

# Policy on Sexual Harassment and Abuse

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## Central Values

Since its informal establishment in 2016 and even more since its formal establishment in 2018, Vegan Life NGO explicitly states through its statute the central values it promotes as follows: "The purpose of the organization is to promote the values of veganism, anti-speciesism, human and non-human animal rights, solidarity, fair trade, animal welfare, the preservation of the planet's resources' sustainability, and ecology more broadly, as well as to raise awareness of these issues in society."

Furthermore, the values of equality and solidarity are explicitly mentioned on the official website of the organization under the section "Our Values," as follows:

*"Vegan Life NGO advocates solidarity with every human and non-human animal that needs it. We support individuals, groups, organizations and collectives that work for the protection of those in need and we strongly believe that solidarity has -and should have- no limits when someone needs help. Thus, we have a separate section of solidarity, at the disposal of which, part of our income goes to the practical support of solidarity projects to human and non-human animals - always guided by their compatibility with the vegan way of life."*

*"Vegan Life NGO promotes the equality of all individuals (human and non-human) who have the ability to feel pain. We recognize the inalienable right of every individual, whether they are human or non-human animal, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, age, abilities, appearance, descent, to not be perceived as property or means of other people's purposes. That is why we do not accept, in the context of our events, the promotion of ideas that oppose the value of equality."*

From the above, it is clear that the promotion of human rights, equality, and solidarity are central values of the organization, and their protection is pursued in every possible way. Specifically, within the framework of Vegan Life's events and activities, all involved parties (partners, speakers, volunteers, etc.) are informed verbally and in writing that racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and any kind of abusive speech or speech that promotes discrimination against individuals of any social or other group is not accepted by Vegan Life and its members.

## **Operational Framework**

Vegan Life is managed by a team of five members who, both as representatives of the organization and as autonomous individuals through their work and public discourse, promote theoretically and practically the values of equality and solidarity and explicitly oppose any kind of discrimination or abusive behavior. In addition to these five individuals, two more members volunteer in close collaboration with the board of directors, while another person works as graphic designer on payroll. Apart from these three close collaborators of the board of directors, the organization has occasional as well as regular cooperation with volunteers for the implementation of its actions and events. In this context, it manages about 200 people per event and about 30 people on a stable basis throughout the year.

As of January 2024, the focal point for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse and for any related reports is

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## **Policy Statement**

Vegan Life is dedicated to fostering a safe environment for all its employees and volunteers, free from discrimination on any ground, and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. Vegan Life operates a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the workplace, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any individual found responsible for sexual harassment is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of collaboration. All complaints of sexual harassment are taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No person is or ever will be victimized for making such a complaint.

Vegan Life is deeply committed to creating a workplace culture that promotes respect, equality, and zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment of any form, including sexual harassment. To uphold these principles, Vegan Life provides comprehensive education and training materials to all its staff and volunteers.

1. **Policy Foundation and Values:** The organization's policy on sexual harassment is built upon a foundation of core values that emphasize equality, solidarity, and respect for all individuals, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. These values are clearly outlined in the organization's statute and on its official website.

2. **Training Framework:** Vegan Life's training framework is designed to ensure that all staff and volunteers understand the importance of preventing and addressing sexual harassment. This training is mandatory for all individuals associated with the organization and, based on available resources, is conducted regularly to reinforce key principles.

3. **Educational Materials:** The organization provides educational materials that define sexual harassment, outline examples of prohibited conduct, and explain the reporting procedures. These materials are available in both written and verbal formats to accommodate different learning styles.

4. **Workplace Framework:** Vegan Life operates within a framework that promotes inclusivity and diversity. The organization's management team actively promotes principles of equality and solidarity, and staff members are empowered to address any instances of discriminatory behavior.

5. **Accessibility:** Vegan Life ensures that all its events, training sessions, and offices are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Efforts are made to accommodate the needs of wheelchair users, individuals with hearing impairments, and other accessibility requirements. In this context, Vegan Life NGO collaborates closely with the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf as well as a Greek sign language interpretation company to achieve active and as unimpeded as possible participation of deaf individuals in any role. The organization's videos are regularly subtitled in Greek to be more accessible to people with hearing impairments, and during the speeches and workshops held as part of Vegan Life's events, the use of supportive visual material is encouraged for the easier participation of everyone.

6. **Complaints Procedures:** The organization has established clear procedures for reporting incidents of sexual harassment. Victims are encouraged to come forward and

report any instances of harassment, either informally or formally. Confidentiality and support are provided throughout the process, and victims are assured that they will not face retaliation for making a complaint.

