



The role of the Confidential Counsellor in the Geosciences Workplace Environment

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A positive work environment is essential in all productive sectors but it is absolutely crucial in research domains. Research institutions are primary producers of knowledge and innovation, contributing significantly to social change.

Workplaces where bullying, hostile behaviours, discriminations and any other type of harassment are not properly handled, tend to have a decline in productivity, a lack of efficiency, higher levels of absenteeism with a detrimental impact on staff performance leading to a damage to the institution's image.

This paper is aimed at presenting the overall measures adopted by an Italian Geophysical Research Institution - the Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia - INGV - in order to design a specific strategy, properly addressed to scientific environments.

In such an environment, an appropriate multi-faceted approach needs to be developed in the prevention of any repetitive, dangerous, humiliating, intimidating psychological abuse at work, hostile behaviours, discriminations and any other type of harassment, on account of the variety of scientific, technical, administrative attitudes and interests of the stakeholders and employees present in the workplace.

The drawing up of a joint strategy implies the mutual interactions of all the key players involved in the organizational well-being, the implementation of a Code of Practice, the definition of a clear set of principles, ensuring that physical, moral or social sexual harassment does not occur in the workplace.

The Confidential Counsellor plays an active role in preventing, handling and solving workplace bullying and harassment issues, contributing to promote research integrity and professional deontology.

Independence, impartiality, confidentiality and the total respect of employees are crucial requirements.

In recent years the spending review has forced Research institutions, as part of National Public Administrations, to cut budget funds, including indemnities paid to Confidential Counsellors.

Therefore, we have recently worked on the implementation of a mutual assistive framework among Research institutions specifically committed to preventing and managing bullying and harassment behaviours.

We will present how sharing good practices and ethic principles by creating a network of cooperation and a free experimental interchange through Confidential Counsellors, may provide an effective assistance and support in hearing the alleged victims of any mobbing, hostile behaviours, discriminations and harassment.

Training and information activities for employees and supervisors are also extremely useful in order to promote awareness, foster cultural change and build a positive work environment in which geoscientist are fully aware of their ethic responsibilities towards themselves, colleagues and society.