

Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination

Code of conduct for staff members



Our cross
has many colours!




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1. Why a code of conduct?

The Ecumenical Centre was set up by the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau (EKHN) and the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck (EKKW). The staff of the Ecumenical Centre support relationships with other churches, religious communities and organisations, and initiate and support activities for peace, justice and the safeguarding of creation. They also promote the development of ecumenical theology and its practical implementation in the EKHN and EKKW. The Ecumenical Centre promotes meetings and dialogue between people of different confessions, religions, world views and cultures in our 'One World' mission and in German society. For this reason, both the basis and the goal of the Ecumenical Centre are to reflect critically on one's own behaviour in terms of discrimination and racism.

In the ecumenical movement, too, there are different kinds of discrimination. Our mission is to create a code of conduct that states our position of opposing all kinds of conscious or unconscious racism and anti-Semitism. In addition, we specifically reject all other kinds of discrimination related to group-based misanthropy, e.g. classism, sexism, discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community and ableism (see graphic in the glossary). We are also aware that different kinds of discrimination can reinforce each other (**intersectionality**).



This code of conduct serves to remind us of our own standpoint. All staff members at the Ecumenical Centre take note of it and confirm with their signature that they stand behind the values it expresses. The code of conduct marks just one step on the path we want to tread with our ecumenical partners. The code of conduct and the paper 'Racism is a Sin. Theological Foundations for Dealing with Racism as a Guide for the Work of the EKHN and EKKW Ecumenical Centre' form a framework for an ongoing discussion of anti-racism and anti-discrimination. Both papers are reviewed every two years and adjusted, improved or expanded as required.

The modern concept of racism

- This defines racism as a form of discrimination and an ideology that categorises and denigrates people based on their appearance, their name, their (apparent) culture, origin or religion.
- In the European/western context, this racism originates from colonisation that began in the 16th century and the race theories of the 18th and 19th centuries that emerged as a consequence of it. Our present day is shaped by the colonial legacy. Deep-rooted power structures continue to create structural inequalities that have found an ideological justification in racism (coloniality).
- Racism creates a division into 'us' and 'them'. 'They' are seen as being less good or of a lower value (**othering**). This leads to a justification of unequal social and economic living conditions, exclusion or even violence. Racism is not 'just' bullying, because it is based on a real imbalance of power in our society.
- There are different forms of racism. For example, racism against **Black** people, against Muslims or against people from Roma or Sinti communities. All these forms of racism are based on a hierarchical system of people and groups. It is a construct thought up by **white** people. Originally, its only purpose was to place **white** people at the top and people of colour below them, in line with a (skin) colour categorisation. This powerful system is still in place today.¹

¹ <https://www.nordkirche-weltbewegt.de/ich-bin-dabei-wie-kirche-einen-rassismuskritischen-weg-gehen-kann/> (only available in German)

- Anti-Semitism is an umbrella term for all types of enmity against Jews, such as rejection, exclusion, prejudice, hate and persecution. Depending on the situation, Jews are described as inferior and primitive, or as superior, powerful and wealthy, as individuals or as a 'conspiratorial community' with particular influence in business, politics, culture and education.
- We are all influenced by racism (e.g. through children's books, films, media or handed-down figures of speech). Racist thinking, behaviour and actions can be conscious or unconscious. It can be expressed in different ways, from day-to-day slights known as microaggressions all the way up to physical violence.

Anti-discrimination: What values are important to us?

Trusting in God's promises, the Ecumenical Centre works for developments that are just and free of violence. At the Ecumenical Centre, we treat each other and everyone else with respect, professionalism and openness. These things are important to us:

- Trusting in the core biblical beliefs of people being made in God's image and God's promises of a just world
- Solidarity
- (Self-) reflection and sensitivity when it comes to differences and the power balances related to them
- Continual exchange and dialogue, also with our ecumenical partners

- Space for participation and multiple perspectives
- Responsibility for a safe working environment

What do we pledge to do?

