



New East Discrimination, Harassment, and Safeguarding Policy

effective November 20, 2021, updated February 15, 2025

Commitment to Dignity, Safety, and Human Rights

New East is a cultural and educational organization that operates in a diverse social environment. We recognize that our activities involve people from different backgrounds, identities, and experiences, and we are fully committed to upholding the dignity, safety, and rights of every person who comes into contact with our work—whether they are participants, staff members, volunteers, partners, or members of the public.

In accordance with national and international standards, New East maintains a policy of zero tolerance toward any form of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, bullying, coercion, or violence.

This includes sexual and gender-based misconduct, physical intimidation, emotional manipulation, and structural exclusion. Such conduct undermines trust, causes harm, and contradicts the very purpose of our mission—to create spaces of openness, dialogue, learning, and empowerment.

Understanding Discrimination and Harassment

Discrimination is any unequal treatment of individuals based on personal attributes or identities that are not relevant to the merit or responsibilities of their role. This includes—but is not limited to—unfavorable treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, age, political opinion, family or marital status, socioeconomic background, or any other characteristic protected under Latvian or European Union law.

Harassment refers to a pattern or single incident of unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment. It can take many forms: verbal (such as insults, threats, slurs, or demeaning jokes), physical (such as unwelcome touching, blocking someone's movement, or aggressive gestures), psychological (such as exclusion, isolation, or gaslighting), or digital (such as offensive emails, social media comments, or the spread of rumors).

Sexual harassment is a specific form of harassment that involves conduct of a sexual nature. It includes unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, sexualized comments or jokes, and any other verbal, physical, or visual conduct that creates discomfort or fear. It is particularly serious when it influences decisions about employment, participation, or access to opportunities. Such behavior does not need to be repeated to be considered harmful—it is defined by its impact, not by the intent of the person committing it.

Bullying is another form of mistreatment that can occur in the workplace or in program settings. It includes persistent patterns of behavior intended to undermine, belittle, or dominate another person. While bullying is sometimes subtle and difficult to identify, its effects can be long-lasting and traumatic, particularly in creative, educational, and intercultural spaces like those New East creates.

This policy applies to all individuals connected with New East, including:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Trainers and external consultants
- Project participants
- Partner organizations
- Visitors to New East premises or events

Workplace and Public Conduct

This policy applies to all staff members, volunteers, collaborators, partners, and participants, regardless of status or level of authority. It extends to all New East spaces—physical, digital, and informal—including offices, events, meetings, social activities, training programs, public actions, and online interactions.

Everyone affiliated with New East is expected to maintain professional behavior and mutual respect at all times. This includes avoiding personal relationships where a power imbalance exists (e.g., between supervisors and employees or mentors and participants), and not engaging in any conduct—on or off duty—that could compromise the trust of our community.

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Persons

New East recognizes its special responsibility to protect children and other vulnerable persons from harm. A child is defined as any individual under the age of 18, regardless of local legal definitions of adulthood or consent. All interactions with children must prioritize their safety, dignity, and well-being.

We strictly prohibit all forms of child abuse, which includes physical abuse (hitting, shaking, burning), sexual abuse (inappropriate touching, sexual acts, exposure to sexual materials), emotional abuse (shaming, humiliating, isolating), and neglect (failure to provide basic needs or adequate supervision). Any form of sexual activity with a minor is considered abuse, regardless of whether consent was given or the perpetrator believed the child to be older. Moreover, no staff member, volunteer, or affiliate may engage in relationships of any kind that exploit the power imbalance between themselves and a minor or dependent individual.

All activities involving children must be planned with appropriate safeguards. This includes obtaining written consent from parents or guardians for participation, photography, or filming; ensuring that adults are never left alone with children; and maintaining transparent and observable interactions at all times.

Personnel working with minors must undergo appropriate screening and background checks, and receive training on how to recognize and report abuse. All suspicions, disclosures, or incidents involving harm to children must be immediately reported to management and, if appropriate, to authorities.

Preventing Exploitation, Human Trafficking, and Abuse

New East strictly prohibits involvement in any form of human trafficking, forced labor, or transactional sexual exploitation. This includes offering employment or benefits in exchange for sexual services; arranging for or engaging in prostitution; withholding identification documents from employees; or recruiting individuals under false promises or coercive conditions.

We require that all partners and contractors working with New East commit to the same standards, and that all reports of potential trafficking or exploitation are treated with urgency and reported to the appropriate authorities.

Reporting and Investigating Violations

At New East, any person who becomes aware of, suspects, or has concerns about a possible violation of this Discrimination, Harassment, and Safeguarding Policy—whether the incident involves themselves, a colleague, a participant, or any other individual engaged with New East—must report the concern as soon as possible. This applies regardless of how minor or informal the issue may seem.

Staff members and volunteers are encouraged to report concerns directly to their immediate supervisor or project coordinator. If this is not possible or appropriate, they may contact our designated safeguarding contact at safety@neweasteurope.com. Concerns may also be submitted anonymously, and no specific format is required—verbal, written, or digital reports are all accepted.

