



CODE OF CONDUCT FOR UNION REPRESENTATIVES ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Introduction

Representatives of the Swedish trade union movement enjoy an excellent reputation amongst the international community and are known for carrying out their international assignments very competently.

It is vital that we maintain this reputation in the interest of the Swedish trade union's credibility, while guaranteeing quality in our international solidarity work. The LO-TCO Board has therefore established a code of conduct for union representatives on international assignments which reflects the fundamental values of the trade union movement and provides guidelines on how Swedish trade union representatives should conduct themselves when they are abroad.

The Code of Conduct constitutes LO-TCO's guidelines for anyone representing the Swedish trade union movement for any length of time on assignments authorised by the LO-TCO Secretariat.

General values

As a representative of the trade union movement, you are expected to conduct yourself in accordance with trade union values, the UN convention on human rights and the ILO's core conventions on human rights in working life.

It is important that your conduct, on or off duty, should contribute to maintaining our excellent reputation in your contacts with international staff, local representatives and the general population of the country you are visiting. You are not merely representing your own trade union - you will also be seen, by those you meet, as a representative of Sweden, of the international trade union movement and the international community.

Your conduct and attitudes must therefore clearly indicate that you do not intend under any circumstances to abuse your position, that you will behave appropriately in your dealings with those you meet regardless of sex, religious belief, ethnic origin or age.

During your stay in the area where you are carrying out your assignment, you are the guest of a foreign country and should as such respect that country, its people, its culture and its environment.

You should also avoid all political, religious, financial or other activities which are incompatible with the above mentioned trade union values.

Inappropriate behaviour during your stay abroad can lead to the violation of other people's rights, while you also risk damaging your own as well as your union's credibility with the local population, local authorities and other international staff and/or organisations.

Security should be given maximum priority when, for example, choosing a particular means of transport, a particular hotel, etc., since unsuitable choices may put not only yourself but others at risk.

“Think before you act” is a good maxim for ensuring appropriate behaviour while on assignment abroad. Think about your own attitudes and actions and on how these may be perceived by others, as well as about their consequences. When you are on an international assignment, you are always “visible”, whether you are on the job or taking time off to relax.

Guidelines

You should be familiar with, respect and adhere to these guidelines during your assignment abroad. If you chose not to do so, the LO-TCO Secretariat and the union you are working with may take appropriate measures. If you choose to ignore these guidelines, resulting in conduct or actions considered illegal under Swedish law, you may be held responsible.

- **Abuse of position of power**

During your assignment abroad, you will come into contact with many people who are or regard themselves as dependent on you. Whether this dependency is real or not, you must never abuse your position as a trade union representative. Neither may you use your position of power to afford other persons privileges they would not otherwise have had. Your conduct during your contacts with others should be such that it can never be interpreted as a demand for or expectation of services or benefits such as “subsidised rent”, sexual services, etc. Sexual relations with people who are or may regard themselves as dependent on you are improper and should be avoided at all costs, as you risk placing the other person in a situation which may have negative consequences during and after the relationship.

- **Discrimination**

You may not discriminate against any individual or group for reasons of sex, religion, ethnic origin, sexual preference, political ideas, disability, age, social standing or nationality, whether they are members of international staff, locally employees, elected representatives or members of the public.

- **Corruption**

You must not become involved in corruption by giving or receiving economic bribes or other benefits for the purpose of gaining advantage over others. In many countries bribery is extremely common. Sida's “Guidelines when corruption is suspected” is applicable in this context. LO-TCO's Secretariat repudiates all forms of bribery, one of the aims of our activities being to combat corruption. We therefore request that all employees and individuals on assignment dissociate themselves from bribery and corruption in any form as far as possible, always providing that it does not cause them physical suffering or harm.

- **Organised crime**

All contact with organised crime must be avoided. This means that you should be aware of organised crime and its ramifications when you, for example, change money, choose hotels or restaurants or find yourself in a variety of everyday situations. You should also, whenever possible (and with the help of our local partners), choose hotels, restaurants and other suppliers who have signed collective agreements with their employees. You must be aware that trafficking exists, not only of sexual services but also for the provision of, for example, domestic and gardening services.

- **Purchase of sexual services**

Purchasing sexual services is not permitted during foreign assignments. “Purchase” includes not only “cash deals” with prostitutes, visits to brothels, etc., but also “private supply” in the form of payment of bills, rent, school fees, etc., in exchange for sexual services. Visits to pornographic, striptease and similar clubs are forbidden as they may imply support for criminal acts such as sex trade, etc.

- **Sexual abuse**

All forms of sexual abuse are forbidden, as are sexual contacts with juveniles. Juveniles, as defined in the UN convention on children's rights applied by LO-TCO, are all young people under the age of 18.

- **Sexual harassment**

No employee should have to suffer sexual harassment, which is defined as "behaviour of a sexual nature in working life which violates the dignity of a person seeking employment or of an employee". (Article 16.1 of the Equal Opportunities Act).

- **Pornography**

You may not use technical equipment provided by your union, such as computers, etc., to view or divulge pornographic material. Contact with pornographic material showing children or under-age persons is strictly forbidden, not only during assignments but at all times.

- **Alcohol**

You should restrict your alcohol consumption. Alcohol consumption while on assignment is only permitted in exceptional cases, such as official dinners, while representing the union and similar events (and then only sparingly). You should restrict your alcohol consumption to the minimum during your time off and should never drink and drive.

- **Narcotic substances**

The use and possession of substances classed as narcotics is forbidden, unless it takes place within the assignment as part of your duties, as in, for example, health care or anti-drug campaigns or in the form of medicine prescribed for your personal use.

Conclusion

International assignments mean being in a country or an area which needs support from the international community in order to create or rebuild a society where human rights are respected and the population can live in security. Regardless of whether the need is caused by war, natural catastrophes or poverty, not only the country and its infrastructures have been damaged. The population is forced to live in insecure, unsafe conditions for indeterminate periods of time, while their faith in and respect for social structures, authorities, laws and regulations are often seriously damaged. By always behaving correctly towards the people you meet during your assignment abroad, you will contribute towards renewing their faith and respect. You must therefore always distance yourself from any situation which may involve abuse of power, bribery or corruption.

This Code of Conduct is based on material provided by the "Network for codes of ethical rules and conduct" and was adopted by LO-TCO Secretariat's Board 1st of December, 2005.