

1 Purpose, objectives, and scope

natESM is a publicly funded project dedicated to establishing a model system for Earth system and climate research in Germany. We are a diverse community composed of scientists from various institutions with equally diverse goals and administrative structures. To address the challenges arising from this diverse community, we aim to establish clear guidelines for collaboration within natESM and promote a culture of openness, tolerance, and mutual support through this Code of Conduct. We commit to regularly reviewing the Code of Conduct and adapting it as needed to ensure that it meets the evolving needs and challenges of the community.

2 Our core values

- We treat each other with respect.
- We act with honesty, ethics, and integrity.
- We communicate transparently and respectfully.

3 Principles of collaboration

We expect all members of our community to consider natESM's core values in their actions and adhere to the following principles of collaboration:

1. natESM is built on mutual respect and rejects any form of discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, or identity. We believe that diversity enriches science and research by bringing forth new impulses, ideas, and perspectives.
2. At natESM, we value the contributions of all members and promote an open and constructive dialogue that allows for the exchange of new ideas and continuous improvement in the quality of our work. We prioritize trust and mutual respect in our collaboration, respect the diversity of participating institutions and members of our community, and create a conducive working environment by respecting personal boundaries. Everyone should feel recognized in our work environment and be able to address issues without fear of reprisals.
3. We recognize that differences of opinion alone do not constitute harassment and that constructive criticism should be communicated respectfully and appropriately.

4. When conflicts arise, we encourage individuals to first communicate directly with the person causing the perceived problem, labeling their behavior as undesirable and asking them to cease it.
5. We are aware that in collaboration there can be problems where the affected person either is not capable or should not try to solve the problem alone. In such cases, we ask the affected individual to gather all evidence and contact the natESM process coordination or contact persons in their own institution who have undergone conflict management training and can provide information about external contact points if desired by the affected person.
6. Members facing sexual harassment, bullying, or other forms of discrimination¹ require understanding and support. We encourage every member of the natESM community to support affected individuals and to take proactive steps to intervene in instances of misconduct, even if the member is not directly involved. It is important to report such incidents early to address misconduct promptly, while also recognizing the need for confidentiality in certain situations, considering legal protections for the accused.

¹ For definitions of terms, please refer to section 4 on page 2.

4 Definitions

Below are definitions of behaviors that explicitly violate the natESM Code of Conduct.

The definition of harassment is highly dependent on the affected person's perception of the behavior which may differ from the accused's original intention.

Individuals in vulnerable, exposed, dependent or subordinate positions might not feel able to freely and fully express non-consent. Thus, it is important to consider the situation of the targeted person.

Discrimination

The German General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz or AGG) defines discrimination as a behavior - conscious or unconscious - that treats individuals or groups unequally on the basis of group-specific characteristics. These include culture or ethnic origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age and mental or physical disabilities.

Experiences of discrimination affect the self-esteem of the persons concerned and can have a direct or indirect impact on their ability to work. In addition to the personal burdens on the persons concerned, discriminatory behavior endangers both good working environments and successful scientific progress, which is enhanced by the diversity of the staff.

Indirect discrimination, according to the AGG, occurs when apparently neutral regulations, criteria or procedures have a disadvantageous effect on a certain group of people. Indirect discrimination is defined by the AGG as apparently neutral actions that are not intended to discriminate against particular groups or individuals, but end up doing so due to indirect consequences.

Harassment / bullying

Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct that violates the dignity of the person concerned and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. Harassment can take many shapes including unwanted contact or communication, insults, threats, or offensive language. The grounds for the harassment are based on that individual's membership of a certain group e.g. based on sex, ethnic group, LGBTQIA+ status².

Bullying is a special form of harassment, which can occur without identifiable motives. In this case an individual, or a group of people, repeatedly causes hurt or harm to another

person or group of people be that via intimidation, insults, or humiliation. Bullying undermines a person's ability to function normally, and affects both their self-confidence and self-esteem. As repetitive behavior, it undermines and violates the dignity, work motivation and mental health of staff.

Bullying can come in many forms e.g. face-to-face bullying (direct bullying including physical or verbal), covert bullying (indirect bullying e.g. whispering campaigns), cyberbullying (threatening or abusive behavior carried out through an online portal).

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is non-consensual behavior of a sexual nature. It includes unwanted sexual acts, unnecessary and unwanted physical contact, comments of a sexual nature, and the unwanted exhibition of pornographic images. It also includes requests to carry out sexual acts, or implies that sexual acts will result in an unrelated reward (e.g. promotions or passing an exam). All sexes can experience sexual harassment.

The motivation for sexualized forms of behavior is not always sexual in nature, but can also be motivated by anger, sadism, hate, superstition, competition, a demonstration of power or control. The original motivation in no way justifies the behavior.

Tokenism

Tokenism is the practice of making a merely symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups, e.g. by recruiting one person from an underrepresented group to committees, panels, or project groups in order to give the appearance of diversity but without any intention of giving the individual equal status. The reason behind including a token employee to such working groups is usually intended to deflect accusations of discrimination.

² LGBTQIA+: Abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexed, Asexual, and other forms of attraction, gender, and sex