

Code of Conduct and safer spaces in SAMOK's activities

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Introduction

SAMOK always strives to provide a positive, [non-discriminating](#) and safe atmosphere in its events and activities. The Code of Conduct and the principles of safer spaces provide the framework for achieving this goal.

[The principles of safer spaces](#) provide guidance on practical measures to [prevent discrimination, harassment](#) and [inappropriate behaviour](#). The principles include a list of choices that each of us can make to ensure everyone's safe participation. The [Code of Conduct](#), in turn, deals with responsibilities and incidents of discrimination, harassment and bullying and how to intervene in them. Both provide instructions to the staff of the union's office, student unions and others participating in SAMOK's activities. Common ground rules ensure the comfort of all participants and facilitate the organisation of events and the resolution of possible problems.

According to feedback received from SAMOK's events over the years, most participants see the events as positive, communal and refreshing opportunities for exchanging peer support, among other things. **We require everyone participating in our activities to commit to this Code of Conduct so that all participants can continue to feel equal and welcome as part of the SAMOK community.**

(The terms harassment and harassment situation used in this guide also refer to [inappropriate behaviour](#) and [discrimination](#).)



Safer space in SAMOK

The experience of safety is subjective, and everyone's needs are different. Naming a space as safe does not in itself make it safe, but requires active action from all participants.

Speak up

- Nothing is self-evident. Speak the instructions out loud together so that everyone knows the same things.
- If in doubt, ask. Answer other people's questions respectfully.

Be open

- Approach new topics and people without prejudice, take every new issue and situation as an opportunity to learn new things and develop.
- Avoid making assumptions about, for example, [sexuality](#), [gender](#), [nationality](#), [ethnicity](#), religion, values, socioeconomic background, [health or functional ability](#). We don't know the backgrounds of others.
- If you assume, assume diversity. We all have preconceptions and assumptions that we should try to identify in ourselves.

Respect

- Respect the boundaries of others, whether physical, psychological or social. Also think about your own boundaries.
- Respect everyone's right to self-determination.
- Don't mock, ridicule, demean, marginalise, or embarrass anyone with your words, behaviour or actions. Refrain from criticism, gossip and perpetuating [stereotypes](#).
- Give others space and the opportunity to participate in the discussion: don't dismiss the opinions of others and speak in a way that promotes equality.
- Respect the privacy of others and treat sensitive topics with respect.

Act

- Take responsibility for the experience of other participants. A positive atmosphere is everyone's responsibility.
- Listen, encourage and offer support.
- No means no. Stop or change your behaviour if the other person so requests or communicates in some other way. Apologize if you have intentionally or unintentionally offended others.
- If you notice discrimination or harassment, don't look the other way. Intervene or contact the anti-harassment officer.

Relax

- Making mistakes and learning are allowed.



Code of Conduct

Environment

Individuals participating in SAMOK's activities are often socially active with strong opinions and ideologies. The identities and backgrounds of participants are also diverse. When a diverse group of people attends an event together, the risk of conflicts is higher and, despite preventive measures, harassment occurs.

SAMOK's events are organised in many different environments and spaces. In addition to student union representatives and other opinion-formers, our events are attended by trainers and partners, for example. SAMOK ensures that both participants in the activities as well as venue staff and visitors are familiar with the Code of Conduct and principles of safer spaces and commit to complying with them. In addition, SAMOK makes sure that our [anti-harassment officers](#) are appropriately trained and available.

We require participants in our activities to respect others and reflect on their own behaviour. They are the first steps to a non-discriminatory and harassment-free community. You don't have to know everything right away, but if you make mistakes, you need to reflect on your behaviour and change it. The principles of safer spaces offer a good guideline for reflecting on your actions.

Each of us is responsible for a safe atmosphere and our personal choices related to achieving this. Part of a good operating culture is that we do not, for example, gossip, bully or talk inappropriately to others. For example, talking behind someone's back fosters an environment of mistrust and increases uncertainty. If you have feedback to give, give it primarily to the person themselves.

Make sure you give everyone space with how you behave and talk. Avoid making assumptions about others and their circumstances. We don't know what the other person is going through or what their background is. Usually, it is safest to assume that all minority groups and people with different functional abilities are represented. This way, you use language that promotes equality and do not exclude anyone with your words or actions.

Everyone also has the right to self-definition and personal space. Respect the other person's boundaries and what they tell you and address others according to their wishes. Everyone also has the right to physical integrity. Before touching someone, make sure you have permission to do so.

