



Code of Conduct

Consolidated version, 4th of April 2024

Why do we need a Code of Conduct?

IMISCOE is a research network with a variety of activities, including the organisation of events, training, and the support of research and publications. This Code of Conduct aims to make sure that everyone involved in IMISCOE activities can work in a safe and respectful environment. To promote such environment, IMISCOE may adopt additional documentation to accompany this Code of Conduct.

With this Code of Conduct, IMISCOE seeks to prevent harassment and discrimination¹ of anyone involved in IMISCOE activities and to create a due course of action for situations where anyone may have experienced harassment or discrimination in the context of the network activities. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to promote behaviour and exchanges in the network that:

- Respect the dignity, individuality, and diversity of the people with whom they are in contact, whether in-person or online.
- Recognise and respect academic freedom in engaging in research, dialogue and other forms of exchange amongst colleagues and participants in IMISCOE activities.
- Treat people with respect and understanding.
- Do not discriminate or condone direct or indirect discrimination on any grounds, including but not limited to sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- Promote equality of opportunity and inclusion.
- Create an environment free from harassment, bullying or intimidation, and where possible remove physical and other barriers to participation.

To what and to whom does the Code of Conduct apply?

This Code of Conduct applies to all actions and speech/comments of individual Members² and Member Institutes³ of IMISCOE in the context of activities of the Research Network. This includes IMISCOE

¹ In line with EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU directives, this Code of Conduct refers to discrimination as either direct or indirect. Direct discrimination consists of treating someone differently solely because of their specific characteristics. Indirect discrimination refers to a rule or practice which seems neutral but in fact has a particularly disadvantageous impact upon a person or a group of persons having a specific characteristic. Harassment is a form of discrimination. The unwanted conduct can take different forms, from verbal or written comments, gestures or behaviour, but it has to be serious enough to create an intimidating, humiliating or offensive environment. See also: https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination_en

² According to the IMISCOE Consortium Agreement, a Member means an individual who has paid the annual individual membership fee and signed the code of conduct; individual members are not directly represented in the Board of Directors, but can make themselves heard through the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors.

³ According to the IMISCOE Consortium Agreement, a Member Institute means a party which has signed the Agreement. From the moment an organisation expresses interest in joining the Network, until they sign the agreement, they are considered a Member-Elect.

Spring and Annual Conferences, training events (PhD schools, events organised by the PhD Network and the PhD Academy, etc.), meetings and events of Executive or Standing Committees within the network, as well as meetings of the Executive Board or Board of Directors. The Code of Conduct gives guidelines for respectful behaviour and interactions in these activities as well as defining unacceptable behaviour and offering a course of action in cases of unacceptable behaviour. The Code of Conduct shall apply equally to face-to-face as well as online and hybrid activities.

All IMISCOE Member Institutes consent to the Code of Conduct as referred to in the IMISCOE Consortium Agreement, and all individual Members consent to the Code of Conduct as part of their individual membership. Participants in events, such as IMISCOE conferences, shall also consent to the Code of Conduct as part of the conference registration procedure. This Code of Conduct gives consequence to Article 10(1v) of the IMISCOE Consortium Agreement.

The Code of Conduct does not apply to events that are exclusively organised by IMISCOE members but which are advertised on IMISCOE webpages. It also does not cover events that are co-badged by IMISCOE but are not directly organised by Standing Committees or members as part of IMISCOE activity. However, the network governing bodies will encourage institutional and individual members of IMISCOE to apply the principles of this Code of Conduct when organising such events.

The Code of Conduct does also not apply to views expressed directly in relation to the contents of research, presentations, and in academic discussions: the intention is not to restrict intellectual freedom in engaging in research, discussion, and dissemination of ideas, however contentious.

What is considered respectful behaviour?

Respectful behaviour is behaviour that helps to create an open, safe, and inclusive environment for activities and exchanges. This includes behaviour that:

- Enables all participants to constructively criticize the substance of each other's work. In promoting our ideas, each one will make every reasonable effort to minimise the risks of any harm arising for any person. Each one will be aware that some academic opinions and arguments may cause offence to some people but that this is not, of itself, a sufficient reason not to express those opinions and arguments. Each one will, nevertheless, be sensitive to the views of others and will present its views in a reasonable and thoughtful manner.
- Allows everyone to participate in a way that makes everyone feel safe and respected.
- Strives, individually and collectively, to increase participation of under-represented groups, especially racialised groups, in accordance with Article 8 of the IMISCOE Consortium Agreement.
- Makes sure that activities reflect core values in terms of inclusivity along a variety of diversities, including but not limited to sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- Ensures that everyone is aware of and feels safe to raise concerns about whether the environment is truly open, safe, and inclusive.
- Pro-actively assists people who find themselves in a situation of potential harm.

