

10.24 LYMEC EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

An equality and diversity plan is first and foremost intended to outline equal conditions for all employees in the working place. An equal working place means a working place equal to all no matter gender or gender expression, age, background, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion or belief, disability or impairments of any kind, appearance or other personal attributes. An equal working place guarantees equal opportunities to all to be able to do their assigned tasks, develop skills, acquire equal compensation and get received on equal terms. An equality and diversity plan also refers to the work in an organization against conscious or unconscious negative actions, like e.g. enhancing gender stereotypes that can translate poorly and offend or exclude persons from the community.

It is important that all the staff of the organization, European Liberal Youth, is aware of the content of the equality and diversity plan and strive to implement the actions that the plan indicates or clearly outlines. The Bureau carry the responsibility for the implementation by setting example and shaping the culture of the organization. The President and Secretary General, as leaders and forepersons in the organization, carry a specific responsibility for following up on the implementation.

The European Liberal Youth strives to implement equal opportunities on all levels of the organization and in all types of activities. When we conduct activities in the organisation, it is important that we analyse what roles we assign each other, which expectations and responsibilities we are expected to live up to. It is humane to set norms on how to act and how things should be, but organizational norms also risk becoming discriminatory to someone and therefore an open and self-analytic culture is essential to establish. An equal organization is not just about rights, but also serves as a method for productiveness and growth. If the persons included in the activities of the organization, such as staff, persons of trust¹, members and partners, perceive themselves equally treated and are given equal opportunities, they can be assumed to prioritize and endorse the organization henceforth.

The European Liberal Youth adheres to standards of equality and diversity as laid out in the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy of the European Commission and will update this plan over time.

The equality and diversity plan has two chapters:

¹ Someone holding an elected position in the organization or a member of the Secretariat.

I The European Liberal Youth as an employer

II The European Liberal Youth as a platform for equal participation

DEFINITIONS

The term **'equality'** is intended to convey a broader meaning in this equality and diversity plan. The definition does not exclude the organization from striving for equality between the sexes, rather the definition in this text strives for equal opportunities for all, no matter gender or gender expression, age, background, religion or belief, ethnicity, race, nationality, disability, appearance or other personal attributes.

The relation to the term **'diversity'** is explained as follows in the Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (p. 3) "Diversity in all its forms is referred to throughout, alongside inclusion. This ensures there is a dual focus – not only on including young people but also on strengthening the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to fully accept, support and promote the differences in society."

Diversity and **inclusion** are often described as being two sides of the same coin. "Where inclusion of everyone ensures that all young people can take part, the focus on diversity ensures that everybody can take part on their own terms, recognizing the value of differences in norms, beliefs, attitudes and life experience." (Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, p. 4)

OUR VALUES

One of the most central values of the European Liberal Youth, LYMEC is the respect for equality and human rights. Everyone should have the same opportunities to participating in society and shaping their own lives. LYMEC wants to work for an open and inclusive society where people can feel safe to be themselves and develop as individuals no matter gender, age, background, disability, religion, ethnicity or personal attributes. LYMEC stands up against all forms of discrimination, hate crime, racism and exclusion, and envisions an open society where all lives are respected.

This plan for equality and diversity applies to all aspects of the organization and activities of the European Liberal Youth, LYMEC: organization, staff, communication, recruitment and event management.

I THE EUROPEAN LIBERAL YOUTH AS AN EMPLOYER

WORKING CONDITIONS

The European Liberal Youth follows standards and legal obligations of employers registered in Belgium. When central documents of organization, such as the statutes and code of conduct as well as working contracts of the staff of the organization are updated, equal opportunities are to be considered. The European Liberal Youth intends to adhere to its responsibilities towards its employees in terms of e.g. parenthood, disabilities and health conditions as is defined in Belgian law and regulation to workplace (ROI). As an employer for young persons, LYMEC is considerate towards parenthood and equal opportunities e.g. in terms of working hours. Due to the European Liberal Youth being an international youth organization, it carries particular responsibility for healthy and supportive working conditions as an employer for young persons and a platform of young persons.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct of the European Liberal Youth, as determined by the Spring Congress in Brussels in Spring 2019 states that “We condemn and reject any behaviour, offline or online, that may prevent the full participation and may bring damage to the respect and dignity of any person that volunteer or work in the organisation or participate in events, with particular reference to discrimination, sexual or emotional harassment, humiliation, prejudice, segregation, stereotype or violence.” Also “LYMEC has a zero-tolerance approach to any kind of discrimination, threatening behaviour or violence, including but not limited to bullying, degradation, harassment, verbal, non-verbal, physical or non-physical humiliation and intimidation.” Should any member of staff, Bureau member, participant at LYMEC events or participant or host at an external event experience proof of such behaviour from a fellow staff member, Bureau Member, fellow participant or LYMEC representative at an external event, this needs to be reported immediately as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

