

OBESSU Code of Conduct

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1. Introduction

OBESSU recognises that it operates in a context where there are multiple potential vulnerabilities present, especially when it comes to the age of its Members and the diversity of their background. Therefore it is highly important that we lay the foundation of protecting ourselves and each other, and know what we stand for and how to avoid and manage uncomfortable situations.

What is the Code of Conduct?

This Code of Conduct is the document that outlines OBESSU's values and how they act in practice in the activities that involve OBESSU and its Membership. It is a document that serves as a guide on how OBESSU aims at creating a safe environment for school students to learn, develop and create connections among themselves in order to amplify their voices.

Scope and applicability

This Code of Conduct applies to all OBESSU Board and Secretariat members Monitoring Committee and different OBESSU structures (Pool of Trainers, Working Groups, pedagogical teams), as well as any participant of any OBESSU event (in person or online), both from OBESSU Member, Candidate and Affiliate organisations and from partner organisations OBESSU may cooperate with. It also applies to any person that may represent OBESSU or engage with the organisation in different capacities.

This Code of Conduct applies to every individual participating in OBESSU formal, non formal, informal, offline and online activities.

Non-exhaustiveness

This Code of Conduct does not foresee all the possible risks, and therefore is not comprehensive. Any intentional behaviour that is not mentioned below, but that undermines the physical, mental and emotional well-being of other individuals will be considered as a breach of the Code of Conduct.

2. Core values of OBESSU

OBESSU is an organisation based on the values of human rights, equality, diversity and democratic participation. We do not tolerate discrimination, harming others and ignoring such claims.

The aim of this Code of Conduct is to ensure that every individual feels safe, included and respected in OBESSU, its structures and its activities.

To reach this aim, OBESSU will always refer to this document as guidance and will make sure to inform and educate all who take part in processes and activities within the organisation.

Education and zero-tolerance

In order to combat discrimination, OBESSU believes all individuals benefit from engaging in education and self development, as societies still replicate exclusionary behaviors such as racist, patriarchal and paternalist norms and regulations.

Therefore, a pedagogical approach will always be put in place regarding the enforcement of this Code of Conduct. This will happen through OBESSU activities, events and documents, as well as with specific explanations at the beginning of each activity and the dissemination of this Code of Conduct. In case of breach of the Code of Conduct an explanation and pedagogical approach will be provided, including an explanation, conversation and encouraging a behavior that is supportive and respectful, both at individual and/or group level depending on the matter.

However, for certain behaviors that imply the violation of another person's rights, a zero-tolerance policy applies, meaning that in certain cases the breach of the Code of Conduct will mean the immediate expulsion of the person of the event, the organisation, and similar consequences. This include: sexual harassment, physical or psychological abuse or violence, threatening the life or wellbeing of another participant.

The concept of consent

Consent is the agreement between participants to engage in activities together. Consent is not always given (or not given) through verbal confirmation. Non-verbal communication and body language play important roles in understanding whether there is consent or not. It is good to ask for verbal confirmation and be sure there is consent from all the parties involved. If the situation is not clear, due to different personal boundaries and personalities, the activity should stop. Consent is not static and can be withdrawn at any stage of the activity. If at any moment the consent stops to exist, it is considered and treated as harassment.

Consent cannot be given by individuals who are intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or asleep or unconscious, or under unequal power dynamics or persuasion. If someone agrees to an activity under pressure of intimidation or threat, that isn't considered consent because it was not given freely.

Sexual consent

OBESSU recognises that two or more consensual individuals can and do engage in sexual and intimate activities in the framework of OBESSU activities. It is necessary for the parties involved to be familiar with the concept of consent and sexual and emotional harassment.

OBESSU commits to delivering positive consent workshops during events.

Peer pressure

"Peer pressure" is the influence that peers can have on each other. The term "pressure", implies the process of influencing people to do things that they may be resistant to, or might not otherwise choose to do according to their personal values and boundaries. Peer pressure can be manifested directly or indirectly.