Managers and team leads who receive a report are responsible for documenting it clearly and passing it without delay to the New East safeguarding lead. Under no circumstances may supervisors conduct their own investigations. All cases will be overseen or handled by qualified personnel designated to ensure impartiality, confidentiality, and compliance with legal and ethical standards. Where appropriate, New East may involve external investigators or legal counsel.

We treat all reports with the highest degree of seriousness and confidentiality. While we strive to protect the identity of those involved in reporting or investigations, full anonymity cannot always be guaranteed if the circumstances require disclosure to ensure due process and effective resolution.

In cases involving suspected abuse, exploitation, or trafficking, New East may notify relevant authorities in accordance with Latvian law. We will fully cooperate with any external investigation and expect all affiliated individuals to do the same.

Retaliation in any form against a person who reports a concern or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited. Any individual—regardless of their role or status—found to have engaged in retaliation will face disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or involvement in New East programs.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. In serious cases, especially those involving harm to minors, sexual exploitation, or trafficking, New East may also refer the matter to criminal justice authorities and will not re-engage individuals found responsible for such violations in any capacity.

Code of Conduct at New East

At New East, we are committed to fostering a working and learning environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, violence, and abuse. Our approach is grounded in the respect for human dignity, inclusion, and mutual accountability, and reflects both the values of our organization and the requirements of Latvian and European law.

Discrimination in any form is strictly prohibited. This includes unequal or unfair treatment based on personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship, religion or belief, age, disability, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, military status, political affiliation, physical appearance, socioeconomic background, or any other status protected under applicable legislation. Discriminatory practices—whether explicit or implicit—are harmful, illegal, and directly opposed to the values of New East.

Harassment is similarly unacceptable and is defined as any unwanted behavior, including that of a sexual nature, which offends, humiliates, or intimidates another individual. Harassment may occur verbally, physically, visually, or through written or digital communications, and can range from subtle remarks to overt threats or aggression. Importantly, harassment does not require repeated actions to be considered serious—any act that disrupts the safety or dignity of a person may be grounds for disciplinary action. Sexual harassment, in particular, is treated with the utmost seriousness. This includes any conduct where sexual advances or requests for favors are tied to professional conditions, or where the behavior creates an intimidating or offensive atmosphere. Examples include inappropriate comments, unsolicited touching, sending sexual messages or images, or making professional benefits conditional on sexual cooperation. Such actions erode trust and safety, and will lead to immediate consequences.

Bullying—whether subtle or overt—is also prohibited. This may take the form of ridicule, verbal abuse, exclusion, or other behaviors designed to control, belittle, or intimidate another person. Any abuse of authority or use of personal influence to harm others in the workplace or program space will be addressed swiftly.

New East also takes a firm stand against workplace violence, which includes any act of aggression or intimidation that threatens physical or emotional safety. Possession of weapons or dangerous items in the workplace is strictly forbidden unless specifically authorized for security purposes. Employees are expected to act responsibly and with courtesy, both during work and in social settings connected to New East activities.

All incidents—whether involving discrimination, harassment, or threats of violence—must be reported immediately. We prioritize the safety and dignity of every person, and reports will be handled with confidentiality and care. Investigations will be timely, impartial, and may involve external expertise where appropriate.

We also encourage early resolution of interpersonal disputes. Employees and volunteers are invited to raise concerns or conflicts through established channels before issues escalate. New East guarantees that no individual will face retaliation for reporting misconduct or participating in an investigation. Those found responsible for violating this policy may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or exclusion from all New East activities.

This policy is not simply a rulebook—it is a reflection of our collective commitment to justice, equity, and well-being in every space we create.

External Conduct and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

New East holds itself and all individuals involved in its programs to the highest standards of ethical conduct—not only within the organization, but also in how we engage with the communities, participants, and partners we serve. This includes a strict commitment to preventing and addressing all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), which are violations of fundamental human rights and international legal standards.

Sexual exploitation and abuse, whether perpetrated in the context of professional activities or outside of them, are acts of serious misconduct. They are never acceptable and will result in disciplinary consequences, including immediate removal from duties or termination of engagement. These behaviors not only harm individuals—they also damage the trust that our work relies on and undermine the mission of creating inclusive, safe, and respectful cultural and educational spaces.

All forms of sexual exploitation—defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes—are explicitly prohibited. This includes the exchange of money, services, protection, employment, or other assistance for sexual favors, as well as any behavior that is humiliating, degrading, or exploitative in nature.

Sexual activity involving children (defined as any person under the age of 18) is absolutely prohibited under all circumstances. It is not a defense to claim ignorance of a child's age. Violations of this rule will be treated as grounds for immediate dismissal and may be reported to appropriate authorities in accordance with Latvian and international child protection laws.

Sexual relationships between New East staff, contractors, or volunteers and program beneficiaries or vulnerable community members are strongly discouraged due to the inherent power imbalance they represent. Even where a relationship appears consensual, such dynamics can create conditions of coercion or compromise and may severely affect the credibility and integrity of our work.

