

ECOLISE

People Care Manual

CONTENTS

05 Introduction to ECOLISE People Care Policies

- 06 Glossary
- 08 Vision and aims of our People Care Policies
- 09 What is accountability?
- 09 Who are we accountable to?
- 09 What is Harm?
- 10 Practising accountability
- 10 People care and Safeguarding Focal Person roles and responsibilities

13 Code of Conduct

25 Wellbeing Policy

Performance Review Process (pending)

29 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

37 Conflict Policy

50 Bullying and Harassment Policy

Recruitment policy (pending)

Internship policy (pending)

57 Inclusive Communications Policy

Inclusive Events Policy (pending)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & APPRECIATION

The writing of the first iteration of this Manual has been led by Alicia Stewart-Colvin and Pauliina Helle in 2023. We have drawn from and been heavily inspired by the pioneering work of [RadHR](#) in offering non-punitive alternatives to off-the-shelf HR policies and processes, which tend to replicate the structural problems that our type of organisations strive to challenge. Policies such as RadHR's [Disciplinary Procedure](#) and [Culture of Care & Accountability](#), as well as their guide: [How to write a radical grievance or disciplinary procedure](#) have all been instrumental in the development of our work. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and thanks to the RadHR team for openly sharing their resources and for making this venture possible for us!

We would also like to thank:

[People Support Co-op](#)

[Transform Harm](#)

[The Wellbeing Project](#)

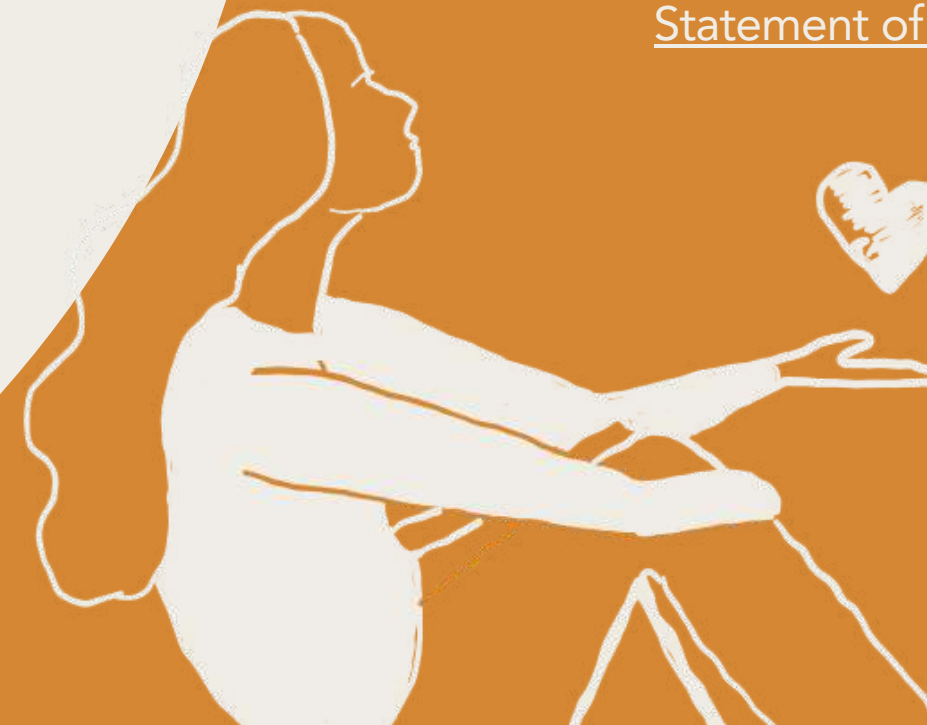
[LevelUp](#)

[Ulex Project](#)

DIY Space for London and their [Accountability Handbook](#)

[The Class Work Project](#) and their [Conflict System Policy](#), which served as a base for our [Informal Tension Management Process](#)

Transition Network for the [TN Culture](#) section on your website, particularly the relational agreements
Global Ecovillage Network Europe for your [Statement of Tolerance](#) and Baltic Ecovillage Network for your [Statement of Values and Behaviour](#)



**INTRODUCTION
TO ECOLISE
PEOPLE CARE
POLICIES**



Glossary

people care

is the term used in ECOLISE instead of human resources (HR), because in ECOLISE we see people as more than simply “resources”. Care for self, people, community - a key permaculture principle and how we in the ECOLISE Core team strive to relate to and collaborate with each other - is at the centre of how ECOLISE works as an organisation. People care practices create the safety from which people are able to show up at work as their whole selves.



radical people care

means putting people care in the centre in an organisation. The term ‘radical’ means cooperative, collaborative, non/less hierarchical, caring and people-centered organisational practices. Radical people care (HR) is in opposition to corporate, mainstream HR within its neoliberal capitalist framing where people are valued in terms of profit and often easily expendable. It challenges the individualistic, competition-based values of the wider systems we oppose. The ECOLISE people care policies are tailored to our specific context, rooted in the values of our network and consciously written in accessible plain English and a less formal style that is approachable and easily understandable.

ECOLISE core members

refers to paid team members and voluntary Council members

ECOLISE collaborators

refers to consultants, freelance external service providers, interns and volunteers

when we write 'we' or 'us'

in the text, it always refers to the people at the Core of ECOLISE, who make up the organisation. This means the ECOLISE team and Council members and other active collaborators. These are also the groups that are asked to comply with these policies and take part in reviewing and co-creating them.

It is a conscious choice to use the term 'we' instead of referring to ECOLISE only in third person, 'it', as the organisation is made up of its people and the implementation of these policies is in essence about live human relationships. However, ECOLISE holds certain accountability as a legal entity, an international non-profit organisation (AISBL) based in Brussels, Belgium. In practice this accountability is held by ECOLISE's legal representatives, its CoPresidents, CoDirectors, and Council. When the text refers to ECOLISE as a legal entity, the terms 'it' or 'ECOLISE' will be used.

¹ Mia Mingus, [Transform Harm](#)

² <https://cij.org.au/opencircle/what-is-restorative-justice/>

transformative justice

is a political framework and approach that ECOLISE has adopted in its culture to radically respond to harm and violence within the organisation. Transformative Justice (TJ) "seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence. TJ is not simply the absence of the state and violence, but the presence of the values, practices, relationships and world that we want. It is not only identifying what we don't want, but proactively practising and putting in place things we want, such as healthy relationships, good communication skills, skills to de-escalate active or "live" harm and violence in the moment, learning how to express our anger in ways that are not destructive, incorporating healing into our everyday lives."¹ In ECOLISE, conflict transformation also means that we use a systemic lens to view conflict and aim at revealing and resolving structural issues that are at the root of the conflict.

Conflicts never happen in a vacuum or purely at an interpersonal level, but they normally reveal issues that require attention at personal, relational, organisational and ecosystem/ societal levels.

restorative justice

is "a theory of justice that focuses on the harm caused by crime and wrongdoing to people, relationships and community. It provides a framework for addressing and preventing harm that moves beyond punishment towards healing."² As a practice, restorative justice brings people together to process issues in a safe and structured way, enabling everyone to take part in finding a way forward together. Restorative practice can be and is being used anywhere from the criminal justice system to schools, workplaces and communities.

Vision and Aims of our People Care Policies

ECOLISE's vision

is to support local community-led action on climate change and sustainability.

the work of ECOLISE

is inspired by the vision of a compassionate, equitable and regenerative society. A society of empowered and resilient communities that thrive on diversity and inclusion; trust and care; and that live within planetary boundaries.

It is essential that ECOLISE has clear people care policies in place, which all ECOLISE Core members and Collaborators can be supported to understand and adhere to, in the event of any tension, conflict or misconduct. They also support ECOLISE Core team to proactively create a people-centred and caring organisational culture.

This manual and all associated policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed every three years, or sooner if the need arises. It is essential that Core members and Collaborators familiarise themselves with these policies. A People Care review is conducted at least once per year among the team, with the focus on evaluating how the policies are being implemented in the day-to-day working culture and how related roles and responsibilities are being held. Anyone in the Core team or ECOLISE membership can propose amendments to this Manual. All amendments are subject to Council's approval.

Ensuring a safe environment for the people that ECOLISE works with has been at the heart of the organisation's work in recent years. The establishment of the internal Culture Building Circle and roles such as the Safeguarding Focal Persons, help ECOLISE Core team to identify how best to steward safeguarding practices and principles of inclusion, mutual respect, social justice and integrity. Creating a safe working environment also means holding ourselves accountable to the way we in ECOLISE Core team relate to others, including the words, actions and behaviours we use at work.

What is accountability?

Accountability is the acknowledgement and validation of the hurt and harm caused to another person. "Everyone has the ability to cause harm and be harmed, and whether that harm is intentional or not, accountability means it is everyone's responsibility to engage in strategies to create safety, justice, reparations and healing. This is how we keep ourselves and our communities safe."³

Accountability is a key part of Transformative Justice; an alternative to legal, state and criminal justice frameworks which are based on punishment and create further harm. The intention behind accountability is not one of shame, guilt or punishment – but one of growth, learning and care.

