

# Code of Conduct

## 1. Preamble

ESN Leuven is committed to creating an open, inclusive and welcoming environment. It is our goal to make all students in Leuven, both local and international, feel included, involved and respected. To ensure this ideal community, we work with a Code of Conduct. All participants of our events are expected to uphold these values and respect our code of conduct.

## 2. The Code of Conduct

The Code of conduct was first approved by the General Meeting of 07/05/2026. The latest amendments have been voted in by the General meeting of 07/05/2026.

Essentially, the goal of this document is:

- To provide guidelines on how volunteers should conduct themselves;
- To inform participants what behaviour is and isn't appropriate;
- To raise awareness about and lay down unwanted behaviours;
- To provide clarity on how to deal with situations where unwanted behaviours; occur or are suspected to have occurred.

The behavioural standards of the Code of Conduct are:

- Respect for inherent dignity;
- Non-discrimination;
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in ESN;
- Respect for difference and acceptance as part of human diversity and humanity;
- Equality and equal treatment.

## 3. Scope of Application

The behaviours outlined in the Code of Conduct apply to all volunteers of ESN, participants and third-party people when they engage in any activity related to ESN Leuven. 'Activity' should be interpreted broadly and covers, but is not limited to, the following:

- Meetings, gatherings or events, physical or online;
- Online communication, through email or instant messaging;
- Online activity in official or unofficial channels related to ESN Belgium such as Facebook groups and Whatsapp communities;
- External representation including non-ESN Leuvenrelated events (e.g. wearing merch with ESN logo at a non-ESN event, attending an event as representative of an ESN Section, etc.)

Volunteers of ESN include

- All active volunteers of ESN Leuven
- All elected members of the Board of Directors and Daily Board
- All Alumni of ESN Leuven
- All active members of other ESN sections participating in ESN Leuven's activities

## 4. The General Code of Conduct

At ESN Leuven, we uphold a fundamental commitment to equality, inclusivity, and respect for all individuals. Discrimination, in any form or context, directly contradicts our core values and is unequivocally intolerable within our community. Our definition of discrimination aligns with the

widely recognized understanding: the unjust or prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups based on certain characteristics or preferences, leading to disparity in dignity, opportunities, and rights.

#### **4.1. Scope of Characteristics and Preferences**

Discrimination within ESN Belgium can arise from biases against, but not limited to, the following characteristics or preferences:

##### **4.1.1. Age**

Ensuring individuals of all ages are treated with equal respect and given equivalent opportunities.

##### **4.1.2. Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses**

Acknowledging and accommodating individuals with physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, ensuring their full and effective participation

##### **4.1.3. Educational and Socio-economic Background**

Recognizing the value of diverse educational backgrounds and socio-economic statuses, without prejudice.

##### **4.1.4. Ethics, Values, and Beliefs**

promoting a culture of mutual respect and understanding, without prejudice against political, religious or personal beliefs..

##### **4.1.5. Gender**

Encompassing sex, gender identity, and gender expression, ensuring that all individuals feel safe and respected in expressing themselves authentically.

##### **4.1.6. Sexual Orientation**

Affirming and respecting the diversity of sexual orientations within our community.

##### **4.1.7. Language and Literacy**

Addressing barriers to communication and understanding, promoting inclusivity through accessible language and support.

##### **4.1.8. Physical Appearance**

Challenging stereotypes and biases related to physical appearance, promoting body positivity.

##### **4.1.9. Colour, Nationality, Ethnicity, or Origin**

Condemning racism and promoting a community where every nationality and ethnicity is celebrated.

##### **4.1.10. Role or Experience within ESN**

Valuing contributions from all members, regardless of their role or tenure within the organisation.

##### **4.1.11. Alcohol Consumption**

Respecting personal choices regarding alcohol consumption, without pressure or judgement.

##### **4.1.12. Practicing of Religious belief**

Allowing and offering the ability to all members to practice their Religion at any time or location.

## 4.2. Inclusivity

### 4.2.1. Common Language for Inclusivity

Ensuring inclusivity and equal participation, ESN Leuven adopts English as the common language in all formal and informal gatherings, communications, and documentation.

### 4.2.2. Pronouns

Respecting individuals' pronouns by using them correctly as requested. If you're unsure of someone's pronouns, use their name or gender-neutral pronouns until you can ask them.

### 4.2.3. Accessibility

Striving to make communications accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities.

