



European Multi-sectoral Social Partners

GUIDELINES

to prevent and tackle third-party violence
and harassment related to work

UPDATED (2025)

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Background, Objectives, Definitions, Principles

1. We, the sectoral Social Partners signatories of these updated Guidelines, affirm that work-related Third-Party Violence and Harassment (hereafter TPVH) is unacceptable. It has serious consequences for the workers' health, dignity and confidence. It also undermines the working environment, staff morale, the attractiveness of jobs and the retention of workers. It compromises the quality of work and, ultimately, the quality of public, private and not-for-profit services provided. It can also create an environment that is unsafe to the public and service users and, therefore, has a wide negative social impact.
2. As representatives of sectors of the economy amongst those most exposed to TPVH, we have a vested interest in better preventing and addressing TPVH. In 2010, four of these sectors¹ adopted the first-ever multisectoral Guidelines to tackle third-party violence and harassment related to work. These Guidelines complement the 2007 cross-sectoral autonomous [Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work](#).
3. Despite their relevance, the original Guidelines have seen limited implementation at national level. Moreover, instances of TPVH have escalated, notably during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Following a project funded by the European Commission in 2021-2023 on the role of social partners in preventing third-party violence and harassment at work, the above-listed social partners decided to update the Guidelines in view of the following developments:
4. According to Eurofound's latest data², 12.5% of workers in the EU have experienced some form of adverse social behaviour. This can be much higher in some sectors.
5. Digitalisation, alongside increasingly complex procedures and individualised expectations and demands in society, contributes to heightened risks of work-related TPVH. Digitalisation can increase the intensification of work, facilitate surveillance or constant evaluation, and cause frustrations and tensions amongst the workforce and third parties. As a result, it can also lead to third-party violence and harassment against workers as well as cyberviolence, including revenge pornography, which primarily affects young women.
6. Some of our sectors are experiencing labour or skills shortages and an increase in administrative tasks. These aspects, among others, can lead to understaffing, which, in turn, can also contribute to TPVH.
7. Gender-based violence, coupled with an intersectional approach, is recognised as an integral part of violence and harassment in the [ILO Convention 190](#) (2019) and the [EU directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (2024/1385).

¹ The Multisectoral Guidelines were adopted in 2010 by CEMR, CoESS, EPSU (health and hospitals), EFEE, ETUCE, Eurocommerce, HOSPEEM, UNI-Europa, in 2018 by TUNED (EPSU and CESI) and EUPAE for central governments, and in 2021 by EFCI

² European Foundation for the improvement of working and living conditions, Eurofound, EWCTS, 2021

Indeed, European data, as mentioned above, demonstrates that women are more affected than men, with a majority of the perpetrators being men.

The share of women experiencing adverse social behaviour at work reported was higher than that of men, with the most significant discrepancy observed in reporting unwanted sexual attention, where women (3%) are more likely to be affected than men (1%). Particularly, young women in the 16-24 age group are more likely to report unwanted sexual attention, being disproportionately targeted (8%).³

8. It has also been found that underreporting of TPVH is persistent due to various factors: the perception that TPVH is part of the job, that complaints will not be addressed due to a lack of resources, time or understanding, and/or that incidents are not severe enough to warrant action. Working alone or at night, heavy workloads, fear of reprisals, atypical work situations, and stereotypes based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and others in certain jobs or sectors further contribute to underreporting.
9. The multisectoral Social Partners recognise that States have the primary responsibility to tackle domestic violence in accordance with national laws and or practices and that employers are not responsible for domestic violence.

Nevertheless, the signatories note that domestic violence can affect employment, performance and health and safety. Governments, employers and workers' organisations, and labour market institutions can help address the impacts of domestic violence as part of other measures, in accordance with national laws and practices⁴.

In recent years, telework has increased. Consequently, the Social Partners reaffirm that provisions on telework remain voluntary, for both employers and workers, and reversible.
10. When TPVH is reported, Eurofound data⁵ has also shown that close to 30% of workers who work regularly with people state that they do not get the necessary support from management, while 16% state that they do not receive support from colleagues.
11. The signatories recognise that employers and workers have professional, ethical and legal obligations to third parties and to each other.
12. Third-party violence related to work is of a multifaceted nature and needs an integrated approach where different stakeholders come together to be part of the solution. These guidelines refer only to matters within the mandate as Social Partners and in accordance with national law and practices.
13. The way in which particular services are organised and provided reflects national, regional and local circumstances.