³ RadHR/ Level Up

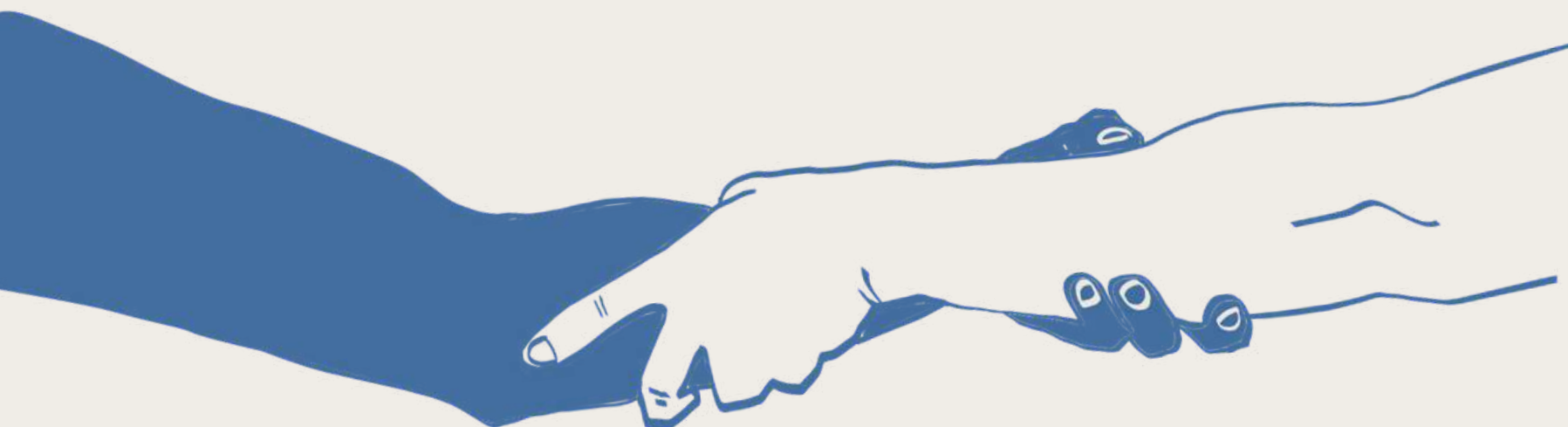
Who are we in ECOLISE accountable to?

Organisationally, we are accountable to our guiding principles, the values and ethos of our network, Statutes, Belgian Law and our funders. Interpersonally, we are accountable to ourselves, each other, our members and partners.

What is Harm?

Harm is: "the suffering, loss, pain and impact that can occur both in conflict and in instances of abuse, as well as in misunderstandings steeped in differences of life experience, opinion or needs. Harm needs healing."⁴ If you have acted or spoken harmfully, even if unintentionally, someone will bring this up with you. If this happens, listen and reflect on what is being said – even if you think they may be wrong, do not respond with defensiveness. Listening and connecting is the first step to remedying harm.

⁴ Adrienne Maree Brown



Practising accountability

Whilst it is important for consequences to be enacted, at varying degrees, for someone who has caused harm, it's important that further harm is not caused. Clear boundaries are needed in this work. This statement from DIY Space For London, defines what practising accountability looks like, as informed by Transformative Justice:

- acknowledge and validate the hurt and harm caused
- start by listening to the person who has been hurt and prioritising their needs
- enact consequences for the person who caused harm and provide opportunities for them to
- learn and change
- help address the root cause of why this has happened whilst recognising that we cannot fix everything
- as part of a culture of care, refrain from gossip or any other individual behaviour that can contribute to fearful group dynamics.

People care and safeguarding focal person roles and responsibilities

Although all ECOLISE Core members and Collaborators have a responsibility to actively promote and encourage people care, there are a number of specific roles within ECOLISE which exist to support, advise and refer any concerns on to the relevant people.

The **Safeguarding Focal Persons (SFP)** at ECOLISE in 2022-2023 are Duncan Crowley (Social Media Officer) and Pauliina Helle (Codirector).



Duncan Crowley



Pauliina Helle

The SFP will:

- be responsible for ensuring ECOLISE's People Care policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and kept up-to-date
- promote the importance of safety and wellbeing across the organisation
- manage allegations or concerns about abuse against ECOLISE Core members and Core collaborators
- ensure incidents are dealt with quickly and reported appropriately

There are always two Safeguarding Focal Persons. They are selected for a two-year term based on interest and competence. The required competence for a SFP is:

- training in conflict processes, mediation, NVC or similar methodologies
- good listening skills
- ability to remain impartial

SFP is a paid role. SFP's can be selected from within the ECOLISE team, Council or externals, such as members or network members. A sociocratic selection process is applied, to ensure that the SFP's are chosen in full confidence of the ECOLISE Core members.

As the SFP role is emotionally and psychologically challenging, we strongly encourage that SFP's have access to personal support when needed. This support should come primarily from an impartial source, external to the ECOLISE Core, such as a counselling service for non-profit organisations, workers union, or the ECOLISE network. If there is no budget and it's not

possible to get this service from an external, listening support should be offered by a trusted ECOLISE Core member.

The People Care representative within the Codirectors at ECOLISE in 2023 is Pauliina Helle (Codirector). They will:

- maintain responsibility for personnel management tasks such as recruitment, selection and onboarding; training and job profile development; performance management and team relations; contracts and for the ongoing development of related policies, systems and good practices
- be familiar with ECOLISE's Code of Conduct, Policies and Procedures
- be able to suitably guide someone they are concerned about through people care processes and procedures
- ensure that all Core members and Collaborators know where they can find ECOLISE policies and procedures and communicate to them any changes that are made to policies and procedures
- ensure that new starters understand the Code of Conduct and the Wellbeing Policy during their induction period
- keep other CoDirectors up-to-date and appropriately involved in people care.

The Culture Building Working Group at ECOLISE in 2023 are Pauliina Helle (Codirector), Abdul Otman (Operations manager), Leonor Afonso (Council member) and Duncan Crowley (Social Media Officer). They will:

- actively support the work of the Safeguarding Focal Person and the People Care Representative by helping to monitor and steer this area

- of work, and by being jointly accountable for key decisions
- engage in operational tasks such as policy writing and culture related projects like Diversity Plan implementation
- steer cultural development within the organisation through the practice of experimentation.

Buddies are people who partner with starter team members during their first six months at ECOLISE. The buddy is the new hire's first point of contact outside of their main domain team or supervisors (CoDirectors). Buddies are primarily responsible for offering advice and guidance regarding the day-to-day aspects of working at ECOLISE. Their goals also include:

- increasing clarity around the role of the new starter
- being an advocate for the new starter's induction into our working culture
- conveying the mission of ECOLISE
- introducing the new starter to other teams
- being a clear point of support and answering any questions
- troubleshooting any software or hardware issues as the new starter gets set-up
- helping the new starter to identify their own professional/personal goals at ECOLISE

The **ECOLISE Council** is responsible for upholding legal oversight of the Association, which includes the appropriateness and lawfulness of ECOLISE People Care Policies. Content changes to these policies are subject to Council decision.



CODE OF CONDUCT



CODE OF CONDUCT

ECOLISE Code of Conduct, May 2023 (to be reviewed End of 2025)

The rules and guidelines contained in this Code of Conduct, and the terms and conditions of your contribution (as outlined in your contract, if relevant), provide a framework within which all ECOLISE Core team and Collaborators (in-house consultants, interns, volunteers etc) regardless of location, undertake their duties and to conduct themselves at work.

The Code of Conduct describes what ECOLISE expects from its Core team and Collaborators, and what they, in turn, can expect from ECOLISE. In accepting your appointment, you commit to performing your duties and regulating your conduct in accordance with ECOLISE's quality of performance and reputation.

The Code of Conduct does not exempt anyone. Any breach of the Code may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal in some instances. Our Formal Disciplinary Procedure outlines this process in detail.

Although ECOLISE team members, Council members, interns and volunteers are based in many different countries, ECOLISE is legally constituted as an international non-profit organisation (an AISBL) in Belgium. Therefore this Code of Conduct helps ensure that ECOLISE is compliant with Belgian law.

content of this document

Intro

- Our organisational purpose
- Peer-based monitoring of agreed-upon behaviours
- The culture around conflict

Conduct

- ECOLISE's relational agreements
- Other agreements

Our organisational purpose

ECOLISE is a strategic network of organisations working together internationally to promote and support community-led action on climate change and sustainability. Members have joined forces as an international confederation because we believe we will achieve greater impact by working together in³ collaboration with others.

ECOLISE is formed of community-based initiatives such as the Transition movement, the movement of ecovillages, the permaculture movement, as well as European organizations such as ICLEI, a network of local governments for sustainability. ECOLISE is also formed of national and regional networks and other specialist bodies engaged in European-level research, training and communications to support community-led action on climate change and sustainability.

ECOLISE pursues three strategic goals:



1

Cultivating a cohesive, integrated network of change-making networks, organisations, groups and people that co-create and inspire a holistic culture of regeneration.

2

Expanding public and political awareness of the potential of empowered communities to positively transform societies and to help reach ambitious local to global level policy goals.

3

Developing a dynamic and inclusive framework for collaboration, sharing of knowledge, research, learning and capacity-building to support communities to engage in and spread transformative action on the ground.

