

POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION AND PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT, ABUSE, AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

1. POLICY SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all individuals affiliated with RIDHE:

- a) Compensated personnel; b) Interns and volunteers; c) Human rights advocates (HRAs) associated with our various programs; d) Consultants, associates, specialists, and/or collaborators; e) Members of our Network; f) Partner or allied civil society organizations engaged in activities promoted by RIDHE; g) Beneficiaries and communities with whom we collaborate.

All individuals are required to adhere to this policy without exception, whether in person, online, in community settings, or across borders. This policy is obligatory and applies to all offices of the **International Network for Human Rights Europe (RIDHE), including its headquarters in Brussels (Belgium), its office in Geneva (Switzerland), and its regional office in San José (Costa Rica)**, as well as to all operations, projects, and activities conducted in any other country.

2. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

At RIDHE, we maintain a strict zero tolerance policy regarding sexual harassment, abuse, and sexual exploitation (SEA), as well as any inaction, complicity, or concealment of such acts. We firmly uphold the belief that:

- No individual should be subjected to any form of sexual violence or abuse of power.
- Human rights defenders, women, youth, LGBTQ+ individuals, those experiencing forced mobility, and survivors of violence encounter distinct risks that necessitate enhanced protective measures.
- The principles of human dignity, informed and voluntary consent, equality, safety, and non-discrimination guide all our actions.

RIDHE is dedicated to:

- To avert any instances of harassment, abuse, and sexual exploitation within the organization and its initiatives.
- Enhance their ability to safeguard, receive, report, investigate, and address these situations.
- Ensure that victims, survivors, and whistleblowers are treated with dignity, confidentiality, and respect, free from the threat of retaliation.
- Foster an ethical, secure, inclusive, and intersectional organizational culture.

3. RIDHE GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT, ABUSE, AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

- Prohibited conduct and sanctions: Any instance of sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment perpetrated by individuals associated with RIDHE is deemed a grave violation and may lead to: a) Immediate termination of the contract; b) Expulsion from processes, programs, or partnerships; c) Notification to relevant authorities, when applicable.

Duty to report:

- Anyone associated with RIDHE who has indications, suspicions, or knowledge of SEA conduct should report it through the designated channels (see section 5).
- Silence or concealment contravenes this policy and may also incur penalties.
- Duty of care and safe environment: All RIDHE collaborators are obligated to foster and uphold safe environments for women, girls, youth, human rights defenders, and any other populations in vulnerable situations.

Victim/survivor approach: All RIDHE initiatives are grounded in confidentiality, security, informed consent, non-revictimization, and unwavering respect for the autonomy of the individual reporting.

4. INSTITUTIONAL POLICY ON HARASSMENT, STALKING, ABUSE, AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

RIDHE is dedicated to implementing a holistic strategy that encompasses prevention, detection, response, and investigation, thereby ensuring:

4.1. Prevention: Establishing a secure, diverse, and intersectional organizational culture while fostering awareness and providing regular training on: **Gender-based violence; Harassment and sexual exploitation; Ethics of care; Acceptable and prohibited conduct; Inclusion of SEA prevention clauses in all contracts, agreements, and partnerships.**

4.2. Reporting mechanisms: The provision of multiple secure, confidential, and accessible channels for reporting, along with the development of alternatives that allow individuals to report without fear of retaliation.

4.3. Response: Timely, professional, and confidential attention to any indication or report. Ensuring immediate protective measures for the individual reporting or who may be at risk. Initiating psychosocial support and referrals to specialized services.

4.4. Investigation: a) Clear and transparent procedures that uphold due process; b) Thorough and secure documentation of information; c) Responsive, proportionate, and protective decision-making.

4.5. Transparency and accountability: a) Prompt information to the Board of Directors; b) Proportional disciplinary measures; c) Corrective actions at the institutional, managerial, and organizational culture levels.

5. PROCEDURES FOR ARTICULATING A CONCERN OR SUBMITTING A COMPLAINT

Individuals affiliated with RIDHE may submit a complaint or voice a concern regarding incidents of harassment, abuse, or sexual exploitation without the apprehension of retaliation.

Reporting channels:

- Confidential institutional email: etica@ridheuropa.org
- Available for written complaints at any time.
- Direct communication channel to the RIDHE Presidency: president@ridheuropa.org
- For situations necessitating immediate escalation: etica@ridheuropa.org. Due to security concerns, potential conflicts of interest, or confidentiality, the whistleblower may choose not to reach out to this address.

Verbal complaints will be recorded with consent and assurances.

- Absolute confidentiality and a complete prohibition on retaliation.
- Protection of the identities of whistleblowers and survivors.
- Prompt response to any potential risk.

6. APPROVAL AND EVALUATION

This policy was ratified and revised by the General Assembly and Board of Directors of the International Network for Human Rights Europe (RIDHE) on March 20, 2025, during Ordinary Session No. 8.

RIDHE is dedicated to conducting periodic reviews, updating its practices in accordance with international standards, and enhancing implementation across all organizational levels.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

PREVENTION, RECEPTION, MANAGEMENT, AND INVESTIGATION OF CASES INVOLVING HARASSMENT, ABUSE, AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (SEA).

1. Transparent, secure, ethical, and confidential procedure has been approved and established for:

- 1.1. Prevent harassment, abuse, and sexual exploitation.
- 1.2. Acknowledge grievances.
- 1.3. Oversee and address promptly.
- 1.4. Conduct an investigation in accordance with professional standards.
- 1.5. Safeguard victims/survivors and whistleblowers.
- 1.6. Sanctions and corrections within RIDHE.

