

# IFSA Code of Conduct

*Approved at 35th GA 2024*

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## Core Values

IFSA is a worldwide youth organisation entirely run by students. Despite the geographical distances between Local Committees (LCs), we aim to build a **community** (internally called the "IFSA Family") that welcomes all IFSA members across the world as well as those that have not yet joined the organisation. A priority of the current IFSA Strategy 2022-2026 focuses on building a strong internal community and to connect IFSA members within and across regions.

IFSA aims to be an **inclusive** organisation where everyone is welcome to join and welcomed to attend our events (based on the organisation's or event's regulations). We aim for a regional balanced participation and representation at international events as well as for a gender balanced participation in all events. Besides inclusivity, **equality** takes a crucial role in IFSA. The involvement in IFSA and the participation in IFSA events is independent of one's cultural or educational background.

Among the core goals of IFSA stands the **empowerment of youth** on an international level which has also been noted in the current Strategy 2022-2026. IFSA members are the future generation of the forestry sector, therefore IFSA aims to give youth the opportunity to learn about the international policies and decision making processes and to get involved in international events.

Lastly, as stated in IFSA's vision, IFSA works towards a **world that appreciates forests**. By aiming for an inclusive organisation focusing on building a strong community and on empowering the next generation in the forestry sector, we aim to contribute to having a diversity of people and societies which recognize the full worth of forests.

## Guiding Principles

Based on IFSA's core values, general guiding principles arise which are required to be followed by all IFSA members.

IFSA's power is its community that is built on openness, fairness, kindness as well as high engagement through voluntary work. IFSA members should be aware of the cultural backgrounds of members surrounding them. IFSA has continued for many years in this principle as a unifying community that respects all faiths and cultural differences, and so do its members. IFSA and its members should also respect all opinions and allow everyone to express their own.

## Behaviour protocol

### I. General Behaviour

IFSA is a multicultural international community in its structure and requires everyone to be aware and respectful of other cultures. Cultural differences are considered positive dynamics to contribute to the enrichment of IFSA. In IFSA, there is zero tolerance for any form of discrimination, including but not limited to racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia or trans- and homophobia.

To ensure a respectful environment, IFSA members are expected to avoid all kinds of discriminatory behaviour. These include, for example, offences against minorities, indigenous peoples, FINTA\*<sup>1</sup> and LGBTQ+ communities. Verbal and non-verbal communication should be sensitive to and aware of the respective cultural and religious context.

### II. Language in Use (Written and Spoken)

The official language of IFSA is English (United Kingdom). Language is a powerful vehicle of ideas and representations and still biases our perception of the world. It has a key role in shaping cultural and social attitudes. Using inclusive, non-discriminatory and gender-aware language helps to reduce stereotypes, promotes social change and contributes to efforts of equality overall. Becoming conscious of how language impacts others can help prevent feelings of exclusion and discomfort.

**Using inclusive language**, which promotes clear and basic communication and refrains from using expert terminologies. Be aware that a majority of IFSA members are non-native English speakers.

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<sup>1</sup> FINTA\* is the abbreviation of Female, Inter-sex, Non-binary, Trans and A-gender. The \* stands for all those who do not find themselves in any of the letters in the designation and are marginalised in the patriarchal society.

**Using gender aware language**, which avoids a bias toward a particular sex or social gender and therefore is less likely to convey gender stereotypes. This includes the following:

- Use gender-neutral expressions.
- Use inclusive language by referring to all genders or use a gender neutral term (e.g., spokesperson). Do not use the generic masculine.
- Ask people for their pronouns instead of assuming them. When using pronouns, use the singular 'they' instead of binary terms 'he' or 'she'. If a language does not offer this inclusive form, use a \* and list both binary terms (e.g., sie\*er, elle\*il) Special attention should be paid to the use of vocabulary referring to gender identity and sexual orientation, roles and attributes, occupations, as well as to the use of titles.

