

Young European Security Conference (YESC)
26th – 27th February 2026 in Berlin, Germany

Awareness Concept YESC 2026

Aim of the policy:

- a. To ensure participating at the YESC offers a safe space for personal growth and development, where the wellbeing, dignity and respect of individuals is at the forefront;
- b. To create an environment where bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment are not tolerated in any form;
- c. To lay down standard behaviour and clarify roles and responsibilities;
- d. To establish procedures for reporting bullying and harassment, as well as the potential consequences to be incurred;
- e. To create a framework of non-sensitive information flow between the Awareness Team and the Team Members of the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

Policy applicability

The present policy is applicable to all events of the YESC. This includes, for example, workshop sessions, panel discussions, breaks, the opening ceremony, the closing debate and the evening program.

Key principles underlying the policy

- a. The YESC has corporate duty and responsibility to care for and safeguard all those who take part in their activities;
- b. YESC should be a safe and welcoming environment for everyone;
- c. The wellbeing of every individual is at the forefront;
- d. Any complaint will be dealt with seriously and confidentially; there are to be no repercussions for complainants;
- e. The privacy of individuals involved in incidents are to be respected; information will only be disclosed on a ‘need-to-know’ basis;
- f. Sanctions are to be applied with an educational rather than retributive purpose;
- g. Failure to act by those responsible to do so will draw consequences, as will the submission of vexatious complaints.
- h. The Policy has been developed with the best interest of participants in mind and should be interpreted in the spirit of transparency and common sense.

Definitions

(a) Bullying

- (i) Bullying is unwanted, recurring aggressiveness or behaviour aimed to, or resulting in, victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening an individual or group of individuals; that causes psychological and/or physical harm. Bullying often involves a misuse or abuse of power/authority (whether real or perceived), where the target(s) can experience difficulties in defending themselves.
- (ii) Different types of bullying:
 - (1) Physical: using physical force or aggression against another person (e.g. shoving, hitting, harsh finger pointing, invasion of personal space)
 - (2) Verbal: using words to verbally attack someone (e.g. name calling, teasing, insulting or offensive remarks, shouting, yelling, angry outbursts)
 - (3) Social/relational: trying to hurt someone through excluding them, spreading rumours or ignoring them (e.g. gossiping, playing harsh jokes),
 - (4) Cyberbullying: using electronic media to threaten, embarrass, intimidate, or exclude someone, or to damage their reputation (e.g. sending threatening text messages, publishing demeaning posts/photos of/about an individual)
 - (5) Work-related: isolating and undermining one's position/authority or purposefully making one's performance of work difficult or unbearable e.g. going around co-workers to avoid communicating with an individual; ignoring them when they walk by; purposefully giving unmanageable workloads and impossible deadlines; arbitrarily changing tasks; using evaluations to document alleged decreased/lower performance, contrary to facts, using threats, intimidation and pressure to influence the way an individual performs their job.

(b) Harassment¹

- i. Harassment is a form of discrimination that includes unwanted conduct which has as purpose or effect violating a person's dignity, victimising, humiliating, undermining, threatening or creating an hostile, degrading, or offensive environment for a person, based on their
 - age,
 - race (e.g. skin colour, facial features),
 - ethnicity (e.g. culture, where or how they live, how they dress), religion (religious beliefs),
 - gender,
 - sexual orientation,
 - family status (e.g. from a single parent family, adopted, non-biological gay or lesbian parents),
 - marital status,
 - physical or mental disability (e.g. mental illness, learning disability, use a wheelchair).