As OBESSU we stand against any form of peer pressure that may lead to other participants' physical or psychological harm and discomfort. Some examples of situations that might be driven by negative peer pressure include: drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, using drugs, sleep deprivation, being engaged in social games that may cause uncomfortable situations, being exposed to extreme pressure to compete and over perform during the event. One should not pressure any of the participants into activities they do not want to engage in nor exclude anyone because of this.

Democracy, participation and representation

OBESSU is a democratic organisation, and promotes democratic competences, values and behaviors in its activities, processes and events.

OBESSU processes are youth-led and participatory processes that put school students at the center of the matters concerning their education and lives. OBESSU respects and promotes the right to the young person's opinion as well as the right to access to information from different sources and kinds.

OBESSU respects the rights of freedom of opinion and expression of its Members and youth taking part in its activities, with the limits of hate speech, non-democratic ideologies and respect to others rights and identities.

OBESSU is a Membership-based organisation; therefore, participants represent their organisations and values when they join OBESSU events and structures, and should act according to them. To support this idea, a nomination letter from the Member, Candidate and Affiliate organisation will always be requested when joining OBESSU events and structures. In case of misrepresentation and misconduct, the organisation will be contacted and informed.

OBESSU representatives, such as the board, secretariat, MC and PoT, act in line with OBESSUs values and guidelines.

Empowerment, equality and non-discrimination

OBESSU strongly believes and promotes equality and non-discrimination. Every individual has the right to not be subjected to any form of discriminative and judgemental behaviours.

Racist, homophobic, transphobic, fascist, classist, ageist, ableist, sizeist, patriarchal behaviours bullying and all other forms of discrimination are against what OBESSU stands for. In particular, OBESSU and its Membership will ensure that there is no discrimination based on:

- Race, nationality, ethnicity
- Religious and personal beliefs
- Gender, gender expression, sexual orientation and sex
- Socio economic background and class
- Cultural background
- Disabilities and access needs
- Physical appearance
- Age
- Language and communication skills

At OBESSU it is our goal to promote and guarantee an inclusive and respectful environment as much as possible. This also means that we promote and encourage the use of inclusive and respectful language and we refrain from using discriminatory and inappropriate words/comments/pronouns and jokes that perpetuate discriminatory stereotypes.

Conversations and questions that aim at improving ourselves and learning are accepted and welcome.

International solidarity

OBESSU recognises and values solidarity as a foundational value and therefore commits to ensuring that solidarity is practiced by means of respecting and valuing diversity, understanding and exploring privilege and promoting common actions.

OBESSU also acknowledges its role as a European platform in international dynamics and the importance of looking critically at European history and positioning in global cooperation and solidarity. For this reason, OBESSU commits to analyse global policy and topics with a critical approach and to involve different partners in the development of content regarding global solidarity.

Considering that one of the main objectives of OBESSU is to promote solidarity and understanding between young people, OBESSU also commits to creating opportunities for solidarity and exchange through cooperation with global partners including the Global Student Forum and the 100 Million Campaign, to stimulate cooperation, peer learning and unity.

Health

OBESSU promotes and ensures, to the extent possible, the good physical and mental health of participants. This includes that participants should respect and take care of the physical and mental health of themselves and other participants, promoting a care culture and the good mental health of everyone.

OBESSU will ask for the needs in terms of health conditions of their participants and create spaces for voluntary disclosure of the participant's personal needs that will always be kept in private following EU GDPR.

OBESSU's activities will be designed keeping in mind these principles of good health of its participants, including different access needs and leaving enough space and time for rest, leisure and relaxation within the programmes.

OBESSU advocates for a quality and inclusive sex education, and will promote good sexual health information and knowledge among participants.

Sustainability

OBESSU and its Membership undertake environmental responsibility, as stated in OBESSU's guidelines for environmental sustainability.

