

**Rural Youth Europe**

# **Code of Conduct**

**(CoC)**

**15th April 2024**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rural Youth Europe is an organisation striving for human dignity, security, mutual respect, and equality. These are preconditions for promoting the organisation's work, ensuring a healthy work environment for RYE employees and guaranteeing full access and active participation for everyone interested in participating on RYE events.

In addition, RYE emphasises the promotion of diversity, as well as the creation of safe spaces for rural young people to share their ideas. The practice of these values is non-negotiable, as they are understood to be essential for every individual to feel safe, heard, included and respected in RYE, and thus at all RYE events.

The RYE events and activities are intended to be educational, enjoyable, safe and inclusive places for learning, cultural exchange and socialising. Therefore, RYE as an organisation, continuously strives for further inclusiveness, diversity and safety in all its activities.

In order to ensure the forementioned environment, a Code of Conduct was developed, which outlines the social and ethical responsibilities of individuals and groups, as well as binds RYE to disseminate and implement the Code.

The Code of Conduct includes a set of fundamental and procedural guidelines, such as the use of a Point of Contact, to guarantee safe participation as well as a space of respect, inclusion, empowerment and equality for the individuals participating in the RYE events and activities, as well as those individuals who work or volunteer for RYE.

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

This Code of Conduct aims at ensuring a space of respect, empowerment and equality within RYE activities and events. Additionally, it strives to prioritise inclusion and safety, strongly discouraging and disapproving any action of violence and/or discrimination from or towards any individual or group at RYE events, activities and beyond.

## **3. APPLICABILITY - INDIVIDUALS UNDER THE CODE**

This Code of Conduct is applicable for RYE board members, volunteers, staff members and any other representatives, as well as all participants in RYE events and activities. It is also applicable to all people who participate in RYE events and activities, in particular residential activities.

The RYE Code of Conduct applies also to RYE participants of external events and activities not directly organised by RYE, but where RYE is represented. This includes events where RYE shares the organisation of an event with another organisation.

A RYE representative shall inform all participants about the Code of Conduct and their requirement to act in accordance with it and its provisions.

The Code of Conduct will be communicated to participants via email before the event

and at events organised by RYE it will be communicated verbally on the first day of the activity if possible, and then reminded also during the event. For RYE staff members, the Code of Conduct will be communicated with them during their induction to the organisations.

All the forementioned must be aware of this Code of Conduct when registering to participate in RYE and RYE related events. RYE will be disseminating this document before and during its events and activities, to ensure that every participant comprehends, accepts, and commits with the following guidelines and rules.

Where queries exist about the Code of Conduct, everyone is encouraged to ask for guidance to any of the Points of Contact, and/or the RYE staff and board.

#### **4. APPLICATION SCOPE**

The Code of Conduct applies to all RYE events and activities, both those being held online and face-to-face, both in formal and informal contexts, as well as external events where RYE is being represented by an appointed individual.

Formal contexts refer to internal meetings, meetings of working groups or political events, any part of the framework of an event or activity.

Informal contexts refer to any activities that take place in connection with a formal context activity, such as social events and online communications (e.g. posts on social media).

#### **5. BEHAVIOURAL GUIDELINES**

RYE requires that the behaviour of every individual participating in any RYE events and activities, or externally representing RYE, is congruent with the aforementioned values and the provision of this Code of Conduct.

The promotion of an all-inclusive and accommodating atmosphere is fundamental and non-negotiable. Therefore, it's reinforced that there is a zero-tolerance policy towards any kind of discrimination and violence, either verbal, non-verbal or physical.

Exploitation of any position is unacceptable behavior. Chairpersons, Board Members, staff and prep team members should be aware of the positions of power they hold.

Any type of action of harassment, bullying, intimidation and humiliation towards any individual or group of people, based on, but not limited to:

- Race (Including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin);
- Gender (Including sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression);
- Physical appearance;
- Religion, belief, faith or non-belief;
- Language;

- Nationality;
- Age;
- Disabilities
- Political convictions
- Education and socio-economical background;
- Marital status;
- Parenthood (being pregnant and/or being a parent).

Should any act of violent or discriminatory behaviour, conduct or discourse of a verbal or physical nature, take place during a RYE event or activity, it is strongly recommended to approach and report it as soon as possible to the Point of Contact (PoC, described below) or to the RYE staff or board members present. If necessary, local law enforcement shall be contacted.