A characteristic feature of SAMOK's activities is the strong presence of student culture. As a result, participants have different ways of doing things, traditions and jokes. They are welcome, but within the limits of good taste. The boundary between work and free time can also become blurred with



many volunteer students participating in the activities. However, it is important to keep in mind that for many, participation in the community is their day job. Therefore, it is worth reflecting on whether your behaviour is appropriate for the workplace.

Finnish drinking culture is also sometimes visible in SAMOK's events and activities. This can be uncomfortable especially for people who do not consume alcohol. Decisions regarding the use of alcohol are always a personal choice that should not be questioned. However, it's a good idea to think about your personal choices regarding the use of alcohol due to its effects on self-restraint. Intoxication is not the cause of bad behaviour or remove the perpetrator's responsibility in harassment situations.

If you experience or witness [harassment](#), ask the person to stop and/or contact the anti-harassment officer. Harassment can usually be identified by the fact that it in some way creates an atmosphere that is degrading, humiliating, threatening, hostile or offensive. Everyone experiences harassment differently, and there is no universal way to define a person's experiences. For example, a joke that is harmless and funny to one person can be offensive to someone else. Because of this, the experiences and feelings of other people should not be questioned.

Harassment can be harder to identify when it is not flagrant. Unpleasant feelings caused by harassment and the perception of the situation can also surface long after the event. Despite this, such feelings and experiences are valid. If you are unsure whether a situation was inappropriate, or whether your own discomfort was justified, it is worth discussing it with the anti-harassment officer.

Online harassment

Social media and other online platforms are an integral part of SAMOK's events. They also serve as a common channel of communication, both formally and informally. For this reason, we need to be aware that harassment also occurs online, and anonymity can lower the threshold for it.

Communication online is done mainly through words and pictures and can be harder to interpret and understand than face to face. Sometimes we use the wrong words and our intended meaning is not communicated to others. It is a good idea for everyone to reflect on their own communication and tone. Various memes, images and videos are also part of online communication. If you share such content, always consider whether it is appropriate. Don't share photos you've taken of others in a mocking context or without permission.

Harassment committed and experienced online is as real as any other form of harassment. The effect of experiences of harassment on personal wellbeing do not differ in significance depending on where the harassment takes place, but a particular feature of online harassment is that it extends to private spaces such as the home. It cannot be protected against in the same way by changing locations, for example. Harassment you witness or experience online should also be reported to the anti-harassment officers.



Anti-harassment officers

SAMOK has at least two anti-harassment officers at all times. At least two anti-harassment officers are assigned to each SAMOK event either from among SAMOK's personnel or student unions to represent a wide range of genders. In addition, the aim is that anti-harassment officers include both persons in a position of trust and staff members.

The task of the anti-harassment officer is to listen without judgment and, if requested, intervene in harassment situations that arise. Anti-harassment officers are also responsible for intervening in harassment they observe. If necessary, they can, for example, interrupt a presentation or speech that is perceived as harassing or discriminatory.

At events, anti-harassment officers can mainly be reached in person, but other contact methods can also be used. There are also always forms available for anonymously reporting harassment. When contacting, please note that internet availability and challenges related to the use of time may influence the speed at which anti-harassment officers are able to respond. Persons who have experienced harassment or discrimination at a SAMOK event can contact the anti-harassment officer of the event also after the event.

After being contacted, the anti-harassment officer and the person who experienced harassment discuss the situation and possible further action. The anti-harassment officer observes confidentiality and does not take any action without the permission of the person who experienced harassment. If they so wish, the person who experienced harassment can refrain from demanding action and only seek counselling from the anti-harassment officer.

What to do in case of harassment

If you experience harassment, discrimination or inappropriate behaviour, please contact the anti-harassment officer of the event.

- Tell them what you experienced or what happened.
- Talk to the anti-harassment officer about how to resolve the situation.

If you witness someone else being subjected to harassment or discrimination and want to report it, contact the anti-harassment officer of the event.

- Tell them what you witnessed or what happened.
- At your request, the anti-harassment officer will be in contact with the parties involved in the incident.

Even if you are not sure whether or not an incident constituted harassment, you can contact the anti-harassment officer to discuss the matter.



After being notified about the harassment, the anti-harassment officer acts with confidentiality and the consent of the harassed person. The anti-harassment officer can:

- Contact the parties involved in the incident and discuss what happened.
- Arrange an opportunity to both parties to the incident to discuss what happened.
- Advise the parties involved to contact various support services, such as hotlines.
- Assemble a group to decide on further action.

When the harassment is flagrant, offensive, repetitive or an offense under the Criminal Code, the anti-harassment officer assembles a group from among SAMOK's staff to decide on further action. The group consists of at least three people, and the decisions of the group must be unanimous. The group deciding on further action may:

- Contact the supervisor of the person accused of harassment (for example, the chair of the board or council of representatives or the executive director)
- Decide on possible disciplinary action, such as issuing a warning, removing the person from the section or event, or issuing a ban to SAMOK's events.

