



**ARTE Documentary *La loi du Silence*:
The European Buddhist Union condemns any form of abuse**

Recently a documentary was shown on ARTE television about sexual, physical and financial abuse in some Buddhist communities.

The EBU would like to reconfirm its earlier statements and commitment (2018 and 2020) as follows:

In a spiritual context, as in any other, inappropriate behaviour may occur, including abuse of all kinds. This has been true throughout history, in many countries and in many religious and spiritual traditions. Sadly, it is still true today and Buddhist communities are no exception. We acknowledge with great sorrow the suffering of victims of harm inflicted by Buddhist teachers and leaders.

It has been clear for many years that serious breaches of integrity, and in some cases criminal offences, have taken place. A strong sense of hierarchy, close community, shared belief systems and heartfelt commitment may all contribute to a healthy spiritual environment, but they may also conduce to unhealthy relationships and serious harm to both adults and children.

Clearly those who suffer most are the victims of abuse. They are further traumatised by the unwillingness and/or inability of institutions and their leaders to address or prevent cases of abuse, and instead to try to conceal them. This is also extremely detrimental to the image and teaching of Buddhism in the West.

In the teaching relationship, the teacher is in a position of greater power and responsibility than the student. We strongly recommend that sexual relationships between teachers and students are either subject to clearly defined and effectively applied measures to reduce risk of abuse of power, or prohibited entirely.

We recognise that individual teachers alone may not be in a position to effectively address issues of this nature, however elevated their spiritual position. As Buddhist organisations we are responsible ourselves for the creation of environments that are safe for students, volunteers and teachers.

The first principle of Buddhist ethics is to avoid causing harm. This has been emphasized throughout the history of Buddhism.

We call upon all Buddhist organisations to address honestly and effectively allegations of serious breaches of ethical precepts and law by their teachers and leaders, and to listen to those who feel harmed and unheard, with compassion for all concerned.

As decided in the annual general meeting of the EBU on 24 September 2022, all our member organisations are required to develop, establish, publish and regularly

review their own code of ethics and grievance procedure. Many member organisations already have these procedures in place, and support is offered to those who do not.

European Buddhist Union

Annual General Meeting
25th September 2022