## 4.3. Humour and Sensitivity

Humour is a vital part of building connections and creating a friendly, relaxed atmosphere within ESN Leuven. It can break down barriers and enhance our collective experiences. However, it's crucial to remember that humour is subjective, and what is funny to one person may not be to another. Sensitivity and respect for others' feelings and boundaries are paramount when sharing jokes or humorous comments.

### 4.3.1. Know Your Audience

considering the diversity of your audience. Remember that backgrounds, cultures, and personal experiences greatly influence what individuals find funny or offensive.

### 4.3.2. Consent and Comfort

Recognizing and respecting when someone indicates, either verbally or nonverbally, that they are not comfortable with certain topics or types of jokes.

### 4.3.3. Avoid Sensitive Topics

Steering clear of jokes that touch on sensitive topics such as ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender identity, or any form of personal adversity. Furthermore, avoiding the current affairs and political situation anywhere.

### 4.3.4. Listen and Apologise

listening to concerns without defensiveness. Acknowledging feelings, apologising sincerely, and refraining from making similar jokes in the future.

## 4.4. Environmental Responsibility                      Respect                      and

In alignment with ESN Leuven's commitment to sustainability and respect for our planet, we recognize the importance of environmental responsibility within our community. This commitment extends beyond organised initiatives to the individual actions and behaviours of our members, underscoring the need for conscientious interaction with our environment at all events, meetings, and activities.

### 4.4.1. Mindful Disposal

disposing of waste properly and using recycling bins whenever available. Being vigilant about separating recyclables from non-recyclable trash.

#### **4.4.2. Respect for Venues**

respecting our surroundings, in- and outdoors. leaving spaces as we found them or in better condition, ensuring that we do not damage property or leave behind waste.

#### **4.4.3. Respect for organisers**

Respecting the organisers and volunteers at events and other gatherings, whether they are from ESN Leuven or from a third party.

## **4.5. Respecting Personal Boundaries for Physical Contact**

In the diverse and vibrant community of ESN Leuven, we recognise and celebrate the warmth and friendliness that physical gestures of affection, like hugs, can symbolise. However, it's crucial to acknowledge and respect individual comfort levels and boundaries regarding physical contact.

#### **4.5.1. Consent is Key**

asking for and obtaining explicit consent before engaging in any form of physical contact, including hugs, handshakes, or high-fives. Consent should be enthusiastic, voluntary, and can be revoked at any time.

#### **4.5.2. Respect Boundaries**

respecting wishes without question or judgement when someone expresses discomfort or declines physical contact. Personal boundaries vary greatly among individuals,

#### **4.5.3. Be Mindful of Context**

Considering the context and setting before initiating physical contact.

## **4.6. Respecting the law**

ESN Leuven is not above the law, any Belgian laws apply to any event in ESN Leuven. Events taking place outside of Belgium will of course respect the local laws above the Belgian law. However the Belgian law is still part of the Code of Conduct and should thus also be respected when ESN Leuven goes abroad. Volunteers of ESN Leuven are obligated to report any form of breaking the law to the local authorities.

#### **4.6.1. Alcohol consumption**

Respecting the legal age requirements of alcohol in Belgium and restraining from providing alcohol to underaged people.

Consuming alcohol responsibly and avoiding behaviour that violates public order or safety. This includes, but is not limited to, public intoxication, unsafe behaviour under the influence of alcohol, or operating vehicles, including bicycles, while impaired. Respecting any local regulations regarding alcohol consumption in public spaces.

#### **4.6.2. Drug use**

Respecting Belgian laws regarding drugs and illegal substances and refraining from the possession, use, production, distribution, or facilitation of illegal drugs.

Refraining from attending ESN Leuven activities or events while in possession or under the influence of illegal substances, endangering oneself or others, disrupting the event, or violating public order. ESN Leuven has a zero-tolerance policy on drugs and will go to immediate exclusion

from the event. ESN Leuven however will not confiscate illegal substances and any found substances will be disposed of immediately.

#### **4.6.3. Privacy and consent to photo- and videography**

Acknowledging that photographs and videos may be taken during ESN Leuven activities and events by ESN Leuven representatives for promotional, archival, and communication purposes. By attending an event, participants consent to the possibility of being photographed or recorded and to the use of such material by ESN Leuven in accordance with applicable privacy regulations.

Respecting the privacy of others when taking personal photos or videos and refraining from recording or sharing content that may violate someone's dignity, safety, or personal privacy. Participants are expected to comply with any requests from organizers or individuals who do not wish to be photographed or recorded.

#### **4.6.4. Sexual Misconduct**

Refraining from any form of sexually transgressive, inappropriate, or unwanted behaviour towards others. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment, unwanted physical contact, inappropriate comments of a sexual nature, or any behaviour that may create an unsafe, uncomfortable, or intimidating environment for others.

