



BERLIN BRUISERS – CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Introduction & Purpose

The Berlin Bruisers is a queer-inclusive rugby club made up of diverse teams: a men's inclusive contact team, a FLINTA* contact team, and an all-gender touch rugby team. We come together to play, train, learn, and build a supportive, affirming community.

This Code of Conduct exists to help us create a **respectful, fun, and safer environment** on and off the pitch. It reflects our values and provides a shared understanding of what we expect from one another **in all club settings**.

It applies in: training sessions, matches and tournaments (home and away), club and team meetings, social events and fundraisers, public representation, and online spaces (group chats, social media, emails).

This Code of Conduct applies to **all club members**, including players, coaches, supporters, volunteers, and leadership (board members).

Therefore, **all club members must read and agree to it**, preferably upon membership registration.

⚠ By becoming a member of the Berlin Bruisers e.V., you accept these policies and commit to comply with them and behave accordingly in order to participate in club activities.

2. Core Values

- **Respect for all identities:** Discrimination of any kind is NOT tolerated. Racism, sexism, queermisia, transmisia, ableism, classism, ageism, and body shaming (among others) have NO place here.
- **Inclusion:** This commitment entails embracing our individual differences and acknowledging the uniqueness of every person in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, body type, disabilities, political beliefs, lived experiences, and athletic abilities.
- **Consent and boundaries:** We practice consent in physical and social interactions. Everyone's boundaries must be upheld and respected.
- **Accountability:** Everyone is responsible for their own actions. Actions that are in breach of this Code of Conduct will NOT be tolerated and will have consequences.

However, we aim to repair harm, not shame. We support growth through education, reflection, and community care.

- **Fun and fairness:** We're here to enjoy rugby, learn, support one another, and celebrate diversity in our community.

 ***Only the person affected defines their experience of discrimination, boundary violations, or harassment, and this perception is taken seriously. This encompasses all behaviors perceived by the affected person as undesirable and inappropriate, which violate their dignity and create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, insulting or humiliating environment.***

 ***All other parties, including the accused, will have the opportunity to share their perspective during mediation, allowing the situation to be fairly assessed and appropriate actions to be taken.***

3. Code of Conduct

3.1. General Expectations for All Members

- **Represent the Bruisers in a way that upholds our values.**
As a member of the Berlin Bruisers you individually represent the club and its community. Your actions reflect on the whole club.
- **Treat all members with dignity and respect.**
- **Use inclusive language and respect people's names and pronouns.**
If you are unsure about a person's name and/or pronouns, ask! If you get the name or pronouns wrong, apologize and make an effort to get it right next time.
- **Always practice consent in physical and social interactions.**
Consent occurs when one person **voluntarily agrees** to a specific proposal of another. Consent must be unambiguous. A person can withdraw consent at any time. Accept no as an answer.
- **Respect boundaries of other members.**
Boundaries define how people want to be treated, touched or spoken to and what is not acceptable to them. People set boundaries for their own safety and self-care. Disrespecting boundaries can cause significant harm.
Pay attention when boundaries are communicated and keep in mind that they can change over time.
If you are unsure, ask — for example before touching someone outside of drills or match situations where physical contact is part of the game.
- **Anyone asked to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately.**

- **Step in or speak up** if you witness behavior that violates this code of conduct, including discrimination, boundary violation, harassment, insults, aggressive behavior, etc.

Make sure to do this safely, so that you don't expose the person affected or yourself to further aggressions.

Talk to the coach or team mediators for support.

- **Don't tolerate** racist, sexist, queerphobic, ableist, or **ANY discriminatory behavior** — including jokes.
- **Don't tolerate aggressive or violent behavior** of any kind (physical, verbal, emotional, etc.), **sexual harassment** — including jokes.
- Avoid exclusionary behavior, spreading rumors, etc.
- **Address disagreements respectfully.** If possible, involve a neutral third party (coach, team captain, mediator).
- **Be mindful of alcohol and substances.** Use them responsibly to avoid putting yourself or others at risk. Respect individual choices, and don't encourage anyone who may already be intoxicated to have more.

3.2. Role-Specific Guidelines

Any club member can have multiple roles within the club. These roles can be situation-dependent and can change. Therefore, different roles can come with enhanced or differing expectations.

