

# Positions and Measures against Sexual Harassment at German Universities – The example of the University of Konstanz

**Conference of EWPS and Donne e Scienza, Pisa:  
#wetooinscience – Sexual Harassment in Higher Education  
Institutions and Research Performing Organizations**

**Marion Woelki, bukof, University of Konstanz, September 21, 2018,**

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Thank you to my colleague Inés Eckerle, who did the co-work

# 1. The situation at German Universities

For more than 20 years we have been discussing the topic of sexual harassment (and violence) at universities as

- form of Gender discrimination, mainly against women
- part of Gender Bias (degradation to sexual objects...)
- one of the reasons why young female scientists leave university
  
- Measures against it are basic for gender equality
- More and more it is seen as abuse of power in the context of scientific integrity
- Universities have the obligation to guarantee the security and the well-being of their members

## What it looks like:

### All members at universities can be offenders or victims

- Students
  - PhD students
- academic staff**
- PhD students
  - Postdocs
  - assistants
  - Professors
- non-academic staff**
- administration
  - library
  - laboratories
  - science management

# Role of SDG at German universities

- Bossing and sexual discrimination/harassment take place between persons of different and of same status.
- More than 90% of the offenders are male.\*
- Sexual discrimination/harassment/violence is an instrument to demonstrate power and predominance in a very vulnerable and intimate area – the physical integrity of a person.

\* Study “Gender-based Violence Stalking and fear of crime” (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)  
(SDG = sexual discrimination and violence (Gewalt))

## 2. Our network for 30 years: bukof

- network of academic equality officers and managers of all state universities, called bukof (Federal conference of Equal Opportunities Officers in Higher Education)
- founded in 1988 with the new state laws
- non-profit organization
- Around 270 university members
- executive committee with 5 elected members for representation
- extended executive board with spokeswomen of state conferences and the chairs of the commissions
- since two years we have an office in Berlin

# How we work:

- collect information for and coordinate the state conferences of 16 federal states
- gain experience in around 14 thematic commissions
- provide support for our members with manuals, guidelines
- organize an annual conference to promote our main topics with focus on topical debates
- annual general assembly to pass the political positions
- ... and last but not least we are now a important political player in the scientific community
  
- **We want to change the academic culture towards more gender-fairness (transparency, respect, visibility, appreciation) and a better work-life balance**

# bukof commission SDG

The bukof includes the commission “SDG” against sexual discrimination and violence which published a position paper on “Sexualized Discrimination and Violence at Universities”. \*

- every second person interviewed in a study (study from ADS 2015) has already experienced molesting on the job
- every 6th woman and every 14th man has experienced this molesting as sexual harassment
- the problem is especially virulent at universities because of the huge hierarchy and dependency

The estimated number is higher, very few seek help, reasons include among others are:

- fear of disadvantages during qualification
- blurring of the borders between private and professional life
- residential status of international female scientists



# Aims of the bukof politics

- breaking the taboo
- do federal and local educational work: sensitization
- foster that the university leadership take over responsibility (top down):
  - clarification of responsibilities within the rectorats, workshops for all executives...
  - implementation of complaint management and contact persons

The bukof commission “SDG” offers all universities a lot of information with best practices on their homepage

[https://bukof.de/Grundsatzpapier zu Sexualisierter Diskriminierung und Gewalt an Hochschulen \(2018\)](https://bukof.de/Grundsatzpapier_zu_Sexualisierter_Diskriminierung_und_Gewalt_an_Hochschulen_(2018))

# 3. Recommendations from the Conference of University Presidents

The HRK – the German Conference of University Presidents - has published a policy against sexualized discrimination and sexual harassment at Universities on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018\* with definitions and guidelines.