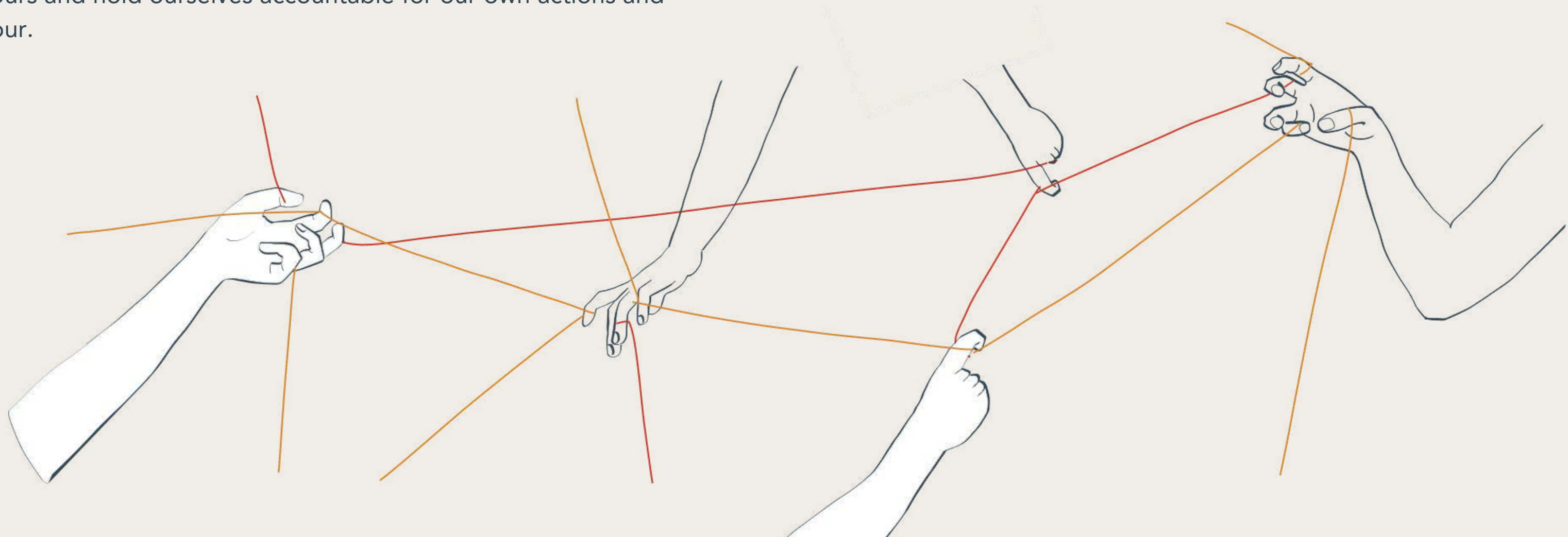
As we work to achieve our ambition and vision of “a compassionate, equitable and regenerative society of empowered and resilient communities that thrive on diversity and inclusion and live within planetary boundaries,” we should always remain true to our core mission, and aims and values.

Holding ourselves accountable for agreed-upon behaviours

ECOLISE Core team and collaborators are collectively responsible for respecting the agreed-upon behaviours stated here and for building a supportive organisational culture. As peers, we take responsibility for giving reminders and feedback to each other when acting against agreed behaviours and hold ourselves accountable for our own actions and behaviour.

Culture around conflict

We acknowledge that tensions and conflicts are inevitable - and even vital - in a social system. We are creating an organisational culture that enables us to address tensions at an early stage through clear communication and feedback opportunities. When misconduct or conflict occurs, we aim for fast and fair conflict resolution. This process is described in detail in our Conflict Policy. Agreeing to this Code of Conduct implies also complying with all our people care policies and procedures in case agreements are broken (see ECOLISE People Care Manual).



ECOLISE's relational agreements



vision and values

The work of ECOLISE is inspired by the vision of a compassionate, equitable and regenerative society of empowered and resilient communities that thrive³ on diversity and inclusion, and live within planetary boundaries. Our values are, as per our 2019 strategy:

- Full respect for the 'voice' (views) of local communities
- Collaboration and collective responsibility
- Gender equality
- Mutual respect and tolerance
- Political independence
- Non-discrimination
- Respect for diversity;
- Sustainable and regenerative use of natural resources
- Accountability and transparency in all decision-making processes
- Equitable distribution of society's wealth, resources and opportunities leading to economic equality
- A healthy environment and human prosperity within planetary ecological limits.

These values reflect three guiding principles:

- Co-creation
- Social justice
- Ecological integrity
-

In order to realise our vision and act as a vehicle of change, ECOLISE strives to foster an organisational culture that embodies the values stated above. The social agreements below guide us in bringing our values into life.

By signing this Code of Conduct, I agree to ECOLISE's relational agreements.

These agreements were written in 2022, based on the results of team and Council member interviews that mapped our current and desired organizational culture. These agreements are meant to be regularly reviewed and updated.

this is how we relate to each other

Mutual respect, Compassion and Gratitude

- 1 We cultivate empathy and practice active and heartfelt listening to others.
- 2 We show active appreciation and gratitude for the intentions, efforts and contributions of others.
- 3 We make space for joy, play, humour, vulnerability and heart.
- 4 We value authenticity and embrace vulnerability to better connect, share insights and address challenging topics.
- 5 We respect and embrace diversity of opinion, cultural and ideological backgrounds, personal rhythms, preferences and other individual differences.
- 6 Treat people as if they are trustworthy; start with the ¹premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

Equity and Proportionality

- 7 We cultivate empathy and practice active and heartfelt listening to others.

¹ Direct quote from Donna Hicks [dignity.model](#).

Sense of community, Mutual support and Co-empowerment

- 8 We foster a sense of community, respect and care for each other. Care for relationships is central to our work culture. We seek and maintain a sense of connection and belonging with everyone in our working community. We value conversations and don't give up on each other.
- 9 We pull each other up rather than push each other down. We support each other to excel in our work, to feel empowered and happy. We know that we need each other, as parts of the same organism, and that together we are stronger.
- 10 We use inclusive language to include, not exclude others. For example, avoiding specialist terms and jargon.

Trust

- 11 Trust feeds trust, distrust feeds distrust. We acknowledge that in order to build trust, we need to be the ones to trust first and to be worth the trust of others.

Forgiveness

- 12 Mistakes are human and they help us to learn. We take a non-judgemental and flexible stance towards mistakes. However, we hold each other accountable for our actions and don't allow mistakes to become a habit.

- 13 We practice forgiveness and make an effort to vent out grudges in a respectful and constructive way, instead of holding them in.

this is how we communicate

Ideological alertness

- 14 We demonstrate acceptance and respect for different ideologies² as long as they don't violate our values and internal policies.
- 15 We don't impose our ideologies and opinions on others.
- 16 We stay alert for dogmas³ and taboos⁴ being imposed on people and by people at the workplace. We welcome questioning dogmas and taboos that negatively affect our work and our team.

² An ideology is a set of beliefs, a form of social or political philosophy, on which people, parties, or countries base their actions. It is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it. See [Britannica Dictionary](#) and [Collins Dictionary](#).

³ Dogma is "1. a belief or set of beliefs that is accepted by the members of a group without being questioned or doubted. 2. a belief or set of beliefs that is taught by a religious organization." See [The Britannica Dictionary](#).

⁴ "If there is a taboo on a subject or activity, it is a social custom to avoid doing that activity or talking about that subject, because people find them embarrassing or offensive." See [Collins Dictionary](#).

Respectful communication and Non-discrimination

- 17 We make our best efforts to communicate in ways that are respectful, inviting, welcoming, compassionate and appreciative.
- 18 We remind ourselves of nonviolent communication⁵ principles: expressing oneself honestly and listening honestly. We also pay attention to the four elements in communication: observation, feelings, needs and requests.
- 19 We are able to be humane and authentic whilst remaining professional within the working community. Differing opinions are necessary, but personal attacks are not. We avoid judgemental and blaming language. We don't allow disagreements to get personal.
- 20 We talk to people, not about them. We avoid gossiping and the formation of social cliques/ politicisation/ polarisation. We avoid labeling people.
- 21 We don't make assumptions but approach people with curiosity and respect.
- 22 We ask questions before judging others.
- 23 We pay attention to our own defensiveness and our need to be right.

⁵ Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a framework and a set of skills that enables compassionate listening and connecting to self and others. It's a communication tool that serves for reconciliation in diverse contexts from work places to prisons and governments. See [The Center for Nonviolent Communication](#).

- 24 We are mindful of the space and attention that we take. We make an effort to keep our expressions concise and avoid overwhelming others.

Personal accountability and Proactive tension management

- 25 We engage in self-reflection and take responsibility for our actions and words - also when we fail to speak up and act.
- 26 We avoid taking things personally.
- 27 We practice setting our boundaries instead of expecting others to set and assume our boundaries for us. We respect other people's boundaries. We don't push or pressure others.
- 28 We are willing to engage directly with people as tensions arise. We make a proactive effort to address tensions head-on. We make it a priority not to let tensions escalate.
- 29 We acknowledge that all parties can play a role in conflict and thus, we can all play a role in their resolution. We make an effort to actively listen to one another and to move from our position, where possible.
- 30 We stand up for each other and call out undesired behavior in a respectful way.
- 31 We make a conscious effort not to escalate conflicts in communication channels like Slack or via email, as well as other public spaces and situations. Instead, we deal with issues privately, between the people concerned, to respect integrity.

Constructive feedback

- 32 We continually develop our work, team culture and ECOLISE policies using constructive feedback - without forgetting to appreciate our efforts.
- 33 We give feedback, receive feedback and act on feedback - always with a respectful and constructive approach, and asking whether feedback is welcome.

this is how we work together

Purpose

- 34 We keep our shared purpose in the foreground and align our contributions to serve this mission. We take collective care of the vitality, sustainability and regeneration of the ECOLISE ecosystem - with all its material, immaterial and living resources and boundaries.

