



WAVE Code of Conduct

I. Introduction

About the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) Network

The WAVE Network was established in 1994 as a network of women's NGOs and women's specialist services. WAVE's mission is to enable **all women and their children to live free from violence**, particularly through strengthening and sustaining a European network of women's specialized support and prevention services, experts and survivors; to share expertise and experience to prevent, challenge, address and ultimately end male violence against women and their children, through an intersectional feminist approach. The WAVE Network is comprised of 180 Members (as of September 2024), located throughout 46 European countries. The WAVE Office serves as a linchpin for the whole network of WAVE.

About WAVE's Code of Conduct

As the only European network focussing on ending violence against women and girls, our goal is to ensure that WAVE members and staff all feel safe, confident and respected in any of our activities, projects and spaces (both in-person and online) and ensure the appropriate level of safeguarding within our operations and activities. We also recognise the importance of ensuring any concerns regarding members' wellbeing can be reported and resolved appropriately. Thus, this code of conduct was developed by the WAVE membership subgroup, composed of three WAVE Board Members and two WAVE office members, the Network & Project Coordinator and Operations Coordinator.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to ensure that we are accountable as a network and individuals for safeguarding this inclusive, professional and safe space and dealing with any breaches of this code. In addition to this, this code strives to properly safeguard and protect WAVE Members, office staff and anyone engaged with our activities, and guarantee that everyone who represents us does so with professionalism and a commitment to inclusion.

In line with the purpose laid out above, the core objectives of this code of conduct are to:

- **Ensure Accountability:** Holds all representatives from organisations in our membership and any organisation or person who we enter into an agreement accountable to ethical principles and ensuring that individuals are treated with respect and autonomy.
- **Encourage Collaboration and Solidarity:** WAVE promotes collaboration between member organisations, fostering a network of support and shared expertise to better address violence against women on a European level.



- **Foster Respect:** The code insists on non-discriminatory practices, ensuring that all representatives in our member organisations, regardless of their background, are treated with respect.
- **Maintain Intersectional Understanding:** Members are expected to ensure we co-create a space where we acknowledge individual lived experiences and work together to address the imbalances that power and privilege produce in shared spaces.

This code of conduct should be read in complement to our Statutes, feminist communication guidelines and other policy documents that guide our work including our overarching WAVE Strategic Plan 2024-27. The code of conduct covers all representatives from organisations in our membership and any organisation or person who we enter into an agreement with, and the above-mentioned policies bind anyone who attends our events, meetings or activities. This means that in all cases, individuals bound by the code must behave and act in accordance with the code of conduct and be alert and act to reduce the risk of violations.

All incoming members will be made aware of the code of conduct when they are asked to sign their membership confirmation letter, and by doing so, agree to abide by all of WAVE's guidelines and policies. The code of conduct and feminist communication guidelines will also be included in the registration form for all future WAVE events and activities, and WAVE representatives will be asked to confirm they acknowledge the existence of these guidelines and that they are bound to them. The relevant articles and complaint form will be placed on our website to allow breaches to be reported.

II. General Principles

WAVE's values

Feminism, solidarity, intersectionality, equality, respect, transparency and human rights.

WAVE aims to foster inclusivity, social justice and equality addressing all women's lived experiences. Representatives of WAVE shall always act in the interest of the WAVE Network and in accordance with our Statutes and other policies including our feminist communication guidelines and this code of conduct. If WAVE Members are attending events or meetings on behalf of WAVE, they should always adhere to this code of conduct as well as application national and international laws. Any breach of the law will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

III. Rules of Conduct

Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest may arise within WAVE. When decisions are taken that are not in the best interest of the organisation or its operations, a conflict of interest might be the reason. The existence of family ties, friendships, or financial relationships between persons linked to our activities may affect the perception of WAVE's credibility, impartiality, and independence.



All those covered by the code of conduct should consider what is in the best interest for the WAVE Network.

Conflicts of interest can arise from financial, political or other strategic interests of individuals representing WAVE and may negatively impact our strategy, the management of financial resources, contracting, procurement, travel, and participation in activities.

Safeguarding

WAVE is committed to safeguarding all individuals entering WAVE spaces and those benefitting from our activities from within and outside our membership. This includes addressing improper uses of power, ensuring safety, dealing with any forms of harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence. Cultivating self/collective care and wellbeing is both deeply personal and deeply political. According to WAVE's feminist communication guidelines, all WAVE representatives should strive to create space for participation and a climate where the least visible among us, especially those from underrepresented groups, feel safe to engage. Safety and wellbeing are the responsibility of everyone entering WAVE spaces.

