Respecting Human Dignity and Integrity

Sexual Harassment Guidelines

(Shorter Version for Participants in Events)

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5,22)

A Safe Environment

WSCF Europe is committed to affirming the dignity and integrity of all persons. WSCF Europe is meant to be an open and safe space where we meet each other in Christian community, respecting each other — a place free from intimidation.

In order to ensure that WSCF Europe is this safe space at all times, these guidelines have been developed to raise awareness, to prevent harassment from happening in our midst and to address it when it does occur.

The guidelines are not intended to control or limit mutually consensual behaviour between adults. The key point is that both partners must give their consent, and consent, especially in a cross-cultural setting as within WSCF Europe, can be a tricky issue. WSCF Europe states that all forms of harassment and abuse are unacceptable and will be addressed when they come to light.

Cultural Diversity

Created all in God's image, we are still different. This diversity is a great richness, which we can learn from and celebrate together. In a cross-cultural context we have different ways of behaving, approaches to people, spiritual traditions and cultural backgrounds.

Meeting together we cross the borders of difference, but we have to take care of each other and not impose our ways of being upon others. What is normal and friendly for one person can be a hurtful invasion of space for someone else.

Relying on our culturally-based common sense may not be enough, as words, phrases, signals and gestures may carry different meanings in different cultures. We all share a responsibility to be sensitive and aware of other people's feelings so that everyone in the group can feel comfortable.

What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual harassment is deliberate and/or repeated attention of a sexual nature that is unwanted by the recipient. Verbal harassment may include unnecessary or unwelcome comments on dress and appearance, "jokes" of a personal or sexual nature that cause discomfort or embarrassment, offensive language, propositions, or verbal abuse

It can also be non-verbal, from unwelcome staring, gestures and touching, to physical assault. In the great majority of cases men harass women. So sexual harassment is more than an individual matter — it reflects a wider pattern in society. Harassment, however, can also occur between people of the same gender or by women harassing men.

The feelings of the person experiencing unwelcome behaviour are what counts, and this depends on each individual and the context. Harassment is not what someone intends to do, but her or his action and its impact on the other person's feelings.

If It Happens to You

Silence is the best friend of violence; any sexual harassment is a violation of the person. If you feel sexually harassed, do not remain silent. Ignoring sexual harassment does not make it go away; indeed, it makes it worse as the harasser may misinterpret a lack of response as approval of the behaviour. There are several things that can be done to stoo the sexual harassment:

Do not blame yourself. Sexual harassment is not something you bring on yourself. Do not delay. This only increases the possibility that the behaviour will continue. Do not hesitate to seek help. It is possible you are not the only one being harassed, so speaking up can prevent others from being harmed.

Try to tell the harasser: stop yourself; if it is possible. If you feel unable to do this, no one will blame you. Talk to someone, anyone you feel you can trust. If you wish, you can speak to responsible pastoral care persons, who will be named at every event. They will listen to you and help you to deal with the situation confidentially.

If the harasser does not stop, the pastoral care person, in consultation with the preparatory committee, the regional secretary and the chairperson, will ask the harasser to leave the event. The whole community is responsible for one another; and harassment damages our wider community as well.

Everyone should look out for signs of someone being harassed, such as withdrawing from the group. If you see or hear obvious harassment, it is your business and your responsibility to tell the harasser to stop or to tell other people. Do not walk past it.

World Student Christian Federation – **Europe Region**

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF, established in 1895) is a global community of Student Christian Movements (SCMs) committed to dialogue, ecumenism, social justice and peace. Our mission is to empower students in critical thinking and constructive transformation of our world by being a space for: prayer and celebration; theological reflection; study and analysis of social and cultural processes; and solidarity and action across boundaries of culture, gender and ethnicity. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, WSCF is called to be a prophetic witness in Church and society. This vision is nurtured by a radical hope for God's Reign in history.

We organise conferences, training events and solidarity activities; we publish books, reviews and journals. Our global ecumenical review is Student World (1908); the Asia-Pacific Region publishes Praxis, and the Europe Region publishes Mozaik (1992). Europe is one of the Federation's six regions, with more than twenty national Student Christian Movements. There are two subregions within Europe at the moment: the Nordic Subregion and the Central European Subregion. We have four interest groups: theology, culture and higher education, solidarity, and gender. WSCF Europe runs the Lingua Franca Language and Leadership Training Project. Teachers arriving from different countries teach language for students in Central and Eastern Europe and share the history and habits of their country, on a volun-

tary basis and in an ecumenical context. They are fully hosted and get a unique insight into the everyday life, cultural and religious traditions

Address **WSCF Europe**

Kálvin tér 8. HU-1091 Budapest

of the hosting country.

Hungary

Tel: + 361 219 5166 wscf-europe@xs4all.nl www.wscf-europe.org

Art Editor: Szalay Miklós (Budapest, Hungary) Illustrations: VEDRES Dániel (Budapest, Hungary)