¹ Harassment is similar to bullying because someone hurts another individual through cruel, offensive behaviours. Harassment is different in that it is a form of discrimination - treating someone differently or poorly based on certain characteristics or differences.

ii. Conduct can be through acts of verbal, nonverbal or physical aggression, intimidation or hostility, and is not restricted to any medium. It may consist of a single or repeated inappropriate behaviour.

iii. Examples of harassment are (not exhaustive):

- a. Verbal harassment – jokes, comments, ridicule or songs;
- b. Written harassment – including text messages, emails, notices or comments;
- c. Activity on social media;
- d. Physical harassment – jostling, shoving or any form of assault;
- e. Intimidatory harassment – gestures, posturing or threatening poses;
- f. Visual displays such as posters, emblems or badges;
- g. Isolation or exclusion from social activities;
- h. Sexual harassment.

iv. Sexual harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- i. Unwelcome sexual advances;
- ii. Requests for sexual favours;
- iii. Unwelcome efforts or pressure to develop a romantic or sexual relationship whether with oneself or third parties;
- iv. Unwelcome commentary about an individual's body or sexual activities;
- v. Threatening to engage in the commission of an unwelcome sexual act with another person;
- vi. Any form of invasion of personal privacy;
- vii. Unwelcome physical closeness or touching;
- viii. Unwelcome jokes or teasing of a sexual nature or based upon gender, perceived gender, or sex stereotypes;
- ix. Other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

(c) **Abuse** is defined as any action that intentionally harms or injures another person. It includes physical aggression, inappropriate use of substances (e.g. that alter consciousness), sexual violence.

(d) **Sexual violence** means any behaviour or act of a sexual nature, or perceived to be of a sexual nature, which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding of all persons involved. Sexual violence includes but is not limited to:

- i. rape;
- ii. sexual assault;
- iii. sexual activity without consent.

Standard behaviour. Duties and responsibilities

1. There is no place for bullying or harassment, in any form, at the YESC.
2. Every team member of YESC/participant in a YESC event has a duty to ensure everyone is treated equally and respectfully. Everyone is integral in creating a welcoming and safe environment for everybody.
3. To create a culture where everyone understands their role in ensuring a safe and respectful environment for everyone, the first step is to ensure everyone is appropriately informed. The Schwarzkopf Foundation team must communicate and discuss this concept to the Awareness Team and the Facilitators as well as all other team members before the event;
4. All team members and facilitators are responsible to create and ensure a safe and dignified environment for the members of their team. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Ensuring individuals feel at ease; respecting their boundaries and not pushing them out of their comfort zone without their consent;
 - b. Maintaining and promoting a respectful attitude towards personal differences (cultural or otherwise);
 - c. Rejecting any form of discrimination and exclusion, as well as shaming, humiliation or degradation;
 - d. Refraining from, discouraging or intervening when observing peer pressure to engage in any type of physical or sexual activities with another individual;
 - e. Avoiding sexualised activities or activities with an increased potential for harassment or bullying (mocking, stereotyping, ...);
 - f. Creating an environment in which bullying or harassment of any kind are neither encouraged, nor tolerated.
5. Every individual should intervene to stop an inappropriate behaviour when observed (be it bullying or harassment). Serious and grave incidents should be reported to the Awareness Team or the corresponding project managers at the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

Sexual and/or romantic relations among participants and/or officials

6. Team members and facilitators must promote and ensure a safe environment free from sexual harassment or abuse.
7. All members, participants and officials must respect national laws setting the age of sexual consent.
8. The YESC operates under a clear consent culture. Everything that is not a yes is a no.
9. No participant should initiate or engage in any romantic, intimate or sexual activity with another participant who:
 - a. is under the legal age of consent and/or
 - b. has not explicitly consented to engaging in the activity, and/or
 - c. does not have the capacity to give consent (e.g.: intoxication by drugs or alcohol, any physical or

mental condition that might cause confusion, mental health conditions) and/or

d. does not have the freedom to consent (e.g. is coerced, pressured, forced, blackmailed or constrained when giving apparent consent).

10. Event officials, such as team members or facilitators, are forbidden to engage in any romantic or intimate activity with another person, when they are in a position of trust or in relation to that person where there is a hierarchical position.

11. The above restriction does not apply to prior existing relations (i.e. relations that had begun before an event). In such case, the project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation as well as the Awareness Team should be informed of the relation as soon as possible before the event.

