



# THE BECC EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Setting out guidelines and best practice for the operations of the BECC.

## ABSTRACT

A guide to the internal policies of the BECC, regarding the standards, responsibilities, and complaints; that apply to all staff, Members and Board Members of the British Estonian Chamber of Commerce.

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Chairman of the Board 2024

## Introduction

Members of the Board, BECC Staff and BECC Members are all obliged to adhere to the BECC's Equal Opportunities and Dignity at Work Policy. This policy aims to ensure that no member, employee, or guest at a BECC event, receives less favourable treatment due to age, race, religion, belief, nationality, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability. Members and staff have a responsibility to cooperate with measures to ensure equal opportunity and non-discrimination.

Members should therefore be aware that the following act constitutes misconduct or gross misconduct under this policy and are liable to disciplinary action, which may include summary revocation of membership:

- Discriminating against fellow Members, BECC staff or guests at BECC events.
- Inducing or attempting to induce fellow Members, BECC staff or guests at BECC events, to practice unlawful discrimination.
- Indulging in verbal or physical, sexual or racial harassment of a nature that is known, or should be known, to be offensive to the victim.
- Victimising individuals who have made allegations or complaints of any discrimination or harassment, or provided information about such discrimination or harassment.

All cases of such behaviour will be investigated and the Board will treat all complaints fairly, quickly and with confidentiality in line with our Complaints procedure.

## Harassment

Harassment encompasses many different types of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. It can occur through a single explicit incident or may be sporadic or on going, in or out of office hours. The defining features are that the conduct:

- Is unwanted and unwelcome.
- Subjects a person or group to intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, offence or loss of privacy or creates an environment which is hostile, intimidating or offensive to that person or group.
- Is unwarranted by the working or social relationship between those involved and would be regarded as such by any similarly situated reasonable person.
- Harassment that is related to a person's sex, pregnancy, gender identity, race, colour, ethnicity, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age, can constitute unlawful discrimination for which staff can be held personally liable.

Examples of harassment:

### *Violence or threat of violence*

- Unwanted physical contact, sexual advances or innuendo.
- Verbal abuse, including threats, derogatory name calling, insults, ridicule or belittling of an individual.
- Using humour to put another person, or group of people, down, for example, telling jokes that are sexist, racist or about an individual's sexual orientation.
- Spreading malicious lies or making insulting comments.
- Display or circulate abusive or offensive materials, for example by email or on the internet, or on a whiteboard.
- Sending offensive text messages.
- Ostracism or exclusion from normal conversation in the work environment, or from social events.
- Intrusion by pestering, spying or stalking.
- Coercion, such as pressure to subscribe to a particular political or religious belief.

### *Bullying*

Bullying is abuse of personal power or a position of authority, either in aggressive or subtler ways, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, and undermines their self-confidence. Bullying behaviour can occur in many different types of relationships. It is possible, for example, for a junior colleague to bully a person in a senior role or a woman to bully a man. Legitimate, constructive and fair criticism of staff performance or conduct will not be considered to be bullying or harassment, provided that those involved are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

### *Examples of bullying:*

- Psychological intimidation, humiliation, excessive and/or unreasonable criticism or fault-finding of any colleague or peer
- Preventing an individual from progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- Unfair allocation of work and responsibilities or setting unreasonable goals or targets in work
- Asserting a position of intellectual superiority in an aggressive, abusive or offensive manner, whether orally or in writing, publicly or in private.

### *Victimisation*

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they have made a complaint of discrimination (which may be a complaint of harassment or bullying) or have helped another person to make or bring a complaint. Victimisation can constitute unlawful discrimination, and result in disciplinary action, regardless of the outcome of the original complaint.

## Responsibilities

To ensure that this policy is implemented effectively the BECC Board will:

- Be alert to potential problems and act promptly, without waiting for a complaint to be made, where possible (by challenging unacceptable behaviour which is directly observed and promoting an inclusive culture).
- Treat informal and formal complaints seriously, with sensitivity to the feelings and perceptions of all those involved.
- Deal with any issues raised fairly.
- Take steps to ensure that staff that bring complaints, or support others to do so, are not treated less favourably than others because of this.

It is the responsibility of all Members and BECC Staff to:

- Behave in accordance with this policy.
- Take seriously requests to cease or amend behaviour and respond courteously to them.
- Not participate in, encourage or condone the harassment, bullying or victimisation of others.
- Promote an inclusive culture in which colleagues or peers are not subjected to harassment, bullying or victimisation, by challenging these forms of behaviour or reporting situations in which they occur to the Board.