## **6. STANDARD PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Dissemination**

The Code of Conduct is available for consulting on RYE's website.

Additionally, the Code of Conduct document shall be shared with RYE members, hosting teams and every participant of a RYE event or activity in advance jointly with a responsibility statement that should be revised and signed by each participant, certifying their agreement and respect for the CoC guidelines.

### **6.2 Points of Contact (PoC)**

It is strongly encouraged to report any observed or experienced situation that may represent a violation of this Code to a Point of Contact (PoC) promptly.

The Point(s) of Contact (PoC) will be nominated in advance before each RYE event and activity. There should be at least two PoC, ideally of different genders, to ensure promptness to deal with improper behaviour situations. The names of the POC will be circulated to the participants at the opening of the event and frequently highlighted to them during the event by the preparation team.

In case of any report of improper behaviour, the PoC has the obligation to proceed as described below:

- Suspend the session immediately, in case of violent or discriminatory behaviour, conduct or discourse of verbal or physical nature;
- Remind participants of their obligation to respect and comply with the code of conduct;
- Identify the alleged receiver of the breach of the Code of Contact, engage

and listen to them, offer assistance and support them until a responsible member of RYE is notified.

- Inform immediately a contact person from the RYE office or board, in particular the Secretary General or the Chairperson of RYE.

In the case, where the PoC was the person committing the improper behaviour, the decision to assess the situation and decide a potential corrective action should be taken by a mediation group, jointly with both counterparties, to be determined by the office and board of RYE.

### 6.3 Reporting

This Code of Conduct represents an ethical foundation for guaranteeing that RYE members and the participants of RYE events and activities are protected in a safe and respectful environment. In order to protect this safe place and ensure its stability in the future for the upcoming RYE members and participants, present tools must be available and used for reporting any deviant behaviour.

Therefore, any complaint or alleged issue regarding online or offline activity can be addressed anonymously or not to a RYE staff member.

## 7. LEGAL PROTOCOLS

RYE staff, board members and any other representatives as well as all participants in RYE events and activities are subject to local laws. Therefore, obedience to any local laws, depending on the hosting country of the event, is strongly binding with participation in RYE events.

Additionally, RYE staff, board members and any other representatives are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct as well as the forementioned applicable laws, rules, and regulations of each country. In a case where the provision of the Code of Conduct should conflict with applicable law, the law prevails.

In the event of misconducted, violent, or discriminatory behaviour, physically or verbally expressed, or any other serious breach of the present Code of Conduct, the respective organising team and RYE reserve the right to have participants being removed from the event or activity, to notify their organisation and to possibly prohibit them from participating to future RYE events. Additionally, the respective organising team and RYE reserve the right to contact the police authority or other local authorities, if necessary and possible, in accordance with the legislation of the country. These measures do not interfere with the legal rights of the person or group affected to take legal action against the person that behaved improperly.

## 8. PRIVACY

The individuals under this Code of Conduct must be fully insured by their rights to privacy. Therefore, to protect the privacy of all parties concerned, the involved Points of Contact and other individuals involved in the process are obliged to preserve silence and confidentiality about any facts they become aware of during the reporting process, except if any legal procedure requires it or for the safety of the individual. Details regarding a report under the Code of Conduct will only be shared with relevant people for escalation through the reporting process. If a specific disclosure occurs which requires reporting through the legal system this shall occur for the safety of the individual.

The respective Point of Contact (PoC) and other individuals involved in the process shall not disclose the identities of the parties concerned without their prior consent. Any written material that contains information about the incident, the people involved, or the process should not be stored longer than the purpose and time of solving the issue of the case, and shall be deleted from all devices, databases, and other locations as the incident enquiry is closed.

There should be appointed at least one responsible person for deleting any supporting material and documentation used for incidents enquiries in each RYE event and activity.

*This Code of Conduct enters into force on the 3rd of June 2024, following its adoption by the RYE board.*

# Behavioural Guidelines for RYE Events

## Applicability

These guidelines are equally applicable to Rural Youth Europe organisers and hosting or partner organisations alike.

All changes and new revisions of this document are subject to the acceptance and approval of the General Assembly of Rural Youth Europe.

