



2023 Annual Report

Confidential counsellor network for staff and students

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## **1. Introduction**

In this report, we take a brief look at the tasks, working method and activities of the confidential counsellors and present the notification statistics for 2023. This report also outlines possible notification trends and makes several recommendations. Various factors must be taken into consideration in this annual report on 2023:

- A number of confidential counsellors have left, because of which some notifications may be missing;
- A temporary coordinator is in place. Notifications from the previous coordinator are missing (they will be obtained as soon as possible and then added to the annual report;
- Some confidential counsellors failed to submit figures on time (an unknown number of notifications are missing as a result. They will be added to the annual report at a later date).

In the reporting by the confidential counsellors, only the number of cases (read: number of interviews) reported to the confidential counsellors is expressed. They do not provide any insight into the total number of cases of bullying, discrimination or harassment. In the faculties, notifications are sometimes handled internally, e.g. by HR staff or managers. Students can also approach study advisors, student counsellors, and psychologists. As there is no central reporting on this, the extent of the problem is not clear. A new internal notification option involves the submission of notifications to [safe@eur](mailto:safe@eur). These notifications are not visible to the confidential counsellors and the same applies for separate reports about which notifications are the result of referrals.

In 2023, there were 98 (in 2022: 190) calls on the confidential counsellors. In total, 201 interviews took place (2019: 87).

The confidential counsellors perform these tasks alongside their own work. The network is temporarily being coordinated by Debra Young, who is also an external confidential counsellor for EUR and EUR Holding.

The confidential counsellors report directly to the Executive Board.

## **2. Vision of Erasmus University Rotterdam.**

### **2.1. Task and working method of the confidential counsellors**

The three main tasks of a confidential counsellor are as follows:

1. Offering support and guidance to the notifier;
2. Identifying inappropriate behaviour and providing managers with solicited and unsolicited advice;
3. Informing and coaching staff and managers.

### Offering support and guidance to the notifier

The confidential counsellor listens to the notifiers and gives them the opportunity to tell their story and express their emotions. Everything remains confidential, unless a serious criminal offence is involved that places the confidential counsellor in a moral dilemma.

The confidential counsellor stands by the notifier but does not take over. The confidential counsellor helps the notifier make an appropriate choice.

The confidential counsellor supports the notifier throughout the process.

### Identifying inappropriate behaviour and providing managers with solicited and unsolicited advice

The confidential counsellor can advise managers about updating, refining and implementing the policy relating to inappropriate behaviour. The confidential counsellor's role also includes raising alerts with managers.

### Informing and coaching staff and managers

Managers may also call on the expertise of the confidential counsellor to discuss policies or a case of inappropriate behaviour they are dealing with or a trend observed by a manager. This involves sharing ideas about the planned policy or listing the advantages and disadvantages of possible 'solutions' for a case. In this way, unnecessary escalation can often be prevented, and value is added for all concerned. The confidential counsellors can only do this if they are not yet involved in the case based on their

support role. If the confidential counsellor is involved, the manager may be referred to a fellow confidential counsellor or an external confidential counsellor.

## ***2.2 The confidential counsellor network***

The confidential counsellor network is not an xxx anymore and, as already mentioned, is in a transition phase. In addition to one central confidential counsellor for both students and staff, there are currently seven confidential counsellors for students and 19 for staff (NB: number of confidential counsellors in 2022).

The pilot was evaluated in January 2022. On the basis of the recommendations and advice from the evaluation report, the network will be structurally embedded in the organisation as of the start of the new (academic) year.

Students will still be able to choose a confidential counsellor themselves. This does not need to be the confidential counsellor of the student's own faculty. The same principle applies to staff, who can choose which of the available confidential counsellors

for staff they want to speak with. This counsellor does not need to be from the notifier's faculty or department. In practice, people often still choose the confidential counsellor from their own department or faculty.

The network meets a minimum of four times a year. Besides the network meetings, there are peer supervision meetings at which cases are discussed in smaller groups. The network and peer supervision meetings are preferably held on campus; network meetings are also offered in a hybrid format. This format does not work well for peer supervision meetings, because of which they are only offered in a classroom-based format.

The confidential counsellors in the network ensure that they are known in their faculty or department. They can provide solicited and unsolicited advice on policies and unsafe situations.

There is also a small sounding board group, which is tasked with preparing the network meetings, for example.

If this is desired, confidential counsellors can consult each other about cases if they have consent from the notifier. All confidential counsellors in the network have taken a training course in order to be able to play this role effectively. EUR will shortly make a definite decision on whether or not certification is required.

The interim coordinator of the confidential counsellor network has had a number of meetings with the ombudsperson on the subject of social safety.

The central confidential counsellor will continue to take part in the Worrying Behaviour Team and will also take part in the wider actor meetings on social safety within EUR.

The central confidential counsellor will also participate in the National Consultation Confidential Counsellors of Dutch Universities.