Discrimination and racism occur at the structural, institutional and individual levels and are expressed through attitudes, actions, language and rules. We pledge the following:

Structural/overall society level

The Ecumenical Centre's work aims to have an effect on society. We strive to reveal, question and overcome unequal balances of power that have arisen in history and society due to racism. This is one of the goals of the educational, advisory and lobby work in the Centre's various areas of activity.

Institutional level

The Ecumenical Centre's goal is to actively contribute to a church that is critical of racism and sensitive to discrimination.² As an institution, we want to recognise and value people in their diversity, on our premises and in the services we provide. In a participatory approach, we are taking the following specific measures to enable people with experience of marginalisation to be involved and to participate, and not to reduce them to attributed characteristics. We want to be aware of conscious and unconscious barriers and disadvantages in the following areas in particular:

² <https://www.zentrum-oekumene.de/de/oekumene/aktuelles/detailseite/wir-brauchen-einen-antrassistischen-diskurs-in-unserer-kirche> (only available in German)

Recruitment and staff

- Recruitment processes must address and invite anyone with the required qualifications to apply, in line with the principles of equal opportunities and diversity. This can be, for example, through explicit formulations in job advertisements.
- As well as a mandatory introduction to the German General Equal Treatment Act³ new members of staff undergo basic training in ‘anti-racist behaviour’.
- All staff members must be offered regular training and opportunities to reflect on anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

Attitude and language

- There is no place for discriminatory behaviour or discriminatory language in the interactions and daily work of the Ecumenical Centre.
- We seek to avoid discriminatory formulations and images in Ecumenical Centre publications.
- We are sensitive to potential discrimination when planning and executing Ecumenical Centre events and educational activities. We take steps to ensure active inclusion and participation of **BIPOC** (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour).

³ <https://agg-schule.de/> (only available in German)

Solidarity with those negatively affected by racism

- The Ecumenical Centre wants to show solidarity to people who have been negatively affected, offering them a **safer space** at the Centre and meeting their needs and wishes.
- If staff exhibit or experience discriminatory behaviour, this can be reported to the Staff Committee (MAV), who will take further steps. We also refer to the EKHN's Equal Opportunities Office⁴ and, in the case of an attack, to contacts in the EKHN⁵.

Individual level

It is the responsibility of the Ecumenical Centre and of every individual to oppose racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination in general, to reflect on and process their own behaviour and ways of thinking, and to learn actively. The Centre encourages all staff, as well as its guests, not to tolerate inappropriate behaviour and to actively oppose it. We therefore call on members of staff to sign a personal commitment.

⁴ <https://chancengleichheit-ekhn.de/startseite.html> (page only available in German)

⁵ Null Toleranz bei Gewalt: <https://www.ekhn.de/themen/null-toleranz-bei-gewalt/infos/ansprechpersonen> (page only available in German)

2. Personal commitment

- I am prepared to reflect critically on my own ways of thinking and behaving and to contribute to the Ecumenical Centre's goal of achieving a church (and society) that is anti-racist and free of discrimination.
- If I find out about inappropriate – racist, anti-Semitic, discriminatory – behaviour, I will ensure that the people affected receive help and support. It will not be kept quiet.

I have read the 'Code of Conduct for Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination'. With my signature, I declare that I stand behind the values in this code of conduct and I am prepared to defend them.

Place, date, signature

3. Glossary

Here, we explain some of the terms used in the text.

For an extensive explanation of terms relating to discrimination and racism, we recommend the University of Cologne's online glossary:

<https://vielfalt.uni-koeln.de/en/anti-discrimination/glossary-discrimination-anti-racism>

BIBoC/PoC

BIPoC

BIPOC stands for Black, indigenous, people of colour and is a political self-designation. It refers to people who experience racism. The term gives people with experience of racism a community and a space for activism, protection and empowerment. At the same time, it reveals the different kinds of racism experienced by different people and enables supportive alliances across the boundaries of marginalised communities.

