

Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences

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Preamble

The mission of the Czech Academy of Sciences is to carry out research, an intrinsic part of which is the constant effort to extend the boundaries of human knowledge and contribute to finding solutions to the pressing challenges faced by society. This is a mission of extraordinary significance for all of society and its fulfilment depends crucially on the trust and support of the public. This is just one of the reasons why the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) works to uphold its good reputation and to ensure adherence to ethical principles in its work and in the work of its departments.

The **Code of Conduct of the Czech Academy of Sciences** (hereinafter ‘the Code of Conduct’ or ‘the Code’) is intended to prevent the occurrence of unwanted behaviour (which is defined in the sections below) that could jeopardise the sense of wellbeing, safety, and motivation of the people who work within the environment of the Czech Academy of Sciences or could damage the credibility of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

The Czech Academy of Sciences is a wide scientific and research community that consists of both the Czech Academy of Sciences as an organisational body of the state and the fifty-four institutes of the CAS that are legally autonomous institutions (hereinafter referred to as ‘CAS institutes’). This Code of Conduct applies to all natural persons who work within the community of the Czech Academy of Sciences, regardless of their employment status, job title (hereinafter referred to as ‘employees’), accomplishments, experience, or academic rank, including students and external collaborators.¹

The Code of Conduct is primarily focused on issues that relate to ensuring the existence of a *safe working environment*. This Code applies to every part of the Czech Academy of Sciences and to all persons working at the Czech Academy of Sciences regardless of their position, while the **Code of Ethics for Scientific Research Activities at the Czech Academy of Sciences** is primarily focused on ethical issues associated with the scientific research activities carried out at the Czech Academy of Sciences (hereinafter ‘the Code of Ethics’). The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to help create and cultivate a *fair and safe working environment* for everyone without distinction, one that is based on mutual respect, professional accountability, and integrity, so that the Czech Academy of Sciences can best fulfil its mission and obligations to society. The Code of Conduct therefore supplements, further specifies, and thereby supports the content of the Code of Ethics, in particular its provisions relating to general moral rules and principles, the treatment of colleagues, and the conduct of persons in positions of authority. The Code of Conduct also provides explanations of key concepts such as *respect*, *violence in the workplace*, and *gender-based violence*.

1. Respect

Respect (also personal respect) refers here to consideration for the rights, needs, and feelings of others. This differs from respect in the sense of showing others respect on the grounds of their abilities, qualities, or achievements, a respect that can be earned or lost. In the sense in which it is understood in this Code of Ethics, respect is something that every individual deserves to be shown, regardless of their title or position.

Employees must treat each other with respect under all circumstances. Mutual respect is of crucial importance for creating a just, open, and dignified environment and for preventing the occurrence of unwanted behaviour such as discrimination, harassment, prejudice, bullying, violence, and abuse of position.

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, for the purpose of this Code of Conduct the ‘Czech Academy of Sciences’ refers to this community.

Respectful conduct includes:

- equal treatment of others regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, or beliefs;
- treating others with dignity under all circumstances;
- making an effort to understand others – showing empathy, a willingness to listen, and consideration of others' needs;
- open and fair communication, honesty, and constructive criticism.

Primary examples of disrespectful conduct include:

- conduct that demeans or embarrasses another person on the basis of their characteristics or beliefs;
- unfair treatment on the basis of characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, beliefs, social or academic status, or position in the workplace hierarchy;
- making prejudiced, unfair, or unreasonable comments about another person.

2. Non-discrimination

Discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of people, particularly on the grounds of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, skin colour, language, age, disability, religion, political or other opinions, social background, membership of a nationality or ethnic minority, or some other status. Discrimination also refers to a situation in which a person is unable to exercise his or her rights to the same degree as others.

Direct discrimination occurs when one person is for any of the aforementioned reasons treated in a less favourable way than another person. *Indirect discrimination* occurs when an ostensibly neutral provision, criterion, or practice puts one person at a disadvantage compared to others. It involves any conduct where an entity (e.g. an employer) acts within the bounds of the law, but discrimination occurs as a consequence of that action.

