



Guidelines for Persons of Trust on Expeditions of the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Center for Polar and Marine Research

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Preamble

The Polarstern should be a place where everyone feels comfortable and can work well. If people feel discriminated against or other conflicts arise, persons of trust are there to offer an approachable, neutral point of contact for expedition participants. This handout presents the basic principles of working as a person of trust and aims to provide the best possible support for those fulfilling this role.

The document is regularly updated by Ship Coordination (schiffskoord@awi.de) and can be found in the [Polarstern Wiki](#).

Legal Background

The General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG)

The General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG) is intended to “prevent or to stop discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation” (Section 1 AGG). The AGG obliges employers to prevent and intervene in the event of discrimination in employment and occupation (Section 2 AGG). Sexual harassment is explicitly covered as a form of discrimination (Section 3 (4) AGG). Employees have the right to file a complaint with the competent office at their employer if they feel that they have been discriminated against by their employer, superiors, fellow employees or third parties in connection with their employment relationship on one of the grounds specified in Section 1. The AGG Complaints Office at the AWI (agg.beschwerdestelle@awi.de) is part of the Directorate Office and acts on behalf of the Directorate.

Code of Conduct for Expeditions

“Conduct yourself with integrity, objectivity and honesty. Seek to create an atmosphere based on trust, cooperation and mutual respect, both during professional and private interactions.”

Source: Code of Conduct for Expeditions, point 1.1.

The Code of Conduct for Expeditions forms the basis for working on board and defines the principles of cooperation. This includes compliance with rules on professional and social interaction that promote the physical and mental health of all expedition participants and allow expeditions to be carried out successfully.

The Code of Conduct can be viewed offline on board via the Polarstern Wiki and can be accessed via the following link:

[https://www.awi.de/fileadmin/user_upload/AWI/Ueber_uns/Logistik/Downloads/Alle Plattformen/CoC Expedition 20210427.pdf](https://www.awi.de/fileadmin/user_upload/AWI/Ueber_uns/Logistik/Downloads/Alle_Plattformen/CoC_Expedition_20210427.pdf)

Duties of Persons of Trust

The on-board persons of trust offer an approachable, welcoming point of contact in the event of discrimination, harassment, sexualized violence or other forms of misconduct. They are not counselors, lawyers or employee representatives.

As the first point of contact, the persons of trust should help to ensure that conflicts can be addressed and resolved at an early stage. Affected persons can contact a person of trust of their choice, regardless of their own status group and affiliation with the institute. The discussions held with persons of trust are confidential. Persons of trust are to remain neutral, help clarify the problem, and find a remedy or solution together with the affected person.

In consultation with the affected person, persons of trust provide support in communicating incidents to the group leader, expedition leader, medical staff, captain or other responsible persons, depending on the specific circumstances.

As a further service, the ship features an awareness letterbox next to the postbox. This is emptied regularly by the persons of trust, at least twice a week. AGG-relevant information is processed by the persons of trust; all other information is passed on to the ship's management.

In addition to these internal contact persons, external helplines can also be contacted. Their contact details are provided to the persons of trust and to participants, in the Polarstern Wiki. In particular, if affected persons find themselves in difficult power and dependency relationships, or if there are uncertainties regarding procedures, persons of trust can recommend that said persons contact external helplines. If conflicts on board cannot be resolved satisfactorily, further contact information is available at <https://spaces.awi.de/display/EFPW/Code+of+Conduct>.

Appointing Persons of Trust

Persons of trust can be appointed in two different ways. The expedition leader agrees on the procedure with the participants at the beginning of the expedition:

First of all, the expedition leader always appoints two persons of trust prior to the expedition. In order to allow time for training the persons of trust, they should be appointed as early as possible.

Depending on the agreement between the expedition leader and the expedition participants, 1-2 additional, external persons of trust may be appointed shortly (a few days) after the expedition begins. To do so, the expedition leader actively approaches potential persons of trust on board; in this regard, they are encouraged to focus on diversity and experience. Diversity can refer to gender, nationality, age, institutional affiliation or other characteristics. In the past, both women and men have been selected as persons of trust, and both AWI staff and external staff. Attention should also be paid to foreign language skills.

Serving as a person of trust is voluntary. The expedition leader and the captain discuss the Code of Conduct and the procedures for various contingencies with the persons of trust at the beginning of the expedition.

Responsibilities of the Group Leaders, Expedition Leader and Captain

The scientific expedition participants are organized into groups, each with its own group leader. These are to be introduced to the persons of trust. The tasks of the group leaders and expedition leader include ensuring compliance with the Code of Conduct and the policies on drug and alcohol use. Ensuring a good working atmosphere on board is part of a successful expedition as well as safeguarding physical and mental wellbeing on board.