³ Idem

⁴ See examples of social partners' initiatives on the project's website

⁵ Eurofound, 2021

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Objectives

14. The aims of the Guidelines are to:

- Ensure that each workplace has a results-oriented TPVH policy to be devised by employers, workers and their representatives/trade unions based on, amongst others, the good practices collected as part of the project research, and which can be complemented by more specific and/or additional measures.
- Update the Guidelines to make them more useful, more user-friendly and relevant to improve their implementation at the national level.
- Gain a better understanding of the risks associated with TPVH at the workplace.
- Develop both preventive and reactive measures aimed at tackling and preventing TPVH at the workplace.
- Incorporate an intersectional approach that underscores principles of gender equality and anti-discrimination, drawing inspiration from the provisions in the ILO Convention 190.

Definitions

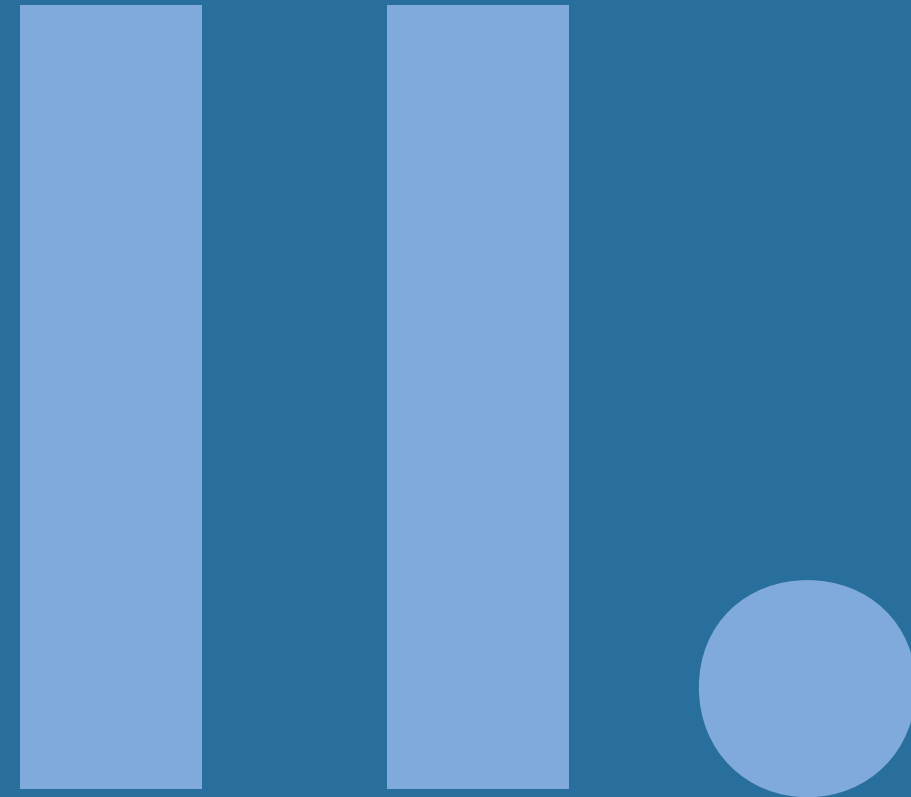
15. Inspired by the ILO Convention 190, the term work-related “third-party violence and harassment” (TPVH) refers to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof - whether isolated or repeated - that aim at, result in, or are likely to cause physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm perpetrated by third parties.
16. The term gender-based violence and harassment means violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, currently more women than men, and includes sexual harassment.
17. TPVH can also be directed at persons because of other grounds of discrimination such as sexual orientation, gender identity, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, body images, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, disability, age.
18. For the purpose of these guidelines, an intersectional approach means TPVH that occurs when two or more grounds operate simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination.
19. For the purpose of these guidelines, perpetrators of TPVH refer to third parties, either individuals or groups, meaning clients, customers, patients, service users, students or parents, members of the public, or service providers.
20. Work-related TPVH occurs in the course of, linked with or arising out of work occurring in any physical and/or virtual public or private environments where they are a place of work or related to the worker's professional duties.
21. In relation to virtual environments, TPVH can be perpetrated through the worker's professional communication channels and/or through the worker's private accounts when related to their professional role.

Principles

22. According to EU and national laws, employers shall have the duty to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to the work, while it is the workers' obligation and interest to comply with occupational safety and health (OSH) policy according to training and instructions given by the employer.
23. Workers and employers can contribute to creating a supportive working environment based on mutual support, trust and respect.
24. Every worker and manager has the right to a workplace free of violence, harassment and all forms of discrimination anchored in occupational health and safety.
25. Employers have a TPVH policy in place in consultation with workers and/or trade union representatives and/or in negotiation with trade union representatives in line with national industrial relations systems.
26. Access to workers' rights and promoting a collective ethos are critical to effectively implement TPVH policies.
27. The Guidelines adopt a gender-responsive and intersectional approach recognising the specific exposure faced by particular groups within the workforce.