Discrimination creates an atmosphere in which those who are affected by it may not feel free and may feel unwelcome or at risk. The Czech Academy of Sciences rejects all forms of discrimination and is working to build an environment in which all persons, irrespective of their differences, have equal access to opportunities and enjoy the same treatment.

All employees are expected in particular to avoid engaging in discriminatory conduct or the use of gender, cultural, and other stereotypes and they are expected to take action against any instances of such behaviour.

3. Violence, harassment, and bullying

The Czech Academy of Sciences opposes all forms of violence, harassment, and bullying in the workplace. Inappropriate and unacceptable forms of behaviour include but are not limited to:

- *stalking* – following a person or repeatedly sending them harassing messages;

- *physical violence* – kicking, pushing, hitting, or restricting a person’s movement;
- *psychological violence* – name-calling, insults, humiliation, ridicule, interrupting a person, deliberately excluding someone from communication;
- *economic violence* – preventing a person from having access to grants or to funding for work travel, for example, in contrast to their colleagues, or denying a person equipment, office space, or support from an assistant;
- *institutionalised violence* – trivialising, tolerating, or supporting violence against individuals on the part of the management of an institution and people in senior positions;
- *cyber violence* – sending or sharing intimidating or sexually explicit emails and other virtual content.

Bullying refers to deliberate, systematic, and recurring psychological abuse. It can be damaging both to individuals and to the entire collective. Where there is bullying in a workplace environment, employees are less committed to their work, spend less time at work, and the quality of their work declines. The result is decreased work productivity, increased employee frustration and turnover, and damage to the reputation of the institution.

The following types of behaviour are examples of bullying:

- *bossing* – the bullying of employees by superiors, which is a long-term and systematic form of pressure that can include defamation, lies, blackmail, the withholding of information, the falsification of documents, the refusal to cooperate, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour, including sexually oriented behaviour;
- *staffing* – the bullying of superiors by subordinates for the purpose of causing harm, the forms of which are the same as in the case of bossing;
- *mobbing* – the bullying of a person by their colleagues, which can take the form, for instance, of ridicule, disproportionate criticism, or purposely excluding a colleague from the group;
- *defamation* – defamation and damage to a person’s reputation caused, for example, by the spread of rumours for the purpose of obtaining a promotion at the expense of the person whose reputation was harmed (i.e. *chairing*);
- *silent treatment* – a specific type of bullying that is characterised by ignoring and excluding a person.

4. Gender-based violence

The Czech Academy of Sciences does not tolerate any form of *gender-based violence*, which means any kind of physical, sexual, psychological, economic, or other violence that targets women, men, and non-binary individuals on the grounds of their gender identity.² Gender-based violence includes inappropriate and unacceptable conduct ranging from less serious forms of harassment to very serious forms of sexual violence. It can assume many forms and can occur in either the physical environment or online.

² This definition is based on international legal documents such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, Strategy for the Equality of Women and Men 2021–2030).

Within the frame of this Code of Conduct gender-based violence refers mainly to the following forms of behaviour:³

- *gender-based harassment* – degrading comments aimed at demeaning the abilities of a person on the grounds of their being a woman, being a man, or being a person with a different gender identity;
- *sexual harassment* – sexually oriented remarks in reference to a person’s appearance or unwanted touching;
- *sexual violence* – pressure for sexual activity or rape.

Gender-based violence can be connected to an institution’s hierarchical structure. Hierarchy and the power inequalities it gives rise to can be abused on the grounds of gender difference or of shared gender or on the grounds of other characteristics such as age, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, family or living situation, care responsibilities, social class, or health status. Fear of potential repercussions and retaliation may lead to the non-reporting of cases of gender-based violence. Given its awareness of the potential for the abuse of power inequalities, the Czech Academy of Sciences declares that it is necessary to apply a trust-based approach to victims and whistleblowers and to refrain from assigning them with any blame.

Gender-based violence impacts the victims but it also affects bystanders. Both victims and bystanders may feel socially excluded, unsafe, or uncomfortable. Gender-based violence has serious effects on the mental health and work performance of those who experience it and of those who are exposed to it as bystanders. The institution as a whole can be damaged as a result and it can see a loss of talent and potential when people leave the workplace or are unable to fully pursue their creative work because of gender-based violence.

