

AWARENESS CONCEPT AND GUIDE FOR CHAMPIONSHIP ORGANIZATION TEAMS

WHY THOUGH?

For many people, going out, partying and dancing is part of a good life - everyone wants to have fun and live out their lives. In the messenger community, this mainly happens in the context of championships and alleycats, which are characterized by a high level of physicality and sporting competition. But: what Fun means to individual people differs from person to person and depends on the specific situation, because

personal limits are subjective.

With this concept we want to work towards a new social state in which respecting one's own and others' boundaries is a matter of course. As a community, we can set a good example and advocate for respectful, appreciative interaction with one another.

Especially in spaces that are characterized by physicality, noise, darkness, confinement and possibly intoxication. personal boundaries are unfortunately exceeded more often. This crossing of boundaries usually affects people who are already discriminated against by existing social power relations, for example because of skin color, gender, sexual orientation, religion or because they are not able-bodied. People affected often leave events after such negative experiences, which further manifests the existing discriminatory conditions. In order to prevent this, it is important that all participants are able to know their boundaries as best as possible and respect them as well as those of others, thus be as *aware* as possible.

The messenger community is still very cis-male dominated: Only 10-20% (rising tendency) of the participants of championships in European area were WTNBIA+ and most of the messenger companies we know have a strong surplus of cis-male riders. In our experience, it is not unusual that there are only few or even none WTNBIA+ people taking parts in alleycats in some cities. We

highlight this because spaces with an excessively high amount of cis-male people can be intimidating or in general uncomfortable for many people (of all genders). In addition, championships are, by definition, sporting competitions, which further encourages dominant and macho behaviour. All of this makes the messenger community a place where different people, especially WTNBIA+ can quickly feel unwelcome.

But of course we do not just want to criticize sexist discrimination, we want to criticize ALL discrimination and (learn to) break down the behavioural patterns associated with it. For this purpose we have formulated a guideline that intends to facilitate the access of championship organizations to the topic awareness in order to establish stable awareness structures and promote the awareness of all participants.

GLOSSARY: BASICS, TERMS, BACKGROUNDS

AWARENESS :...is an approach of carefully dealing with one another. The concept aims to create awareness for one's own limits, the limits of others, and power relationships in general. Therefore it is the responsibility of everyone (guests, organizers, artists, etc.) whether an event has the potential for every person to feel comfortable. AwareMess refers to the messenger version of awareness. The structure was founded as a loose association of a few motivated people at ECMC 2019 in Brussels.

RESPECT AND ATTENTION: The ultimate goal of awareness work and structures is their own abolition. Because: If society is aware of itself, these structures are no longer needed. Then everyone takes good care of themselves and others. For this reason, attention and consideration are two important aspects of awareness in general: Be considerate and look out for each other. If you notice that a person is not feeling well, talk to them and ask if they need help.

AWARENESS ≠ COPS: The awareness team is not the police! The awareness team only takes action as an active support when it is asked to do so. It is not about sanctioning others or imposing rules. Awareness work is based on consensus with the affected person and thus forms the opposite to the justice system, which often deprives those affected of control over their situation.

DISCRIMINATION: ...is a social phenomenon of disadvantage, exclusion and devaluation of persons or groups based on (supposed) characteristics of that specific person or group.

SELF-DESIGNATION: People are often labeled with categories or designations that they do not feel like they belong to or that they themselves would describe differently. Self-designations, on the other hand, are names that a socially marginalized group chooses for itself. Which pronoun would a person like to be addressed with? If you are unsure about how a person or group would like to be addressed or referred to, it is good to ask. Expressions such as “The person is read by me as...” leaves the actual designation of a group open.

PRIVILEGES: Privileges are often referred to as social advantages that people have due to their supposed membership to a socially constructed group. Privileges open up opportunities and give access to social spaces. People who are considered to be “normal” in society (e.g.: white, male, cis-gender, able-bodied, etc.) are considered privileged. Positions that deviate from this, i.e. the supposedly “others”, are disadvantaged and therefore discriminated against.