Transparency and Inclusion

- 35 We work transparently and make information accessible, unless it's confidential
- 36 We integrate diverse points of view in decision-making processes. We aim at including in proposal forming processes the people who will be directly affected by the decision.⁶

37 We form proposals for decisions in a transparent way and communicate these as early as possible to relevant members of the Core team.

38 We test our ideas on others, ask for help and make space for integrating their feedback.

39 We strive for active collaboration - across domains, working groups, team, Council and Membership - instead of creating silos.

Appropriate pace

40 We do what is in our power to avoid unnecessary stress on ourselves and others, and to reduce overload.

Respect and Accountability

41 We do what we agreed to do by the date we agreed to do it. We respect others by being on time, delivering on time and communicating openly when we are unable to be on time.

42 We take responsibility for what we say and do, as well as for what we fail to say or do - particularly when it affects other people or our work negatively.

other agreements

As an ECOLISE contributor, I will:

1 *Uphold the integrity and reputation of ECOLISE by ensuring that my professional and personal conduct is demonstrably consistent with ECOLISE's values and standards.*

- I will seek to maintain public confidence in ECOLISE by being accountable for the professional and personal actions that I take.
- I will ensure that I manage the power that comes with my ECOLISE position with appropriate restraint.
- At all times, including in my private life, I will avoid engaging in activities or behavior that runs contrary to the values and purpose of ECOLISE and risks bringing ECOLISE into disrepute.

2 *Treat all people with respect and dignity and challenge any form of harassment, discrimination, intimidation, exploitation or abuse.*

ECOLISE team members hold a privileged position of power in relation to our partners and the communities that we serve. There are also explicit and implicit power relations within the team and ECOLISE Core that should be given conscious attention and not be exploited.

When carrying out ECOLISE's mission, I will:

⁶ See [Sociocracy 3.0](#): The Principle of Equivalence and pattern "involve those affected"

- treat all people with respect and dignity and challenge any form of harassment, discrimination, intimidation, exploitation, abuse or corruption in the working environment
- not engage in any form of on/offline harassment, sexual abuse or exploitation of any persons of any age
- not abuse our positions of power/unequal power
- challenge injustice, respect all peoples' rights, and contribute to a working environment characterised by mutual respect, integrity, dignity and non-discrimination
- commit to continuous organisational development that supports deep cultural transformation and systemic change within and without. These include, for example, awareness-raising, training and continuous evaluation and adaptation.
- be open to participate in difficult conversations and make an effort to keep the space respectful and safe for all voices, despite of disagreement

ECOLISE and its network aspire to a community-led transition to a low-carbon wellbeing economy which respects planetary boundaries, in which the most vulnerable and marginalised in society⁷ are not left behind. These groups include for example people with disabilities, people living in poverty, racial minorities such as indigenous people and people of color,

⁷ Certain groups are being hit disproportionately harder by the effects of the climate crisis than others. These same groups often also suffer from the lack of access to support and representation in policy making. These groups include at least: Socially vulnerable people who are affected by social and economic factors like income, education, health care access, and housing; People with chronic medical conditions, poor health or disabilities; Children, youth and the elderly; Racial minorities such as indigenous people and people of color, People in the global south. See more: e.g. EEA, UN, WHO, US EPA.

people in the global south, children and youth. ECOLISE recognises that social inequality is deeply rooted in the very same injustices that cause harm to the environment. In and through our work, we strive to transform exploitative, destructive and discriminatory relationships into relationships that respect the dignity and rights of humans, living beings, nature and the health of our planet. Within the ECOLISE Core we work consciously for non-discrimination and fair treatment of everyone, regardless of personal characteristics or position in the team, in line with Belgium and European anti-discrimination legislation and international human rights.

ECOLISE does political work, but chooses to not formally affiliate with religious groups or political parties. Our work relies on our shared values and principles, as stated in our strategy and elaborated in this Code of Conduct. We are tolerant and respectful of the diversity of viewpoints from our Collaborators and from within our network. However, we condemn and distance ourselves from any group or individual that spreads hate-based values⁸ and ideologies and actions that violate people's dignity⁹ and human rights¹⁰, such as violent right-wing extremism¹¹.

⁸ For reference, FBI's definition of a hate group: hate group's "primary purpose is to promote animosity, hostility, and malice against persons belonging to a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or ethnicity/national origin which differs from that of the members of the organization." These groups may promote for example fascism, racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, sexism or homophobia, and more.

⁹ See [Donna Hicks on dignity](#).

¹⁰ As defined in international and European legislation

¹¹ "Violent right-wing extremism (VRWE) are acts of individuals or groups who use, incite, threaten with, legitimise or support violence and hatred to further their political or ideological goals, motivated by ideologies based on the rejection of democratic order and values as well as of fundamental rights, and centred on exclusionary nationalism, racism, xenophobia and/or related intolerance." See [European Commission](#).

For us to live up to our transformative objectives and reputation, we commit to creating agreements and structures that support deep cultural transformation, such as our Equity Diversity and Inclusion policy. We create processes for keeping such policies and agreements active, such as awareness-raising, training and continuous evaluation.

3 *Perform my duties and conduct my private life in a manner that avoids possible conflicts of interest with the work of ECOLISE.*

- I will declare any financial, personal, family (or close intimate relationship) interest in matters of official business which may impact the work of ECOLISE (e.g. contract for goods/services, employment or promotion within ECOLISE, partner organizations, beneficiary groups).
- I will advise ECOLISE of any intention to seek a nomination as a prospective candidate/official role for any political party/public office to clarify whether there are perceived conflicts with my duties at ECOLISE.
- If conflicts of interest arise with the work of ECOLISE, I will fully disclose to ECOLISE on a regular basis all⁷ other private or public assignments and positions, paid or unpaid, which I hold, and give due notice of my nominations or candidature to new positions.

4 *Be responsible for the use of information, equipment, money and resources to which I have access by reason of my employment with ECOLISE.*

- I will use my discretion when handling sensitive or confidential information, such as personal data of ECOLISE Core team, Collaborators and network members, including contact details.
- I realise the importance of my role as part of the ECOLISE Core team and Collaborators network and will convey messages correctly when communicating in ECOLISE's name.
- I will avoid any unintended detrimental repercussions for me or ECOLISE.
- I will appropriately account for all ECOLISE money and property, (e.g. intellectual property, online applications, systems and files, as well as physical property such as office equipment, where relevant).

5 *Protect the health, safety, security and welfare of all ECOLISE staff, volunteers and contractors.*

- I will undertake and act on appropriate risk assessments.
- I will comply with any related internal policies, such as the EDI policy, wellbeing policy, conflict policies and other.
- I will behave in such a way as to avoid any unnecessary risk to the health, safety and welfare of myself and others, including partner organizations and beneficiaries.

6 *Promote human rights, protect the environment and oppose criminal or unethical activities.*

- I will ensure that my conduct is consistent with human rights, such as the International Human Rights Law, European Discrimination Law¹², Belgian Discrimination Law and any other human rights framework to which ECOLISE subscribes¹³.
- I will endeavor to protect the natural environment and work in a sustainable way to the best of my ability.
- I will contribute to preventing all forms of criminal or unethical activity.
- I will inform ECOLISE of any relevant criminal convictions or charges I have had prior to my employment in which ECOLISE may have a legitimate interest.
- I will also notify ECOLISE if I face any criminal charges during my employment that may impede my ability to perform the duties of my position, subject to national legislation.

I will adhere to all approved ECOLISE policies and procedures that support the above Standards.

In accepting my appointment, I undertake to uphold my role and regulate my conduct in accordance with the requirements of this Code, thereby contributing to ECOLISE's quality of performance and reputation.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....



¹² See [Handbook on European non-discrimination law](#).

¹³ See for more from the ECOLISE [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#).

WELLBEING POLICY



WELLBEING POLICY

aim

This policy sets out how we at ECOLISE strive to create a working environment that is rooted in care, trust, compassion and a sense of belonging. Rather than maintaining a “work/life balance”, which for so many of us can be difficult to achieve, we instead aim to support and nurture a fulfilling work life. We in ECOLISE want to create a culture that encourages personal development, recognises both the small and the big wins, and allows Core team members and Collaborators alike, to bring their whole selves to work.

purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define what ECOLISE can do to support the wellbeing of our Core members and Collaborators in a remote working environment. By pro-actively creating a culture of trust and care, we are more likely to create work that is heart-centred, inspiring and connected to those that we engage with externally. As a non-profit organisation with a freelancer-based team who all work part-time, we also want to be transparent and hold ourselves accountable to the things that we are unable to offer. ECOLISE has a limited amount of unrestricted funds that are not tied to project deliverables. This means that our work in

wellbeing - although constrained by budget concerns - is an ongoing process that we take seriously and strive to improve and develop over time. With the collaborative input of our Core team members and Collaborators, our long-term vision is to pursue funding opportunities that will assist us in our efforts so that we can support our internal wellbeing culture to thrive.

to be read alongside

Code of Conduct
Performance review process
Related policies

Our Wellbeing Scan

A wellbeing scan is a questionnaire that the Culture Building Circle conducts amongst our ECOLISE Core team every two to three months. It is our main methodology for monitoring wellbeing across the organisation. A wellbeing scan allows us to identify areas for improvement and make proactive changes. The changes we make normally take the form of iterative experiments that allow us, in a step-by-step manner, to improve, learn and adjust as a team. The results of our wellbeing scan are fed into this policy as an evolving document that is updated regularly.

How we support wellbeing at work

- Flexibility and understanding around ad-hoc changes to the working day, such as mental, physical, emotional or family situations
- Championing “saying yes” to and advocating wellbeing practices during meetings and events, such as personal level sharing, group games, silent moments, stretching and movement etc.

