



This document has been composed by Legal Initiative in collaboration with Nasta Bazar and the civil society of Belarus

We recognise that sexual harassment and other forms of abuse in Belarusian civil society are a systemic issue. They undermine trust, encourage a culture of violence, reinforce stigmatization, and hinder community development. We are convinced: not speaking out and ignoring harassment cases is unacceptable. Creating a safe environment is the fundamental goal of our work and everyone's moral duty. This is not just a declaration, but a foundation for trust and cooperation.

Every person has an inalienable right to respect, safety, and protection from all forms of harassment and violence. Any form of harassment — verbal, physical, digital, or psychological — is unacceptable and goes against the basic principles of equality, justice, and human dignity.

These principles are proposed to organisations, initiatives, media outlets, and individual members of Belarusian civil society, both within the country and in exile.

The signatories undertake a professional and ethical responsibility to promote a culture of zero tolerance for harassment and to maintain respectful interaction collectively.

The complete glossary of terms outlined here can be found in Chapter 2 of the main document via the [link](#).

We are committed to observing the following principles:

1

Unacceptability of sexual harassment.

We oppose all forms of harassment — verbal, physical, digital, structural, etc. (a full list of kinds of abuse can be found in Chapter 2 of the main document). Harassment is unacceptable in any setting, whether online or offline, regardless of the context.

2

Respect for boundaries and unacceptability of power and status abuse.

Flirting and/or romantic relationships can create situations of vulnerability when there are power imbalances, status differences, or dependency. If romantic relationships develop between individuals of unequal status (e.g., a manager and a subordinate), this should be disclosed to the responsible person, and direct subordination, if possible, should be avoided to prevent a conflict of interest. The person bearing responsibility to conduct themselves ethically is the one with greater power and status.

3

Unacceptability of victim-blaming (shifting blame onto the injured party).

The responsibility always lies with the person who has caused the harm. We reject the practice of blaming victims and being distrustful of their experience. Any pressure on the injured party and/or witnesses to cover up the instances of sexual harassment is unacceptable. We support the victim's right to decide for themselves whether to speak publicly about the incident.

4

Prohibition of retaliation (repercussions for individuals who have reported harassment).

No one should be punished, bullied, or alienated for reporting harassment or supporting victims.

5

Transparent response mechanisms.

We recognise the importance of having clear, independent, and expert channels for filing complaints and procedures for reviewing them and making decisions. Any organisation or collective should have clear guidelines on where to submit complaints, how they are reviewed, and whether independent and trained experts are involved; how confidentiality is ensured, and what measures are taken to implement the decisions.

6

We are committed to providing moral, psychological, and organisational (administrative) support to victims of harassment, respecting their choices, needs, and levels of readiness for communication. By moral support, we mean acknowledging what the victim has gone through, respectful treatment, and solidarity. By psychological support, access to qualified assistance from specialists. By organisational support, creating a safe environment, documenting, and providing assistance in accessing and

protecting rights. The primary responsibility to react and provide such support lies with the organisation within which the incident has occurred; however, all signatories of these principles consider it their duty to assist victims and, if needed, to engage external resources and professional assistance.

7

Inclusivity and concern for safety.

We recognise that certain groups, such as women, LGBTQI+ people, the young, the elderly, people with lived experience of migration, single parents, people with disabilities, and members of other vulnerable social groups, are at greater risk in situations of sexual harassment. Therefore, we strive to create conditions in which members of these groups can feel safe and have an equal voice in discussing issues related to internal culture, safety policies, and participation conditions, as well as in organisational decision-making.

8

Openness to self-reflection.

We acknowledge that all communities are prone to making mistakes. Willingness to discuss issues, to learn, and to change practices is an important step towards creating a safe environment.

9

Leadership's responsibility.

Managers, coordinators, and other decision-makers have an obligation to lead by example, ensuring that the principles are followed within their organisation or initiative, to respond to complaints promptly, and to foster a safe and trusting environment.

10

Responsibility of civil society organisations and representatives.

Organisations and individuals that have signed these principles undertake the responsibility to follow them and act fairly and transparently, with the consent of the injured party.

11

Harassment prevention and community responsibility.

We believe that the responsibility for preventing sexual harassment lies with every organisation and every member of civil society. Combatting harassment requires not only responding to incidents, but also continuous preventive work. Creating a safe environment is impossible without everyone's proactive participation. We are committed to responding to instances of harassment, supporting victims, fostering a space of equality and trust, supporting a culture of respectful and responsible interaction in civil society, providing regular training for employees, as well as members, on what harassment is, how to recognise it, and how to respond to it. Prevention is a collective task aimed at strengthening the trust, dignity, and safety of all community members.

These principles help Belarusian civil society to build safe, respectful, and fair communities where everyone feels protected and can act without fear or pressure.

Following these principles is, first and foremost, a matter of respect for human dignity, rights, and safety for everyone. Only in such an environment is it possible to achieve genuine trust, cooperation, and solidarity, which in turn make teams and organisations stronger.

You can subscribe to these principles as an organisation or as an individual deeply involved in Belarusian civil society activities in exile.

Signatories will be recorded in two lists: a public one (for open distribution) and a non-public one (for internal storage), which is necessary for security concerns. If you would like to subscribe anonymously, please contact Legal Initiative via email or Telegram.

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