PARTISANSHIP/PERSPECTIVE OF THOSE AFFECTED: One main aspect of awareness is partisanship. When it comes to discrimination or violence, partisanship means *not* taking a supposedly neutral stance. The awareness team always acts partisan in the interest of the person(s) concerned. This should grant a protected environment to those affected in which they can to report on their experiences without being confronted with doubts or even ac-

cusations of guilt. What is told is not evaluated and is accepted as those affected have experienced it.

DEFINITIONAL POWER: ...includes that those affected define themselves what happened to them, what form of violence, sexualized violence or discrimination they had to suffer. This definition is not necessarily rigid: sometimes those affected change the name over time, perhaps because they initially did not want to admit how blatant the violence was and after the initial shock the violence appears different to them.

CONSENSUS: ...is the attempt to take the needs of everybody involved into account. The people involved find themselves in a transparent process to create a common solution. Consensus is a method for reflecting and communicating personal and sexual needs, boundaries and desires. The general formula of active consent can be summarized in short as:

No means no and only yes means yes!

WTNBIA+: By WTNBIA+ we mean all non-cis-male persons, summarized as all women, transgender, nonbinary, intersexual and agender people. In German speaking areas you'll also find the acronym FLINTA: female, lesbian, intersex, nonbinary, trans and agender. Here, the L for lesbian (sexual orientation) is specifically named to honor the important role the lesbian movement played in feminist struggles. Further used acronyms are: TINFA (transgender, intersex, nonbinary, female, agender) and FINTA (female, intersex, nonbinary, transgender, agender).

CIS-GENDER/CIS-MALE: Cis-gender people identify with the social gender that was assigned to them at birth based on their genitalia. Cis-men are therefore people who were assigned as male at birth and who identify themselves as men..

>> A more detailed glossary can be found at www.awaremess.org/glossary <<

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARENESS STRUCTURES AT MESSENGER CHAMPIONSHIPS

AWARENESS TEAM: The awareness team only becomes active, when others point out discriminatory behaviour or when a person affected by it asks for help. The awareness team should act in solidarity and in consensus with the affected person at all times. Specific tasks of the awareness team are described later in this document.

AWARENESS-POINT: This is the fixed location where a member of the awareness team should always be present. At smaller championships, this can also be the *Safer Space* (see below). Individuals from the awareness team can of course move around the event site. At larger championships, the awareness point can also be split into a safer space and an information point with information material for interested participants.

AWARENESS-SHIFTS: It makes sense to differentiate between day shifts (sports time) and night shifts (party time). Day shifts can last longer than night shifts and secondary activities may be possible. Evening shifts should not last longer than 3 hours. If people have no previous experience in awareness work, they should be assigned to shifts with more experienced people. The awareness team consists of several people on each shift, preferably of mixed gender. Everyone should have received a briefing before their shift and be sober and well-rested when they start their shift.

SHIFT HANDOVER: During shift handovers, all cases of abusive and transgressive behaviour will only be passed on anonymously to other people on the next awareness shift in order to protect those affected! Furthermore, everything that is told to the awareness team is subject to a duty of confidentiality and is therefore always treated **confidentially**.

CONTACT PERSONS: In addition to the awareness team, there are various important contact persons such as: Checkpointers, medics, race management, evening management, security and the bar. The awareness team should briefly introduce themselves to them as far as possible so that they know the awareness team and who they can turn to in an emergency. When changing shifts at the bar, one person from the awareness team should always be present during the evening shifts to introduce themselves and give an approximate location besides the location of the Safer Space.

VISIBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY: The awareness team is clearly recognizable. Glow sticks or high-visibility vests with "AWAREMESS" printed on them are well suited for this. The awareness team can be contacted via an emergency telephone number which should ideally be printed directly in the booklet of the championship. You can also ask for *Maria* or *Luisa* at the bar. This works as a code word to get quick help from the people working at the bar in the event of abusive behaviour. They will take the person concerned to the awareness team. This must of course be mentioned within the briefing for the bar staff.