Awareness Team

12. The project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation are obliged to ensure that there is an Awareness Team present throughout the entire conference. The Awareness Team should consist of individuals with a high level of empathy and sensitivity, experienced in dealing with intense, stressful or challenging situations, good track record of professionalism and respect of policies/rules in place. The project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation are responsible to ensure that the contact information of the Awareness Team is easily accessible to event participants and team members.

Reporting

13. Bullying, harassment, as well as abuse and violence of any type, whether witnessed or experienced, should be reported to the Awareness Team or the project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

13. Incidents occurring during the event are reported to the Awareness Team or the project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

14. In case accusations of inappropriate behaviour are formulated against the Awareness Team, or - for any reasons, there is significant discomfort to report to them, the individual can also report to the project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation or any other team member present.

15. Throughout the entire process, the privacy of the individuals is to be respected. Information about the incident and the reporting or complaint process should only be disclosed when and to whom is necessary.

Bullying or harassment during an event

16. If possible, individuals experiencing or witnessing bullying or harassment should approach the perpetrator or ask the Awareness Team to do so on their behalf, to advise of the offending behaviour and the impact which it has on the individual, and to ask that it discontinue. The Awareness Team should inform the perpetrator at this moment of the potential consequences in case the behaviour continues.

17. The Awareness Team should attempt to resolve the matter locally and/or offer mediation to both parties with the intention of resolving the issue.
18. The victim of inappropriate behaviour should not be pressured in any way and at any point of the proceedings to confront or discuss with the perpetrator, if they are not comfortable in doing so.

Abuse during an event

19. Whilst no list can be comprehensive and vigilance is always required, the following may be signs of abuse:
 - a. the participant explicitly says they have been abused;
 - b. the participant makes a comment or asks a question which gives rise to that inference;
 - c. there is no reasonable or consistent explanation for a participant's injury; the injury is unusual in kind or location; there is/are a pattern and/or number of injuries;
 - d. there is a drastic or significant change in the participant's behaviour.
20. Any event participant or official - whether they are themselves an adult or not – must report their concerns to the Awareness Team or the project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation if they suspect abuse has taken place or could take place.
21. In case of abuse, the wellbeing of the victim should be at the centre of the concerns. They should be taken to a safe space (removed from public surroundings, as well as the perpetrator), offered specialised support (to be taken to a hospital, to see a specialised therapist, to submit a complaint to the Police), as well as to contact a parent/close person for support.
22. The Awareness Team - or any other individual at the event hearing a complaint of abuse:
 - a. Must listen carefully to the participant, reassure them, and keep an open mind;
 - b. Must take all complaints seriously;
 - c. Must not judge whether or not abuse has actually taken place;
 - d. Must not ask leading questions (i.e. a question which suggests its own answer);
 - e. Must keep a sufficient written record of the conversation. The record should include the date, time and place of the conversation and the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence. The record should be signed by the person making it and should use names not initials. The record must be kept securely and handed to the Safe Person/Police;
 - f. Must note the specific circumstances of the situation to be able to report to the Safe Person/Police in the most accurate way possible;
 - g. All efforts will be made to preserve privacy; this means that only people who need to know about the incident will be given limited information as necessary;
 - h. The person hearing a complaint should explain that they need to pass the relevant information on to the designated project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation and the Awareness Team;
23. Individuals alleging having been subjected to abuse should not in any way be pressured or influenced in their decision to notify the Police or legal guardians/parents.

24. If the individual having experienced abuse wishes to benefit from specialised support (hospital, psychologist, police) or when the Police is notified, the Awareness Team will ensure they are accompanied and offered support.

Potential measures to be applied

25. Violation of this Policy will result in appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of the project managers of the Schwarzkopf Foundation and the Awareness Team. Measures should be applied with an educational purpose, rather than retributive.

Such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to:

- a. reprimands;
- b. expulsion from the event at the participant's own expense (access to any of the program elements or venue is forbidden from then on);
- e. legal action in case of unlawful behaviour;
- g. expulsion from all YESC events, either temporary or permanent.