**Using non-discriminatory language** and be aware of different forms of discrimination which reflect in language. E.g. pay attention to:

- Indigenous peoples: Never use negative, discriminatory or stereotypical terms that would be offensive to the Indigenous peoples.
- People with physical and/or intellectual ability: Avoid unnecessary reference to the physical and/or intellectual ability of a person or a group.
- Race, ethnicity and/or religion: Avoid unnecessary reference to the ethnic or racial background of a person or a group; avoid terms which defame a person or a group on the basis of race, ethnicity and/or religion; be aware of the politically correct naming of countries.

### **III. Behaviour During Meetings (online and in-person)**

Meetings are a space where we discuss and learn about different topics. Therefore for regardless of the type of encounter, it is key to respect the following aspects:

- Do not interrupt others: Interrupting is disrespectful and should be avoided. If the state of the discussion demands an ending, people should be made aware of it and a mutual solution found (e.g allowing everyone a short statement/contribution).
- Avoiding a power imbalance in the meeting.
- Respect other opinions: Having people from all over the world brings a wide variety of opinions. There are going to be occasions where different opinions will meet; Be punctual: Respect the organisers of any in-person or online meeting and the work they put into the organisation by joining meetings on time.

- Avoid excessive drinking and do not do drugs: As professionals representing LCs, regions or all of IFSA, avoiding excessive drinking and drugs is a requirement for everyone without exception.
- a. Specifics for online meetings
  - i. Respect the screen sharing person.
  - ii. Mute whenever another person is speaking.
- b. Specifics for in-person meetings
  - i. Follow protocols (i.e given by OCs in RMs, IFSS, Interim): Organizing Committees have the freedom to create protocols for their events. When attending an in-person event, rules and protocols must be followed as the OC indicates.
  - ii. Respect non-smoking areas and be aware of the people near you: It is common for most places to have non-smoking areas. During meetings, these spaces must be respected. In addition, people can be affected by nearby smoke, being aware of the people around and respecting personal space when smoking will make the meeting experience smoother.
  - iii. Respect one's personal space and boundaries: Especially for in-person meetings, where the interaction among participants is constant, people should be given their personal space. Before getting close to a person, make sure that they are comfortable with it. If necessary, ask for verbal permission (e.g., for in-person meetings make sure people feel comfortable with cappottone, IFSA's way of hugging).

#### **IV. Data Protection**

Any information related to an identified or identifiable person must be collected and processed in compliance with applicable data privacy laws.

- Personal data should only be collected for specified, explicit, and legitimate purposes and stored accordingly.
- If personal data is collected, get permission to use personal data.
- Data collected should not be further processed in a manner that is incompatible with its purposes except proper permission is taken.
- [something on confidentiality of internal discussion]

#### **V. Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests – family, friendships, financial, or social factors – could compromise their judgement, decisions, or actions. This is the case when an individual's best interest is not in the best interest of the individual's organisation, in this case IFSA.

Such situations might arise both within IFSA and in relation with IFSA partners or processes.

IFSA members should avoid situations which might lead to a conflict of interest. Should such a situation arise or possibly arise, the (possible) conflict should in a first

instance be communicated with a responsible person, e.g., LC president, HoSC, HoC. If the matter cannot be resolved, it should be brought to the Board for decision.

Examples of possible conflict of interests are:

- During discussions: At all IFSA meetings or events discussion must be done to promote only IFSA values and interest and not interest of person, regions and/or specific organisations
- Selection of Official positions and delegation spots: The Selection or nomination of position(s) and delegations must be carried out based on the criteria for the position(s) or delegation and not based on personal benefits of any person or organisation
- Financial decisions: The use of funds shall not be in any way beneficial to a particular person or organisation but to promote IFSA and members interest.

## Procedure guideline

While handling a matter reported to the Code of Conduct (CoC) Committee, the CoC Committee will pay the utmost attention to data protection and the privacy of all involved parties. Although the IFSA Board will be updated during the process about the general progress, personal information is required to stay confidential and is only to be shared with the CoC Committee members. Only if the incident requires an involvement of the IFSA Board, the CoC Committee will share necessary information with the IFSA Board.

### **1. Case reported to CoC Committee**

Cases within IFSA that require support and guidance from a neutral organ should be reported to the CoC Committee. This report can be filed by any involved person in the incident as well by any outsider who witnessed the incident.