SAFER SPACE: There should always be a separate (cozy) room that is only intended for the awareness team and those affected plus any friends of the person affected, if they wish so. In addition to sufficient seating, this space should provide a small supply of drinks and snacks. The consumption of alcohol, illegalized substances, etc. should not take place here under any circumstances.

INFORMATIONS – HOUSING; PARTY; HQ: Sufficient information on the awareness concept should be visible at the housing, party locations and the event headquarters, e.g. posters displayed in toilets, the bar, etc. In addition, printed awareness concepts can be distributed in the booklet or at the registration.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF FIRE? RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WORK IN AWARENESS TEAMS

Personal boundaries are subjective! Only those affected can say when they have perceived something as transgressive. The awareness team should not question this under any circumstances (definitional power). If the awareness team observes potentially transgressive behaviour according to its own assessment, it can approach potentially affected persons to offer support. If their own assessment proves to be correct, the persons concerned should be removed from the situation or noisy environment immediately.

...That means specifically?

Guidelines for talking to affected persons

- Clarify whether you can communicate and ask whether the person concerned agrees to you having this conversation or would like someone else to do it. If the person concerned does not want to talk, please do not pressure them to do so
- If you realize that you only have limited emotional or time capacities, you can set a time frame, e.g. "We now have ... h/min time to talk."
- Say that all incidents will be treated confidentially and will only be discussed anonymously. Ask whether anonymous sharing in the awareness team is okay for the person concerned.
- Ask permission for any kind of physical contact, e.g. for comforting!

In conversations, the affected persons should be given the necessary space to talk and be listened to. Under no circumstances should the experience or the accounts of those affected be questioned! We do not discuss the situation with the person concerned and do not try to find out what "really" happened. Instead, we ask the person concerned what they need to be able to deal with what they have experienced in order to improve the situation for them.

*IMPORTANT: The awareness team can of course only contribute to improving the situation as long as not all the wishes of the person concerned collide with their own boundaries – this should always be communicated honestly and transparently! The question must always be: Am I the right person to deal with the situation right now / do I trust myself to do so? **If not:** hand the situation over to another person from the awareness team and withdraw from the conversation.*

...And then what?

How do we enable the person concerned to stay at the event, to go home with a good feeling or to calm down/collect/retreat in a temporary safe space (e.g. in the awareness room or similar)? If it is necessary to expel the person(s) perceived as threatening from the event, this should be done. The organization of the event has the RIGHT OF THE HOUSE and can enforce this. In general, however:

- We do not impose punishments but try to shape the situation in the best possible way for the person(s) concerned.
- Focus on working with those affected! We only engage with the person(s) who triggered the incident if this is requested by the person(s) concerned and if we have the capacity to do so.
- The aim of our work is always to give the person concerned self-determination and the greatest possible capacity to act.

...Complicated mix of issues?

What do we do in a dispute when it is unclear who is the initiator and who is the affected person?

- A maximum of 2 people approach the immediate incident and try to soothe the situation
- No pack formation or rubbernecking- both should be prevented by those who are not approaching the incident- i.e. ask bystanders who are not involved to leave the situation.
- If the confrontation is aggressive or violent, the Security concept applies

THE HOUSE IS ALREADY BURNING? SECURITY-CONCEPT

How do we protect ourselves against violent attacks?

- We do not get into physical confrontations with perpetrators! If at all, we only fend off attacks against us if possible
- We do not use physical coercion to enforce rules (exception: a ban from the house issued after consultation with the group. **We hold the domiciliary right** and enforce it. If needed, bring allies to the team.
- Team-internal debriefing promptly after each case with **all** persons involved from the awareness team. The anonymized case discussion also applies here.

HOUSE RULES AND TIPS FOR CODE OF CONDUCT OF CHAMPIONSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

Even if many people in the messenger community fortunately reject unfounded authority and the associated rules, it is important to formulate some rules for championships due to structural differences and privileges. Since the organization of an event is responsible for it, it is allowed to determine its house rules. These range from practical rules (such as mandatory helmets for races) to rules of conduct for mutual consideration. As this is an awareness guideline, we have limited ourselves to those rules that we believe are important for attentive and considerate treatment of oneself AND others in order to raise awareness among the participants and ensure that everyone can feel comfortable.