- Annual internal or externally resourced workshops for colleagues around people care practices (e.g. team building exercises like personality tests and discussing the results; training on conflict resilience etc.)
- Virtual “coffee breaks”
- Annual in-person team meetings
- Buddy system for new team members
- Regular wellbeing scan as a method for monitoring wellbeing
- Using wellbeing scan results for crafting proactive action proposals around wellbeing
- Space to bring our *whole selves* to work, including our emotional, intuitive, spiritual and vulnerable layers. Practising active, heartfelt and empathic listening to another. Acknowledging that there are several types of knowledge and wisdom, and all personality types have their strengths and gifts to bring.
- Holding spaces for appreciation and gratitude
- Creating a good working culture by putting into practice the social agreements listed in our Code of Conduct

Wellbeing goals

- Leaders who role model self-care and healthy boundaries at work
- Walking voice call Zoom meetings to encourage getting out outdoors
- A specific amount of paid break time during each working day for team members
- Peer-based confidential listening and wellbeing support, when needed
- Recognising, as early as possible, work stress amongst the team and offering necessary support
- Expressing successful personal wellbeing practices during meeting check-in rounds
- Offering each other guided bodywork sessions online, such as short workouts and stretching during the day
- Implementing a 'Wellness Action plan'¹ for team members and leadership
- Creating a constructive, open and solution-oriented approach to errors and failures
- Clear feedback systems and spaces to express and process tensions

- Getting everyone trained in NVC² or similar communication frameworks to support a constructive and compassionate communication culture
- Monitoring how the social agreements stated in our Code of Conduct are being put into practice and bringing awareness and support to areas where it's needed
- Integrating wellbeing and self-care goals into personal learning plans and performance reviews
- Time allocated to engaging with wellness resources such as information, advice, a facility, courses and seminars that promote physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing
- Implementing caring and supportive return to work policies, following team member illness/absence from work
- Mental Health First Aid training (MHFA) for designated team members (see St John Ambulance UK's MHFA offering).

¹ A Wellness Action Plan, created by UK mental health charity, MIND, is a "personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one." MIND has created two Wellness Action Plan Guides, which include practical Action Plan templates, in two relevant key areas: People Working Remotely - 'Using a Wellness Action Plan/Top tips for staying well at work' and Line Managers - 'Supporting your team members to develop a Wellness Action Plan/Supporting your own wellbeing'

² Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a framework and a set of skills that enables compassionate listening and connecting to self and others. It's a communication tool that serves for reconciliation in diverse contexts from work places to prisons and governments. See <https://www.cnvc.org/learn-nvc/what-is-nvc>

Holding ourselves accountable

ECOLISE doesn't currently offer direct employment contracts but instead works with freelancers across Europe. This means that common employment benefits, such as paid sick leave or holiday pay; paid maternity or paternity leave; insurance cover (life, health and dental, for example); disability protection, retirement, social security or similar benefits are the sole responsibility of team members. However, for further support and advice, ECOLISE strongly encourages team members to join a freelancers' union in your country.

What we in ECOLISE pride ourselves on is supporting flexible working arrangements. Our team members have the freedom to define their own spaces, work rhythms and arrangements in a part-time, fully remote context. ECOLISE creates space for team members to bring their own inspiration, diverse competencies, creativity and play to the working culture, and to shape the way they influence their role.



**EQUITY,
DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION POLICY**

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

aim

The work we do at ECOLISE is inspired by the vision of a compassionate, equitable and regenerative society of empowered and resilient communities that thrive on diversity and inclusion, and that live within planetary boundaries.

As per our 2019 strategy, our values are:

- Full respect for the 'voice' (views) of local communities
- Collaboration and collective responsibility
- Gender equality
- Mutual respect and tolerance
- Political independence
- Non-discrimination
- Respect for diversity
- Sustainable and regenerative use of natural resources
- Accountability and transparency in all decision-making processes
- Equitable distribution of society's wealth, resources and opportunities leading to economic equality
- A healthy environment and human prosperity within planetary ecological limits

purpose

This policy exists in recognition of the fact that any organisation based on such guiding principles must consciously work to understand and deconstruct the damaging social relations in which we - consciously or unconsciously - participate in, and which reproduce the systems we are working to transform. ECOLISE recognises that inequality is deeply rooted in the very same injustices that cause harm to the environment. In our work, we strive to transform exploitative, destructive and discriminatory relationships into relationships that respect the dignity and rights of humans, living beings, nature and the health of our planet.

ECOLISE and its network aspire to a community-led transition to a low-carbon wellbeing economy, in which the most vulnerable and marginalised⁵ in society are not left behind and the planetary boundaries are respected

⁵ Certain groups are being hit disproportionately harder by the effects of the climate crisis than others. These same groups often also suffer from the lack of access to support and representation in policy making. These groups include at least: Socially vulnerable people who are affected by social and economic factors like income, education, health care access, and housing; People with chronic medical conditions, poor health or disabilities; Children, youth and the elderly; Racial minorities such as indigenous people and people of color, People in the global south. See more: e.g. EEA, UN, WHO, US EPA.

We in ECOLISE believe that an inclusive and effective transition can only be created if we listen to, learn from, make space for and welcome voices from a diversity of backgrounds, identities and life experiences. We accept that this will challenge us and make us uncomfortable. We will not always succeed on our path to improvement and we recognise that “when you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression” - we will attempt to act with this awareness in mind.

Finally, we in ECOLISE recognise that in our various and overlapping positions of privilege there is much that we are unaware of and can learn more about. We expect from ourselves, as well as our wider network of members, to be in a constant process of reflection, discussion and research regarding these values, and to approach each subject with a level of humility and respect for different views and perspectives.

Categories of diversity

##

As a Brussels based organisation ECOLISE operates under Belgian law and therefore its Equity Diversity and Inclusion targets and efforts are aligned within the Belgium framework, such as the [anti-discrimination legislation](#), the labour law and the [Actiris diversity policy for employment](#). Any discrimination based on the below listed criteria is punishable by law:

- The five racial criteria: alleged⁶ race, skin colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin or descent
- Physical disability
- Religion or philosophical conviction
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Wealth (or financial resources)
- Marital status
- Political conviction

⁶ “The European Union rejects theories which attempt to determine the existence of separate human races.[...] There have been debates around the use of the term ‘race’ within anti-discrimination legislation. [...] some countries have taken the view that including the terms ‘race’ or ‘racial origin’ in anti-discrimination legislation reinforces the perception that humans can be distinguished according to ‘race’. For this reason, they have avoided using these terms altogether in transposing legislation. [...] Belgian law refers to ‘alleged race’, while in France, various legal provisions refer to ‘real or assumed’ (vraie ou supposée) race or ethnic origin, in an attempt to underline the non-acceptance of the concept of ‘race’.” See: [A Comparative Analysis of Non-Discrimination Law in Europe](#) - 2017 and more in the [Handbook on European Non-Discrimination Law](#).

- Trade Union membership
- Health condition⁷ (current or future)
- Physical or genetic characteristics
- Birth
- Social background
- Sex (including pregnancy, giving birth, maternity, breastfeeding, fatherhood, adoption, medically assisted reproduction, sex change and gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics)
- Language

Moreover, in ECOLISE we pay special attention to cultural and personality differences, as well as explicit and implicit power relations (one’s role within the team, duration of engagement with ECOLISE, expertise in a particular field, junior/senior imbalances, language skills, etc). These can all be factors that contribute to misunderstandings and tensions in daily working relationships and can lead to unequal and unfair treatment.

In our public facing and impact work we pay particular attention to vulnerable groups that are being hit disproportionately harder by the effects of the climate crisis than others. These groups include for example people with disabilities, people living in poverty, racial minorities such as indigenous people and people of color, people in the global south, children and youth.

⁷ Health conditions may be defined as a physical or a mental health condition.

Ongoing commitments from ECOLISE Core team and Collaborators, and our external members

##

core team and collaborators⁸ will:

- treat all people with respect and dignity and challenge any form of harassment, discrimination, intimidation, exploitation or abuse in the working environment.
- not abuse our positions of power/unequal power.
- challenge injustice, respect all peoples' rights, and contribute to a working environment characterised by mutual respect, integrity, dignity and non-discrimination.
- commit to continuous organisational development that supports deep cultural transformation and systemic change within and without. These include, for example, awareness-raising, training and continuous evaluation and adaptation.

⁸ This includes consultants, freelance external service providers, interns and volunteers

- be open to participate in difficult conversations and make an effort to keep the space respectful and safe for all voices, despite of disagreement
- acknowledge that conversations and decisions that have to do with power and privilege have both systemic and personal sides to them, and therefore easily bring up controversy and emotions. This can only be handled constructively if we embed them in a sense of care for each individual, place the shared purpose and mission in the centre, explore systemic and structural causes for conflict, back up decisions and arguments with an evidence base and avoid blaming, silencing, defensiveness, weaponizing⁹, pitting people against each other and other harmful behaviours (see more about constructive behaviour in our Code of Conduct).

ECOLISE members must:

- share the ECOLISE vision, our values and guiding principles
- act or speak up¹⁰ if one sees that the ECOLISE values are violated in ECOLISE's or its member's spaces
- act or speak up if one sees that the ECOLISE values are violated by individuals who hold a representative role for ECOLISE or one of its members

⁹ "to make something suitable for use to harm somebody or to damage something" ([Oxford learner's dictionaries](#))

¹⁰ To act or speak up is to highlight, only if it feels safe to do so, your concerns with the person you believe is violating ECOLISE's values. You may also report concerns to your closest/most trusted ECOLISE team member. ECOLISE advises that this team member then bring their concerns directly to the ECOLISE Safeguarding Focal Person and/or Culture Building Group.