With the acceptance of these guidelines, all previous documents and regulations covering any behavioural guidelines shall become superseded.

## Document History

Created by: Russell Carrington, Chairman  
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Last changes by: -

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## **BACKGROUND**

Rural Youth Europe events and activities are intended to be fun, safe and inclusive places for learning, cultural exchange and socialising.

Due to cultural differences there can often be different expectations relating to behaviour at events, particularly in relation to alcohol. This has in the past negatively impacted Rural Youth Europe events and hence this document serves as guidance for the avoidance of any issues in the future.

## **1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF RURAL YOUTH EUROPE**

- 1.1 The Rural Youth Europe Board are responsible for ensuring these Behavioural Guidelines are implemented in conjunction with host or partner organisations, those organisations sending participants, and adopted by the participants themselves. This includes the execution of disciplinary action.
- 1.2 The board will do this by communicating these guidelines and their importance internally at board and staff handover meetings, at preparation meetings for events, directly to organisations sending participants and to participants themselves.

## **2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ORGANISATIONS SENDING PARTICIPANTS**

- 2.1 The organisations sending participants are responsible for selecting suitable participants for events and for making the participants aware of these guidelines and ensure they are committed to them.
- 2.2 The organisations sending participants shall ensure that the individuals are motivated to attend the events and are aware of their responsibilities whilst representing themselves, their organisation and country.
- 2.3 Rural Youth Europe events are educational, social and cultural events and must be promoted and advertised as such when seeking suitable participants.
- 2.4 The theme of the event must be taken into consideration when selecting participants to ensure they will find it relevant. Ideally, selected participants should also be made aware that Rural Youth Europe events include non-formal learning methods and should appreciate that these methods can be very successful when working with a culturally diverse group.
- 2.5 Encourage selected participants to organise a preparation meeting before the event to ensure that they are properly prepared and also have to discuss these behavioural guidelines.

## **3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOSTING ORGANISATION**

### **3.1 SETTING THE RIGHT EXPECTATIONS**

- 3.1.1 Rural Youth Europe events are educational, social and cultural events and must be promoted and advertised as such.
- 3.1.2 The host is ultimately responsible for ensuring the right learning environment is created for participants to get the most out of the event in a safe and inclusive way.
- 3.1.3 The host, in conjunction with the board and office of Rural Youth Europe, is to ensure that behavioural guidelines and any local laws and regulations are appropriately communicated to participants before and during the event.

### **3.2 BAR**

- 3.2.1 Bar staff shall be well informed about the Behavioural Guidelines and shall follow them.
- 3.2.2 It is strongly recommended to have very low prices for non-alcoholic drinks. Free water must be provided in common areas and the bar area during the day and evening programme, and also after the bar is closed. It is also recommended that bar snacks are provided to purchase whilst the bar is open.
- 3.2.3 The opening hours of the bar are to be agreed in conjunction with the Rural Youth Europe board and should be well communicated amongst the participants.
- 3.2.4 Regardless of agreed opening hours, alcohol may only be served from the bar after an evening meal, not at any other time of day. The only possible exception being during the closing ceremony at the rally.
- 3.2.5 A common area will be provided for participants to congregate when the bar is closed to avoid activities prohibited in 3.2.6, 3.2.7 and 3.2.8.
- 3.2.6 Consumption of alcohol may only take place in the bar area and/or other designated areas. Any participant(s) found to be not following this may face disciplinary action (as outlined in section 5).
- 3.2.7 Consumption of alcohol in private rooms is prohibited. Any participant(s) found to be not following this may face disciplinary action (as outlined in section 5).
- 3.2.8 It is strongly recommended that one or more evenings during the event are to be alcohol free, where no alcohol is served at the bar, and alternative activities are organised instead.
- 3.2.9 The host organisation is responsible for following local laws and regulations.

### **3.3 INTERNATIONAL BUFFET**

- 3.3.1 Prior to the International Buffet a full meal shall be served to and consumed by all participants.
- 3.3.2 The international buffet is designed to serve different dishes and ingredients representing each country's culture and flavours.
- 3.3.3 A refrigerator shall be provided for refrigerating any foods that require being kept chilled so that they are then safe to eat at the buffet.
- 3.3.4 Water shall be available during the International Buffet.

