

‘Safe at home, safe at work’.  
Project findings from eleven  
Member States



# Violence at work: a trade union issue

**Violence at work, including the effect of domestic violence at work, are core trade union issues:**

- Violence affects the safety, health and wellbeing of workers
- A major and persistent barrier to achieving equality at work and in society
- It impacts negatively on job performance and productivity, retention of workers, absenteeism, as well as the overall climate of workplace relations and the working environment
- Rising levels of violence and harassment are directly related to the growth in non-standard forms of employment e.g. casual work, temporary work, involuntary part-time work, zero hours contracts etc. particularly affecting sectors where women and young people work

**Combating sexual harassment and violence at work is one of five objectives in the ETUC Action Programme on Gender Equality (2016-2019), adopted at the Executive Committee 7-8 June 2016:**

- To contribute to eliminate gender-based violence and harassment at work through adequate measures and actions protecting those people (most usually women) and those sectors mostly exposed to violence and harassment, also by third parties. Continue to make the link between domestic violence and work-level protection.

# Key challenges

- Growth of non-standard work and increasing casualised labour market.
- Problems of addressing the issue in small workplaces where there is low union coverage - most best practice approaches, including well-defined workplace policies and procedures, exist in large companies.
- Key problems identified in mainstreaming gender-based violence into safety and health / work environment policies and agreements.
- Difficulties in convincing some employers and union officials (often because of competing priorities) of the economic and social case for addressing gender-based violence in collective bargaining.
- The economic crisis has made it difficult to get gender-based violence onto bargaining agendas – at the same time unions in several countries identified increasing incidence of harassment and violence in the light of the crisis.

# Aims of the 'Safe at home, safe at work' Project

- Improve trade union knowledge, collective negotiations and involvement in social partner initiatives to address and prevent gender-based violence at work
- Integrate a gender perspective into trade union actions to address and prevent violence at work
- Make recommendations for affiliates, for the ETUC and European institutions, including for the proposed ILO standard on violence at work

Eleven country case studies:

Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, UK

# Collective bargaining

- Unions see collective bargaining as the most important and effective way to address gender-based violence at work; however, some unions report on a low level of awareness of sexual harassment and some resistance.
- The structure of bargaining impacts on how unions negotiate on this issue, and has been affected by more fragmented and decentralised bargaining since the crisis.
  - National framework and sectoral agreements in some countries have been important in setting out principles for lower level bargaining
  - Importance of workplace level agreements in setting out more detailed codes of practice and workplace procedures to prevent and tackle sexual harassment.
- Over 55 agreements (national, sectoral and workplace) collected addressing violence at work, the majority include sexual harassment as part of a broader approach to violence.

# Examples of good practices

- **Bulgaria:** in the transport sector FTTUB signed agreements with four municipal authorities as part of a campaign on violence against women in the transport sector. A special chapter on 'protection against violence at the workplace and gender equality' is included in the 2010-2012 sectoral agreement, with joint actions by employers and unions to prevent violence and a zero-tolerance approach.
- **Italy:** 2015 national framework agreement to transpose the 2007 European agreement on violence and harassment at work provides a framework for sectoral and territorial agreements. A good practice agreement on sexual harassment exists in the woodworking sector signed by the three unions in the sector (Feneal-UIL, Filca-CISL, Fillea-CGIL) – the agreement is detailed and includes a Code of Conduct which is now being implemented in companies and at the territorial level.

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- **Slovenia:** A good practice agreement in the banking sector addresses employer's responsibilities to prevent mobbing and sexual harassment and provides for paid leave for workers affected by violence at work. The ZSSS retail union signed an agreement for a workplace policy with the Mercator supermarket chain on zero-tolerance on harassment and sexual harassment, with detailed procedures to address and prevent violence at work.
- **France:** sexual harassment has been included in a large number of agreements on professional equality, setting out obligations on employers, procedures for dealing with cases and prevention measures. Good practices exist in the public sector and in companies such as La Poste, the defence company SAFRAN.

# Union efforts to raise the visibility of sexual harassment at work

## 1. Improve the evidence base

- A key priority for unions has been to provide an evidence base to raise awareness about growing levels of sexual harassment, as well as barriers faced by women in taking cases and claiming their rights.
- UK TUC survey received significant media coverage, and gave evidence of pervasive sexual harassment at work, and the negative impact of the introduction of fees to take cases to tribunals. Similar union surveys in the university sector and in the creative arts/entertainment sector have also helped to show the impact of casualisation in these sectors.

