

# RIPE Code of Conduct: Process and Consequences

Authors: (Code of Conduct Task Force) Brian Nisbet, Danesh Bhabuta, Salam Yamout, Leo Vegoda, Antony Gollan, Athina Fragkouli

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## Introduction

This document describes the process to be followed by the Code of Conduct (CoC) Team when handling reports. The same process applies equally to everyone who participates within the RIPE community.

This document was prepared by the Code of Conduct Task Force. It is based on similar documents developed by the Python and Mozilla communities.

## How the Code of Conduct Team Relates to the Rest of the RIPE Community

Everyone who organises activities or fills a role within the RIPE community has a responsibility to make sure that people understand what is appropriate behaviour. However, only the CoC Team is responsible for handling reports and making decisions about outcomes.

Working group chairs are responsible for their respective mailing lists and WG sessions in a proactive way. In contrast, the role of the CoC Team is a reactive one – it will only act once a report has been submitted. If a WG chair thinks someone has breached the CoC in one of their sessions, they will report this to the CoC Team. The WG Chair Collective and the CoC Team will liaise as needed and the two groups will maintain a cooperative relationship.

The RIPE Chair appoints volunteers from the RIPE community to serve on the CoC Team. The RIPE Chair will use their good judgement to prioritise individuals with integrity who best represent the community's values. New members of the CoC Team will also receive high-quality training from experts. The RIPE Chair's judgement, together with this expert training, will ensure that the community has a CoC Team that can perform its duties fairly and effectively. The RIPE Chair is ultimately responsible for the RIPE community and will take action if a member of the CoC Team (or the team as a whole) is found to be deficient in their role.

## Process Steps

This section describes the steps the CoC Team will take when handling reports.

### 1. Report is Submitted

People can submit reports electronically or by speaking with a member of the CoC Team. RIPE NCC staff can also help people to contact the CoC Team.

When someone makes a report, they will get confirmation that it has been received and is being reviewed by the CoC Team. When a report is made in-person, a member of the CoC Team will take notes and make sure it is properly entered into the system.

Electronic reports can also be submitted anonymously. In this case, the person making the report will not receive a confirmation or be notified of any outcomes. Anonymous reports will not carry the same weight and cannot be investigated to the same extent as regular reports.

The member of the CoC Team who receives a report will be responsible for forming an assessment group to handle the report. The purpose of this triage step is to make sure the report is not seen by more people than necessary.

### 2. Assessment Group is Formed

The assessment group will be formed within one week of a report being made. In practice, this will often need to happen much faster, especially during an event. This smaller group should consist of at least two members of the CoC Team and one RIPE NCC staff member who is appropriately qualified. The member of the CoC Team who initially received the report would preferably be one of the members of this group.

Before assessing a report, CoC Team members will consider whether there are potential conflicts of interest. Reviewing the names of the people involved should be enough to determine whether this is the case. Any members of the assessment group who see a potential conflict of interest will recuse themselves so that someone else can take their place.

### 3. Report is Assessed

Depending on the nature of the report, elements of the assessment process may include (but are not limited to):

- Contacting the subject of the report to hear their side of the story
- Obtaining reports from witnesses
- Reviewing any relevant materials (photos, videos, screenshots, messages, emails, etc)
- Consultation with others as appropriate
- Group discussion and assessment of the evidence

The extent to which the steps above are taken will depend on the severity of the report. For example, in almost all cases the CoC Team is expected to inform someone that a report has been made about them and ask to hear their version of events. However, if the CoC Team received a report that was clearly submitted in bad faith, it might decide that informing the person named in the report was neither required nor helpful.

The role of the RIPE NCC staff member in the group is to provide administrative and legal support to the volunteers on the CoC Team as needed. Members of the CoC Team must exercise discretion when evaluating reports. Other people involved in an investigation, such as the subject and witnesses, are also expected to exercise discretion.

#### 4. Decision is Made

When the assessment group properly understands the reported incident, it will decide whether this represents a breach of the Code of Conduct. If the group believes that a breach has taken place, it will agree on a course of action.

When deciding on appropriate outcomes, the group will consider a range of factors, such as the severity of the breach, its impact on others, any past incidents involving the same person, and the potential for future harm to members of the community.

The CoC Team can decide to impose 'minor' or 'serious' outcomes. An example of a minor outcome would be giving someone a warning and telling them not to repeat certain behaviour. Serious outcomes are where the RIPE NCC needs to implement an action, such as revoking someone's RIPE Meeting badge, banning them from future meetings, or banning them from posting to a mailing list.

In cases where the group believes that serious outcomes should be applied, such as expelling someone from a RIPE Meeting, it may notify or seek input from other parties, such as the RIPE NCC's Events Team or Legal Department. However, while it might seek input from other parties, only the assessment group is responsible for making a final decision.

If the group decides that serious outcomes are required, it will inform the RIPE Chair Team and the RIPE NCC before action is taken.