What is considered unacceptable behaviour?

Unacceptable behaviour is any behaviour (actions/comments) that directly or indirectly harms another person or creates an unsafe or hostile environment for any person. This includes:

- Inappropriate actions or comments (speech) concerning a person's background, including but not limited to a person's race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or any other aspect.
- Any form of racism, discrimination, sexual harassment, intimidation, or any form of unwelcome solicitation of emotional or physical intimacy.
- Inciting or spreading hatred or violence.
- Using one's position or authority in a way that is considered inappropriate.
- Inappropriate photography, recording, or stalking.
- Advocacy of, or encouragement of any of the above behaviours.

What is the procedure for resolving complaints?

It is important that there is a clear and easily accessible procedure for persons who feel they have experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour and want to approach to inform about it, report it, and/or call for appropriate actions. The Vice Chair of the Board of Directors, with the support of the IMISCOE Network Office, will make sure that such an appropriate procedure is in place, and that trustees are appointed accordingly.

For every IMISCOE event, there will be a Trustee who is clearly announced in documentation or on the website. The Trustee can be a person from the conference organizing committee, the board of a Standing or Executive Committee, etc. All messages to and talks with the Trustee will be fully confidential. Trustees will be available for a private conversation or for receiving reports of any disrespectful behaviour of harassment during events. They can also advise on appropriate subsequent actions. Anonymity must be ensured throughout the entire process unless both parties consent to the disclosure of anonymity to the other part.

The organizing committees of the IMISCOE Annual Conference, of the Spring Conference, and of the PhD School shall designate two Trustees (at least one of whom must be a woman) for each of these events. For all other events organised by IMISCOE Executive and Standing Committees, there will be one Trustee assigned for each event. If the person reported is someone from the hosting organization/committee of an IMISCOE event, the report can be made directly to the Vice-chair of the Board of Directors. For any internal meetings of IMISCOE governance bodies (including meetings of the Board of Directors, the Executive Board, Standing and Executive Committees, etc.) any reports on unacceptable behaviour shall be made directly to the Vice-chair of the Board of Directors and/or to the Network Office.

As a complement to Article 10 of the IMISCOE Consortium Agreement on Defaults and Remedies, this Code of Conduct offers two routes of action for those who feel they have experienced unacceptable behaviour:

1. Talk to a Trustee and ask for informal resolution. Once the Trustees have a private conversation or receive a complaint, Trustees and the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors will approach the person against whom the complaint was made. If the process is brief and the individuals involved can meet separately in person with one of the Trustees and the Vice-chair, it is preferable to handle it that way. If the event is ending soon or has already ended and there is no opportunity for such a meeting, communication can be conducted through a video call or via

email. All members are encouraged to raise any issues and grievances as early as possible, before they become a major problem. The mediation process may be concluded if the offending party acknowledges responsibility for their misconduct and/or offers an apology to the reporting party (if accepted).

2. Report unacceptable behaviour and ask for formal resolution. Any person can formally report unacceptable behaviour to the Trustee by filing a formal complaint. In this case, the identity of the complainant needs to be revealed at least to the Trustee, but should be processed further in confidentiality, only between the parties involved in the complaint and its subsequent inquiry. The Trustee will attempt to settle the complaint with involvement by the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors. The Vice Chair of the Board of Directors and the Trustee will then jointly examine the complaint; notify the person or organisation against whom the complaint is directed and provide them with an opportunity, in a reasonable time period, to respond to the complaint; set up an inquiry into what happened that ensures the right of all parties to be heard and informed; and identify appropriate action. A formal complaint and the result of the inquiry needs to be reported to the IMISCOE Executive Board and to the IMISCOE Coordinator. The IMISCOE Executive Board and the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors can ultimately take sanctions in response to complaints, which includes giving a person a warning, informing a person's institute of the complaint, and suspending the individual membership of a person. Once a year, the IMISCOE Coordinator will need to report to the IMISCOE Board of Directors what has been done in response to formal complaints.