- commit to standing up for the protection of human dignity and human rights, and particularly within our networks and related events, activities and spaces

short-term commitments

In 2022 ECOLISE went through a diversity and inclusion assessment facilitated by the Diversity Department of Actiris, the Public Employment Service for Brussels. We identified organisational gaps and weaknesses related to diversity and inclusion in four key areas:

- recruitment and selection
- personnel policy (HR)
- awareness-raising and internal communication
- external positioning

ECOLISE Culture Building Circle designed actions to address these gaps, during a two-year period, with a 20.000 EUR budget. During this implementation period we will have 1-2 checks annually with the Actiris Diversity Department to evaluate how well we are achieving our targets. Between 2024 and 2025 we will make a new EDI analysis and create a set of commitments and targets for the following years.

Between 2022-2024 ECOLISE will:



1

Develop an inclusive recruitment process

We in ECOLISE aim at attracting more people from the groups that we don't currently reach and that are underrepresented in our team. We will make sure that we minimise biases towards certain groups during the hiring process. We will commit to discovering and addressing barriers and blind spots that might create limitations for people to engage with us. We will pay attention to diversity in recruitment, including gender and other diversity criteria, using Belgian demographic metrics as an indicator.

2

Broaden our recruitment channels

We in ECOLISE aim at creating more inflow of people who originate from non-European countries or beyond EU14 and people who are 45+. We will reach out to people with disabilities in our recruitment process.

3

Highlight in the new hire's welcome package and onboarding process, our commitment to anti-discrimination and the promotion of diversity and inclusion

We in ECOLISE will ensure that new team members and interns feel welcomed and get the support they need at ECOLISE, through a buddy system or similar. We inform any new person joining our team of our commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination; and what this means in practice.

4 Establish a diverse Advisory Board

We in ECOLISE will actively engage and dialogue with groups that are underrepresented in our network, such as lower socio-economic groups and other marginalised communities; youth, elders, indigenous/global south etc. We will involve representatives from these groups in our ongoing strategy development by establishing an Advisory Board that works to identify shared values and challenges, whilst building collective strategies. It is key to our strategy that we promote a community-led transition to a low-carbon wellbeing economy which respects planetary boundaries and society where the most vulnerable and marginalised in society are not left behind. This action enables us to engage in deeper conversation around this topic on a regular basis.

5 Coach staff in diversity, inclusion and tension management, with a focus on developing a more inclusive work culture

We in ECOLISE will continue to provide training, coaching and workshops to our team and Council, in order to root diversity and inclusion awareness into our work on a practical level. We improve our capacity to work with and solve difficult issues as they arise, such as tensions and conflicts caused by differences in perspective, opinion, values, communication style and cultural backgrounds, unconscious bias and sometimes leading to miscommunication, polarisation, bullying etc. We will continue to refine our internal People Care Policies and their practical implementation, in order to create a safer

and more inclusive work environment. We build our capacity for addressing harmful behaviours in the office, head-on.

6 Organise a workshop around Ableism

We in ECOLISE will ensure that the team and Council become more aware of different types of visible and invisible disabilities that exist, including mental health. We will support people with disabilities within the team. We will encourage conversations within our team around how we can do better to accommodate different types of disabilities in the future. This training will be held as a workshop led by an external consultant - the learnings of which we will root into our organisational process. Our [Inclusive Communications Policy](#) offers more about the work we are already doing in this area.

7 Communicate our ongoing commitment, actions and advances in this area, to our broader network

We in ECOLISE regularly communicate our work in equity, diversity and inclusion through our communication channels such as newsletter, at least twice a year. The purpose is to share our learnings of the work we are doing and regularly update our broader network.

8 Develop and implement an inclusive communications policy

We in ECOLISE will conduct an analysis of the language we use, tools, channels and who we are writing to and use the results to develop

9 Develop and implement an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

We in ECOLISE will have clear EDI values for our organisation, our broader network, and will ensure that all of our core Collaborators are aware of these values and will put our values into practice.

10 Create opportunities for more inclusive events

We in ECOLISE will write policies and guidelines for running our events in a way that attracts a wider audience. We commit to making events accessible, allowing everyone to feel safe, represented and welcome when they take part. Event policies will take into account factors such as disabilities, language, positive discrimination in participant selection, diversity of speakers, location of events, themes chosen and food provided.

11 Building a diverse and inclusive image bank

We in ECOLISE aim to better represent our evolving audience in our communications, with the intention of appealing to more people from a wide range of diverse and underrepresented groups. We will build an image bank of real, relatable people from our network and set out clear EDI guidelines of the way we use images in our communications at ECOLISE.



WORK IN PROGRESS...

CONFLICT POLICY



CONFLICT POLICY

aim

ECOLISE aims to support and encourage all Core members¹ to maintain individual conduct and performance, as set out in the agreed standards of our [Code of Conduct](#). Our [Wellbeing Policy](#) also outlines the ways in which we support Core members and Collaborators at ECOLISE, as well as what we, as an organisation, will hold ourselves accountable to and the kind of care spaces we wish to create in the future.

At ECOLISE we aim to treat tensions² as opportunities for improvement and learning on an organisational and interpersonal level. Tensions often reveal something in the collective field that deserves attention and that can be turned into positive action. When seen this way, tensions can be a gift.

We also seek to understand the root causes of difficulties we may encounter in meeting our agreed standards. We want to step outside of

the punishment-based approach and instead adopt practices aligned with transformative justice when handling conflict: “We don't just want to respond to harm - we want to change the conditions that enabled that harm to take place”³. Justice practices such as these help us to focus on accountability and healing, as well as the potential root causes that go beyond the individuals like structural issues within the organisation (e.g. governance and operational practices); systemic issues in the organisation (e.g. power dynamics); or society at large (e.g. forms of systemic oppression). We will also explore the personal context of what might be impacting an individual's conduct - for example; events in their life; a lack of training, support or opportunities.

For more information about transformative justice theory, practices and recommendable methods, please refer to our [People Care Annex and Resources](#).

¹ ‘ECOLISE Core members’ refers to paid team members and voluntary Council members. In these policies we also use ‘Collaborators’ to refer to consultants, external service providers, interns and volunteers that contribute to daily operations.

² In sociocracy, tension is described as “an experience: a symptom of dissonance between an individual's perception of a situation, and their expectations (or preferences).” In other words, tensions can guide a way from an undesired reality towards a desired reality.

³ [RadHR / LevelUp](#)

purpose

In most cases when conflict arises, it is preferable to try and¹ work out issues directly and independently between the people concerned. The focus should be on taking personal responsibility and initiative attempting to reach a resolution based on clear and compassionate communication between the parties involved. In conflicts that manifest on a relationship level, this means primarily a private process among colleagues, whereas in conflicts of a more structural nature it's good to invite the participation of people who hold accountability of the² organisational issues at hand, or relevant data. When tensions between individuals are felt, it is advisable to turn as soon as possible to audiovisual means (e.g. Zoom, if in-person meetings are not possible) to reduce the potential for misunderstandings to arise in written communications.

Tensions should be handled directly and as soon as possible, before they grow into conflicts. We acknowledge that it takes courage to face tensions head-on. Therefore we seek to build and maintain a culture of trust, support, respect and honest communication to make this process easier. It is important to make the effort to repair harm in order to heal ruptures in trust - apologising and agreement setting are ways we can do this, among others.

to be read alongside

[ECOLISE Code of Conduct](#)
[Performance Review Process \(pending\)](#)
[Wellbeing Policy](#)
[Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
[Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)
[People Care Annex and Resources](#)

Feedback systems



Tension management starts from prevention. Structures and practices for sharing and integrating feedback are key. As a flat hierarchy organisation based on nearly fully remote working practices, it's a key expectation for all team members to speak up and take personal initiative to sort out tensions, doubts and concerns. This can happen in:

- Daily check-in's
 - Starting meetings with a round of personal sharing, which can include news and feelings from both personal and work life
- Weekly full team coworking meetings
 - Meetings with co-created and emergent agenda. Space to raise any issues or tensions and process them.
- Ad-hoc meetings set up to solve an issue at hand
- Domain team meetings and inter-domain meetings
- Regular virtual "coffee breaks"
 - Meetings without work agenda, meant for connection and discussion
- Annual in-person team meetings

All ECOLISE domains are required to conduct retrospectives regularly, to evaluate the work done and make needed adjustments. This allows early awareness and intervention on issues that may otherwise start accumulating and negatively impacting the work and working environment.

In ECOLISE we aim to channel identified structural tensions into concrete, immediately actionable and timebound experiments that allow us to make quickly and easily implementable changes, and later evaluate and iterate. Anyone in the organisation can propose an experiment.

Rhythms for retrospectives and feedback sessions should be regular, roughly:

- Domain specific retrospectives should be conducted at least three times a year, but preferably monthly, even if in a smaller scale
- Feedback across domains needs to be invited at least once a year.
- Debriefings should be conducted at the end of any larger project, event, campaign or experiment that is finishing.
- Feedback on general governance, operations management, culture and wellbeing concerning the entire organisation, needs to be invited at least 3-4 times a year.

