

The purpose of this briefing is to provide all participants of Vienna Euros 2015 with some practical recommendations which help ensure that all participants can enjoy equal levels of access and well-being. These recommendations can help you uphold the binding Code of Conduct. In addition to expecting compliance with the Code of Conduct, we will work on the assumption that all participants have read this equity briefing.

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## Ensuring equal levels of access and well-being

Different people can experience different, and sometimes even multiple barriers to successfully engage with debating.

Our empathy with barriers, of all kind, is a matter of fairness. Being consistent in our empathy with all barriers is also a matter of fairness.

Not all barriers may seem familiar to you, not all barriers might seem sensible to you and you might also not agree with certain things being called a barrier. However it is precisely because of a potential lack of familiarity or a potential disagreement towards that perceived barrier that empathy is recommendable. Empathy is not necessarily recognising the existence of a barrier. Rather, it asks that you are open-minded when listening to others, and respectful when you talk about that barrier.

In light of the above, we want to discuss two barriers of access that frequently come up in discussions in the European debating community. For the duration of Vienna Euros, we make the following recommendations, in line with EUDC Council rulings where applicable.

### When to use gender pronouns

Introducing yourself and stating your preferred gender pronouns is an important way to make people feel in control of how they are spoken to and about by others. However, particularly in a multicultural environment such as Vienna Euros, this particular practice of creating an open and safe space has been stated by some to be counterproductive to its aims of creating a safe space. In particular, this has been stated by some of those who this policy seeks to benefit. That this was the case is regrettable from an objective perspective, but from a perspective of safety must be assigned the highest importance. Due to unfortunate differences in levels of social acceptance, this practice might expose individuals to risks that transgress the tournament.

According to an EUDC Council 2014 ruling, a speaker will not be asked to state their preferred gender pronoun when the Chair opens the debate. Council also ruled that, during debates, we must

all strive to use gender neutral language such as ‘when the previous speaker mentioned X’, ‘when the prime minister presented their model’ or ‘Chair Person’ instead of ‘Madam or Mister Speaker’.

This ruling certainly doesn’t mean that asking for preferred gender is not allowed. It is only not to be a part of the public process of a debate round. You are of course encouraged to find out anyone’s preferred gender pronoun when interacting with them in a personal setting. It is also encouraged, but not required, for any participant at Vienna Euros, at any moment in which they are introducing themselves (including during a round) to state their preferred gender pronoun should they choose.

We also recommend that all participants use non-gendered language in all their interactions with people whose preferred gender pronoun they do not know. Should you wish to ask someone how they wish to be addressed, please do by simply asking “what is your preferred gender pronoun?”

Should you accidentally misgender someone, immediately apologise, and move on with your speech or conversation. Intentionally misgendering as well as deliberately mocking the importance of using respectful language to address each other will be seen as an act of degrading a person’s or a group’s identity, thereby violating the Code of Conduct.

### Language as a barrier to debating

Language practices that might be deeply engrained in the speaking habits of some speakers are not always easily accessible to other speakers. It is important to be sensitive to the double challenge some speakers feel in speaking competitively in public and doing so in a language which isn’t their first. In fact, the language barrier can be felt at all times during Vienna Euros, so a constant mindful attitude from all participants is recommended.

In particular reference to the paragraph above, avoiding gendered language can be considered to be more of a burden for those who have grammatically gendered languages as their first language, e.g. Hebrew or Slavic languages, and addressing everyone by their correct gender can be harder for those who do not have gendered languages such as Hungarian and Turkish – all languages present at Vienna Euros. The transition to non-gendered language is therefore arguably less easy for some speakers than others who have had less exposure to the importance and practice of speaking gender neutral English. Whilst this does not exempt those speakers from using gender neutral language; it can provide a clear explanation for such a challenge.

It is commendable to always show empathy towards any and all linguistic barriers to accessing debating. Intentionally mocking or misrepresenting intentions that can be derived from a linguistic barrier can be seen as an act of degrading a person’s or a group’s identity, thereby violating the Code of Conduct.

### The use of certain types of argumentation or language

- Extreme generalizations and essentialising of a group of people is almost always of no argumentative value and can be offensive to judges and other speakers. We recommend refraining from using those types of generalizations.
- Stating that a person doesn’t have the appropriate background to have a valid argument in the debate (i.e. “what do you know about policy X, you’re from Y!”) is almost always of no argumentative value. That is also the case for personal attacks (i.e. “people like you shouldn’t even be saying things like X because you’re a Y”). Such arguments do not address the content of an argument, nor do they address its logical structure. Both these types of argumentation can upset a person, since you are referring to their background as if it is relevant for their chances

of winning or losing the argument. In some cases, this can violate the Code of Conduct, but we recommend that in all cases, you should try to avoid using such arguments.