## 2. Upscale awareness raising

- Unions have collaborated in Denmark to form a Joint Task Force and campaign to fight sexual harassment (3F, HK, Service Forbødun and the Technical Staff Union) with the aim to create common union strategies to significantly increase awareness and visibility of sexual harassment in unions, general public and the media.

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## **3. Union campaigns**

- Campaigns have been carried out in most Member States often connected to 25<sup>th</sup> November; FTTUB campaign 'No to Violence against Women'; campaigns by UK unions e.g. Unite on violence in the hotel sector; campaigns to fight gender stereotypes and harassment of girls by teaching unions in several Member States

## **4. Guidance for negotiators**

- Confederations and sectoral unions in the UK, Slovenia, Italy, Denmark, France, have produced bargaining guidance, model agreements and training for negotiators on how to negotiate agreements on sexual harassment and other forms of violence at work.

# Domestic violence at work: a new negotiating issue

# The impact of domestic abuse and violence on victims at work

- High levels of sick leave, absenteeism and being forced to leave work
- Reduced work performance, difficulties in concentration and isolation from work colleagues
- Access to work affected where there is coercive control of money, clothing, transport to and from work, socialising with work colleagues, participating in training events etc.
- Harassment, violence and stalking by abusers in the workplace
- Has a wider impact on the working environment, team working and workplace relations

## Contd.

**4. Awareness raising of union members, officers and women workers:** through posters, leaflets, campaigns, training and information sessions by unions in most Member States, often with a focus on 25 November.

**5. Collection of evidence of the impact of domestic violence at work:** examples include workplace surveys carried out by unions in the UK and Ireland.

**6. Working in partnership with domestic violence organisations:** evidence from the UK and Denmark of close collaboration with domestic violence organisations, and more widely with the global network DV@WorkNet.

**7. Lobbying for a legal framework on gender-based violence at work.**

# Domestic violence at work: challenges

- Unions in Belgium and Netherlands speak of the difficulties in bringing 'private' and 'family' issues into the workplace.
  - In Belgium a precedent has been established in a national agreement that addresses the impact of drugs and alcohol on the workplace, which union suggest could form the basis for a similar agreement on domestic violence at work.
- Some unions (and employers) do not see the issue as a priority, at a time of many different competing demands.
- Low level of awareness of the problem / resistance to recognising it as a trade union issue.
- Austerity measures have impacted on social services and NGO support services for victims of domestic violence.

# Conclusions: critical success factors

- Presence of women in senior and negotiating roles ensures a gender perspective in collective bargaining on violence:
  - Bargaining successes in male dominated sectors, for example, in Slovenia and Italy.
- Support for and awareness raising of negotiators, including model agreements, detailed guidance on workplace procedures.
- Making a strong business case of the economic impact of gender-based violence at work.
- Importance of an enabling legal framework with clear duties on employers and governments (e.g. for collective bargaining; requirements for workplace/sectoral policies to address and prevent violence at work).
- Linking violence at work to wider gender equality policies and actions, including gender mainstreaming.

# Recommendations: 10 things unions can do to tackle gender-based violence

1. Promote social dialogue and jointly agreed policies and procedures
2. Ensure women are in senior negotiating positions
3. Produce guidance and model workplace policies
4. Include a strong focus on gender inequalities and discrimination
5. Provide information and support to workers affected by violence at work and domestic violence
6. Establish partnerships with specialist NGOs and women's organisations
7. Encourage men to take a stand on violence against women
8. Show the economic, business and social case for workplace measures
9. Lobby for the workplace to be included in legislation and national action plans on violence against women
10. Implement measures on violence against women in European sectoral social dialogue agreements

# Recommendations for the ETUC

1. Ensure that violence is a high priority in work and policy of ETUC and affiliates, and that it contains a strong gender dimension.
2. Draw up best practice guidance and model agreements.
3. Include violence against women at work in ETUI training programmes and training materials.
4. Establish European and national objectives for addressing violence against women at work in the ETUC Women's Committee and the ETUC Collective Bargaining Committee.