Concepts

Non-discrimination means that all people are equal regardless of their [gender](#) or gender expression, age, [ethnic or national origin](#), [nationality](#), [language](#), [religion](#) or beliefs, opinion, [disability](#), [state of health](#), [sexual orientation](#) or [other personal characteristic](#).¹ Section 6 of the Constitution of Finland states that people are equal², and section 8 of the Non-discrimination Act prohibits indirect and direct discrimination based on the abovementioned characteristics as well as harassment.³

According to the ihmisoikeudet.net website, **discrimination** is the unequal treatment based on a personal characteristic.⁴ Discrimination can take many different forms. **Direct discrimination** refers to situations when a person is treated worse than another under similar circumstances because of a personal characteristic. **Indirect discrimination** means that an apparently neutral rule, requirement or practice puts a person at a disadvantage compared to others on the basis of a personal characteristic. **Multiple discrimination** refers to being discriminated against on the basis of two or more different grounds for discrimination. **Discrimination by association**, on the other hand, means discrimination because a person's friend or family member belongs to a certain minority, for example.⁵

According to the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, **harassment** means discrimination prohibited by the Non-discrimination Act. Harassment is behaviour that violates the dignity of a person, whether intentionally or actually. In harassment, a person creates a degrading, humiliating, threatening, hostile

¹ [Non-discrimination - Non-discrimination Ombudsman](#). Accessed on 26 April 2023.

² [Constitution of Finland 731/1999, FINLEX](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

³ [Non-discrimination Act 1325/2014, FINLEX](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

⁴ [WHITE PAPER - Section 4 DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY, ihmisoikeudet.net](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

⁵ [Non-discrimination - Non-discrimination Ombudsman](#). Accessed on 26 April 2023.



or offensive atmosphere that is related to a prohibited grounds for discrimination and directed at another person.⁶

Inappropriate treatment refers to conduct or actions towards another person at work that violate the law, general good practice or personal work obligations. It is frequently systematic and continuous, but it can also be an isolated incident. The target can be any member of the work community.⁷

Stereotype means a generalising opinion about a group or individual as a member of a particular group. Both positive and negative stereotypes lead to a one-sided way of seeing the other person. Stereotypes are usually accompanied by prejudices, that is, perceptions that arise before getting to know a person or an issue. Prejudices can be distorted and often target a specific group of people, such as a minority. Stereotypes and prejudices influence how we behave towards the object of the stereotype and can therefore lead to harassment, discrimination or bullying.

Racism means valuing a presumed group of people below others on the basis of ethnic origin, skin colour, culture, nationality, religion or native language, for example. In a word, racism is the degrading of human dignity.⁸ Racism often involves seeing one's own group as superior to others. Racism causes inequality and harms not only its targets, but society as a whole. Racism is used as an instrument of power.⁹

Sexual harassment and harassment on the basis of gender constitute discrimination. According to the Criminal Code, sexual harassment refers to a physical act that violates the right to sexual self-determination, or a verbal or other act that is comparable to one due to its intensity or repetitiveness. In other words, messages and images can also be sexual harassment.¹⁰

Gender and sexual orientation are always personal matters. Gender identity is a person's experience or definition of their own gender. Sexual orientation, on the other hand, is about who a person feels sexual and/or emotional attraction to. We cannot infer a person's identity from external factors such as physical characteristics, name, voice or clothing.¹¹ Therefore, assumptions about the other's gender or relationships should be avoided.

State of health and disabilities refer to issues related to a person's health and medical conditions. State of health includes mental, physical and neurological ability. A person's functional ability cannot be inferred from external factors, nor should it be inquired or assumed.¹²

⁶ [Harassment - Non-discrimination Ombudsman](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

⁷ [Harassment and inappropriate treatment - Centre for Occupational Safety](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

⁸ [Guide to anti-racism for most education systems - Mixed Finns ry](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

⁹ [Definition and forms of racism - Red Cross](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

¹⁰ [Sexual harassment - Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare](#). Accessed on 3 April 2023.

¹¹ [LGBTQI+ Vocabulary - SETA](#). Accessed on 26 April 2023.

¹² [Wellbeing and health inequalities, key concepts - Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare](#). Accessed on 26 April 2023.

Other personal grounds for discrimination include a person's age, socioeconomic background, family or relationship status, social status, unemployment, homelessness, wealth, place of residence, appearance, opinion, political beliefs or participation in associations.¹³

¹³ [Grounds for discrimination - Non-discrimination Ombudsman](#). Accessed on 26 April 2023.