Informal tension management process

introduction

The purpose of an informal approach is to solve tension by proactively introducing changes to day-to-day working practices. It also allows everyone in the room to be heard, without placing blame on others or side-taking. Support from colleagues or external mediators may be called upon gradually and over time, or more directly where misconduct is serious. In these processes, it's good to keep in mind the standards, values and relational agreements outlined in the [Code of Conduct](#).

If an issue is brought forward as a written complaint, the Safeguarding Focal Person will assess the seriousness of the situation and decide whether the issue will take the informal or formal route.

If you have followed the outlined Informal Tension Management steps below and the issue remains unresolved, the next step is to follow the Formal Disciplinary Procedure. In cases of gross misconduct, the Disciplinary Procedure will be followed immediately. If you believe this to be a case of bullying, please read our [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#).

feeling triggered

Everyone should feel safe at the workplace. If you feel often triggered⁴ at work, it's a wellbeing issue that needs to be addressed. When you feel triggered, begin by taking deep breaths to slow down and regulate your nervous system. This is a first and very effective step in dealing with tension. If possible, avoid defensiveness or verbally attacking others. Also notice if you are withdrawing into yourself or feeling emotionally numb. Explore what you need and what how to get those needs met. In some cases we may recover well from triggers through self empathy, at other times we may require the support of others. Know that such support is available, if you request for it. Everyone in the ECOLISE Core is expected to make themselves available for supporting others in solving workplace tensions.

In case of feeling or being exposed to other people's triggered behavior, remind yourself of the relational agreements in the ECOLISE Code of Conduct - particularly the ones on 'respectful communication and non-discrimination', and 'personal accountability and proactive tension management'.

⁴ "Trigger symptoms often include: Feeling scared, panicked, anxious, or unsafe; Elevated heartbeat, sweating, and difficulty breathing; Feeling like you have no control over your emotions; Urge to run away, escape, or other avoidant behavior; Rumination or negative, automatic thoughts; Inexplicable or unpredictable changes in mood; Anxiety or panic attacks; Physical tension, like clenching the fists or jaw; Flashbacks of stressful or traumatic events; Delayed outbursts of anger or sadness." See [BetterUp blog](#)

tension management pathways

STAGE 1

a) Asking for empathy or advice: Request listening from an ECOLISE Core member unrelated to the tensions

You may ask a trusted team or Council member to listen to you and support you to process and clarify what is coming up for you. Depending on the type of tension, you may ask for *empathy* or *advice*.

An *empathic listening space* is about supportive, non-judgmental and confidential listening to another person. It is not about spreading rumours or speaking harmfully about another person behind their back. The focus of empathic listening is to feel heard by someone and to better understand one's own feelings and needs. After being heard by someone else, it can be more comfortable and constructive to face the person who triggered the tension in you.

An *advice space* is about sharing your perspective and challenge with someone, and getting a second opinion or additional data, before you take the issue further.

OR

b) Direct dialogue: Speak directly to the person you're in conflict with or who holds accountability for the issue

If it's an issue of *behaviour* or other interpersonal triggers:

- Turn to audiovisual communication like Zoom as soon as possible
- Make a record of when this conversation was had.
- Avoid blaming - own your feelings and experiences. Aim to understand the feelings and needs of the other, even if their behaviour or what they share with you is triggering⁵.
- You may find the BIFF structure helpful (behaviour - impact - future - feelings)
 - Describe to them which *behaviour* you've experienced as harmful
 - Share what the *impact* of that behaviour has been on you
 - Communicate what you *need and expect in future* in terms of behaviour
 - Check in on how the person *feels* receiving this
- If you are receiving feedback on how you have behaved harmfully, you may experience discomfort and a pull to defend yourself. Encourage yourself to sit in discomfort, to listen and learn from what is being said.
- Aim at reaching shared agreements. These may be relational and behaviour related, or proposals for changes on an organisational level that you can share at team meetings, Slack or directly with relevant team members.

⁵ You may find the Non-Violent Communication (NVC) framework helpful here

If it's a *structural or organisational* issue:

- Seek needed data from the people who know (e.g. administrator on budget information and potential scenarios)
- Take contact with the people who hold accountability on the issue, and hence, have the mandate to solve it (e.g. CoDirectors on budget decisions).

OR

c) Bring it up for a group process

- If a tension or conflict is brought to a meeting where a larger group is present, we can either A) deal with it there and then B) create a separate meeting. Ask yourself, who is needed in the conversation?
- When processing tensions in a group, pay special attention to ensuring that people feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves, and that there is an atmosphere of listening and a sufficient amount of time.
- This approach is mainly to be used when the issues concerned involve a group of people or team dynamics, rather than an interpersonal conflict between two people.

OR

d) Supported dialogue: Bring along a support person from the ECOLISE Core

If the issue feels difficult to address, you may choose to ask a trusted team or Council member to join you in a meeting as your support person and witness. You may give your counterpart the opportunity to do the same. Alternatively, you may both choose someone neutral. At this stage, the role of the supporter doesn't need to be active: their main role is to listen, witness and add a sense of psychological safety. These supporters can also be asked to perform small tasks, such as note taking or sharing an outside perspective to the topic. Ownership over the process is still held by the issue holders.

Guidance for the supporter:

1. Take notes of the meeting, only if you're asked to. At the end of the meeting, make sure your notes are agreed upon.
2. Be mindful of confidentiality agreements. If the issue concerns sensitive personal information, don't share details with third parties, unless you've specifically been given permission to do so.
3. Care for the process. Offer your support and keep checking in on the parties involved. Once you've got involved, we recommend maintaining a connection between the people involved until it's agreed that:
 - a. structured outside mediation is needed (stage 3)
 - b. clear actions for repair have been taken or satisfactory agreements have been made about how to deal with the issue in the future
 - c. the conflict has been resolved

STAGE 2 - Introducing further support

If a), b) and/or c) or d) have been attempted and further processing is needed, then either:

d) Bring along a support person from the ECOLISE Core for supported dialogue (same as d) above). At this stage, please keep the Safeguarding Focal Person and a member of the Culture Building Group informed of the process.

OR

e) Reach out for mediation support from the ECOLISE Safeguarding Focal Person or a person external to ECOLISE, such as a network member or a professional mediator (clarify budget before making any commitments). At this stage, please keep the Safeguarding Focal Person and a member of the Culture Building Group informed of the process.

If a), b) c) and d) have all been attempted then reach out for external support (e).

Reaching out for structured support/ mediation (e)

This stage precedes the first stage of the formal disciplinary procedure. At this stage, space holding moves from the issue holders over to supporters, such as the ECOLISE Safeguarding Focal Person or a person external to ECOLISE, such as a trusted network member or a professional mediator.

However, the process is still lighter than formal disciplinary measures. The role of the supporter is to facilitate dialogue, not to investigate, judge or define consequences.

Guidance for external support

i) Speak to every person involved in the tensions, more than once if needed.

ii) Bring conflicting parties together for a supported dialogue. You may choose to use one of the meeting frameworks described in our People Care Annex and Resources document.

If conflict is sufficiently settled or resolved at this point then great, if not repeat steps i) and ii).

Other:

- If one or more persons are feeling unsafe, you may propose to build distance between the parties for a set period of time, to allow the person who has been harmed the opportunity to heal, and the person who has caused harm the opportunity to reflect. This may, for example, mean avoiding small group meetings and direct communication between the parties.
- If the people involved desire an apology, support this to happen and follow up on how the apology is received.
- Transparency stops rumours from spreading and therefore we recommend making the wider team of ECOLISE Core members aware that such a process is happening, whilst adhering to our confidentiality guidelines. The parties involved need to actively approve any information that is being shared, such as a piece of text. This informing process is normally done in Slack, without going into unnecessary details.

other suggestions

ROOT CAUSES

We recommend reflecting on, at each stage of the tension management process, the root causes of a situation. One helpful framework for this is 'the five types of conflict'⁶, namely: information conflicts, values conflicts, interest conflicts, relationship conflicts and structural conflicts.

This could mean reflecting together - with the person you are in conflict with, the people accountable for the issue, a support person and/or an external mediator, for example - to make changes. It could also mean instigating a collective group discussion on power dynamics, values and beliefs, shared procedures or work habits, resource issues, boundaries etc. to help address the root cause. Conversations such as this would ideally lead to practical experiments or agreements. It is also important to recognise that we cannot fix everything and structural/systemic issues may require a longer time to change.

APOLOGISING

If you are called on to apologise for your behaviour, remember that apologies must be firmly grounded in acknowledging the harmful behaviours – not excusing, explaining or focusing on the emotional response of the person you've harmed. Use the analogy of stepping on someone's foot to remind you: if someone is in pain due to your actions, even if accidental, do not dismiss their pain. Apologise for your action.

⁶ See Christopher Moore: The Mediation Process (2003) / [University of Colorado Denver](#)

Formal Disciplinary Procedure

introduction

This procedure is designed for use when the principles of the Code of Conduct have not been upheld and only after supportive action from the Informal Tension Management Process has been unable to resolve the issues raised. It sets out the formal procedure we are legally obligated to provide. It has been created to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues.

If you have faced harm that is serious enough that you need immediate protection, or the informal process hasn't led to a resolution, you can file a written complaint. The Safeguarding Focal Person will assess the situation and guide you through next steps. Your physical and psychological safety needs to be prioritised without delay.