All WAVE representatives (WAVE Members, Board, office staff, others in the WAVE Network) may also be subject to improper uses of power, safety risks, forms of harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence at events or activities of our partners. In order to protect WAVE representatives, decisions can also be taken to disengage with partners, if behaviours are not sufficiently addressed. WAVE representatives can raise such behaviour directly via the reporting mechanisms described at the end of this document. Anyone who raises such an issue should not be fearful of the impact on their membership and all issues raised will be dealt with in a serious manner. WAVE encourages member organisations to develop their own safeguarding and reporting procedures to encourage a safe environment for all.

Improper use of position of power

WAVE recognises that power can be held by WAVE representatives and is committed to addressing power imbalances. A position of power must never be used improperly for someone's own benefit or at the expense of others. In addition, a position of power must not be used to give anyone advantages they would not normally have enjoyed. Conduct and relations shall be carried out in such a way that there can never be a perception that different benefits are expected or required. This also applies to, for example, WAVE Board Members who are elected by the General Assembly to guide the network as well as WAVE Advisory Board Members who represent their country and the interests of member organisations in their country at Advisory Board Meetings.



When faced with ethical dilemmas, we check with others, for example, our colleagues or WAVE office staff. It is important to be self-critical and aware of how power can influence dialogue and discussion, decision making, and access to resources. It is also our responsibility to think about uneven power dynamics in historical context to deconstruct positions of power and prevent hierarchical re-creations and structures.

Information and data management

Adherence to GDPR is key to WAVE, in order to be able to guarantee the integrity of our employees, members, and partners. The dissemination of information through various channels is a central part of WAVE's communications. However, there are times when it is inappropriate to disclose information. Disclosure of sensitive information, including personal information related to human resources, risks seriously compromising the safety of employees and partners, compromising WAVE's effectiveness, and reducing our credibility. Discretion is therefore expected, and sensitive information must not be disseminated. Information that has not been made public and that is known to you because of your position may not be used for private benefit. According to WAVE's feminist communication guidelines, trust is an important element of working together. There are times when it is valid for members to agree that what is said in the room stays in the room and that information will be used ethically in the interests of all.

Alcohol and drugs

Having a problematic pattern of using alcohol or another substance is both self-harming and can cause harm to others. If a WAVE representative is at risk of or has a substance use disorder, we will encourage them to seek professional help immediately. Struggles with substance abuse issues, in line with WAVE's general commitment to fostering wellbeing at organisational level, will be dealt with in a spirit of support and caring. Members must use good judgement when consuming alcohol and never drink in a way that makes others feel threatened or disrespected, endangers the safety of others, or violates the law.

Carrying out activities on behalf of WAVE while under the influence of alcohol or drugs could risk the reputation of the organisation and lead to an erosion of trust and respect from colleagues and partners. This applies not only to activities and events organised by WAVE such as the annual WAVE Conference, Advisory Board Meetings, and Regional Meetings, but also to activities and events organised by partners where you are representing WAVE.

Discrimination, harassment and violence

WAVE opposes all forms of harassment, violence, bullying, discrimination, or any similar harmful behaviours and has a zero-tolerance policy for such behaviours. This also includes personalised critical remarks about staff or other meeting participants or members in meetings of WAVE. At all times in WAVE spaces, we communicate honestly and respectfully.



As stated in WAVE's feminist communication guidelines, we do not engage in the targeting of individual representatives and their work but rather, focus on the strategic mission to progress our feminist visions. We agree to challenge our own biases and prejudices, and to respect diverse lived experiences and their context, including different forms and expressions of feminisms and different ways of being.

Violence in this context is understood to be any situation in which a person is threatened or is physically or psychologically attacked whilst representing or attending a WAVE activity. Harassment can be several forms of similar or different forms of abuse that are external or internal to the activities of WAVE, which occur over a certain period of time, and which have the aim or the effect of harming the personality, dignity or physical or psychological integrity of a person attending WAVE activities or an employee whilst carrying out their work. This can pose a threat to their work or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment and which manifests itself, in particular, through words, intimidation and unilateral acts, gestures and written materials.

All forms of sexual abuse and exploitation are prohibited within WAVE, as are all forms of sexual contact between adults and children. We ensure informed consent when interacting with others. We are mindful that power differentials may compromise consent. We respect the privacy of others and do not reveal personal information of an intimate or sexual nature without explicit permission. We know that affirmative consent cannot be given if a person is subordinated, intoxicated, unconscious, suffers a cognitive disability, or is a child.

Facilitating equal participation

WAVE is committed to creating space for all WAVE representatives and encouraging everyone to contribute and participate equally. In WAVE spaces, this means creating space that reflects intersectional practice, and where individuals are aware, recognise, and accept the realities of all women as lived experience and give space to the expression of multi-layered experiences. Examples of this would be ensuring that those from vulnerable groups feel supported to contribute and that the space is shared equally with them. Acknowledging and respecting diverse experience is critical to equal participation. Accepting the experiences of others as nuanced enhances respect for one another and foster solidarity.

