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Michela Petrini, Christian Brouder

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universities address the lack of legal protection for students by providing specific contact points for students. Only few universities however, provide awareness trainings, especially for staff in leadership positions.



Lisa Mense

The analysis of the universities' guidelines against sexual harassment and gender-based violence revealed a great variety in the practical implementation of the law. In general, the structure of the guidelines contains a preamble, defining its fundamental goals, followed by a definition of sexual harassment and GBV, e.g. as an issue of abuse of power, or with regard to peer violence, as an issue involving marginalized groups. In addition, the guidelines elaborate on the designation of the complaints office, processing of cases and point to possible sanctions.

However, we found significant differences regarding the precision of defining the processing of reported cases and providing access to professional counseling for victimized persons. In many guidelines, women are highlighted as a vulnerable group. In addition, some guidelines problematize hierarchies, abuse of power and dependency. What is left out is an intersectional approach towards understanding the complexity of gender-based violence, including sexuality, racism, and gender as a non-binary concept.

*The full report is available here:*

<http://www.genderreport-hochschulen.nrw.de/gender-report-2019/>

Dr. Heike Mauer is a research associate at the Research and Coordination Office of the Women's & Gender Research Network NRW, University of Duisburg-Essen. Her research focuses on Gender Equality in Higher Education, Intersectionality and Antifeminism in and outside Academia.

Contact: heike•mauer[at]netzwerk-fgf•nrw.de

Dr. Lisa Mense Deputy Coordinator of Women's and Gender Research Network NRW, University of Duisburg-Essen. Research focus: gender equality policies in higher education, gender and diversity in university teaching, gender studies, queer theory.

Contact: University of Duisburg-Essen, Berliner Platz 6–8, 45127 Essen, Email: lisa•mense[at]netzwerk-fgf•nrw.de

## The case of gender-based violence in French universities

*Michela Petrini & Christian Brouder*  
(Sorbonne Université)

Many French higher education institutions have long been relatively tolerant towards gender-based violence (GBV).

Resistance against GBV was mostly organized by feminist collectives, trade unions and associations aiming at denouncing GBV and/or helping victims from medical, psychological and legal points of view.

Good practices how to deal with GBV and resources are now shared through a network of French gender equality officers in higher education **Conférence Permanente des chargé.e.s de mission Egalité et Diversité (CPED)**,

<https://www.cped-egalite.fr/>

which meets three times a year. In 2018, results of a large-scale survey on GBV in French universities revealed that GBV is a widespread phenomenon in higher education.

In 2015, the French Institute for Demographic Studies conducted a telephone survey on violence and gender relations (VIRAGE survey).

<https://virage.site.ined.fr/fr/>

The objective of the survey was to evaluate the degree and scope of different forms of violence, i.e. physical, psychological, and sexual violence, suffered by women and men in France during the past twelve months (Debauche et al. 2017). In addition, a self-administered web survey was administered in four French universities in order to investigate violence among the student population during the past year (Lebugle et al. 2018).

The survey study demonstrated that 32% of the female students and 23% of the male students suffered from some sort of violence in the past twelve months. For women, the most common violence is sexualized language or behavior (10% to 16% depending on the university), followed by social exclusion (7% to 11%), mockery (7% to 9%) and insults (6% to 9%). Unwanted sexual advances, even despite active refusals, have been reported by 4% to 8% of the female students.

These numbers are larger than in the general population cohort of the survey, in which sexualized language or behavior and insistent sexual advances have been reported by 5.5% and 2.9% of female students, respectively.

The difference may occur due to the sampling method of the university web survey, it may indicate a bias due to contextual factors of the universities or it may indicate a response bias created by the survey modes, i.e. the telephone interview versus a self-administered web interview.

For men, the most common violence is mockery (6% to 10% depending on the university), followed by insults (5% to 10%) and social exclusion (5% to 8%). Only 5% of the male students reported suffering from sexualized language or behavior. No significant difference with the general population survey was observed for men.

In French higher education institutions, GBV can be prosecuted by the judicial system and/or must be handled by internal disciplinary committees. The latter are composed of peers (i.e. professors can only be judged by professors, students by professors, assistant professors and students).

Disciplinary committees can be extremely unfair to victimized people. For example, until August 2019, a student victim of GBV perpetrated by a professor had no legal right to be assisted by a lawyer while the professor had a lawyer, possibly paid by the university. By the same law that abolished that rule, every higher-education institution must now be equipped with gender equality officers and a listening and counseling unit (LCU) for GBV victims.

The Paris Diderot University externalized its LCU to allow for an independent treatment of the cases and to make it easier for people who experience sexualized violence at the university to report what has happened. This example is now being followed by Sorbonne University and other Parisian universities, too, because externalized LCU was observed to lead to a much larger number of reports.

CPED collaborated with Association Nationale des Etudes Féministes and Collectif de Lutte contre le Harcèlement Sexuel dans l'Enseignement Supérieur to edit a booklet on good practices for implementing LCU as well as preventing, identifying and fighting GBV in higher education. CPED set up working groups to deal with surveys about GBV, public awareness of GBV and formation against GBV. CPED is also considered to be a privileged negotiator by ministries, associations and the European Union.

### References

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*Michela Petrini* is a theoretical physicist active in string theory.



*Michela Petrini*

She is a full professor at Sorbonne University and the head of the Laboratoire de Physique Théorique et des Hautes Energies. In June 2018, she was appointed Gender equality officer at the Faculty of Sciences and Engineering of Sorbonne University.

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*Christian Brouder* is a solid-state physicist active in mineralogy and mathematical physics.



*Christian Brouder*

He is a research director at Centre National de Recherche Scientifique. In June 2018, he was appointed Gender equality officer at the Faculty of Sciences and Engineering of Sorbonne University.

On January 24, 2020 the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Decision allowing Member States to take forward the process of ratifying at national level the **Convention on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work**.

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_711570.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_711570.pdf)

The convention calls for the acknowledgement that gender-based violence and harassment are the consequences of 'gender stereotypes, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, and unequal gender-based power relations' (p. 4).

The convention explicitly expands the scope of its application to persons without contractual status, e.g. volunteers, jobseekers and job applicants, which must be protected from gender-based violence and harassment.

It seems research organizations and universities will need to adapt and expand their policies and measures in the near future to fill more gaps.

The upcoming **CEWS knowledge resources on gender-based violence in academia** can serve as an inspiration to ensure that the newly developed policies give consideration to the needs, rights and interests of people who are affected by sexual harassment on campus.



*Anke Lipinsky*

Anke Lipinsky is senior researcher at CEWS.

Contact: Dr. Anke Lipinsky, phone +49 (0)221 47 69 42 59, [anke.lipinsky\[at\]gesis.org](mailto:anke.lipinsky[at]gesis.org)