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**TPVH is not part
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prevention, protection,
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perpetrators liable

1. Employers should have a clear policy covering all workers as far as possible on how to prevent and respond to TPVH. Such a policy should be integrated into the management and structures of occupational health and safety, gender equality and anti-discrimination practices.
2. The employers should take measures to ensure that everyone knows that there is zero tolerance for TPVH. Regular and appropriate communication to relevant third parties about using dignified and appropriate behaviour towards workers should be conveyed, including that, where appropriate, legal action will be taken against perpetrators.
3. While policies must be tailored to each work environment and occupation, based on our research and collection of good practices, we recommend the measures below to help create safe spaces and ensure TPVH cannot be normalised and deemed part of the job.
4. These measures should complement existing workplace, sectoral or cross-sectoral collective agreements and relevant legislation.

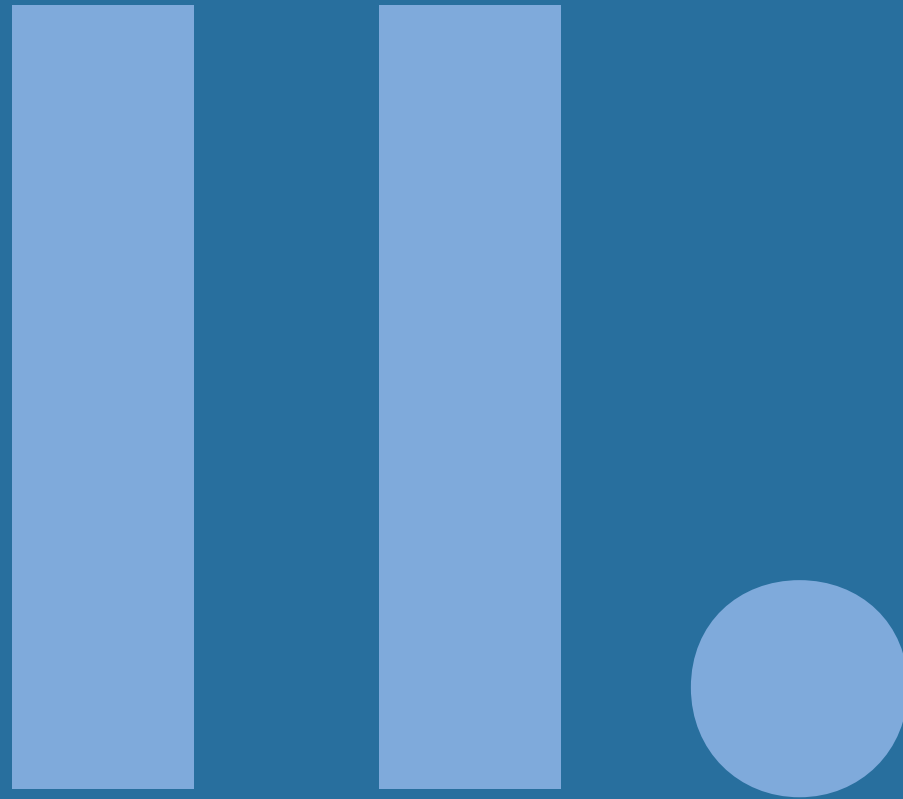


Measures for an effective policy on TPVH

5. Social dialogue is the best way to design and implement policy to prevent and mitigate the consequences of TPVH.
6. Clear definitions, objectives and examples of the most common forms of TPVH, taking into account the grounds of discrimination mentioned in section 1.C - Definitions.
7. Prevention of TPVH is an integral part of the occupational health and safety risk assessment, the latter being an EU legal requirement for each employer (see box below).
8. Training and awareness raising, which is easily accessible and free of cost, for workers and persons with supervisory functions, including general safety in relation to work tasks and the working environment. Such training may include more specific skills such as de-escalation techniques and tools to manage conflict, threats and aggressions, support measures for workers experiencing gender-based violence, and trade union facility time within the time according to national legislation and practices.
9. Complaints procedures that workers trust, including confidential advice and information and contact details of a person of trust to whom to speak in safe spaces. These should include clear and accessible formal reporting procedures through written and verbal reports (offline and/or online) to line managers/supervisors and systems to ensure confidential and anonymous reporting, if deemed appropriate, respecting personal integrity, confidentiality, and data protection.
10. Clear requirements regarding the reporting of incidents by workers and the measures taken to protect them from possible reprisals, and addressing issues to other public authorities, within national practices and procedures, such as police, health and safety agencies.
11. Remedies, psychological and other practical support available for workers (victims and witnesses) (see below).
12. At the workplace level, systematic collection, recording and review of TPVH incidents to learn from cases, build organisational responses, and improve working conditions, while respecting GDPR.
13. Follow-up and evaluation of TPVH policies, taking into account experience and related developments in legislation, research and technology.
14. When relevant, cooperation agreements with relevant public authorities such as police forces, justice, health and social services, and labour inspectorates are part of an integrated approach.
15. Provision of suitable tools to protect workers, e.g. communication channels, monitoring, security measures, etc., and support them when TPVH is perpetrated through the workers' private communication channels and is related to their professional role.