Once the group has made its decision, the relevant parties will be notified of the outcome as appropriate. In all cases, both the person who made the report and the subject of the report should be informed. Where possible, this notification should happen before any outcomes are applied.

#### 5. Outcomes are Applied

Once the assessment group has decided on outcomes, it will arrange for them to be applied as soon as is practical and appropriate. When the RIPE NCC needs to take actions, the staff member who supported the assessment group will be responsible for making sure they are carried out. They will report back to the CoC Team as appropriate.

People who dispute the outcome of a report can contact the CoC Team to make an appeal. An appeal must be initiated within one month of being informed of the outcome. In this instance, a different group of CoC Team members must review the case. The request for an appeal will probably not prevent some consequences from being applied. For example, someone who is ordered to leave the RIPE Meeting will not be able to remain at the meeting while their appeal is being considered.

If the person who submitted an appeal is unhappy with the outcome, they can approach the RIPE Chair as the final assessor in the appeal process. They will review the CoC Team's findings and use their judgement to decide on a course of action that is best for the RIPE community.

## 6. Decision is Recorded

The RIPE NCC will maintain a record of all assessments made by the CoC Team. Any personal data contained in these assessments will be stored and processed according to the relevant European data protection regulations.

## Data Protection Information

*Note: References to the actions of the CoC Team in this section also include the actions taken by the assessment group responsible for the handling of a report.*

A submitted report and the assessment by the CoC Team might contain the personal data (for example: name, email, phone number, photos, etc.) of the following people:

- The person named in the report
- The person who submitted the report
- Any witnesses or others included in the report or mentioned as involved in the incident

Personal data submitted in a report, or otherwise received by the CoC Team when assessing a report, will be processed for the following purposes:

- For the CoC Team to handle and assess a submitted report
- For the CoC Team to inform the relevant parties of any outcomes, and the RIPE Chair Team and RIPE NCC in case of serious outcomes
- For the RIPE NCC to maintain records that allow it to implement actions as instructed by the CoC Team
- For the CoC Team to inform the relevant parties and request additional information in the event of an appeal
- For the CoC Team to be able to consider past behaviour and context when investigating reports
- For the CoC Team and the RIPE NCC to be able to demonstrate the evidence based on which the CoC Team has made a decision in case this is required for a judicial claim

The personal data of the individuals mentioned in a report and/or the assessment of the CoC Team will be retained for as long as necessary to fulfil the purposes defined above and no longer than five

years after an assessment is finalised and any applied outcomes are lifted, unless there is an ongoing legal dispute or other legal reason requiring the CoC Team and/or the RIPE NCC to maintain this data for longer.

All personal data will be removed from assessments once the relevant periods have expired. Assessments can then be stored indefinitely. This will allow the CoC Team to identify trends and review actions taken in previous cases.

## **Potential Consequences of Breaching the CoC**

This section outlines some of the possible outcomes that may result from breaching the RIPE Code of Conduct. It is important to be clear that these are all examples and are not definitive lists. This is especially the case as not every form of participation is described, such as interactions via instant messaging or at virtual events. Both lists are ordered on a scale from least to most serious.

When deciding where on this scale a specific case belongs, the CoC Team will consider a number of different factors, such as whether that person has done anything similar in the past and how they have affected others. The CoC Team are empowered by the RIPE community to apply their best judgement when selecting a consequence for an action.

## **Meeting Sessions and Social Events**

1. Told not to repeat a certain kind of behaviour
2. Removed from the room for a period of time to allow emotions to settle
3. Removed from the room for the remainder of a session
4. Removed from the meeting venue for the day
5. Removed from the social event for the remainder of the event
6. Removed from the meeting venue for the remainder of the meeting
7. Not allowed to attend future events for a period of time
8. Permanently banned from attending RIPE events

Note: in the case of virtual events, consequences would roughly correspond to their real-world equivalent. For example, someone might be asked to leave a conference call to calm down rather than leaving a physical room.

## **Mailing List**

1. Publicly told not to repeat a kind of post
2. Temporary ban from posting to the list
3. Permanent ban from posting to the list
4. Temporary ban from posting to any RIPE mailing list
5. Permanent ban from posting to any RIPE mailing list

## Loss of Community Role

The procedures to remove people from various roles within the community are covered in the relevant RIPE Documents. The CoC Team does not have any additional powers in this regard, and so this is not an outcome it can apply. However, it may be the case that a person is no longer able to carry out their role after other consequences have been applied following a serious breach of the CoC, such as being banned from mailing lists or prevented from attending RIPE events.

## Appendix - About the Code of Conduct TF

The Code of Conduct Task Force was formed after RIPE 80 to finalise the updated RIPE Code of Conduct documents. It was chartered to create three documents:

1. An updated [RIPE Code of Conduct](#)
2. A [process for selecting](#) the Code of Conduct Team
3. This document

The Task Force had four community members and was supported by two RIPE NCC staff members. The TF's [web page](#) provides more details and links to mailing list archives, where meeting minutes are published.