 As a coach, captain, mediator or board member, you hold a **position of influence and responsibility**. We expect all to embrace the **principles of servant leadership** —prioritizing service to the club and its members. Your actions should reflect and uphold the values and interests of the club at all times.

Coaches & Captains

- Create a safer training and playing space.
- Actively prevent participation in training/match when a known injury endangers a player's health.
- Model inclusive behavior and language.
- Communicate positively with players, using encouraging language and avoid any comments or language that discourages, undermines or singles out other players.
- Call in problematic behavior early, with care.

Board & Leadership

- Ensure transparency, accessibility and inclusion in all decisions. For example:

- Make sure board meeting minutes are accessible to all club members.
 - Allow club members to ask questions and engage positively — for example, during club and team meetings or when taking part in organizational tasks.
- Uphold confidentiality in complaints.
- Support ongoing training and education for coaches, mediators, and club members in general.

Mediation Team

- Handle complaints confidentially.
- Offer non-punitive, restorative options where possible.
- Clearly communicate consequences to all parties and make sure that they're carried out.
- Ensure transparency and emotional safety in all steps.

3.3. Situational Guidelines

Training, Matches and Tournaments

- Be kind to each other - Encourage your teammates, be supportive. Avoid any comments or language that discourages, undermines or singles out other players.
- Participating in training sessions, matches or tournaments while **under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol is NOT tolerated**. Doing so puts not only yourself but also others at risk, and compromises the safety and integrity of the entire group.
- Show fair play and respect referees, teammates, opponents, organizers & staff, and supporters/spectators.
- Do not tolerate or excuse slurs, intimidation, or aggressive behavior that goes against the rules of the sport or the spirit of fair play.
- Address disagreements respectfully. If you have a disagreement with a teammate, tournament official, referee or an opponent, involve a neutral third party such as your team captain and approach the person during a break or after the training/competition.
- Ask before giving feedback and physically correcting someone's posture or technique, unless immediate instruction is required to prevent injury or ensure safe play.
- Respect your teammates' boundaries.
- Respect when someone sits out for mental or physical reasons.
- Respect and take care of the club's or the host's equipment. Ensure cleanliness at the pitch, showers and changing rooms.

- Most importantly, remember you and others are here to have fun!

Social Events

- Practice consent in all interactions.
- Respect people's boundaries around alcohol, drugs, noise, touch, etc.
- Include everyone — newcomers, quiet folks, sober members.
- Consider more inclusive events beyond typical party settings. For example, this could include quieter spaces, providing subtitles or sign language interpretation when possible, or offering support options such as sober buddies at events.

Online Spaces

- Keep chat groups respectful and inclusive: no insults, intimidation, bullying, etc. Avoid sending material that contains violence or add appropriate trigger warnings.
- Don't post images or content of others without consent.
- No (cyber)stalking
- The club will not inhibit the freedom of personal expression or respectfully shared opinions. However, if a player or member makes an online statement or post that seeks to harass, discriminate and/or vilify for any reason; the safe spaces the club strives to build are threatened and this may constitute a breach of the Code.

4. How We Address Harm

When harm occurs, we aim to respond thoughtfully and proportionately.

Possible steps include:

1. **Informal conversation or check-in** (by a peer, coach, or mediator)
2. **Mediation or facilitated dialogue** (if appropriate and agreed)
3. **Educational support** (workshops, coaching, self-reflection)
4. **Formal response** (warning, suspension, or exclusion in severe or repeated cases)

We prioritize **restorative approaches**, but some behavior — like violence, harassment, or hate speech — may require more formal consequences.

5. Reporting a Concern

If you've experienced or witnessed behavior that violates this Code, you can:

- Talk to a **trusted team member, coach, mediator or board member**
- Use the **anonymous reporting form** (not available yet)

- Request a **confidential meeting with a mediator**

The Bruisers have a mediation committee, and some teams have their own mediators. Check with your teammates about who you can contact for support.

 *Reports and complaints are **kept confidential** by all mediators, board members and other people involved unless the person harmed gives permission to share.*

 *The mediator(s) will **communicate the process clearly and transparently to all parties involved**. If the reporting person's identity is known, **they will be consulted** before further steps are taken. At the same time, **the club retains responsibility for taking appropriate measures to protect the safety and well-being of its members**.*

6. Ongoing Learning & Review

This Code of Conduct is a **living document**. It will be:

- Reviewed annually by the board and club members
- Updated with community input
- Made available to all members (digitally)

7. Relationship to Club Bylaws

This Code of Conduct governs behavior and expectations in everyday club life. It is separate from, but complementary to, the club's **bylaws**, which deal with structural and legal matters.

