

BWI POLICY AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT



BWI
Building and Wood
Workers' International
www.bwint.org

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BWI is the Global Union Federation grouping free and democratic unions with members in the Building, Building Materials, Wood, Forestry and Allied sectors.

BWI brings together around 378 trade unions representing around 12 million members in 108 countries. The Headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland while the Regional Offices are in Panama, Malaysia, and South Africa.

Our mission is to defend and advance workers' rights, and to improve working and living conditions in our sectors. The BWI, above all, has a rights-based approach. We believe that trade union rights are human rights and are based on equality, solidarity and democracy, and that trade unions are indispensable to good governance.

BWI goals include 1) to promote and defend human and trade union rights; 2) to increase trade union strength; 3) to promote a stable and high level of employment in our sectors; and 4) to influence policy and strengthen the capacity of institutions and tripartite structures in our sectors.

BWI Policy against Discrimination and Harassment



1. Statement on BWI Values

BWI envisions a world with strong, independent, and democratic trade unions in the building and timber trades, where all workers have equitable access to stable jobs, fair wages and safe and healthy working and living conditions.

The BWI, above all, has a rights-based approach. BWI believes that human rights based on equality, solidarity and democracy, are embedded in trade unions which are indispensable to good governance of any national agenda.

The International Labour Standards, the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO) are the fundamental bases upon which BWI stands and struggle for.

2. Statement of Principles

The BWI is committed to providing a work environment free of all forms of discrimination and harassment. BWI opposes any behaviour that discriminates against another person based on nationality, ethnicity, skin colour, sex, age, pregnancy, marital or relationship status, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief or political affiliation. The BWI neither condones nor tolerates behaviours that undermines the dignity or esteem of any individual or creates an intimidating, humiliating, hostile, abusive threatening or offensive workplaces or work-related environment.

The BWI is committed to addressing harmful social norms, gender stereotypes and institutional sexism and misogyny in the world of work and society, and to creating an organisational culture of positive change. There is full respect for confidentiality and protection of victims/affected-persons, witnesses and whistleblowers.

The BWI has a high degree of appreciation for the need to respect the dignity and worth of every individual. Therefore, in all organisations there should always be vigilance to ensure that all participants feel they are able to operate in an atmosphere that is welcoming, comfortable, and safe.

The Policy is aligned with ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention No 111, ILO (C111) Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 (C190) and Recommendation No. 206 (R206).

3. Scope of the Policy

The Policy covers all leaders, members, participants, delegates, external speakers, third-party suppliers and employees of BWI at all activities, functions, meetings, and at social gatherings of BWI — wherever they may take place around the world.

The Policy also covers acts of discrimination and harassment that may arise in all BWI global, regional, sub-regional, project offices where acts are conducted in context of working relationship or while fulfilling duties or missions including travel provided by BWI for undertaking such duties.

The Policy is extended to third parties with contractual relationships with BWI. BWI is committed to communicate Policy provisions to third parties with contractual relationships.



4. Unacceptable Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour includes cases of discrimination, including bullying, institutional misogyny and sexism; cases of harassment, including sexual harassment.

Examples of discrimination include, but not limited to:

- ▶ the process of making unfair or prejudicial distinctions between people based on race, ethnicity, religion, colour, sex, age, national origins, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or expression, ancestry, pregnancy
- ▶ Bullying cases, including:
 - pushing and shoving
 - intentional abuse of power relations, offensive behaviour to humiliate or undermine an individual or groups, including cyber bullying
 - aggressive language, profanity, shouting and threats
 - comments, questions, or insinuations about a person's private life
- ▶ Institutional misogyny and sexism cases, including:
 - statements reflecting gendered stereotypes
 - workplace culture that tolerates sexual harassment and sexism
 - jokes, banter or repeated micro-aggressions (everyday comments about a person's appearance, gender or identity based on unconsciously held prejudices and beliefs)
 - reinforcing a culture of exclusion of minority groups from the decision-making process in the organization
 - assumptions that women will take only certain work tasks
 - giving less value to minority groups roles e.g. in applications for jobs, career development.



Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ excluding or isolating a person from professional activities without reason or legitimate authority
- ▶ unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comment
- ▶ homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.
- ▶ persistent negative comments to a person or group, including rumour, gossip and ridicule
- ▶ harmful or offensive verbal or written comments related to race, ethnicity, religion, colour, sex, age, national origins, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity or expression, ancestry, pregnancy or any other discriminatory expression
- ▶ harassing speech or actions, including cyber harassment
- ▶ real or implied threat of physical harm.



Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ deliberate and unsolicited physical contact or unnecessarily close physical proximity
- ▶ sexually oriented comments or gestures about the body, appearance
- ▶ sexually explicit jokes or proposition and showing or displaying sexually explicit content





- ▶ persistent invitations to social activities after the person made it clear they are not welcome
- ▶ any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust
- ▶ for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another
- ▶ actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.



