

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RESPECT AT WORK

### General

European Forest Institute (EFI) is an equal opportunity organisation, committed to promoting equality, diversity and providing an inclusive working environment free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

It is important that all staff members at EFI are treated with dignity and respect.

EFI wants all staff members to be clear about the behaviours and actions that are considered to be discriminatory and/or amount to bullying or harassment.

Staff members need to feel comfortable raising work-related issues, so that support can be provided, and appropriate action taken to resolve the situation.

Discrimination, bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviours at EFI.

### Discrimination

Staff members must not discriminate against others, including current and former staff members, job applicants and visitors.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect:

- Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably than another person was treated, is treated or would be treated, in a comparable situation, because of a certain personal characteristic (actual, perceived or through association).  
Different treatment does not constitute discrimination if the treatment is based on applicable regulations and it otherwise has an acceptable objective and the measures to attain the objective are proportionate.
- Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects only a person with a particular characteristic, and which cannot be justified as legitimate and proportionate.

### Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened.

Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

Bullying can take the form of verbal as well as physical and other non-verbal conduct, and may include:

- Physical or psychological threats
- Overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision
- Inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance.

Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a staff member's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to staff members regarding their tasks, will not amount to bullying on their own. Any such criticism and instructions must be documented in writing.

### **Harassment**

Harassment is unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Harassment is unacceptable at the workplace and a single incident can amount to harassment. Examples of harassment include:

- Unwanted physical contact ranging from touching to serious sexual or physical assault - invading someone's personal space may amount to harassment.
- Verbal conduct such as sexist, racist, ageist, homophobic comments or innuendo; derogatory remarks about any individual or group of people; offensive slogans, insults, comments of a personal nature; suggestive remarks, nicknames, inappropriate jokes or language.
- Spreading rumours or gossip including speculating about someone's sexual orientation or gender identity or outing them.
- Unwanted non-verbal conduct, including sexually suggestive behaviour and/or gestures, staring or other unwanted sexual attention or advances.
- The display, storage or circulation of offensive material (including information held on or accessed by computer) by whatever means.
- Conduct that threatens, ridicules, intimidates or abuses, undermines or undervalues an individual including derogatory or degrading remarks or insults, offensive comments about appearance or dress, spreading malicious rumours.
- Open aggression, obscenities, uncontrolled anger.
- Unfair treatment, which might include deliberately excluding someone from social activities because they have or are perceived to have a protected characteristic or associate with a person who does

### **Raising a complaint**

To raise a formal complaint relating to discrimination, bullying or harassment, the staff member will need to provide a written complaint which needs to be addressed to the Deputy Director through the Head of HR & Administration. The complaint must set out the following:

- full details of the conduct in question
- the name of the perpetrator(s)
- the date and time and where such conduct occurred.
- the names of any witnesses
- any action that has been taken so far to attempt to stop the conduct from occurring.

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the alleged perpetrator shall be provided with a copy of the complaint to enable them to submit comments. The alleged perpetrator(s) will be allowed up to 7 calendar days to respond to the complaint in writing. If no response is received the matter will proceed without such a response.

Any complaints received will be handled sensitively and in confidence wherever possible.

### **Investigation**

The Deputy Director will investigate the matter as deemed appropriate. This may include interviewing the person raising the complaint and/or the alleged perpetrator to gain further insights or clarify points raised. In addition, it may be necessary to interview witnesses to any of the incidents mentioned in the complaint. The Deputy Director will be supported by Head of HR & Administration.

### **The outcome**

If the Deputy Director, in consultation with the Head of HR & Administration determines that the complaint is to be upheld in whole or in part, EFI will carefully consider what further action will be taken.

If the Deputy Director, in consultation with the Head of HR & Administration determines that the complaint is not well-founded, the matter will be closed.

At the end of the process, the complainant and (alleged) perpetrator(s) will be informed of the outcome in writing. Normally, within calendar days of the formal complaint being received by EFI. Making false allegation in bad faith the complainant will be subject to further actions in accordance with EFI Staff regulations.

Whether or not the complaint is upheld, EFI will consider how best to manage the working relationship between the persons concerned. It may be considered appropriate to arrange some form of mediation and/or counselling or to change the working arrangements of one or both parties.

### **Referral to the Director**

If either of the complainant or (alleged) perpetrator(s) are not satisfied with the outcome as determined by the Deputy Director, the matter can be referred by that person to the Director within 21 calendar days from receiving the decision made by the Deputy Director.