

- 6.1. The right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is respected.
 - 6.1.1. Chemical use is controlled and evaluated. Where applicable, substitution and/or implementation of alternative processes is carried out to reduce health and environmental hazards and improve resource efficiency.
 - 6.1.2. Waste is stored, handled, transported and disposed of in a manner that protects the health of Workers and other Rightsholders, including local communities, and the environment.
 - 6.1.3. Emissions and runoff that pose a danger to health and the environment are reduced or eliminated.
- 6.2. The rights of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and natural resources that they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired are respected, including the right to free, prior and informed consent.

6.3. Illegal eviction or taking over of land, forest or water must not occur.

7. Severe non-compliances

7.1. Forced labour, Child Labour, working conditions that pose a danger to life, attacks on environmental and human rights defenders, and serious environmental harm are severe non-compliances. Other severe non-compliances are those that negatively impact the right to life and to the physical and moral integrity of Rightsholders. In this context, serious environmental harm means damage caused by polluting activities that have a severe adverse impact on people, water areas or ground water, species and/or habitat.

Appendix I: Definitions

“**Affiliate**” refers to affiliated members of Electronics Watch.

“**Child Labour**” refers to any work or activity conducted by persons under the age of 18 that deprives them of their childhood, their potential or their dignity, is harmful to their physical or mental development, and/or interferes with their schooling. The latter includes preventing them from attending school, obliging them to leave school prematurely, or requiring them to combine long and heavy work with school attendance.⁵

“**Client**” refers to the contracting or framework authority to which Goods or Services will be provided by the Contractor, in accordance with the Contract.

“**Code**” refers to the code of conduct included in the Contract, which may be the Electronics Watch Code or an equivalent code.⁶

“**Commitments**” refers to the obligations described in the Code that the Contractor pledges to uphold in the performance of the Contract.

“**Conditions**” refer the Electronics Watch Contract Conditions.

“**Contract**” refers to the legally binding agreement between the Client and the Contractor and the terms and conditions thereof.

“**Contract of Employment**” refers to a contract of service or apprenticeship, whether express or implied and, if it is express, whether agreed orally or in writing.

“**Contractor**” refers to the business enterprise that enters into the Contract with the Client for the provision Goods or Services.

“**Electronics Watch**” refers to Stichting Electronics Watch Foundation, a not-for-profit public benefit organisation whose registered office is Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

“**Employer**” refers to a legal person or entity that employs Workers, directly or indirectly, to perform formal or informal work. This includes private employment, state-owned enterprises, and recruitment agencies, among others.

“**Goods**” refers to the products provided by the Contractor and those related to their provision, including the component parts and the raw materials (e.g., minerals) necessary for their production, that

⁵ This definition is consistent with guidance from the ILO. See, “What is child labour,” available at: <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/what-child-labour>. Accessed in December 2024.

⁶ See Footnote 1 in the Electronics Watch Contract Conditions.

represent the Subject-Matter of the Contract. The Goods may be supplied permanently or temporarily, as part of a service contract.

“Human Rights Due Diligence” refers to the risk-based process through which business enterprises and other actors identify and respond to actual and potential negative impacts on Rightsholders in their operations and supply chains.

“International Standards” refers to conventions, protocols, recommendations and other instruments, whether binding or nonbinding, issued or adopted by international bodies.

“Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement” refers to responsive, ongoing, and interactive processes of engagement with relevant stakeholders, including Rightsholders, their representatives (e.g., trade unions and other Worker Representatives), and civil society organisations, that are characterised by two-way communication and depend on the good faith of participants on both sides.^{7,8}

“Monitor” refers to any party retained by the Client to monitor compliance with the Code during the performance of the Contract. A Monitor may be retained directly or indirectly (e.g., as a Supplier or partner), as part of a shared services arrangement, or through other means, such as a Memorandum of Understanding.

“Operational-Level Grievance Mechanism”, or OLG, refers to a formalised means through which individuals or groups can raise concerns about the impact an enterprise has on them and can seek remedy. OLGs support the identification of adverse human rights impacts as a part of due diligence and support these being addressed and remediated.⁹

“Parties” refers to the parties to the Contract, i.e., the Client and the Contractor.

“Production Site” refers to a factory, mine or other site where the Goods or Services provided by the Contractor and products related to their provision, including the components thereof, are assembled, manufactured or mined.

“Recruitment fee” refers to any fees or costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for a Worker to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, time or location of their imposition or collection.¹⁰

“Remedy” refers both to the process of counteracting negative impacts on rightsholders, sometimes described as making them whole, and the substantive outcomes thereof. The term “remediation” refers solely to the remedy process whereas the term “reparations” refers solely to its outcomes. Rightsholders that have experienced harms have the right to an effective remedy.

⁷ OECD (2018), *Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/15f5f4b3-en>.

⁸ OECD (2011), *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*, Commentary on General Policies, para 25.

⁹ OHCHR (2012), *The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights: An Interpretive Guide*, p. 68,, and UN (2011), *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, p. 32.

¹⁰ General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment & Definition of recruitment fees and related costs. International Labour Office - Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch, Labour Migration Branch – Geneva: ILO, 2019.

“Rightsholders” refers to individuals and social groups that have particular entitlements in relation to specific duty-bearers. The obligations of duty-bearers are defined in human rights law, including in such texts as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the context of responsible business conduct, rightsholders such as Workers, vulnerable groups among them (e.g., migrant workers, temporary workers, and women workers), communities located near Production Sites, and those where Workers and their families reside, are given specific consideration as their rights are likely to be impacted by the business operations.

“Services” refers to transactions provided in exchange for money that are not governed by the roles relating to the freedom of movement for goods, capital and persons and that represent the Subject-Matter of the Contract. Services may include goods provided as-a-service, for instance, through leasing, temporary use, hosting and other similar arrangements. When it includes goods provided as-a-service, then “Services” refers to those goods themselves and the component parts and raw materials necessary for their production.

“Shared Responsibility” is a principle that recognises the need for mutual accountability among the parties to an activity with inherent risk and the allocation of tasks between them. It is operationalised in the Contract through language that prevents the Client or the Contractor from transferring their HRDD obligations to the other party or to third parties, e.g., by automatically rendering the contract void in the case of a compliance breach.

“Supplier” refers to any party that performs works or renders services related to the provision of the Goods and Services that comprise the Subject-Matter of the Contract. Suppliers include parties with a direct contractual relationship to the Contractor and others involved with any tier of the production process, including but not limited to assembly, manufacturing, and mining.

“Subject-Matter of the Contract” refers to all works performed, and services rendered under the Contract for the benefit of the Client, including the Goods and Services provided by the Contractor and products related to their provision. Applicable legislation in different jurisdictions may further describe the term.

“Whistleblower” refers to someone who informs on an individual, group or organisation engaging in illegal or unethical activity.

“Worker” refers to any individual who has entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, worked under) a Contract of Employment with the Contractor or a Supplier, and job seekers, as well as those who are self-employed working in cooperatives. Workers include all those involved in the production of the Goods and Services provided on the Contract, including their assembly, the manufacture of their component parts, and the extraction and transformation of the raw materials necessary for their production, such as employees, subcontractors, agency and other forms of temporary labour, trainees, interns and apprentices.

“Worker Representative” refers to an individual or body, including a trade unions and health and safety committees, that is democratically elected by Workers to represent them and their interests in particular forums or processes.

“Working Day” refers to any day other than a weekend or a bank or public holiday in the jurisdiction under which the Contract is governed.¹¹

¹¹ Note: the definition should mirror the definition of "days" in the underlying contract.