The expedition leader works in close collaboration with the captain to ensure that the expedition runs smoothly and successfully. If there are any indications of misconduct or aspects that could jeopardize the collaboration between the crew and scientific expedition participants, the expedition leader and captain are responsible for investigating the matter and, if necessary, taking appropriate measures. Depending on the severity of the violation, disciplinary measures such as warnings, alcohol bans, exclusion from social activities and reporting the incident to the accused party's employer may be imposed on board. All reported cases will be dealt with and the solutions discussed with the affected person.

All rights and duties of the group leaders, expedition leader and captain can be found in the Polarstern Wiki:

<https://spaces.awi.de/display/EFPW/Cooperation+of+captain+and+cruise+leader>

Training for Persons of Trust

In future, at least two of the designated persons of trust are to receive specialized training before the expedition begins. The training will address e.g. how to conduct conversations, possible areas of conflict, and types of conflict. Importantly, the training should also provide information on different types of and views on sexual harassment. This training is currently in the planning phase.

Introducing Persons of Trust on Board

During the first scientific staff meeting (in the first week of the expedition), which is moderated by the expedition leader, the persons of trust are introduced and (optionally) a vote is taken on whether or not to appoint (an) additional person(s) of trust (see "Appointing Persons of Trust" above) for all expedition participants. The persons of trust briefly introduce themselves and, together with the expedition leader, share information on how they can be contacted on board.

The persons of trust are also introduced during the crew safety briefing. From the start of the expedition, persons of trust should meet with the group leaders informally at regular intervals and as required. This is intended to promote and maintain awareness among those responsible. In particular, participants with little or no expedition experience should be approached to ensure they feel comfortable.

Ensuring Persons of Trust are not Overwhelmed

As a person of trust, expedition participants may share very personal matters with you. If you notice that this is becoming a burden for you or that you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, talk to your fellow persons of trust or turn to the expedition leader or captain with regard to conflict resolution or taking appropriate measures. You can also consult [other contacts](#) on land to receive confidential feedback.

The role of the persons of trust is to be approachable, to offer advice on further steps, and to discuss potential communication options and solutions with the affected person or bystanders. Fundamentally speaking, the expedition leader and, in the event of a conflict with crew members, the captain must be informed of any incidents that cannot be resolved immediately. In this regard, the affected person decides whether this should be done anonymously or not. It should be kept in mind that resolving and remedying problems anonymously is much more difficult; the persons of trust should also be aware about this.

Conflict Intervention

This overview takes you step by step through the most important aspects of conflict resolution from the perspective of a person of trust. Please note that only the basic process steps are included here – each case is different and must be dealt with individually on board.

Incidents involving conflicts, harassment or discrimination

Expedition participant reports the incident to a person of trust
(alternatively: they report it to the expedition leader or captain)



Confidential discussion between the person of trust and the affected person:

- How can the person of trust provide support?
- What happened?
- What are the next steps?

Note: It is advisable to prepare a protocol from memory of the incident and the consultation together with the person seeking advice or filing a complaint. Please be sure to jointly clarify the confidentiality/anonymity of this step.

In consultation with the person seeking advice, the following steps are possible:

- A: If requested, do not take any further steps; merely record the incident anonymously and provide advice.
- B: Conduct individual interviews with the affected person and/or the accused party.
- C: Conduct individual interviews with bystanders.
- D: Enlist the support of the group leader / expedition leader and/or the captain and/or other responsible persons ashore.

In the event of serious allegations and reasonable suspicion of violations (see Code of Conduct), the expedition leader must be involved immediately. Depending on the situation and fundamentally speaking whenever conflicts with crew members are involved, it may also be advisable to consult the captain and obtain feedback on the incident from sources ashore.

If the allegations prove to be true or cannot be disproved, further disciplinary action will be taken against the accused party. Fundamentally speaking, this includes reporting the incident to their employer.

Support on Board for Affected Persons

- Speak with bystanders: How was the conflict perceived by others?
- Discuss it with the group leader, medical staff, expedition leader and/or captain
- Use the awareness letterbox

Support on Land for Affected Persons

- Overview of contact points at the AWI: [overview page on the AWI](#) intranet
- AGG complaints office: agg.beschwerdestelle@awi.de
- Psychosocial counseling from the *Betriebsarztzentrum Bremen e.V.*
Ute Seemann-Herbst, Tel. +49 170 3114 268, seemann@baz-hb.de