Respecting personal boundaries and ensuring that all interactions are based on clear and mutual consent. Any form of coercion, pressure, or behaviour that disregards another person's autonomy or dignity is strictly unacceptable.

#### **4.6.5. Violence**

Refraining from any form of violence, intimidation, or aggressive behaviour towards others. This includes, but is not limited to, physical assault, threats, harassment, or any conduct that may endanger the safety or well-being of participants, organizers, venue staff, or bystanders. Respecting the physical integrity and personal safety of others at all times and avoiding behaviour that may escalate into conflict or disturbance.

## **5. Procedures and Arbitration**

The code of conduct is an essential guideline for ESN volunteers before, during and after events. Whenever there is a breach of the code of conduct by individuals, groups or else, anyone can address and ask for arbitration of a possible violation of the code of conduct. Important to note is that the Code of Conduct is a guideline. This means that every situation will be addressed individually by the organisation in charge.

### **5.1. Reporting a (suspected) violation**

We urge you to report any (suspected) violations whenever witnessed or aware of them. Reports of violations and misconduct will always be dealt with professionally, efficiently and discretely by the volunteers of ESN Leuven.

#### **5.1.1. During events**

During events, an elected (vice-)member of the Daily Board or Board of Directors is always present. They can always be contacted directly or through other active volunteers at the event.

### 5.1.2. After events

After events, all violations and misconduct can be reported to the Board of Directors through e-mail to bod@esnleuven.be. If misconduct was performed by the Board of Directors, it can be reported directly to the president of the Daily Board through e-mail to president@esnleuven.be.

### 5.1.3. Anti-Retaliation Policy

Reporting violations to the code of conduct is important to work towards a safer network. Retaliatory behaviour against anyone who, in good faith, reports a concern or participates in an incident report can be subject to similar sanctions, as described in article 5.3.1, regardless if allegations are ultimately substantiated.

## 5.2. Procedure after the report

### 5.2.1. Levels of Violations

When a violation is reported, the report will be documented and following steps will be discussed by the appropriate body of arbitration . A violation can be of two levels:

- Level-One-Violation
- Level-Two-Violation

A Level-One-Violation is any minor violation during an event in which sanctions binding to the event can be taken. A Level-Two-Violation is an escalation where either the violation is deemed extremely problematic or harmful, or the perpetrator is not willing to adjust their behaviour to conform to the Code of Conduct.

Level-One-Violations can be dealt with by any member of the Daily Board or Board of Directors. Level-Two-Violations will always be dealt with by a body of arbitration.

### 5.2.2. Arbitration

Any Level-Two-Violations, as well as any violation committed by volunteers of ESN Leuven will be arbitrated by a body of Arbitration:

- A violation committed by a participating member, that is not a registered volunteer of ESN Leuven, will be arbitrated by the Daily Board, chaired by the President of the Daily Board.
- A violation committed by a regular volunteer or workgroup member will be arbitrated by the Daily Board, chaired by the Vice-President of the Daily Board.
- A violation committed by a member of the Daily Board, with exception of President, Vice-President and Finance Manager, will be arbitrated by the Board of Directors, President of the Daily board, Vice-President of the

Daily Board and Finance Manager and will be chaired by the President of the Board of Directors.

- A violation committed by the President, Vice-President or Finance Manager of the Daily board will be arbitrated by the Board of Directors, chaired by the President of the Board of Directors
- A violation committed by the Board of Directors will be arbitrated by the Daily Board, chaired by the President of the Daily Board.

### **5.2.3. Appeal**

Any first decision and sanction taken by the arbitrators can be appealed to the Board of Directors. In case the initial decision or sanction was taken by the Board of Directors, or in case the perpetrator of the violation is a member of the Board of Directors, the appeal will be held in a General Meeting.

## **5.3. Sanctions**

Violations of the Code of Conduct are followed by sanctions. Sanctions can typically include, but are not limited to, the following:

For Level-One-Violations, sanctions will typically range from exclusions from certain aspects of events, such as alcohol consumption, to exclusion of the entire event.

For Level-Two-Violations, sanctions can include exclusion from multiple events, temporary blacklisting and ban from any ESN activity, or complete blacklisting from the community and its events.

Violations committed by active members of ESN Leuven may also be sanctioned by, but not limited to,

- Loss of privileges, such as voting rights, teambuildings, ...
- Exclusion from certain events
- Expulsion from the Network
- A rejection, or in severe cases a ban, on reapplication to become an active volunteer of any level of ESN Leuven