According to WAVE's feminist communication guidelines, we should be mindful of our responsibility to support each other and to engage in discussions that acknowledge the value of each other's points of view. We acknowledge how power and privilege operate in shared spaces and work self reflectively to address the imbalance these dynamics produce when we share space. We inhabit space to ensure everyone can share knowledge, experience and expertise for the benefit of network and its members.



Behaviour at events, meeting or other activities

WAVE takes a zero-tolerance approach in its activities to any kind of discrimination, as defined above, and violence including but not limited to bullying, degradation, harassment, verbal, non-verbal, physical or non-physical humiliation and intimidation. When WAVE representatives register or sign up for a WAVE activity, they will be made aware of WAVE's feminist communication guidelines and this code of conduct, including the procedure in case of violations (outlined below).

As individual women and members of different WAVE bodies, we have a collective responsibility to call out behaviour that infringe upon WAVE guidelines and procedures and, regardless the position within WAVE, act actively where issues/incidents arise that can affect the network, even where individuals may not be directly concerned. This also means we must practice self-awareness and reflection.

Fraud and corruption

Fraudulent or corrupted behaviour may stem from the abuse of power, or the position within an organisation, allowing access to data, resources, and services for personal gain. This includes the abuse of entrusted power and authority for private gain. Any person who performs duties connected to WAVE must avoid these behaviours.

IV. WAVE complaints policy & procedure for WAVE Members

What Can You Report?

You can report any issue that impacts or has impacted you personally, or anything you have observed that concerns you. This includes incidents that occurred at any events and WAVE spaces, as well as interactions among members, staff, leadership and partners.

Types of Complaints

1. **Anonymous Complaints:** If you prefer to remain anonymous, you may submit a complaint without providing your name or any identifying information. However, for effective follow-up, please provide as much detail as possible. Please note that without sufficient information submissions might not be followed up due to lack of information.
2. **Named Complaints:** If you are comfortable, you may submit a named complaint. In such cases, a member of the WAVE Board and Office membership subgroup will contact you to discuss next steps.



How to Submit a Complaint

Complaints can be submitted in two ways:

- **Anonymous Online Form:** Available on the WAVE website for anonymous submissions.
- **Email:** Send your complaint to the designated email address (complaints@wave-network.org), which is reviewed by the membership subgroup (three Board Members and two WAVE office members).

Complaint Handling Principles

WAVE is committed to:

- **Open Communication:** Informing members about the organisation's actions and decisions.
- **Impartial and Constructive Responses:** Handling complaints fairly and effectively.
- **Conflict of Interest Management:** Ensuring that no one with a conflict of interest participates in investigating a complaint.
- **Confidentiality:** Respecting the privacy of all parties involved in a complaint.

Complaint Process

Whenever possible, WAVE encourages complaints to be resolved through dialogue, following these steps:

1. The complaint is submitted in writing to the WAVE Board and Office membership subgroup at complaints@wave-network.org. The email should include the following details: date and time of incident, person(s) or body concerned, reason for complaint, desired solution and any other remarks. The subgroup will review the complaint and, where appropriate, seek a satisfactory resolution through an investigation. The aim of such an investigation would be to gather a comprehensive picture of the circumstances of the complaint.
2. The subgroup will aim to conduct the investigation and announce necessary actions within a maximum time span of 3 months. This timeframe is subject to changes depending on the severity of the complaint.
3. Steps of the investigation may include:
 - a. **Remind** the parties involved of their obligations under WAVE's code of conduct.
 - b. **One-on-One Conversations** to clarify any misunderstandings.



- c. **Involvement** of other parties if necessary, including statement(s) of third parties relevant to the matter.¹
- 4. The WAVE Board and Office membership subgroup will strive to reach a satisfactory solution for all parties involved. If this is not possible the subgroup will decide on the path forward in the best interest of the network and its members. These actions could include:
 - a. **Request for Apology or Retraction**, if appropriate.
 - b. **Temporary or permanent bans** from WAVE activities or events, depending on the severity of the misconduct.
 - c. **Immediate Action** for physical violence or serious misconduct, which may include contacting authorities, reporting the breach to the person's employer or member organisation.
 - d. **Removal from the WAVE network** or WAVE membership, in cases of serious violations.

Keeping You Informed

Throughout the process, WAVE will keep the complainant informed of progress and decisions, taking into account any confidentiality considerations.

This procedure is designed to ensure that all complaints are handled with fairness, transparency, and respect, in line with WAVE's principles and values.

¹ Should the complaint concern one or more members of the membership subgroup, these members will exclude themselves from this process and will be replaced by other WAVE Board or staff members.