

CALL FOR ENGAGEMENT TO END SEXISM IN THE ARTS



STATEMENT

In the wake of the global #metoo movement, we artists and people working in the arts in Belgium, have turned to our communities to talk about sexism and abuse of power in our workplaces. We have collected dozens of testimonies on harassment and discrimination that are evidence of a web of oppression across the Belgian creative industries and arts economy. Our combined experiences show that the practice of power abuse is not only recurring here; it is systemic.

To those who have spoken out, we hear you, we believe you, and we stand by you.

The time has come to express our outrage. By signing this statement we show our commitment to join a worldwide movement to end harassment, violence, discrimination and abuse of power.

IF YOU ARE A PERSON WORKING IN THE ARTS AND ARE CONFRONTED WITH SEXISM, (SEXUAL) HARASSMENT, OR VIOLENCE: WHAT DO YOU DO?

1. WHAT CAN YOU DO YOURSELF?

The possibility to act on your own behalf depends entirely on the situation. If a person makes you feel uncomfortable or their behaviour is inappropriate, and you feel in a position to address this to the person: do it!

Tell this person it is not ok to talk or behave in the way they do. Explain why this behavior is problematic. Give the person room to reply. Propose it as a chance for change. Communicate clearly what you like that change to be. Maybe, for example, you simply need an apology and see the person being willing to change? Maybe you cannot work with this person anymore? Maybe you need to include a third person your conversation?

In this process it is advised you talk to a colleague you trust. This person can give advice and can support you.

2. WHAT IF YOU CANNOT ADDRESS THE PROBLEM BY YOURSELF?

While some problems can be solved with a one-on-one conversations, some instances of sexual harassment are too severe or complex for that alone. In those situations you will need to be assisted and supported by an organization. If the situation concerns physical violence contact a doctor. Knowing that most artists work as freelancers and are only temporarily connected to institutions, you might need to evaluate different options that depend on the context you are working in.

If your work is in any way connected to an organization or an institution, it is advised you talk to a person in charge (i.e. project leader, employer, venue director,...). They might have a person who is especially assigned to deal with these issues. This can be a confidential person, an advisor specializing in prevention of psychosocial transgression, or an external service. The coordinates of these persons and services have to be present according to proper work regulations. Temporary co-workers should have received this information and be able to rely on the assistance it provides as well. In these conversations, the person you go to should first listen to your experiences. Then, you will likely discuss together the different options for action.

If you work with an SBK or BSA (Social Bureau for Arts; e.g. T-Interim, Smart,...), then you should be able to rely on their internal procedures.

If you are a member of a union you can contact them directly and ask for their advice. Especially if the above conversations makes you feel dissatisfied or uncomfortable. Unions can function as external mediators and provide juridical advice or support.

3. DO YOU WANT TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE (ANONYMOUSLY) WITH AN ART COMMUNITY?

There are several closed Facebook groups that function as platforms for discussing and supporting action regarding the problems of harassment in the performing arts industry. Depending on where you live, ENGAGEMENT can put you in contact with an online community near you. Also, if you would like to start a closed Facebook group with your own group of colleagues, ENGAGEMENT can provide you with information and support. For more information, please write to contact@engagementarts.be

4. DO YOU WANT TO TALK TO SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT?

If the situation concerns physical violence:

- contact a doctor

If you prefer to talk anonymously:

- call **1712** (Dutch-speaking)
- call **0800/98.100** (French-speaking)

If you would like to talk anonymously to a volunteering artist peer:

- write to **contact@engagementarts.be** (English-speaking)

Contact an organization that is specialized in helping victims of sexual violence:

- www.seksueelgeweld.be** (Dutch/French-speaking)
- www.cawbrussel.be** (Dutch-speaking)
- www.sosviol.be** (French-speaking)



engagementarts.be