To ensure anonymity, if preferred by the reporting person, an online platform will be used that allows a person to file a report anonymously. The online form will be accessible on the IFSA website.

The form will ask for a set of information that will have to be filled in when filing a report, for example:

- Person(s) involved in the incident
- Date and time of incident
- Description of incident
- If applicable, contact information of reporting person

### **2. Case viewed by the CoC Committee**

One member of the CoC Committee, previously selected, is responsible to view the submitted case, create a document and set up a meeting of the CoC Committee. This meeting should happen within two weeks of receiving the submitted case. The

document created based on the submitted report will be securely stored in a space only accessible for the CoC Committee members.

### **3. CoC Committee meeting**

During the CoC Committee meeting, the Committee has to decide whether further steps have to be taken or not.

If no further actions are taken, the Committee will inform the Board about the decision and mark the respective document accordingly. In addition, the reporting person(s) will be informed. Even if no further actions are taken, the Committee can suggest the option for a meeting between the CoC Committee and the person(s) who reported, if wanted.

If further actions are taken, the Committee will inform the Board about the decision and get in contact with the person(s) involved in the incident. If the Committee sees it as necessary the LC Board of the respective person(s) can be informed as well. This step should happen no later than three weeks after the case was reported to the Committee.

The Committee will then schedule a meeting with the involved person(s) to discuss the matter and to give everyone the opportunity to share their experience. This meeting should happen within two weeks of reaching out to the involved person(s). The Committee should prepare the meeting in a way that facilitates the discussion and supports the settlement of the incident.

After the meeting, the Committee will communicate their decision and/or next steps within one week to everyone involved as well as to the IFSA Board. If additional meetings are necessary, those should be scheduled in a timely manner. The section 'Consequences' gives an overview of possible decisions that can be taken by the CoC Committee, depending on the specific circumstances of the case. However, the section only gives examples and can be extended, if necessary.

## **Consequences**

The following consequences are examples and may be extended by the CoC Committee based on the specific circumstances. The CoC Committee is responsible for determining the consequences and will feedback their decision to the affected individual and respect their wishes (e.g., a meeting with the individual in question). Based on the CoC, the committee will develop a decision and outline the next steps, subsequently informing the Board. The decision-making authority resides solely with the Committee, not the Board. If the incident involves an Official, including Board members, the consequences will apply equally. However, the implementation of consequences may be reasonably postponed to allow for the orderly handover of the respective position. The committee will categorise each case

into one of three categories, resulting in the corresponding consequences for the individual in question:

1. Written statement to the CoC Committee, IFSA Board and all involved parties.  
Meeting with the involved parties.
2. 3 or 6 months ban from IFSA.  
Exclusion from specific events (e.g., IFSS, Regional Meetings).  
Exclusion from Local Committee activities.  
Prohibition from applying for Official positions and delegation opportunities (for one term or permanently).  
Dismissal from an Official position.
3. 12 months or permanent ban from IFSA.

If an individual fails to respond within a period of one month regarding an ongoing case, they will be permanently removed from IFSA. This action will be taken as their lack of response is deemed as a failure to participate in the reconciliation or clarification process, thereby causing further harm to the affected individual.

## CoC Committee

The Code of Conduct will be carried out by a separate Committee, which is completely independent from the IFSA Board. The Board is not allowed to be part of the Committee. The Committee is an independent decision-making mechanism, ensuring unbiased oversight and evaluation. Within the Committee regional and gender balance should be ensured. This Committee will be composed of **five committee members** as follows:

- **IFSA Member:** two
- **Consulting Members:** one
- **IFSA SAN Members:** one
- The **remaining position** (one) can be filled by a Consulting or an IFSA SAN Member.

The Committee will be **elected** through an Open Call in accordance with the following:

- **Timing:** Each Committee member is elected for a two year period. In order to assure knowledge transfer within the Committee, 2 (or respectively 3) change at a time. Hence, an election will be carried out asynchronously every year.
- **Election:** Officials are deciding at Interim on the Committee members in line with aspects mentioned above.