7. **Informal Resolution Mechanism:** In cases where the victim prefers an informal resolution, a designated member of the board facilitates discussions between the parties involved to reach a mutually acceptable outcome. This approach aims to address the issue promptly and effectively while maintaining the victim's confidentiality and dignity.

8. **Formal Investigation Process:** If the victim chooses to pursue a formal complaint or if informal resolution attempts are unsuccessful, the organization initiates a formal investigation process. This process involves interviewing the victim, the alleged harasser, and any relevant witnesses to determine the facts of the case and recommend appropriate remedies.

9. **Outside Complaints Mechanisms:** Victims have the option to lodge complaints outside of the organization through relevant legal frameworks or authorities. Vegan Life supports victims in accessing external channels for redress if they choose to do so.

10. **Sanctions and Disciplinary Measures:** Individuals found responsible for sexual harassment are subject to disciplinary action, which may include warnings, performance evaluations, suspension, or dismissal, depending on the severity of the offense. Serious cases, such as physical violence, result in immediate dismissal/termination of any collaboration.

11. **Policy Implementation and Evaluation:** Vegan Life ensures that its sexual harassment policy is widely disseminated, integrated into staff and volunteer training programs, and regularly reviewed for effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation processes are in place to assess compliance, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments to the policy.

Overall, Vegan Life is committed to fostering a workplace environment where all individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and equality, and where sexual harassment is unequivocally condemned and addressed promptly and effectively.

## Definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated. It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient.

Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

### Physical conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g. touching, pinching
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favours

### Verbal conduct

- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)

### Non-verbal conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually-suggestive gestures
- Whistling
- Leering

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. Vegan Life recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people

of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

Vegan Life recognizes that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships and often occurs within unequal relationships in the workplace, for example between manager or supervisor and employee.

Anyone, including employees of Vegan Life, volunteers, clients, customers, casual workers, contractors or anyone related to Vegan Life, who sexually harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with this internal policy.

All sexual harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within Vegan Life premises or outside, including, but not limited to, festivals, social events, business trips, training sessions or conferences sponsored by Vegan Life.

## **Complaints procedures**

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. Vegan Life recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e. between a supervisor and his/her employee) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser.

If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment.

When the designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:

- immediately record the dates, times and facts of the incident(s)
- ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she wants
- ensure that the victim understands the organization's procedures for dealing with the complaint
- discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome
- keep a confidential record of all discussions

- respect the choice of the victim
- ensure that the victim knows that they can lodge the complaint outside of the organization through the relevant country/legal framework

### **Informal complaints mechanism**

If the victim wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will:

- give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint
- ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism
- facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant, or refer the matter to a designated mediator within the organization to resolve the matter
- ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens
- follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behavior has stopped
- ensure that the above is done speedily and within 7 days of the complaint being made

### **Formal complaints mechanism**

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint mechanism has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaint mechanism should be used to resolve the matter.

The person carrying out the investigation will:

- interview the victim and the alleged harasser separately
- interview other relevant third parties separately
- decide whether or not the incident(s) of sexual harassment took place
- produce a report detailing the findings and any recommendations
- if the harassment took place, decide what the appropriate remedy for the victim is, in consultation with the victim (i.e.- an apology, a change to working arrangements, a promotion if the victim was demoted as a result of the harassment, training for the harasser, discipline, suspension, dismissal)

- follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behavior has stopped and that the victim is satisfied with the outcome
- if it cannot determine that the harassment took place, he/she may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the workplace
- keep a record of all actions taken
- ensure that the all records concerning the matter are kept confidential
- ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible and in any event within 7 days of the complaint being made

### **Outside complaints mechanisms**

A person who has been subject to sexual harassment can also make a complaint outside of the organization. They can report any type of gender-based violence, including sexual and psychological violence, to Hotline 15900, at the consultation centres of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality and those run by municipalities.

### **Sanctions and disciplinary measures**

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- verbal or written warning
- adverse performance evaluation
- reduction in wage (if applicable)
- transfer
- demotion
- suspension
- dismissal

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal of the harasser.

## **Implementation of this policy**

Vegan Life will ensure that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. All new employees and volunteers must be trained on the content of this policy as part of their induction into the organization.

Every year Vegan Life will require all employees and volunteers to attend a refresher training course on the content of this policy.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

Vegan Life recognizes the importance of monitoring this sexual harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether or not it is effective. Supervisors, managers and those responsible for dealing with sexual harassment cases will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, the organization will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.