- Such sexualized discriminating acts and behavior can be:
  - sexualized discrimination (degradation or discriminations due to sex, sexual orientations or gender identity)
  - sexual harassment (verbal and physical assault of a person)
  - sexual violence (sexual assault and rape)

Further on they ask every university to protect their members (students, academic staff and non-academic staff) from sexual harassment and violence. Therefore a **culture of respect and appreciation** is necessary.

# Additionally every university should

- pass guidelines/directives
- establish measures for prevention and sensitization (awareness)
- establish drop-in centers for victims
- offer trainings for managers and executives
- establish supervision contracts within the topic of correct behavior for Ph.D. supervisors

<https://www.hrk.de/positionen/beschluss/detail/gegen-sexualisierte-diskriminierung-und-sexuelle-belaestigung-an-hochschulen/>

# 4. The example of Konstanz context Baden-Württemberg



# Legal Situation in Baden-Württemberg

- The university law of the federal state of Baden-Württemberg (LHG 2014) states that every university has to appoint a female and a male person to act as contact persons.
- They offer help in cases of sexual discrimination and harassment.
- They act confidentially and do not underlie directions.
- Furthermore every university should have guidelines.

# Konstanz – „Reformuniversität“ on a Campus



# Situation at the University of Konstanz: Our Policy

- In 1998 the University of Konstanz was one of the first who has adopted a guideline to protect women from sexual harassment
- completely revised and extended in 2015:
  - accommodates to numerous possible cases of discrimination with an intersectional approach
  - helps all involved parties to act in a transparent manner in every case due to clearly defined actions to be taken.

# Situation at the University of Konstanz: Our Policy

## Contents of the guideline:

1. Scope
2. Definition
3. Forms of discrimination
4. General prohibition
5. Responsibilities
6. Exposure of cases
7. Measures and sanction
8. Effect, entry into force and publication



# Situation at the University of Konstanz: Our Policy

Definition of sexual discrimination according to the guideline

- Sexual discrimination: Disparagement or disadvantage on grounds of gender, sexual orientation (e.g. homosexuality) or gender identity (e.g. transgender, queer, transsexual)
- Sexual harassment (verbal and physical assaults on a person)
- Sexual violence (coercion and rape)
- Stalking (following or harassing persons so that their physical or mental integrity is directly or indirectly threatened and compromised to a considerable degree)

# Situation at the University of Konstanz: Contact persons

## Drop-in Center

- At the University of Konstanz two contact persons (m/f) have been in charge since 2015.
- 12 to 15 persons every year have been asking for advice or help.
- The incidents involved stalking, molesting via e-Mail, showing pornographic objects, undesired touching all the way up to physical violence.
- The female contact person is employed in the office for equal opportunities for 6 hours a week.

# Counselling at the University of Konstanz

## Drop-in Center...

- provides a homepage\*
- publishes brochures
- offers self-defense courses
- gives advice on safe ways
- organizes courses to sensitize authorities
- invites all involved parties to speak out loud
- encourages to break the taboo
  - Empowering women, fixing the system and changing the culture



\* [www.uni-konstanz.de/campus-sicherheit](http://www.uni-konstanz.de/campus-sicherheit)

# Information politics at the University of Konstanz

## Presentation of the Drop-in center and the contact persons

- heads of the administration departments
- the heads of the faculty divisions
- the University Council
- Plan workshops with the student union of one faculty

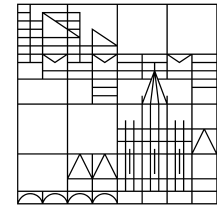


# Security at the University of Konstanz

- meeting point to walk home together
- parking for women close to the building
- well-lit paths around the university campus



Universität  
Konstanz



**Thank  
you!**

**Marion Woelki**

Head of Office for Equal Opportunities, Family Affairs and Diversity  
University of Konstanz

Spokeswoman of the **bukof** commission „Gender Equality and  
Internationalization“

Tel.: +49 (0) 75 31/88 - 2032  
[marion.woelki@uni-konstanz.de](mailto:marion.woelki@uni-konstanz.de)