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Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) risk assessment

Carrying out a regular OSH risk assessment in consultation with workers and/or their representatives is an EU legal requirement and a fundamental prevention tool.

When properly designed and implemented, health risk assessments are key to understanding and contributing to eradicating the root causes of TPVH.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at work - EU OSHA - provides comprehensive guidance on health risk factors (see project website).

A risk assessment should take into account the various occupations, locations and working practices to allow the identification of potential problems and the design of appropriate responses and practices, for example:

- Incorporate safer environments into workplace design
- Include psychosocial risks relevant to different sectors
- Take into account the specific needs of workers at greater risks of violence or harassment (including those of a sexual nature), based on an intersectional approach (see II, nr. 4)
- Recognise that gender-based violence has work-related consequences
- Include risks of cyberviolence/harassment associated with increasing digitalisation

- Aim for a fair distribution of workload and safe staffing levels based on a clear job content
- Provide clear information regarding the nature and level of service third parties should expect as well as the provision of procedures for third parties to express dissatisfaction and for such complaints to be investigated
- Review the risk assessment at times of changes, e.g. when restructuring, introducing or deepening of new technologies, moving offices or a health emergency

TPVH, including of a gendered nature, can be rooted in the job content and training due to harmful social norms and stereotypes based on gender, other grounds of discrimination, and unequal power relations at work. These should be addressed in training for the job. The signatories call on the respective relevant public authorities to consider reviewing the curriculum of the initial training, if appropriate, to integrate this aspect, too.

Finally, everyone should watch for signs that violence and harassment may be occurring, such as increased absenteeism, decreased motivation, reduced job performance and increased staff turnover.

Remedies: support to victims and holding perpetrator(s) liable

It is important to express and provide support to the victims for their own and their colleagues' sake in a non-blaming and constructive atmosphere. Depending on the circumstances, such support is provided at different levels, for example:

- Information on a transparent and effective procedure to monitor and investigate any allegations of harassment and/or violence from third parties and to inform the victims of the progress of any relevant investigation and action.
- Health support, including both physical and psychological.
- Legal, practical and/or financial support (e.g. additional insurance cover which goes beyond statutory obligations).

As part of the victims' recovery, perpetrators of TPVH must be held accountable and made to understand that the issue is dealt with seriously. This is part of the victim's recovery and commitment to ensure a safe and healthy workplace. The signatories further call on the authorities to review the applicable criminal legislation to examine whether it is still an appropriate framework given developments in society.

In view of the number of TPVH cases caused by people with mental health disorders, the signatories call on the Member States to strengthen their mental health services to prevent and counter the risks of TPVH.

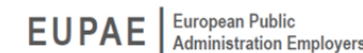
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Application,
review
and further
information

The signatories agree that:

1. They will disseminate and promote the implementation of the Guidelines with their national members through joint and/or separate actions. More specifically, the signatories strongly encourage their respective national members to integrate these Guidelines into possible national sectoral guidelines or collective agreements.
2. They will promote the Guidelines at all appropriate levels and update the relevant European sectoral social dialogue committees every two years on the state of play.
3. Recognising the importance of this issue, they will also distribute this document to relevant stakeholders at the European level.
4. The present Guidelines will undergo a comprehensive evaluation within six years from the date of adoption. This evaluation will assess their effectiveness and relevance, and identify whether revisions are necessary to integrate developments and address emerging challenges in preventing and managing third-party violence and harassment.
5. Examples of future joint social partner work related to third-party violence and harassment will be regularly updated and available on a joint website, thirdpartyviolence.com. The website will serve as a central repository of knowledge and resources, facilitating the sharing of good practices among signatories and other stakeholders.



For more information, please see the joint website dedicated to TPVH and follow-ups to the revised Guidelines [HERE](#)