Any updates to the Code must be **ratified at the AGM**, with transparency and community input.

Appendix: Glossary with definitions

Ableism emphasizes the unequal treatment, transgressions, and stereotypical attributions that people experience because of their physical or mental impairments. There is a normative idea of what people must achieve or be capable of. Anyone who deviates from this norm is labeled as disabled and perceived as inferior.

<https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/woerterbuch/ableismus>, last accessed 12.02.2026

Ageism: unequal treatment of a person based on prejudices and stereotypes attributed to their age. A person's age is associated with certain abilities or general physical or mental performance.

<https://www.ikud.de/glossar/ageismus-definition-ageism.html>, last accessed 21.02.2023

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits. (IHRA definition)

<https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>, last accessed 21.03.2026

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color): This term originates from the self-identification process of racially oppressed people. It was also coined as a political term in the 1960s in the context of the Black Power movement. The aim is to identify commonalities between communities with different historical backgrounds. It also focuses on the fact that Black and Indigenous people, unlike other people of color, are never considered or regarded as white.

https://www.gendercampus.ch/public/ttgd/Glossar_RACE.pdf, last accessed 12.02.2026

Body shaming refers to discrimination or insults directed at people because of their bodies or appearance.

Classism refers to discrimination based on social background and/or social and economic position. Classism is therefore not only about how much money someone has, but also about their status and the financial and social circumstances in which they grew up. In particular, homeless and unemployed people, as well as people from the working class and those living in poverty, are marginalized.

<https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/woerterbuch/klassismus>, last accessed 12.02.2026

Consent is a mutual agreement. It should always be clear, voluntary, and communicated without pressure, manipulation, or fear. It isn't just a one-time check-in, but an ongoing conversation. It can be withdrawn at any time. Enthusiastic consent means seeking out a clear, positive “yes”—not just the absence of “no.”

<https://rainn.org/share-the-facts/consent-101-respect-boundaries-and-building-trust/>, last accessed 17.02.2026

Discrimination is the use of categorical, i.e. supposedly clear-cut distinctions to establish, justify and rationalize unequal treatment, resulting in social disadvantage. In this way, discrimination simultaneously produces structural relations of domination and oppression. It can take the form of actions, behaviors, omissions, policies, or laws, and may be intentional or unintentional.

<https://www.uni-bremen.de/en/university/profile/anti-discrimination-and-diversity/anti-discrimination-policy/definition-of-discrimination> & <https://kritische-maennlichkeit.de/glossar/>, last accessed 21.03.2026

FLINTA* (Womxn, Lesbians, Inter*, Non-binary, Trans*, Agender): In other words, people who are discriminated against on the basis of their gender identity due to patriarchy. FLINTA* does not describe sexual orientation, but rather gender identities, thus highlighting the social component of gender. FLINTA* explicitly includes lesbian as a gender identity so as not to obscure feminist achievements. The asterisk * serves as a placeholder for other gender identities. <https://missy-magazine.de/blog/2020/12/07/hae-was-heisst-denn-flint/>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Intersex/intergender/inter* people have congenital sex characteristics that are not clearly accepted by the prevailing social and medical norm, i.e., they do not fit into the categories of male or female, whether genetically, hormonally, or anatomically.

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/queerspiegel/was-ist-intersexualitat-2602330.html>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Non-binary, genderqueer, and other similar terms are self-identifiers for a gender identity that cannot be described in terms of male or female. This can refer to a gender identity that is “between,” “both,” “neither,” or “beyond” male and female.

<https://www.regenbogenportal.de/glossar>, last accessed 20.02.2023 (doesn't exist anymore)

Trans* is an umbrella term that refers to various people who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth.

<https://kritische-maennlichkeit.de/glossar/>, last accessed 17.02.2026

Agender people do not identify with any gender.

<https://kritische-maennlichkeit.de/glossar/>, last accessed 17.02.2026

Gender identity is the inner knowledge and feeling about one's own gender identity. In English, a distinction is made between “gender,” which is social, and “sex,” which is the gender assigned at birth based on physical characteristics.