In particular OBESSU ensures:

- to limit the use of unnecessary paper during the events as much as possible
- to take care of recycling the waste in the appropriate way and reduce and reuse when possible
- to avoid single use plastic as much as possible and choose reusable options instead
- to shop locally and to avoid food waste as much as possible
- to promote low-emission travel options.

Intergenerational dialogue

The concept of empowerment is key throughout the work that OBESSU carries out. As school students and their opinion and agency is constantly challenged and diminished, OBESSU commits to building safe spaces where patronising behaviours are not tolerated. At OBESSU, we commit to stimulate cooperation and understanding between generations, and to foster positive attitudes towards young activists and volunteers. OBESSU commits to building spaces for training and discussion among generations and different stakeholders. In particular, when events are foreseen with the active participation of external stakeholders and trainers, OBESSU commits to training them on organisational values and expectations, to make sure that participants feel comfortable to share their views in a positive environment.

Child protection

At OBESSU, we believe that each young person has the right to participate in a safe environment and exercise their right to well-being and welfare. As an organisation working with school students, OBESSU is committed to ensuring that such safe environments are provided for young people, including underaged participants to our events and organisational activities. Each Staff Member, volunteer or contractor participating in any OBESSU activity commits to ensuring the well-being of all participants by encouraging an open environment, building and maintaining clear boundaries and building relationships based on trust and open communication. OBESSU, to ensure the wellbeing of participants - and in particular underaged participants - commits to always having a designated contact point for both the participants and the signatories of the

guardian consent, which is a document signed by the legal guardians of the underage participant to each OBESSU activity.

More information and guidelines on child protection are available in the internal Risk Mitigation Policy and available publicly on the OBESSU Website.

3. Measures for safety and security

OBESSU takes creating and upholding safe space as an important value and practice in the organisation.

Meanwhile OBESSU recognises that groups' processes are diverse and not easily predictable, therefore flexibility and good judgement on each case is required, we believe we can identify some general guidelines on the measures that can be taken in case a violation of the Code of Conduct occurs.

These include the following:

- Spoken warning to the perpetrator in question.
- Removal of the perpetrator from the session/event in question.
- Official letter to the sending organization of the perpetrator.
- Restriction of participation in future OBESSU events.
- Any other measure not mentioned here (including taking possible contact with local authorities and law enforcement), in agreement with the Board and the Secretary General.

Very importantly, no public action must be taken without the consent of the injured individual or party.

4. Bodies involved in upholding the Code of Conduct

Several bodies are involved in making sure that the Code of Conduct is implemented and monitored. Hereafter is a list of these bodies and what their role is. It is important for the participant to an OBESSU event to know that in case of controversy the person to contact is the OBESSU Secretary General (sg@obessu.org).

Team

During OBESSU events, it is always the team of the event that acts as the primary source of reference. The team always consists of at least one Board member or senior PoT member and one Secretariat member, who act as the core persons of contact and are fully aware of the code of conduct and its procedures.

Furthermore, safe persons of the team will be appointed, if possible, at least not of the same gender, who are available for disclosure. Even then, the Secretariat member present is in charge of keeping the well-being of participants but also the team as part of their youth worker task and are supported by the rest of the staff and specific professionals if needed.

Board

The Board of OBESSU is the highest decision making body within OBESSU between the GA and COMEM. Therefore, violations of the Code of Conduct can and should be reported to the Board at any point who then decide if they need to involve other bodies of OBESSU - especially the Secretariat - in dealing with the issue.

Secretariat

The Secretariat of OBESSU in general is a contact point for reporting violations of the Code of Conduct given the nature of the staff being there for safeguarding all participants and the team.

Monitoring Committee

Should the other contacting measures fail to work or they concern a member/members of the Board and/or the Secretariat, reporting should be directed towards the Monitoring Committee.

You

Each participant and member of OBESSU Member, Candidate and Affiliate Organisations is responsible to uphold the principles of the Code of Conduct and act in case they see a violation.