Every member of New East—whether in a formal or informal role—has a duty to prevent, report, and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes reporting any suspicions or concerns, whether involving a colleague, partner organization, or participant. Maintaining silence in the face of abuse is unacceptable. Staff and volunteers must proactively contribute to creating an environment in which dignity, consent, and safety are non-negotiable values.

Leaders and managers within New East carry an additional responsibility to build and uphold systems that prevent SEA. This includes risk analysis in program design, clear communication of behavioral expectations, safe recruitment practices, and ensuring secure channels for confidential reporting.

While specific cultural or legal contexts may differ from country to country, New East does not lower its standards of protection. In rare and exceptional circumstances (such as legal marriage to a person under 18 in a country of citizenship), flexibility may be considered—but always with the utmost caution, and never at the expense of child protection.

Ultimately, this policy is about building trust—with the individuals and communities we serve, with each other, and with the public. It is about ensuring that New East remains a place where no one is harmed, exploited, or silenced—and where human rights and integrity are foundational to everything we do.

Child Safeguarding at New East

New East recognizes that its programs, events, and initiatives may involve interaction with children and young people under the age of 18. As such, we are deeply committed to upholding the highest standards of child safeguarding in all of our activities—whether local or international, formal or informal, on-site or online.

Our approach is guided by core principles that ensure children are not only protected from harm but are treated with dignity, respect, and care. These principles apply to every person associated with New East: staff, volunteers, artists, educators, contractors, mentors, and guests.

Foundational Commitments

1. Legal and Ethical Compliance
2. All New East personnel must comply with the child welfare and protection laws of Latvia, the European Union, and applicable international standards, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Where legal frameworks differ, the standard offering greater protection to the child shall prevail.
3. Zero Tolerance for Abuse
4. New East strictly prohibits any form of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect. This includes direct actions and failures to act that result in harm or pose serious risks to a child's safety, dignity, development, or well-being.
5. Safeguarding in Program Design
6. All project planning and implementation must include a safeguarding lens—identifying and mitigating potential risks to children involved in or impacted by our activities. This applies across workshops, performances, media production, outreach work, and public events.
7. Preventive Measures
8. New East implements measures to reduce the risk of harm, including:
 - Avoiding unsupervised one-on-one interaction with children unless absolutely necessary and with proper visibility.
 - Prohibiting access to inappropriate materials such as pornography.
 - Ensuring responsible and lawful practices in photographing, filming, or otherwise capturing children's images, with prior consent from guardians.
9. Safe Recruitment and Training
10. All individuals whose work brings them into direct or sustained contact with children are subject to screening procedures, including background checks. Additionally, New East provides training to help staff and volunteers recognize signs of abuse or neglect and understand how to respond appropriately.
11. Mandatory Reporting
12. Anyone working with or through New East who suspects, witnesses, or receives a report of child abuse, exploitation, or neglect is obligated to report it immediately. Reports should be made to the designated safeguarding officer or by email to safety@neweasteurope.com. Where necessary, New East may refer cases to child protection services or law enforcement authorities.

Definitions and Scope

- Child: Any individual under the age of 18, regardless of the local age of consent or mistaken belief about their age.
- Child Abuse: Any act—or failure to act—that causes actual or potential harm to a child. This includes:
 - Physical Abuse: Acts that inflict physical injury, pain, or risk of harm (e.g., hitting, choking, burning).
 - Sexual Abuse: Involvement of a child in sexual activity, including fondling, penetration, incest, or the production of sexual materials.
 - Emotional Abuse: Actions or threats that harm a child's emotional health, such as humiliation, verbal abuse, isolation, or coercive control.
 - Exploitation: Using a child for labor, services, or sexual purposes in exchange for money, benefits, or privileges. Even if a child appears to "consent," exploitation remains a form of abuse due to the power imbalance and vulnerability involved.
 - Neglect: Failure to meet a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, supervision, and medical care, especially in the context of organizational responsibility during activities or events.

New East recognizes that individuals over the age of 18 may also be vulnerable to abuse or coercion. While this policy focuses on those under 18, the safeguarding principles of respect, non-exploitation, and empowerment extend to all beneficiaries.

In certain rare cases, exceptions may be considered—for example, in contexts where legal marriage involves individuals under 18 and is recognized by their country of citizenship. However, such cases will be subject to rigorous ethical and legal review and will never override the principle of child protection.

If allegations of abuse are found credible following internal investigation, and especially where there is a risk of ongoing harm, New East will consult with legal experts and, when necessary, report such cases to the appropriate national authorities for possible criminal prosecution.

The logo for 'NEW EAST' is positioned in the top right corner. It features the word 'NEW' in a bold, white, sans-serif font above the word 'EAST', also in a bold, white, sans-serif font. A small gear icon is located to the left of the 'N' in 'NEW'. A white diagonal slash is positioned to the right of the 'T' in 'EAST'.

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