**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.:

* 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
* 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

1. **Who is affected?**

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

1. **How to prevent sexual misconduct**

**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!

**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.

**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.



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 Officer:**Ruth Thormann and Sieglinde Kolbrink: gleichstellung@geomar.de, +49 431 600-2889  
**Staff Council:**Bettina Domeyer: personalrat@geomar.de, +49 431 600-2816  
Sven Petersen: spetersen@geomar.de, +49 431 600-2110

If you want to contact the **shipping line Briese** confidentially: [Gleichstellung.research@briese.de](mailto:Gleichstellung.research@briese.de)

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

**The Violence against women support hotline** [www.hilfetelefon.de](http://www.hilfetelefon.de), for German native speakers there is a live chat online

**Violence against men Support Hotline**: www.maennerhilfetelefon.de

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

The Baltic Consortium on Promoting Gender Equality in Marine Research Organisations (Baltic Gender) has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 710363

1. **How to behave when you experience sexual harassment**
2. **What can be done?**
3. **Who can I turn to?**

**Author**  
GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel incooperation with Briese Schiffahrts GmbH & Co. KG

**Acknowledgements**  
The content is based on the code of conduct used on Polarstern (AWI) and IODP research cruises. Content consultation by Dr. Sabine Blackmore, Blackmore Coaching.

**contact**   
gender-diversity@geomar.de

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.

**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.