5. Preventive Activities

BWI and affiliates will aim to promote wide-ranging culture change, and create equal, dignified and inclusive workspaces, and prevent all forms of discrimination and harassment.

To fulfil these objectives BWI will implement the following measures:

1. Include an orientation session in the agenda of all BWI statutory meetings in 2025-2026 and the newly elected officials in 2027.
2. Training of staff members on the Policy and on complaints handling.
3. BWI will set up a special e-mail address for complaints that will be submitted
4. The Policy will be attached in the invitations to the BWI events. Confirmation of participation should also include confirming its commitment to the Policy
5. The Policy shall be explained to all the participants at the start of all trainings, events and meetings. When feasible, a video (or other accessible awareness raising materials) will be shown at the start of the training, event or meeting.
6. Affiliates conducting BWI-funded project events will have to sign the commitment to implement the Policy in the frame of the project activities. The Policy should be explained to all the participants at the start of the activity.
7. BWI will continue to disseminate training and other resource materials to assist affiliates in their Policy development, campaign and other actions aimed at preventing and raising awareness about discrimination and harassment.
8. BWI will help to facilitate an exchange of and collate together examples of affiliates' policies and clauses in CBAs in ending discrimination and harassment.
9. BWI will encourage affiliates that have not yet implemented policies and mechanisms enabling them to prevent discrimination and harassment to adopt such policy at the union level. The policy should include an effective internal complaints mechanism, with a fair and effective complaints procedure.
10. The BWI Secretariat will develop an annual Action Plan to implement Policy Preventive Activities.





6. Implementing Mechanism

6.1. Leadership Responsibilities

The BWI Leadership (the General Secretary and the Presidium) must be informed of all complaints that have been made.

They will:



1. guarantee the respect of the Policy when handling these complaints
2. ensure that staff members who handle complaints are protected from victimization and retaliation
3. establish a confidential/anonymous system for recording cases
4. consider recommendations of Investigation Committees and make a final decision on resolving the cases
5. appoint staff members to be the contact persons in all the offices
6. report the number of submitted cases to the BWI World Board and Auditors Committee.



6.2. Contact Persons

BWI Leadership shall appoint contact persons in all the offices of BWI responsible for receiving complaints. BWI General Secretary and Regional Representatives shall appoint contact persons for each of the BWI statutory meetings. Other BWI events, trainings and activities, the staff-in-charge or coordinator will appoint the contact person. An appointed contact person has exclusive access to the e-mail address where complaints shall be submitted.



The responsibilities of the contact person are:

1. receive the complaint and acknowledge receipt within 48 hours
2. carry out an initial investigation to consider whether the case breaches the Policy
3. inform BWI Leadership about the case
4. with the consent of the complainant, resolve the case following the Examination Procedure described in the Policy
5. if the case is not resolved, with the consent of the complainant, contact persons submit the complaint to the relevant Regional or Global Investigation Committee according to the Policy.



6.3. Investigation Committees

BWI has established Global and Regional Investigation Committees, which report to the BWI Leadership. Each Investigation Committee comprises a member of the International or Regional Women's Committee, selected from among themselves, a member of the BWI World Board, selected by BWI World Board members and a member of BWI staff, appointed by the BWI General Secretary.



The responsibilities of the Investigation Committee are:

1. inform the complainant that the investigation procedure will be carried out and that they will be invited to an interview in due course
2. inform the alleged offender that an investigation is being carried out outlining the allegations without revealing names or identities of the complainant and that they will be invited to an interview in due course

3. plan and prepare for the investigation by gathering documentary evidence, identifying witnesses and risk assessing the methodology and other matters
4. investigate and conduct interviews
5. submit the investigations report with findings of the allegations, proposed actions to resolve the complaint and recommendations for action to prevent such harm from occurring again to the BWI Leadership.



7. Procedure for Handling Cases

This section sets out BWI standard procedure for handling complaints against discrimination and harassment which are made directly to BWI where it occurs in the course of BWI work and activities.

7.1. How to file the complaint?

Any person who considers they are the victim or affected person of unacceptable behaviour as described in the Policy may file a complaint to the contact person responsible for receiving complaints against discrimination and harassment.



Complaints can be made by e-mail, in person or by telephone to the contact person anonymously or by a named victim or affected person about the alleged case. Written complaint can be also sent by post. The complainant should be prepared to provide details describing what happened, when and where it happened, how often and of there were witnesses or written or other evidence.

In the absence of formal complaint from the victim/affected person, any witness or whistleblower who wish to report an incident may inform the contact person orally in person, by telephone, or in written format by e-mail or post. Contact person will have to verify and validate the complaint before proceeding to the investigation procedure.