- Using vivid or graphic language to illustrate the impact or truth of your argument is a common and effective rhetorical tool in debating. While using that tool, we recommend a certain level of consideration in your choice of language. There are many ways to refer to a person, group or nation's experiences in a way that could help you win your debates. We recommend that you choose a way that shows respect to those persons, groups or countries.
- Try to be sensitive to the people who will share the experience of Vienna Euros with you. Some jokes might be top banter within your social circle, but you would never repeat that pretty bad joke about "a German, a Dutch and an Israeli walk into a bar" at, for example, a job interview at McKinsey. The difference? Well, context, audience and potential consequences. It's quite simple, really. Being sensitive to the various contexts that you will find yourself in, such as debate rounds, socials, during briefings, dinner with your own crew and so on, will also be expected of you at Vienna Euros, and we know that everyone can do it.



## How to raise an issue with someone

If you would like to raise an issue with someone, the table below provides a helpful tool to prepare yourself for that. Should you wish to do this in your own way, then you are obviously entitled to do so. The below is only intended to provide some assistance.

Raising an issue with someone	being approached by someone
<p>Reflect - Think about why and how a statement or action caused you offence. This is not because you have to phrase everything perfectly, but to give yourself some time to reflect on what happened.</p> <p>Think then whether you are comfortable to approach the relevant speaker or team on your own, or whether you would like to approach someone from the equity team.</p>	<p>When someone approaches you, whether with an equity officer or not, please remember that this is an open inquiry that respects your side of the story. Very often, a brief chat and exchange of thoughts is sufficient to deal with a misunderstanding.</p>
<p>Communicate - Tell your thoughts to the offending side. Try to only make a remark about certain behaviour or use of words and never on the person's value as a human being. Do not pre-judge someone's intentions, but listen openly to their side of the story.</p>	<p>Listen - Listen openly and respectfully to what the other person is telling you. Understand the other person as fully as you can before you react.</p>
<p>Listen - Allow the other person a chance to understand and if necessary, ask some clarification questions, since it is very likely the case rests on a misunderstanding or a miscommunication. Allow the other side an opportunity to explain themselves or apologise.</p>	<p>Communicate - Recognize the position and feelings of the other person and give adequate space for it. You can further explain yourself to correct misgivings, if any, or simply apologise. A sincere apology goes a long way.</p>

Please remember, that while all of us (as human beings) are always completely free to communicate issues directly with each other, you can also always come to us to talk about issues caused during or in-between rounds and at socials.

## Equity officers are not law enforces

We are not the Austrian Police and have no intention of switching careers. We have copy-pasted certain things that some might think are the territory of equity, but are, in fact, criminal law in Austria. The message below comes from the Austrian Convening Team and must be read and respected. As Equity officers, we have no more (or less) of a duty to report, prevent or assist the police in criminal investigation than any other participant at Vienna Euros.

## *MESSAGE FROM THE CONVENORS*

“Physical integrity, the boundaries of sexual consent and property are strictly protected by Austrian law. These boundaries should be self-evident and easy to observe for all participants. Hence,

violations are unacceptable and we will report any criminal offences to local law enforcement if necessary.

### Glorification of NS crimes – Verbotsgesetz

While we Austrians value Freedom of Expression, there is a stringent boundary concerning the glorification of the NS regime or any of its crimes. As set of laws (§3a-g Verbotsgesetz and administrative offences) leaves no tolerance towards speech and symbols that can be interpreted as endorsing the NS regime. Please generally refrain from references to the NS regime at socials and in public, no one here finds jokes about war crimes funny. In debates refrain from portraying the NS regime in a positive light and be aware that the area represents a dark chapter in Austria's history.

### Discrimination, personal and religious honour

Austrian law to a certain degree protects the honour of individuals and religions. Gross negative generalisations of religious communities may infringe rules of the penal code. Public attacks on individuals are a similarly bad idea as well as open abuse on grounds of race, sexual orientation or gender. All this behaviour is a no-go anyway, but in Austria, it can be a criminal offence in addition.

### Drug offences

Austria's drug law is complex. In general trading or importing drugs is more harshly punished than consuming drugs, but depends of the amount of drugs found – this includes Marihuana. Just don't do drugs at Vienna EUDC."

### A bit more about us

We are all (former) speakers in the European debating circuit. We profoundly love debating and are honoured to be part of a team that is there to try to make sure that all participants at Vienna Euros enjoy equal levels of access and well-being. We are also all adjudicators at the tournament, but as Equity Officers, we have an additional five functions at Vienna Euros.

- 1) We have created the Code of Conduct and this equity briefing.
- 2) We are at the tournament to mediate between two parties where there is a concern that the code of conduct has been violated and should one of the two parties wish for mediation.
- 3) Although hopefully unlikely, but if necessary, we will apply sanctions as described in the Code of Conduct.
- 4) We will moderate an Access Forum (Women, Diversity & Equity), giving space for discussing Equity issues and potential policies that could improve equal access to this and future EUDCs.
- 5) We also assist the Convening Team in their work to make Vienna Euros a fair and accessible tournament.

In all these cases, we make our decisions independent of EUDC Council, the CA team and the conveners, but we operate within the scope of EUDC Council rulings where they apply.

Finally, because drinking impedes decision-making power and 'I was drunk' will never be accepted as anyone's excuse for poor decision-making, for each day of the duration of Vienna Euros, at least two members of the Equity Team will not drink alcohol or use other intoxicating substances (excluding chocolate).

Thank you for reading, and see you in Vienna!