APPENDIX

CONSENT FORM

To participate in the Young European Security Conference (YESC) 26th – 27th February 2026 in Berlin, Germany

I, (name), born on (date of birth)

in (place of birth incl. country code), currently residing at

(current main residence with address), have read and understood the rules and responsibilities contained in the Code of Conduct order for me to attend the events and I promise to abide by these rules and the following:

Liability and Insurance

In signing, I commit to covering any damage to public or private property that I may cause during the event's and I declare that I am accordingly insured for third party liability. I recognise that participation in physical activity involves the risk of injury to one's person or property and acknowledge that by signing this document, I accept these potential risks. Further, I hereby declare that I have insurance which covers any potential health problems during the events.

Behaviour of participants

I recognise that upon arrival and throughout the duration of the events, I must follow the given regulations for all venues and must further follow all instructions given by a representative of the organisational team.

Transfer of rights

For the duration of the events, I transfer the right to my image to the Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe and give my full consent to being photographed, filmed and interviewed by other participants, as well as authorised guests of the events (e.g. journalists). Further, I give my full consent to having my personal data (including all media footage) stored digitally for an unlimited time. I give my full consent to redistribution and editing thereof by the Schwarzkopf Foundation and the foundations partners like the Hertie Stiftung, and to being contacted by the Schwarzkopf Foundation in the future. This consent may be revoked at any time by sending an email to withdraw@schwarzkopf-stiftung.de.

Violations of law, code of conduct or misconduct

I acknowledge that in case of a violation of the law of Germany during the events, or of violation of the Code of Conduct (e.g. abuse of alcohol), or in any other serious case of misconduct on my part as decided by the organisational team, I will be excluded from the events and will be sent home immediately at my own expense.

Signature:

Date/Place:

Code of Conduct for participants at the Young European Security Conference (YESC)

Commitment to integrity

1. Participants are obliged to behave in a way that does not reflect negatively on the YESC and other participants at the event.
2. Participants are obliged to behave in a way that does not reflect negatively on the Organising Committee, and should therefore respect all rules established by the organising team, including, but not limited to:
 - a. participating in all mandatory items of the programme in a timely manner;
 - b. respecting the venues where the event is taking place, and their respective rules;
 - c. not abandoning the group or premises of the event without explicit permission to do so;
 - d. behaving as a representative of the organisation at all stages of the event, even outside the official programme elements.

Behaviour and non-discrimination

3. Participants must behave respectfully towards other session participants. Expected behaviour includes:
 - a. maintaining a positive and welcoming environment for all participants;
 - b. not engaging in conduct that is unfair or abusive towards others;
 - c. respecting cultural, religious, and personal differences;
 - d. not discriminating any other participant on the basis of their age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental disabilities, religion, national or ethnic origin, family status, marital status, or any other status.
4. Bullying or harassment of any kind – whether, verbal, non-verbal, physical aggression, sexual or emotional is not tolerated at any events connected with our organisation.

Sexual conduct and relationships

5. Session participants must respect national laws setting the age of sexual consent.
6. The YESC operates under a clear consent culture. Everything that is not a yes is a no.
7. Participants are expected to promote a safe environment free from sexual misconduct.
8. Session participants cannot engage in any romantic or intimate activity with people in a position of trust towards them.

Alcohol consumption and drug abuse

9. Participants must respect national law and limit the use of alcohol and tobacco accordingly.
10. The consumption or use of alcohol or any drugs is strictly forbidden at all YESC events.

Criminal conduct

11. Session participants are obliged to comply with the national law of the country where the event is taking place.

Duties and responsibilities

12. Every individual should intervene to stop an inappropriate behaviour when observed (be it bullying, harassment or other harmful or dangerous behaviour). Serious and grave incidents should be reported to YESC Team.

13. Every participant must confirm that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct.

Consequences

14. Violation of this Code of Conduct will result in appropriate disciplinary action at the discretion of the YESC Team including, but not limited to:

- a. reprimands;
- b. expulsion from the event at the participant's own expense (access to any of the program elements or venue is forbidden from then on);
- c. expulsion from all YESC events, either temporary or permanent.

15. Complaints in case of serious breach of the policy can lead to further consequences being imposed by the corresponding Team Lead of the Schwarzkopf Foundation.