2. Guiding principles: All actions are founded on:

- 2.1. Strict confidentiality: The identities of whistleblowers, witnesses, and affected individuals are safeguarded.
- 2.2. Physical, emotional, and digital security: Risks are consistently evaluated, and protective measures are implemented.
- 2.3. Informed consent: Every stage of the process is elucidated prior to its execution.
- 2.4. No revictimization: Individuals will not be compelled to recount their experiences more than is necessary.
- 2.5. No retaliation: All forms of intimidation, threats, or punitive actions are strictly prohibited.
- 2.6. Gender, intersectional, and intercultural perspective: Examines the structural inequalities that may exacerbate violence.
- 2.7. Impartiality and Due Process: Investigations will be conducted with objectivity, transparency, and free from conflicts of interest.

3. The guiding principles of this POE are applicable to:

- 3.1. RIDHE personnel; Interns and volunteers; Board members; Consultants and collaborators; Supported defenders; Project participants and beneficiaries; External partners when engaging in activities organized by RIDHE.

4. Operational Definitions:

- 4.1 Sexual harassment: Unwelcome behavior of a sexual, verbal, non-verbal, or physical nature that fosters a hostile or intimidating atmosphere.
- 4.2 Sexual abuse: Entails coercion, force, manipulation, intimidation, threats, or the exploitation of a position of power.
- 4.3 Sexual exploitation: Exploiting an individual's vulnerability or dependence for sexual purposes in return for favors, resources, protection, procedures, opportunities, or promises.
- 4.4 Complainant: An individual who submits information or raises concerns.
- 4.5 Survivor/Victim: Individual directly impacted by the conduct.

5. Standard Operating Procedure:

5.1. Stage 1 — Acknowledgment of the complaint or concern via designated channels:

- Confidential email: etica@ridheuropa.org
- Presidency; Members designated by the Board of Directors.
- Communication, whether verbal or written, during activities or assessments.

5.1.1. Prompt measures following the receipt of the complaint:

- a) Document the date, time, medium, and preliminary description;
- b) Generate an internal case code (excluding names);
- c) Ensure complete confidentiality;
- d) Evaluate immediate risk;
- e) Implement protective measures if required.

5.2 Stage 2 — Preliminary assessment and case categorization (maximum 72 hours):

RIDHE will categorize cases as:

A. High Risk/Serious Case: Sexual assault; sexual exploitation; sexual abuse involving coercion; threats to the life or physical integrity of the individual. **Action:** Initiate protection protocol and convene an immediate investigation committee.

B. Medium risk: Ongoing sexual harassment: Inappropriate sexual behavior without direct coercion.
Action: comprehensive evaluation and commencement of inquiry.

C. Low Risk: Isolated inappropriate remarks; Discomforting behaviors lacking continuity. **Action:** Implement corrective measures and conduct follow-up; The survivor's preferences are consistently acknowledged.

5.3 Stage 3 — Case Management Committee (CMC):

The Committee comprises:

- A Board Member devoid of any conflict of interest.
- Individual accountable for Ethics/Protection (when applicable).
- Psychologist and/or external legal counsel.

The responsibilities of this committee:

1. Confirm information.
2. Safeguard the survivor.
3. Authorize the investigation.
4. Ensure objectivity.
5. Establish urgent preventative measures.
6. Designate an investigative team.

6. Inquiry (where applicable)

6.1. Selection of the research team: It must adhere to the following criteria: independence, absence of conflicts of interest, training in sexual violence, and a victim-centric approach. The team may consist of internal staff or external members.

6.2. Research Plan: This section encompasses the objectives, methodologies, a list of individuals to be interviewed, potential risks and protective measures, and a timeline (ranging from 15 to 45 days, depending on the specific case).

6.3. Interviews: Mandatory regulations: Conducted by trained professionals in private and secure environments, with informed consent, free from coercion or challenges to credibility, permitting emotional support or the presence of a trusted individual.

6.4. Documentation: All evidence is securely stored with a password in restricted folders, organized by case code and excluding real names (only passwords are utilized).

6.5. Investigation report: Should include: Findings, analysis, conclusions, recommendations, degree of accountability, proposed disciplinary actions.

The report is presented to the Case Management Committee, which determines disciplinary actions.

1. Immediate contract termination and/or temporary suspension.
2. Exclusion of activities.
3. Termination of alliances or agreements.
4. Ban on future collaboration.
5. Notify the appropriate authorities (where applicable).

7. Reactions and disciplinary actions

Institutional measures: a) Protocol review; b) Compulsory training; c) Strengthened supervision; d) Remedial actions in equipment or software.

8. Assistance and safeguarding of the victim

The RIDHE will ensure: a) Psychosocial support; b) Referral to specialized services (healthcare, legal assistance, shelter); c) Protection from reprisals; d) Secure accompaniment throughout the process; e) Reasonable accommodations for their involvement.

9. Conclusion of Case

A case is considered closed only when: a) Measures have been implemented; b) The final documentation has been completed; c) The complainant has been informed (without breaching confidentiality); d) Institutional recommendations have been formulated.

RIDHE will maintain the internal file for a period of five years, ensuring strict confidentiality.

10. Evaluation of the SOP

The POE should be evaluated biennially or more frequently in the event of a significant case, changes in international standards, or modifications to the institutional structure of the RIDHE.