It should be explicitly emphasized here that the awareness structure has NOTHING to do with these rules and will not enforce them if they are disregarded by individuals without people feeling specifically disturbed/threatened etc. as a result! Also these rules are suggestions, no strict regulations.

PHOTOS: Strictly no photos or videos should be taken at the housing. At best, this will be communicated by the organizers at the beginning of the event. At all other locations, it is up to the organizers to decide whether photos may be taken or not.

NO SHIRT POLICY: Show solidarity and keep your shirts on. Many WTNBIA+ bodies are still being objectified - it makes a big difference whether a WTNBIA+ or a male-read person would show themselves topless in public. The well-intentioned advice that WTNBIA+ should just confidently go bare is a sign of (male) ignorance of what it means to live as a WTNBIA+ person. It is

therefore perfectly okay, as a fairly privileged cis man, to think about how your own body looks in public and what messages it sends out

SUBSTANCE CONSUMPTION: Everyone is free to consume substances such as alcohol or illegalized substances. However, you should always respect your own boundaries and those of others. In addition, not everyone feels comfortable if people are allowed to consume substances everywhere at an event. To this end, an organization could decide to have designated places where consumption is either permitted or strictly prohibited.

SMOKING: Not everyone smokes and not everyone feels comfortable when someone smokes nearby. It is extra problematic for people with asthma when they they inhale the smoke of others cigarettes. Please ask whether people in your immediate vicinity will be bothered if you light up your cigarette. Smoking indoors is prohibited unless explicitly stated otherwise.

DOGS: Loud music and large crowds are not at all a relaxed environment for dogs. Also some people are afraid. *Therefore our request: if possible, leave your four-legged friends at home.* If this is not possible, please take sufficient responsibility for your pet's behaviour.

FIRST AID: In an emergency, there should always be a competent person on site and a suitable setting for treating injured persons. The first aid location should not be the same room as the Safer Space!

PROUDLY PRESENTING: FRIENDS OF AWAREMESS

Some of you may be familiar with the batik Awaremess shirts with the light-house logo that are sometimes worn by people in the awareness team at championships. In recent years, people have also worn these shirts casually in everyday life or at championships without being part of the Awaremess team.

This is of course very unfavourable for a functioning awareness, as the awareness team should be clearly recognizable and unmistakable at all times! But all of this gave us an idea: **The Friends of Awareness**

In consultation with the founders of Awareness, the old Awareness shirts will be repurposed from now on. By wearing the shirt, people now have the opportunity to show their active support for Awareness to the outside world and be recognizable as a direct ally. This means that although they have not taken on an official Awareness shift, they know what Awareness is, know the concept behind it and support it. It is very much in our interest that people are still approachable when wearing the shirt and are able to take affected persons to the respective Awareness team should this be necessary.

TL;DR: WHY AWARENESS?

- Because structural discrimination is unacceptable and must not be allowed to become more entrenched
 - Because we are aware that border violations and assaults unfortunately happen
 - Because boundaries are subjective and sometimes difficult to formulate
 - Because we are aware that it is not always easy to be empathetic and to respect everyone's boundaries, including our own
 - Because no affected person should feel powerless and left alone
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>> This document is to be understood as a “breathing” document, i.e. its content is open to everyone for discussion and exchange. With this text, we want to create an awareness guideline that championship organizers can follow, so that work on the awareness concept and structures is simplified in the future and access to the topic is made easier. This document was created in collaboration between the organizational structures of ECMC Bremen 2022, DMFK Cologne 2024, ECMC Lausanne 2024 and CMWC Zurich 2024. The authors of this document are *white* and our perspective is noticeably Eurocentric. We would love to include more perspectives and will actively try to do so as soon as possible. The concept is a first draft and none of us are professionals. Criticism of the text, additions and comments etc. are very welcome! <<

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