PoC

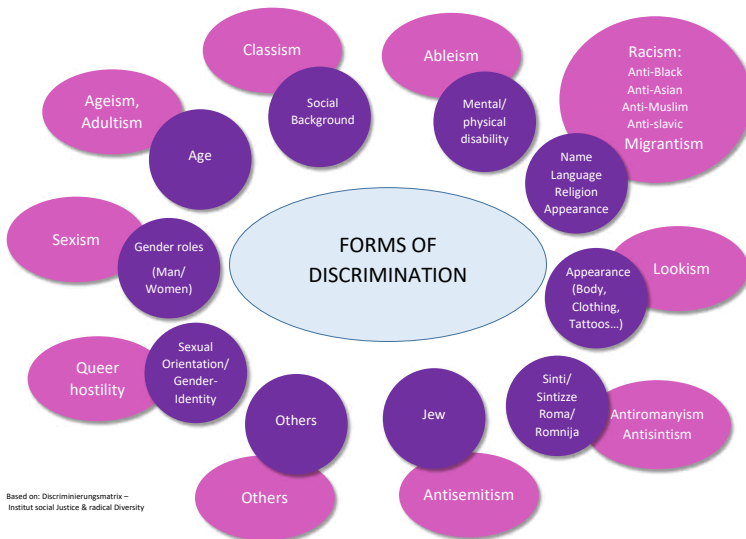
Person of colour (plural: people of colour) is a term for people who are interpreted as non-**white** by the majority society and who face day-to-day racism and other forms of racism due to their ethnic origin.

In Germany, the term has mainly been used in an academic context and as a self-designation until now. People of colour refers to all ethnicised people, who may be of African, Asian, Latin-American, Arab, Jewish, Indigenous or Pacific origin or descent. It brings together all those who are excluded by the dominant **white** culture and strengthens anti-racist interventions and alliances.

Decolonisation

We understand decolonisation to be a societal process that aims to combat and dismantle coloniality at local and global levels. It is about a societal transformation on all structural – and in particular legal – levels. This is important because colonialism has produced thinking and systems that are shaped by ideology and, still today, perpetuate structural racism.⁶

Types of discrimination



⁶ https://decolonize-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2310-Decolonize_Rechtsgutachten_BRO_digital_einseitig.pdf (only available in German)

Levels of discrimination and racism

Individual level

The individual level refers to the behaviour of people who denigrate, exclude or discriminate against individuals. Denigration, exclusion and discrimination are the most easily recognised forms of racism, as they occur openly and face to face. One person treats another unfairly, based on their apparent membership of a particular group. This can range from passive discrimination, such as avoiding sitting next to someone on the train, to touching or talking to someone inappropriately or extreme forms such as physical attacks or even murder.

Institutional level

The institutional level refers to the actions of an organisation. Here, the starting points are not the prejudices or disparaging attitudes of certain individuals. Rather, the way rules, regulations, standards, routines or habitual practices are interpreted or implemented leads to a direct or indirect disadvantage for certain groups of the population. Institutional racism is usually harder to recognise than individual forms such as racist slurs or attacks.

Structural/whole society level

Discrimination at the structural level involves power relationships that have grown historically and socially and are anchored deep in a society's structures, discourse or images. It is about the question of what is 'normal' and what is 'different' or 'in need of explanation'. Stereotypical ideas and images of 'normality' and 'difference' are transported by the media, but are also found in day-to-day conversations, in school books or teaching materials.

Intersectionality

This describes the overlap and simultaneity of various forms of discrimination a person might experience in real society. They might, for example, be discriminated against due to their skin colour but also their gender. Intersectionality is not about adding the two types of discrimination, but about the interplay between them. A **Black** woman might not only be discriminated against as a woman or a **Black** person, but also as a '**Black woman**'.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are day-to-day comments, questions, verbal or non-verbal acts that affect marginalised groups above all and reinforce negative stereotypes. They can be deliberate or unconscious. Although they are often not meant to be offensive, they can cause people to feel uncomfortable and unsafe. Microaggressions may seem small or unimportant in the moment, but they add up and can give people the feeling that they don't belong.