Complaints against BWI contact persons should be submitted to the BWI General Secretary who acts as BWI contact person in the course of investigation.

In the case of physical or sexual violence or assault, BWI is committed to abide by national legal requirements and to refer the case to the statutory authorities. Where crimes have been committed and where cases are reported to the police, BWI will coordinate with concerned affiliates to determine if, and what support can be provided to a victim.

7.2. Examination Procedure

It is important to seek early resolution of a complaint, ensuring that complaints are dealt with promptly and within realistic timeframes. BWI has established two levels investigation procedure: Examination and Investigation Committee Procedure.

Examination Procedure guidelines:

1. The Examination procedure shall be carried out by the BWI contact person.
2. The first step of the contact person shall be to gather the information either through interview with the complainant or through the written complaint to verify and validate the case.
3. With the consent of the complainant, it may be possible to have an informal discussion with the subject of complaint, which could result in them becoming aware of the problem. An apology maybe be made with a commitment to changing of behaviour.



4. Contact person shall inform BWI Leadership about the investigation results, any closure of a complaint, or any next steps required.
5. In cases when the complainant is not satisfied with the outcomes of the Examination Procedure or the case has not been resolved through the Examination Procedure, and with the complainant consent, the contact person shall submit a written report to the Investigation Committee for further investigation and resolution.



7.3. Investigation of the complaint

Once the respective Investigation Committee receives the contact person report along with the complaint, the Investigation Committee proceeds with the Investigation Procedure.

Investigation Committee Procedure guidelines:

1. The Investigation Committee validates the information in the contact person report and in the complaint, and if necessary, conduct additional interviews with parties involved and witnesses, as well as gather additional information.
2. The Investigation Committee with the consent of the complainant may involve external independent expert to investigate the case.
3. The Investigation Committee investigates the case according to their responsibilities mandate as stated in Point 6.3.
4. The Investigation Procedure should be completed in one month or within a mutually agreed timeframe.



The Investigation Committees or BWI contact person shall recommend courses of actions to the BWI Leadership to ensure Examination and Investigation Procedures are held in a sensitive and discreet manner.

In case BWI contact person or Investigation Committee establishes that the complaint is a false accusation, it shall be treated as a harassment case to the subject of complaint. An opening of another case may be initiated against the false accuser with the consent of the falsely accused.



7.4. Resolution / Remedy

In the event of the complaint is being upheld by the Investigation Committee, the Committee shall submit recommendations to the BWI Leadership about sanctions relevant to the level of severity within 2 weeks after the completion of the investigation.

Sanctions may include, but not limited to a warning, suspension of participation with no refund of the participation cost, suspension of participation in all future BWI activities. Participation of an affiliate to BWI funded project can be suspended temporarily or definitively in case of repeated lack of cooperation or breach to the Policy principles. The BWI Leadership shall deliberate on appropriate and just sanctions. The BWI Leadership may include the affiliates in the remedy process.



The Investigation Committee shall also submit to the BWI Leadership recommendations for action to prevent such incidents or harm from happening again.

7.5. Communication of the decision

After receiving the report from the BWI contact persons or BWI Investigation Committees, the BWI Leadership shall inform the involved parties about the outcomes of the investigation on a strictly confidential manner within 2 weeks.

8. Prohibition of Retaliation



BWI has a zero tolerance of any form of retaliation against victims/affected persons, witnesses and whistleblowers who make a complaint of abuse, discrimination, bullying and harassment, occurring in BWI meetings and activities. Similarly, this principle of non-retaliation extends to who provides support or information to a victim/affected person.

Annex: Definitions

1. **Discrimination** is the process of making unfair or prejudicial distinctions between people based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they belong or are perceived to belong.
2. **Bullying** is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical or emotional (use of words or gestures) or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online.
3. **Institutional** misogyny/sexism are policies and practices in organizations that reproduce the same biases, prejudices and patriarchal gender norms that shape any given society.
4. **Harassment** in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment.
5. **Gender-based violence and harassment** means violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately and includes sexual harassment.
6. **Sexual harassment** is the most common form of gender-based violence in the world of work, involving unwelcome verbal, non-verbal and physical conduct. It forms an important part of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190 and Recommendation No. 206. In addition, sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination under ILO Convention No. 111 on discrimination in employment and includes: “quid-pro-quo” (a condition for a job) and “hostile workplaces” (intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment).
7. **Victim/affected person** is the person who suffered from the case of unacceptable behaviour in a form of discrimination, violence or harassment.
8. **Complainant:** victim/affected person who filed a complaint for breaching Policy.
9. **Witness** is a person who was not victimized but witnessed the case of unacceptable behaviour in the form of discrimination, violence or harassment against another person.
10. **Whistleblower** is a person who gives information about the case of unacceptable behaviour in the form of discrimination, violence or harassment to the BWI authorities responsible for handling the case.

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