



Dealing with sexualized violence on expeditions led by GEOMAR

Research expeditions are extreme situations in which a group of people is at sea for an extended period of time, working under high pressure to achieve their goals and, often under strenuous conditions. Moreover, many expeditions are characterized by small group sizes, reduced privacy due to spatial restrictions, stronger dependencies among colleagues, and less options to keep physical distance from one another. These circumstances may increase the possibility of unintentional and intentional sexual harassment on expeditions.

However, **GEOMAR does not tolerate any sexual misconduct** and will follow up every formal report of incidents. **GEOMAR protects all employees** by taking appropriate preventive measures.

1. What is sexualized violence?

The European Parliament has defined sexualized violence as *“a situation where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Sexual harassment within this meaning shall be deemed to be discrimination on the grounds of sex and therefore prohibited.”*

Accordingly, German law specifically defines sexual harassment in its General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), esp. § 3. Sexual harassment can take many forms, ranging from subtle behaviour to criminal offences. It includes, e.g.:

- Suggestive and embarrassing remarks about external appearance, e.g. body shaming, inappropriate compliments
- Unwanted physical contact and intrusive behaviour, physical advances, e.g. pats or pinches on the bottom, kisses, unwanted hugging or holding
- Showing, displaying and sending (e.g. by email) pornographic material
- Sexist remarks and jokes, e.g. catcalling
- Stalking, i.e. the repeatedly following, monitoring, surveilling, harassing, threatening, or intimidating someone including by telephone, mail, electronic communication, or social media
- Blackmailing or forcing someone into sexual relations, including with promises of benefits or under threat of disadvantages
- Physical assaults
- Sexual assault and rape

2. Who is affected?

Sexualized violence can happen to both women and men! It can happen to anyone!

3. How to prevent sexual misconduct

Awareness:

Be a responsible team member - look out for each other! It is your duty to act when you witness a border violating situation. Take appropriate actions and don't be afraid: it's better to act than to do nothing. Be respectful and mind your borders and those of others! Even if you experience some behavior as not uncomfortable or threatening, others might experience it quite this way.

Consent:

Only 'Yes means Yes!' Consent to sexual activities requires an affirmative agreement of both persons. Lack of protest, or resistance, or silence do not mean consent.

Ask-once-be-good guideline:

Take No! for an answer! Any lack of explicit positive feedback must be considered a “no” and should not be followed up with further advances. Rather: take it with a smile!

4. How to behave when you experience sexual harassment

Speak up: Do not hesitate to resolve the violating situation, i.e. to explain the respective person that his or her behaviour is unwanted or to talk to another person about it. This takes away the “private” or “secretive” character of the situation and helps you to gain control.

Keep records: document the incidence, e.g. date, place, and time, and any witnesses. Collecting evidence such as letters, emails, images, calls recorded on an answering machine, text messages on your mobile, etc. strengthens your position and provides important evidence.

Seek help – asap: Reach out to people you trust to seek support, e.g. (colleague, friend). However, to address a specific concern, it is important to speak with someone in a position to help you.

Offer support: If you have witnessed a violating situation, offer your support to the affected person. Studies show that the observations of witnesses add to the process of resolving the situation in question and provide emotional support to the affected person.

5. Who can I turn to?

The chief scientist or the ship captain must be notified of the incidence.

If you don't want to talk to a member of the expedition, the following contact persons are available at GEOMAR:

Equal Opportunities Officers:

Ulrike Schroller-Lomnitz and Kristin Hamann: gleichstellung@geomar.de, +49 431 600-2889

Staff Council:

Christine Utecht: personalrat@geomar.de, +49 431 600-2816

Sven Petersen: spetersen@geomar.de, +49 431 600-2110

Or turn to an **external advisory body:**

The Violence against women support hotline www.hilfetelefon.de, for German native speakers there is a live chat online

Männerberatung offers help for men: maennerberatung@fnrkiel.de, +49 431 91124

Wave – Women against violence Europe wave-network.org. Under *Find help* is a list of national helplines available in the European Countries.

6. What can be done?

The chief scientist or the ship captain will make sure that the conflict is resolved and that a reoccurrence of similar situations is prevented. Depending on the situation, this includes different levels of action from talking to the involved people, banning people from certain common areas (e.g. gym, social rooms), to having people sent home in case of serious violations and/or excluding them from future expeditions. Any illegal actions will be prosecuted according to German law when applicable, otherwise by the respective authorities.

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