### **3.4 RESPONSIBLE RELATIONS**

- 3.4.1 No participant should be pressured into a situation that is not according to their beliefs, values or habits.
- 3.4.2 During the opening session of each event an open discussion should be held with participants to agree that they should treat others with respect – regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, their relationship status, different abilities, ethnic background, or cultural or religious beliefs.
- 3.4.3 Participants and organisers are asked to respect other participants' privacy. This includes taking photographs or videos and using social media during and following events. This topic is to be discussed openly with all participants during the opening session of each event. Furthermore all participants will be asked whether or not they allow for their image to be published in any kind of media material (photos, videos, etc.) by Rural Youth Europe or the host organisation, in accordance with GDPR.
- 3.4.4 As part of the opening sessions, participants should be made aware of the relevant laws in the hosting country, and if necessary the host should provide a summary of the relevant laws to display in common areas.

## **4.0 RESPONSIBILITY OF PARTICIPANTS**

### **4.1 PARTICIPATION**

- 4.1.1 The organisers of events want to make sure that all participants get the most out of the events so participants must attend and actively participate in all sessions. Failure to attend sessions or repeatedly arrive late for sessions will result in disciplinary action (as outlined in section 5) unless there is a genuine reason for absence.
- 4.1.2 Rural Youth Europe events are designed to bring young people from different countries and backgrounds together and not exclude any participant so gathering a group of people in a private room is not encouraged.

## **4.2 ALCOHOL**

- 4.2.1 Consumption of alcohol may only take place in the bar area and/or other designated areas, not in private rooms. Any participant(s) found to be not following this may face disciplinary action.

## **4.3 RESPECT FOR OTHERS**

- 4.3.1 Participants are expected to treat others with respect – regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, their relationship status, different abilities, ethnic background, or cultural or religious beliefs. This topic is to be discussed openly with all participants during the opening session of each event.
- 4.3.2 During free time participants should not feel pressured by other participants into spending that time in a particular way. Free time is for using as they wish.
- 4.3.3 Participants are asked to respect other participants' privacy. This includes taking photographs or videos and posting on social media during and following events.
- 4.3.4 If participants publish inappropriate content from a Rural Youth Europe event or other related activity on social media or any other platform disciplinary action will be taken.
- 4.3.5 Participants shall be aware of their behaviour and how it's perceived by others and the local community. What may seem appropriate or funny to some participants from some countries, may appear inappropriate or threatening to others.
- 4.3.6 Harassment of any sort will not be tolerated, and anyone found to have caused harassment, including sexual or racial harassment, will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 4.3.7 Participants are responsible for their own personal safety. However, each participant is expected to look out for their team members and fellow participants. If you suspect that someone is in need of assistance, please assist if possible and always notify a member of the prep team or Rural Youth Europe Board.
- 4.3.8 Participants (and all attendees at events) must abide by the national laws of the hosting country, which can be different to those in countries where participants have come from.

## **4.4 SETTING AN EXAMPLE**

- 4.4.1 Participants are reminded that whilst at Rural Youth Europe events they are representing their organisation, their country and themselves, and should therefore ensure that they act appropriately both at events and online.

#### **4.5 SHARING THE POSITIVE EXPERIENCE**

- 4.5.1 During and after the event, participants are encouraged to share the positive experience they have had in a balanced and appropriate manner, taking into consideration the full programme of activity (especially learning outcomes), the need to respect others and showcase themselves, their organisation, their country and Rural Youth Europe in a positive light.

#### **5.0 DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

- 5.1.1 The preparation team, Rural Youth Europe board members, or any organisers in conjunction with the Rural Youth Europe board, have the right to:
- Issue a personal informal warning.
  - Issue a personal formal warning.
  - Issue a warning and inform the sending organisation of the participant's actions.
  - Cancel the travel reimbursement.
  - Immediately expel attendees from the event including a ban from future Rural Youth Europe events.
  - Contact law enforcement authorities to assist with or arrest any attendee.
- 5.1.2 In normal circumstances these measures will be implemented in the order they are laid out above. However, any of these measures may be implemented, at the discretion of Rural Youth Europe board, at any time, depending on the severity of the offence.
- 5.1.3 In the event that an attendee is found to be using banned substances, the law enforcement authorities will be contacted and any of the above measures will be taken.