Othering

Based on 'us' – 'them' constructions, 'them' becomes someone who appears entirely different, who, unlike 'us', is thought to be less emancipated, enlightened, tolerant, democratic, educated, etc. Elementary differences are constructed, which are evaluated and underlined hierarchically – whether in an openly negative way or in an exoticising way that appears positive. When a person begins to unconsciously accept these differences, because they are constantly confronted by them, they actually become the supposed 'other'. They have adapted to the image of the 'other' (see double consciousness and

internalisation). Migrants, for example, whose bilingual competence is openly judged to be limited, gradually pay more attention themselves to their deficits in German, and, as a result, may begin to speak less. So in the end they are reinforcing the stereotype and thereby unconsciously confirming the othering process.⁷

Safer space

Safer spaces are special (physical) rooms. These rooms are places to meet, talk and share experiences. The important thing is that they aim to be safer. Safer, because nothing is 100% safe, but there are efforts to consciously dismantle discrimination. This is also achieved by the spaces being created by and for those affected. There are, for example, queer safer spaces, safer spaces for **Black** people, safer spaces for people with impairments/disabilities, etc.

Black and Black people

‘Black people’ is a self-designation that describes a position in society that is affected by racism. ‘Black’ is written in upper case to underline that it is a constructed categorisation and not a real characteristic based on skin colour. In this context, Blackness does not mean being assigned to an actual or assumed ethnic group. It refers to the shared experience of racism, to being perceived in a particular way.⁸

⁷ <https://vielfalt.uni-koeln.de/en/anti-discrimination/glossary-discrimination-anti-racism/othering>

⁸ <https://isdonline.de/uber-schwarze-menschen-in-deutschland-berichten/>

white and whiteness

Just like **Black**, *white* (lower case and in italics) or whiteness is not a biological characteristic or a real skin colour, but a social and political construct. Whiteness refers to the dominant and privileged position within the power dynamic of racism, which otherwise remains unspoken and unnamed. Whiteness comprises an unconscious concept of self and identity that influences how *white* people view themselves and how they behave. This accords them a privileged place in society, for example regarding access to resources.⁹

⁹ translated from: <https://weranderneinenbrunnengraebt.wordpress.com/2012/09/15/weisweissein/>

Links to further information

In English:

- German General Equal Treatment Act
https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/Wegweiser/agg_wegweiser_engl_guide_to_the_general_equal_treatment_act.html
- Amadeu Antonio Foundation
<https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/en/>
- German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency
<https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/EN/homepage/homepage-node.html>
- Decolonize Berlin association
<https://decolonize-berlin.de/en/>
- Information and Documentation Centre for Anti-Racism Work (IDA)
<https://www.idaev.de/en>

In German:

- Anne Frank Educational Centre
<https://www.bs-anne-frank.de>
- Black People in Germany Initiative
<https://isdonline.de/>
- EKHN Staff Office for Equal Opportunities
<https://chancengleichheit-ekhn.de/startseite.html>

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- United Evangelical Mission: Racism and the Church: For a Change of Perspective in the White Church in Germany
<https://www.vemission.org/informieren/rassismus-und-kirche>
 - Glossary of German terms relating to discrimination: ‘Wer andern einen Brunnen gräbt...’
<https://weranderneinenbrunnengraebt.wordpress.com/glossar/>
 - Centre for Global Ministry and Ecumenical Relations – Northern Church Worldwide: ‘I’m in! How the church can take an anti-racist path’
<https://www.nordkirche-weltbewegt.de/ich-bin-dabei-wie-kirche-einen-rassismuskritischen-weg-gehen-kann/>

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