If someone has filed a complaint about you, you will be informed in writing of what is alleged and have the opportunity to state your case at a disciplinary meeting. We will give you an opportunity to respond, being open to the fact that you may have an alternative perspective or

contradictory evidence (this excludes vocal denials and any attempts to minimise the incident or its impact on others). You have the right to be accompanied by an ECOLISE Core member, trade union representative, a friend or family member, and you have the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision.

We recognise that the prospect of disciplinary action may well be upsetting and cause stress and anxiety. This is likely to be a difficult experience with some hard conversations along the way. We want to take steps to make it easier for everyone involved. Our Wellbeing Policy outlines some of the ways ECOLISE can support you. We will also seek to identify appropriate external forms of support to the best of our ability and financial means.

STEP 1: Reporting to safeguarding focal person, investigation and improvement plan

- Where misconduct is felt to have occurred, it is reported to the safeguarding focal person and/or a person in a leadership position, such as a CoDirector at the earliest possible moment.
- An investigation will be opened, which we will aim to carry out as quickly and consistently as possible. Investigators appointed by the Safeguarding Focal Persons, will look at available evidence and consult the relevant policies. They may also hold a fact-finding meeting with you and interview anyone (for example, witnesses/bystanders) with relevant information. The person leading the investigation will intentionally investigate both the alleged misconduct and our own internal systems for mutual responsibility and accountability.

- For more information about the way we investigate disciplinary cases and who is chosen to lead the investigation, please refer to our [People Care Annex and Resources](#).
- You will be **informed in detail**, including concrete examples, about your alleged misconduct and will be given an opportunity to offer an alternative perspective to the situation. Space is held for an exploration of the wider context of issues and any barriers that may be impacting your conduct. The desired working culture at ECOLISE is also discussed during these space holding sessions.
- If, after investigating, we believe that misconduct has occurred, then a process for developing an **improvement plan** is put in place. However, if the investigators feel that the issue does not warrant a disciplinary process, then the Safeguarding Focal persons will guide you back and through the [Informal Tension Management Process](#). This may be the case for example if the issue is structural and not personal and behavioural by nature,
- An improvement plan will be co-created in an intentional meeting by both you and the investigator. In these meetings notes are taken, clear agreements are made and a time is set for reviewing them. Time frames from improvement plans are decided on a case-by-case basis and will last no longer than six-months.
- If the investigation shows that both/all parties hold a considerable level of responsibility for the events, an improvement plan will be prepared for each of the people involved.

- You will be supported to achieve the actions listed in your improvement plan with regular check-in meetings and, as needed, with:
 - additional one-to-one support, or coaching in a particular work area from other core/ network members
 - signposting to external services for personal issues that may be impeding work
 - Practical adjustments to working hours, physical arrangements or other aspects of the role that are proving difficult
 - Other ideas that are raised together with the staff or members involved

STEP TWO: THREE-MONTH URGENT ACTION PLAN

- If you do not adhere to the agreed course of action listed above or if no improvements as set out in your plan have been made, we may invite you to a session to draw up a three-month urgent action plan. You will be asked to attend regular check-ins at agreed intervals. If at the three month point there has been insufficient improvement, you may be at risk of dismissal.

STEP THREE: DISMISSAL

Where we find that misconduct is sufficiently serious to justify dismissal or if your conduct or performance has failed to improve despite following improvement and action plans, you may be dismissed. The Safeguarding Focal Person, a Codirector and a member of the Culture Building Circle will make a decision about the dismissal within two weeks from the

completion of your urgent action plan. You will be provided with the reason for your dismissal in writing, including the date on which your contract or duty will terminate, and you will be notified of your right to appeal.

gross misconduct

Where there is an allegation of gross misconduct immediate action is necessary. This procedure will be carried out within one week of receiving a complaint and you will be invited to a formal meeting with an external professional. You can find more information about this process in our [People Care Annex and Resources](#) document. We consider offences of the following nature to constitute gross misconduct (the list is not exhaustive):

- Theft, bribery, fraud or deliberate falsification of records
- Persistent and repeated failure to deliver on agreed tasks and responsibilities
- Violence and/or assault on another person
- Deliberate damage to ECOLISE property (including intellectual property)
- Serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of illegal drugs
- Serious negligence causing unacceptable loss, damage or injury
- Unauthorised sharing of confidential and sensitive information that may damage ECOLISE's interest (that is not deemed a legally protected disclosure).

- Acts of gross misconduct outside work that would bring ECOLISE's name into disrepute. This includes activities that are illegal under the local law and those which, although not illegal, may damage ECOLISE's reputation.

If you are accused of gross misconduct, you may be suspended from work on full pay, normally for no more than two weeks, while the alleged offence is investigated. If we are satisfied that gross misconduct has occurred, the result will normally be dismissal with no notice or payment in lieu of notice granted. Both the CoDirectors and Safeguarding focal person should be notified if gross misconduct is proven. If the complaint is against a CoDirector, it should be communicated to the Safeguarding focal person.

appeals

If you wish to appeal against any disciplinary decision you must do so in writing to the ECOLISE Safeguarding Focal Person within five working days. The SFP will then invite you to a formal appeal meeting conducted by an Appeals Board that has been established by the ECOLISE Council. The members of the Appeals Board will be fully impartial and will not have been previously involved in any of the decision making related to the case concerned. You will be informed of the decision in writing.

WORK IN PROGRESS...
##

about confidentiality and anonymity

(pending)

**INCLUSIVE
COMMUNICATIONS
POLICY**



INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

aim

This policy outlines how we use inclusive communication at ECOLISE. Inclusive communication means sharing information in a way that everybody can understand. It applies to all kinds of on and offline communication - emails, events, presentations and conversations.

purpose

ECOLISE wants to raise awareness around inclusive communication within the organisation, and to adopt these practices throughout all of our work.

We all have different ways of communicating. We also have different needs and preferences. The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge and support these differences, whilst also highlighting the ways we share information to make it accessible for all.

This policy outlines how we support inclusive communications for people¹

¹ Although we recognise that in other, non-English Speaking countries, 'people with disability' might not be the preferred term, here we follow [guidelines set out by the World Health Organisation](#).

with disability², as well as those whose first language is not English. There are other aspects around inclusivity and representation, which we cover in more detail in our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Considering people with disability as a specific and important target group for ECOLISE is not only about generally reaching a broader audience. People with disabilities account for 25 percent of the European population and they are among the ones hardest hit by the climate crisis, which calls for increased efforts on integrating their voices in climate policy and action.³

to be read alongside

Code of Conduct
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

² See more on what is meant by disability: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html>

³ "'Eco-ableism', the EU, and climate disaster" in EUobserver, 6 April 2023 <https://euobserver.com/opinion/156898>

When sharing information online and offline, we will consider the following:

- Presume that our audience, including our Core team and Collaborators, includes people with communication support needs and supporting those needs by using plain English
- Remove ambiguity and misunderstandings by avoiding jargon
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Create accessible documents⁴ like in HTML format or accessible PDFs, for example
- Offer information in alternative formats like audio and large print
- Allow enough time to create different formats for our audience
- Continue to adapt and change our communication style to meet the needs of our audience
- Use size 12 font
- Subtitle videos shared on social media
- Distribute manuals, workbooks and other materials in a wide range of languages

⁴ Non-accessible formats include PDF documents that haven't been tagged properly or don't use 12-14pt font - changes which make PDFs barrier-free and usable on assistive technologies like screen readers.

Currently our websites, Communities For Future and ECOLISE, both offer accessibility functionality, including the ability to:

- resize fonts (increase/decrease)
- add grayscale, negative contrast, high contrast and light backgrounds
- underline links to external pages
- use readable fonts
- link to sitemap /feedback /help pages



When designing our events we will consider the following:

- Creating accessible events with both the speakers and attendees in mind
- Speaking clearly and slowly
- Checking that our venues are accessible
- Mention the facilities available when publicising an event
- Encourage people to express⁴ their needs around language, whenever possible
- Record events so that people can access them at their own pace, or at a later date
- Offer Easy Read materials at all of our events
- Activate the automated captions & automated captions translation on Zoom

Our Inclusive Events Policy provides detailed information about the ways we strive to make our ECOLISE events more inclusive.

##

Inclusive Language

ECOLISE actively avoids reinforcing stereotypes by avoiding terms like:

- gendered language: 'guys', 'mankind', 'chairman', for example
- language or terms related to age: 'fresh out of university,' for example
- 'normal' when referring to a non-disabled person
- phrases like 'suffers from', 'handicapped', 'inflicted by' a disability, for example
- phrases such as 'special needs' or 'differently abled' in relation to disability
- 'mentally ill', 'insane' or 'schizophrenic' when referring to mental health conditions
-

These terms are problematic because they can perpetuate discrimination and may come across as exclusionary or condescending to others. Instead, ECOLISE actively strives to use terms like:

- 'humanity', 'all genders', 'chair' or 'chairperson'
- 'they', rather than 'he' or 'she', for example
- 'parents' rather than 'mum and dad', for example
- 'person with disability', 'person living with...'
- 'person with a mental health condition' , 'person with schizophrenia'

Other ways we can support inclusive communications



- Ask our Core team, Collaborators and members what their preferred gender pronouns are and suggest that they share their pronoun on email signatures
- Use images that represent a wide range of diversity in our communications⁵
- Use subtitles and audio tracks in our videos
- Adopt Active Listening Skills when talking with people. Active listening skills ask that we hear what another person is saying and that we seek to understand the meaning behind their words. To learn more about what active listening might look like in practice, within ECOLISE, visit the 'Relational Agreements' section of our Code of Conduct.

⁵ Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy provides more information about the work we are doing around diversity and inclusion.