



**Fórsa policy on
harassment, bullying
and general behaviour
at Fórsa conferences,
meetings and events**



Introduction

Fórsa is committed to creating and maintaining a diverse and inclusive environment free from all forms of bullying, violence, inappropriate behaviour, harassment and sexual harassment.

Fórsa has zero tolerance for violence or any type of harassment. Violence and harassment in the world of work deprives people of their dignity and is incompatible with decent work. It is a threat to equality and equal opportunities, and to safe, healthy, and productive working environments.

Everyone in Fórsa has a role in delivering this commitment and a responsibility to engage with and treat all colleagues with dignity and respect, regardless of their status as a staff member, union officer, elected representative, or event participant.

As part of our ongoing commitment to create working environments that are free from violence, harassment and sexual harassment, Fórsa has adopted the following policy that applies to all Fórsa conferences, meetings and events, regardless of venue.

Aim

The goal of this policy is to prevent incidents of bullying, violence, inappropriate behaviour, harassment and sexual harassment.

Fórsa is committed to organising events and other activities at which participants can participate in an inclusive, respectful and safe environment. All members and participants at Fórsa conferences, meetings and events are expected to uphold this approach.

Applicability

This policy applies to all union meetings, events and activities, including conferences, seminars, committee meetings, courses, workshops, social events, and any other type of event hosted, sponsored or organised in whole or in part by Fórsa, wherever it may take place.

This applies to everyone participating in Fórsa events and other Fórsa activities.

Expected conduct

Fórsa expects all those involved in union activities and events to uphold our trade union values and to work to achieve an environment that is free from violence, harassment and sexual harassment, and to behave in a dignified and respectful way towards each other.

Prohibited conduct

Harassment on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race, or membership of the traveller community is defined as any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the person. The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

Harassment may consist of a single incident or repeated inappropriate behaviour.

Unwanted conduct based on the discriminatory ground, even if the person does not have that relevant characteristic, may also be deemed to be harassment i.e. if the perpetrator believes that the individual has the characteristic when in fact they don't. The intention of the alleged harasser is irrelevant; it is the effect of the behaviour on the recipient which is relevant.

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. This includes same-sex sexual harassment, and a single incident may constitute sexual harassment. The unwanted conduct may consist of acts, requests, spoken words, gestures, or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material. Some examples include unwanted physical contact, sexually suggestive texts or images, sexually-charged comments or propositions.

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity.

An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity, and may be unsettling, but as a once off incident, does not in and of itself constitute bullying.

Behaviour which makes for a bullying pattern will likely include, not just one but, a range of the following behaviours: exclusion with negative consequences, verbal abuse/insults, being treated less favourably than colleagues/members in similar roles, belittling a person's opinion, disseminating malicious rumours, gossip, or innuendo.

Complaint process

It is in the interest of all parties to proceed with the necessary discretion to protect the dignity and privacy of all.

As a first step, individuals should, where appropriate, attempt to address an allegation of bullying, inappropriate behaviour, harassment or sexual harassment as informally as possible. This response is designed to be flexible and suited to non-serious, minor complaints to be dealt with quickly. It can suit situations where it is possible that the respondent(s) is/are unaware that their behaviour is negatively impacting others. Ideally, this initial informal response would effectively address the unwanted behaviour without any further action being required.

Initial informal procedure

- The complainant(s) who believes that they are being bullied, sexually harassed or harassed should explain clearly to the respondent(s) that the behaviour in question is unacceptable;
- If it is more suitable, the complainant(s) should put their concerns in writing;
- In circumstances where the complainant(s) finds it difficult to approach the respondent(s) directly he or she should seek assistance from a person nominated by the General Secretary, where appropriate.

For example, for Divisional Conferences, the General Secretary may nominate the Head of Division, or persons nominated by the Head of Division.

For large events, such as conferences, delegates will receive a copy of this policy and will be informed of the nominated persons to contact for advice and support in the event of a complaint.

Where the matter remains unresolved, the complaint may be dealt with in accordance with union rule, and the matter should be referred to the General Secretary. If it is established that harassment, sexual harassment, or bullying has occurred, appropriate measures will be taken. This may include measures up to and including the exclusion of persons from Fórsa meetings and events.

Final points

This policy does not replace the legal responsibilities of Fórsa. Fórsa will report serious incidents to the appropriate authorities.

This policy does not replace the right of a person to refer the matter to a criminal or other authority.

This policy does not replace the responsibilities or obligations on employers to ensure that their workers are protected from violence, harassment and sexual harassment at work and to manage their workers.

This policy will be interpreted and applied in a manner that supports our staff and their policy and procedures relating to the prevention of violence, harassment and sexual harassment at work.

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