

SYL's Safer Space Policy

Introduction

SYL is deeply committed to feminism and to opposing racism, and we strive to ensure that all SYL events are free from harassment and discrimination. SYL will continue to seek new ways to promote equality. In the student movement, everyone must have a chance to participate in activities according to that person's abilities. The student movement also embraces diversity.

SYL aims to ensure that its events are safe spaces where participants feel at ease and take responsibility by reflecting on their own behavior and changing it if necessary. The policy aims to create ways to prevent unpleasant situations from arising or to remedy these situations, instead of making the participants just put up with them.

The word "safer" instead of "safe" refers to the idea that creating a completely safe space for everyone is virtually impossible, even though it is our goal.

Safer Space Policy

The aim of the safer space policy is to support people participating in SYL's activities to create an inner sense of security. It is important that the participants can trust that their experiences are heard and respected and that everyone is committed to the safer space policy. This also encourages people to handle any conflicts arising within the community in a reflective and solution-oriented manner.

The aim is to get the participants to observe their own behavior and to take responsibility for it. The policy prevents the creation of hierarchies and unequal situations within groups. It is a way to create a sense of community and inclusion by making everyone feel welcome and that they can contribute together to increasing the sense of security.

A safe space is determined by the mutual interaction between the participants, and no general guidelines can be given as to how the boundaries of individual participants are defined and when they are crossed.

- Acknowledge the different boundaries of different people and respect them. The identity of each individual is up to that individual to determine, and no one's gender, sexual or political orientation or nationality can be inferred from their appearance.
- Acknowledge and be aware of your privileges. Privilege refers to unearned benefits that certain social groups possess. In society, they are defined in relation to one's identity: skin color, social class, gender, sexual orientation, language, geographic identity, health status, religion, etc.
- Be open and listen to others. Avoid making assumptions about other participants, as we cannot understand the experiences, thoughts, life situation and self-determined identity of the

other participants for them. However, since we often do make assumptions about other people, try to be aware of your own assumptions.

- Uphold and promote respect for each other, for the diversity of the community and individual diversity.
- Give other people space and make sure that everyone's voice is heard and that everyone can take part in conversations. Everyone is encouraged to get involved.
- SYL events are free from harassment and discrimination. Harassment comes in different forms, such as verbal harassment, touching or staring. If someone is asked to stop this behavior, it must stop. Discrimination also takes many forms, such as making assumptions about a person based on their skin color or the languages they speak.
- Nobody should turn a blind eye to objectionable and inappropriate behavior.
- Do not generalize your own experiences and apply them to others: it is not appropriate to determine someone's experience on their behalf.
- Talk in such a way that everyone understands - try to use language that is understandable also to those outside your own reference group by e.g. explaining the meaning of abbreviations used.
- Do not talk improperly of other people or attack them in your speeches, neither those present nor absent. In line with this, stereotypes and offensive comparisons must not be tolerated.
- Nobody's views should be misrepresented or deliberately interpreted in a negative light.

Equality Observers

Two equality observers will be elected for SYL's events. An equality monitor follows up on the implementation of this document and the equality code of practice. Participants can contact equality monitors if they become aware of, or are themselves affected by, activities that violate the principles of equality, diversity, and safety. You can report these incidents either face-to-face, via telephone or through an anonymous electronic form.

The equality observers work to support the creation of a safer space and support people in conflict resolution situations. The most important thing is, however, that the participants try to create a safer space themselves instead of outsourcing the task to the equality observers.

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People at the SYL Central Office

Source: Annika Ojala: Turvallisemmat tilat feministisessä vaikuttamistyössä ("Safer Spaces in Feminist Advocacy Work"), 2017.