The European Liberal Youth has a working place environment where the staff and Bureau respect and trust each other. All are to feel safe and included in the working community. There is a positive social climate, where giving and receiving feedback is constructive and furthers the growth of the organisation and the individual. The members of the organisation are met with respect and both staff and Bureau demonstrate professionalism and integrity in their actions.

Use of language sets the tone and signals a respectful, open and self-analytic culture or can portray a lack of respect, professionalism or inclusion in the working place. It is of great importance that members of the staff or the Bureau do not encourage stereotypes in regard to e.g. ethnicity or gender, but rather are sensitive to situations and individuals met. In an international youth organisation it is important not to create norms and label individuals, as it often creates negative images based on subjective perceptions and at worst excludes individuals from equal opportunities. It is the liberal way to be judged based on **your merit**, not based on your personal attributes. Members of the staff and Bureau have to communicate with caution and according to agreed standards and values internally in the

organisation, but particularly externally as messages might be referred to by third parties and are not owned by the organisation on social media platforms. Members of the staff and Bureau also have to consider representation in its external communication and what perceptions of the organisation might come from images and voices presented on various topics and in various situations.

The European Liberal Youth strives for open and fair recruitment processes, enabling equal opportunities for all to apply and get recruited. Therefore, recruitment processes are anonymous (as far as possible) up until interviews are held.

SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The European Liberal Youth is a working place where all employees are aware of what discrimination and harassment means and encompasses and the staff and Bureau does its utmost to counter the existence of such treatment. Harassment is, except for a trespass against the ideology of the organization, the discrimination of the rights or integrity of an individual and can decrease the capacity of that individual in the working relationship. Therefore, an open and self-analytic culture is essential for finding ways to detect, process and react to discrimination and harassment. Regular personal development and evaluation talks with the President or the Secretary General and the staff members as forepersons of the staff is a first step towards establishing such a culture.

A second step towards an open and self-analytic culture in the organization is the naming of **two support ombudsmen**, who the staff can turn to (individually or collectively) to report on cases of perceived harassment. Cases of harassment does not only concern sexual harassment, but also other forms of discriminating treatment or bullying in the working place. The named ombudsmen are to be one person from the Committee of Discipline and Arbitrage or one of the Internal Auditors, who also are to be informed by the Bureau of where to turn to with reported cases of harassment and what the process and terms of secrecy ought to be as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

The ombudsmen contact the Bureau to report and pass first discussion on how to process the issue – unless Bureau Member(s) are a part in the harassment case, then the person(s) in question is excluded from the initial discussion. If the issue raised indeed is a breach against the Code of Conduct, the case is presented to the LYMEC Committee for Discipline and Arbitrage, upon decision from the Bureau, which then presents a solution or a legal interpretation for best practices. The ombudsmen are obliged to act on reported cases as quick as possible in order to avoid escalation of an uncomfortable conversation development.

II THE EUROPEAN LIBERAL YOUTH AS A PLATFORM FOR EQUAL PARTICIPATION

The European Liberal Youth, LYMEC has 60 member organisations in over 40 European countries with a total estimated membership of 200 000 Europeans under 35 years of age. In order for LYMEC to function as a platform for political debate, skills development and international partnerships it is important that young persons of varying background feel welcome, respected and appreciated in LYMEC activities. The same standards for equal treatment and support for diversity and the Code of Conduct that apply for the staff and Bureau of LYMEC, also applies to the membership of LYMEC. This applies to all events that LYMEC arranges or attends through members of staff or Bureau.