5. Integrity, accountability, and fairness

Where there is an awareness of the need for equal access to opportunities, space for individuals to fully apply their abilities and pursue their personal ambitions to the benefit of everyone, and confidence in the fairness with which individuals are assessed, employees are more satisfied and more motivated, and this improves the quality and productivity of work. Employees must act responsibly in how they manage material and energy resources in the course of their work.

In performing their work duties, employees will:

- protect and uphold the justified interests of their workplace;
- protect sensitive information in their workplace and prevent the abuse of such information;
- protect intellectual property and sensitive information connected with such property;
- be guided by objective facts and not personal preferences in the course of decision-making on work matters;
- support a cooperative environment and protect the transparency of any internal competition in the workplace;

³ These forms of gender-based violence were defined through prevalence research carried out in the European UniSAFE project: <https://unisafe-gbv.eu/the-project/gender-based-violence-unisafes-definition/>.

- endeavour to limit the climatic and environmental footprint of their activities.

6. Transparency and conflicts of interest

The Czech Academy of Sciences expects its employees to exercise personal accountability in matters of transparency and conflicts of interest. To ensure accountability it is expected that employees:

- will actively communicate information that is important and essential to workplace activities and will not deliberately withhold information;
- will not manipulate information for their own personal benefit;
- will not circumvent internal processes in the workplace in order to pursue their own interests;
- will not abuse their professional or academic position;
- will ensure that support (financial, professional, in terms of patronage, or otherwise) is not given to questionable or unchecked external entities and activities.

7. The special responsibility of people in senior positions

People who are in senior positions should understand their position as a service to the institution and not as a source of privilege. This service involves responsibility for subordinate colleagues, personal integrity in decision-making, and fairness and objectivity in conflict resolution and in the assessment of subordinate employees.

People in senior positions are expected to refrain from the following types of conduct:

- abuse of their position to obtain undue advantages for themselves or others, in particular through favouritism or nepotism, i.e. a situation where a person is appointed to a position on the basis of a family relationship;
- the obstruction of the professional and career growth of a subordinate employee;
- the creation and maintenance of power networks in order to be able to retain one's position or other advantages not on the grounds of ability but through relationships of power.

8. Summary

The Czech Academy of Sciences is committed to creating a *fair and safe working environment* for all. This starts with eliminating the taboos around and the trivialisation of such issues as *harassment*, *bullying*, and *gender-based violence*. Special importance is then ascribed to the behaviour of persons in senior positions and an emphasis is placed on preventing the emergence of both direct and indirect *discrimination*, which prevents employees from making full use of their creative potential. Sensitivity, trust, consideration for the needs, experiences, and feelings of victims, cultivating a sense of belonging, open communication, and *respect* for the uniqueness of each individual person are key principles for creating a safe environment and for solving problems. A *fair and safe working environment* is established through the everyday aspects of life, such as the ways in which an institution's culture is shaped, how much space is given to alternative views, the ways employees are able to become involved

in decision-making on issues relating to their work, and whether there is transparent and fair remuneration and a transparent definition of roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes.

With reference to the above the Czech Academy of Sciences will not tolerate forms of conduct such as aggression, violence, coercion, intimidation, bullying, discrimination, sexual or gender-based harassment, or any other form of *unwanted behaviour* that constitutes a violation of this Code. The Czech Academy of Sciences as a whole will make every effort to put an end to any unwanted conduct that they become aware of and to appropriately protect whistleblowers and all persons affected by such conduct (bystanders, victims, and the accused). Employees are expected to ensure that they and others around them comply with the Code. Deliberately participating in a violation of the Code or overlooking a blatant violation of the Code or unwanted behaviour (as defined above) can also be considered action that contravenes the spirit and purpose of the Code. Reporting violations of the Code other than in good faith will not be tolerated.

9. Final provisions

This Code was approved by the Academy Council of the Czech Academy of Sciences on 30 April 2024 and comes into effect on 1 July 2024.