### **3. Notifications**

#### **3.1. Notifications from students**

The number of students reporting inappropriate and transgressive behaviour would seem to have fallen in 2023 (NB: see earlier disclaimer regarding the figures provided) from 93 in 2022 to 20 in 2023. Most notifications from students concerned negative treatment, bullying and sexual harassment. Notifications were also frequently submitted on the subject of discrimination. Most notifications related to multiple problem areas.

<b>Notifiers (students):</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Male	8	23	7	8	6
Female	12	70	33	40	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>42</b>

### **3.2. Notifications from staff**

A total of 78 staff submitted notifications in 2023. Although this figure is lower than the figure for 2022, it is likely that a large number of notifications were not received by the coordinator (the figures will almost certainly be updated before the end of the interim period (July 2023)). Like in 2022, the accused were generally men, frequently in managerial positions.

Most notifications are about negative treatment/intimidation, sexual harassment and abuse of power. A number of notifications are about aggression as well. Another piece of salient information is that an increased number of notifications were submitted about women, whether or not in managerial positions. No explanation has been found for this.

<b>Notifiers (staff)</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Male	20	29	13	19	15
Female	58	68	25	27	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>38</b>	46	45

### **3.3. Conclusions and trends**

The total number of notifications at EUR fell to 98 (from 190 in 2022). One reason for this could be the absence of a number of notifications (the expectation is that a reasonable number of notifications are still to be received). Also, with the advent of safe@eur, it is possible that some notifications have already been processed, as part of a low-threshold approach. There were 201 interviews in total. One interview was enough in most cases. The number of interviews necessary increases when cases are more complex. Experience also shows that the number of interviews per case can increase depending on the nature of the notification. Most interviews took place physically or by telephone. The number of known referrals as part of the complaints procedure is notable as well. There is no separate explanation for this, but it is the subject of consideration.

In 2023, students approached a student counsellor 20 times. The number of notifications would seem to be significantly lower than in 2022 (93 notifications). Most notifications from students were about negative treatment/general harassment and sexual harassment. Sexual harassment regularly involved unwanted touching, comments and messages.

Fear, shame and low expectations about what the university can actually do about a situation would seem to be deterring students from submitting notifications again this year. Although students are more aware of student counsellors now, as they also attend the information market organised during Eureka week, more still needs to be done to raise awareness among students.

The number of notifications from staff about negative treatment/harassment and sexual harassment would appear to have remained comparatively the same as last year.

### **3.4 Recommendations**

The network has proposed a number of additions to the recommendations that ensued from the evaluation:

#### ***Recommendations directed at EUR (Executive Board and HR):***

##### **Further development of the network:**

The network proposes the appointment of a full-time, designated coordinator to develop the confidential counsellor network further. EUR is already taking steps to implement the proposal above, by bringing forward the appointment of a coordinator. It will then be possible to work out in more detail how the continued development of the confidential counsellor network can be achieved.

##### **Training courses and workshops:**

Additional training courses and workshops for students and staff is highly recommended. For example, bystander training courses or an e-learning course for students, staff and managers about undesirable behaviour. All the above can be realised in collaboration with HR, the D&I team, the ombudsperson, the safe@eur confidential counsellor network and others within the support structure at EUR.

We would like training courses and workshops like these to become a standard part of induction programmes for students and of the 'onboarding' process for new staff. Staff could do online, module-based training courses, for example. Managers could benefit from training courses on how to recognise transgressive behaviour and respond to it.

##### **Complaints procedure:**

An explanation of and information about the complaints procedure needs to be provided more (frequently), given the need for referrals to and by confidential counsellors. In this procedure, confidential counsellors are involved on an informal, more de-escalating basis in principle.

#### ***Recommendation for the network:***

##### **Guide for the Undesirable Behaviour Committee:**

This guide, which has been produced by Mariëtte Hamer, the government commissioner for sexual transgressive behaviour and sexual violence, may provide starting points for the further embedding of the network and the social safety theme in the organisation ([www.metelkaartrekkenwedegrens.nl](http://www.metelkaartrekkenwedegrens.nl))

##### **Corrections to the annual report:**

To be more inclusive, steps are being taken to see how we could adapt and improve registration. This does not automatically mean that identification will be mentioned explicitly in the report, provided there are notable trends and developments that are important to report. Efforts will also be undertaken to make the language used in the report more inclusive.

#### **4 Other activities and developments**

The network is in a transition phase and will take new steps to develop further this year.

There were previously two central confidential counsellors. Currently, there is just one central confidential counsellor, who also has a temporary coordinating role. Once a full-time coordinator has been appointed, there will most probably be two or more central confidential counsellors again. The number of designated officers for cases of domestic violence have been supplemented by the two case managers from Safe@EUR. Both of them have completed the relevant training course. There are currently three designated officers, but more may be appointed in the future.

In the upcoming Eureka week, a minimum of two confidential counsellors will man a stall to further increase the visibility and awareness of the network among students in particular. Also, a video explaining how confidential counsellors can help students and staff will be shown again this year in collaboration with Eureka week management.