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION

The guidelines for equal participation and diversity support are divided between the staff or Bureau members and the membership as follows:

1 Responsibility of the staff and Bureau:

- To treat all members and representatives equal
- To set high standards for interaction

2 Responsibility of the membership:

- To demonstrate respect towards others in the use of language and actions when attending LYMEC events and participating in LYMEC working groups
- To encourage the growth in others and be a sponsor for equal opportunities and diversity

It is the responsibility of the staff and Bureau to do its utmost to counter the existence of discrimination and harassment. Harassment is, except for a trespass against the ideology of the organization, the discrimination of the rights or integrity of an individual and can have a negative impact on the capacity of that individual in similar contexts in the future. Therefore, an open and self-analytic culture is essential for finding ways to detect, process and react to discrimination and harassment. The staff, Bureau and ultimately the President or the Secretary General as leaders are responsible for establishing such a culture. Engagement and presence of LYMEC staff and Bureau is quintessential to actively creating a positive, inclusive and supporting culture, but also the member organisations are obliged to contribute to a positive social climate.

A second step towards an open and self-analytic culture in the organization is the naming of **two support ombudsmen**, who participants of LYMEC events can turn to (individually or collectively) to report on cases of perceived harassment. Cases of harassment does not only concern sexual harassment but other forms of discriminating treatment or bullying at

events, meetings or in working groups. The named ombudsmen are to be (congress) chairs, event facilitators or persons from the Bureau or one of the Internal Auditors, who also are to be informed by the Bureau of where to turn to with reported cases of harassment and what the process and terms of secrecy ought to be as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

The ombudsmen contact the Bureau to report and pass first discussion on how to process the issue – unless Bureau Member(s) are a part in the harassment case, then the person(s) in question is excluded from the discussion. If the issue raised indeed is a breach against the Code of Conduct, the case is presented to the LYMEC Committee for Discipline and Arbitrage, upon decision from the Bureau, which then presents a solution or a legal interpretation for best practices. The ombudsmen are obliged to act on reported cases as quick as possible in order to avoid escalation of an uncomfortable situation.

1 Responsibility of the staff and Bureau:

It is the responsibility of the staff and the Bureau to make sure all members and representatives are treated equal and included on equal terms. Also, as LYMEC strives to make sure all persons feel welcome at LYMEC events and in LYMEC activities, individual support or special attention might be necessary for inclusion and equal opportunities, especially in the case of persons new to LYMEC, or with special conditions to participation. Individual support can mean e.g. arranging newbie sessions during LYMEC events in order to break down processes, rules and social interactions. Individual support might also imply that Bureau Members pay extra attention to persons attending LYMEC events for the first time. Technical event information is always communicated to all attendees of LYMEC events individually and event information is communicated with abbreviations explained.

The LYMEC staff and Bureau will prioritize representatives with no prior experience of LYMEC for introductory events such as the EU Parliamentary Group Summer Academy, but otherwise participation selection for events is up to the member organizations to determine (within in the given number of delegates or participants, according to outlined purpose of event or in line with insurance policy). The LYMEC staff and Bureau will do their utmost to accommodate the participants in terms of limitations to mobility or participation within the financial framework of the organization.

The staff and Bureau members are also responsible for setting high standards for interaction, meaning a careful choice of language that avoids enforcing stereotypes and labels. The staff and Bureau members are to be an example to others and ought to demonstrate the values and professionalism that the organization stands for.

2 Responsibility of the membership:

Each person attending a LYMEC event or participating in LYMEC working groups is expected to demonstrate respect towards others in the use of language and actions. This is also stipulated in the Code of Conduct of LYMEC. The European Liberal Youth takes pride in manifesting the values for equal opportunity and an open society for all no matter background or personal attributes. Representatives of LYMEC member organizations and individual members of LYMEC are expected to avoid offensive language, generalizations towards others, racism or hate against persons or ethnic groups. Such language and thus, harassment will lead to immediate actions by the named ombudsmen, Bureau or ultimately by the Committee for Discipline and Arbitrage.

As liberals, it is in our interest to encourage the growth in others and be a sponsor for equal opportunities and diversity. This also applies to all events arranged by LYMEC or attended by LYMEC staff, Bureau or other representatives. The political values of LYMEC carry little weight unless they are manifested in the actions of the persons that make up the platform.

GUIDELINES FOR REPRESENTATION

As an umbrella organization, LYMEC can only encourage its member organisations to enable equal opportunities for all in their organisation and consider equal access to the educational and political experiences that LYMEC offers its member organisations' representatives.