<https://kritische-maennlichkeit.de/glossar/>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Islamophobia refers to rigorously negative views of Islam and/or hostility towards Muslims. A typical example of this would be a general and undifferentiated view of Islam as a threat that must be combated in order to preserve one's own will, however that may be described.

<https://www.bpb.de/themen/rechtsextremismus/dossier-rechtsextremismus/180774/islamfeindlichkeit-islamophobie-islamkritik-ein-wegweiser-durch-den-begriffdschungel/>, last accessed 21.02.2023

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym (word formed from the initial letters of several words) that stands for, among other things, the following terms: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual or agender, etc. The plus sign + serves as a placeholder for other gender identities and sexual orientations.

Queer refers to people whose gender identity and/or sexual orientation does not conform to the binary gender, cisgender, and/or heterosexual norm. The word “queer” comes from English and means ‘strange’ or “peculiar.” It was initially used to refer to homosexual people in a negative way. The term was later reclaimed by the queer community during the AIDS movement in the 1980s. As a result, it took on a positive connotation and has since been used by the LGBTQIA+ community as a self-designation. Not all people in the community identify with the term.

<https://www.vielfalt-mediathek.de/queerfeindlichkeit>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Queermisia (also known as Queerphobia) refers to discrimination and hostility towards people who identify as part of the queer community. This hostility manifests itself in various ways, including intolerance, prejudice, and rejection of those affected, but also through direct hate crimes and violence. The frequently used term “queerphobia” should be used less often, as ‘phobia’ means “fear,” which does not express the actual core of the hostility.

<https://www.vielfalt-mediathek.de/queerfeindlichkeit>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Racism is a social practice of differentiation and the valorisation or devaluation of social groups into which people are divided on the basis of actual or ascribed characteristics. This categorisation can be based on criteria such as language, culture or religion. However, it can also be based on physically visible/audible characteristics such as skin colour, language or clothing, while these characteristics are given social significance. Importantly, this categorisation creates hierarchical differences between the groups and serves as social legitimisation for the exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage of specific groups and their members. It takes the social power of one group to enforce this practice of categorisation against other, disadvantaged groups. Racism takes place on different levels, e.g. on the individual/interpersonal level, the institutional level or the discursive level.

<https://www.uni-weimar.de/en/university/structure/central-university-facilities/diversity-department/topics-and-measures/focus-topic-2024/glossary/glossary-on-the-topic-of-racism-and-anti-racist-critique/>, last accessed 12.02.2026

Sexism means the disadvantage, devaluation, violation, and oppression of a person or group based on gender. Sexism is also the idea that genders have an order or hierarchy. For example, the idea that men are worth more than women.

<https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/lexikon-in-einfacher-sprache/331402/sexismus/>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behavior, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It can be physical, verbal or written. Sexual harassment is not behavior that is mutually agreed upon.

It can include:

- Comments about a person's private life or the way they look
- Sexually suggestive behavior, such as leering or staring
- Brushing up against someone, touching, fondling or hugging
- Sexually suggestive comments or jokes
- Displaying offensive screensavers, photos, calendars or objects
- Repeated requests to date
- Unwanted requests for sex
- Sexually explicit emails, text messages or posts on social networking sites

<https://humanrights.gov.au/resource-hub/by-resource-type/books/sexual-harassment-code-practice-what-sexual-harassment>, last accessed 21.03.2026

Sexual orientation describes a person's interest in which gender they feel romantic, sexual, emotional, or other affection towards. Examples include heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and pansexuality.

<https://kritische-maennlichkeit.de/glossar/>, last accessed 20.02.2023

Transmisia/Trans hostility (or widely known as transphobia) refers to the rejection of people who are trans* and/or whose gender expression does not correspond to the recognized binary categories of male and female. According to studies Trans* people often face the most discrimination within the LGBTQIA+ community.

<https://www.lsvd.de/de/ct/562-Transphobie-Transfeindlichkeit-und-geschlechtliche-Vielfalt-in-Deutschland>, last accessed 21.02.2023

Victim blaming describes when victims of discrimination are blamed for their experiences in a reversal of guilt. It can also mean that perpetrators or people in a privileged position portray themselves as victims when criticized in order to avoid accountability.

<https://gemeinsam-gegen-sexismus.de/glossar-posts/victim-blaming/>, last accessed 21.03.2026

Violence: actions that are intended or likely to hurt people or cause damage.

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/violence>, last accessed 17.02.2026