



On the offensive to combat gender-based violence in the world of work

Adopted at the Executive Committee meeting of 24-25 June 2024

Introduction

Preventing and combatting gender-based violence in the world of work is a key priority of the ETUC. The recently adopted *Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence* fails to deliver meaningful provisions to make the world of work safer for women workers. It also fails to recognise our role as trade unions to end gender-based violence.

In line with the ETUC Action Programme, the ETUC Women's Committee proposes a set of trade union-led actions to fill the gaps left by the recently adopted Directive. The aim is to tackle gender-based violence in the world of work, including economic violence.

ETUC has made the case that the world of work is connected with all forms of gender-based violence, notably sexual harassment, domestic violence, third-party violence and cyber-violence. Gender-based violence, including economic violence, is rooted in gendered power imbalances, often resulting in economic harm, which is a common denominator of all forms of gender-based violence. Victims and survivors are exposed to a loss of economic stability and – independence. Economic violence is a form of gender-based violence itself, adding to the undervaluation of work predominantly done by women. The dimension of economic violence must be further explored and mainstreamed into legislation, as well as into collective bargaining strategies and social dialogue initiatives. The recognition of austerity as a form of economic violence against women must also gain ground, including in the framework of the European semester.

A multi-pronged strategy of **legislative measures, social dialogue and collective bargaining** is conducive to achieve the goal of a world of work free from gender-based violence.

Depending on the evolution of the European political context, the ETUC equips itself and should, where relevant:

Call for a new EU Directive eradicating gender-based violence in the world of work.

A Directive to eradicate gender-based violence in the world of work should be included in the work programme of the upcoming European Commission and European Parliament on the basis of the social policy chapter of the TFEU. Occupational safety and health legislation is an important entry point for such an initiative.





A proposal for a new Directive must include measures to prevent and tackle all relevant forms of gender-based violence in the world of work, online and offline, and offer practical solutions for safe workplaces through an intersectional lens, in which the social partners must be involved and trade unions have a key role. A strong focus should be made on how to define and address different aspects of economic violence, as well as the prevention of secondary victimization and further discrimination. ETUC should seek support for such a call from the European Parliament, by means in particular, of monitoring the implementation of the *Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence*, stressing the need for follow-up measures relating to the world of work.

Address gender-based violence in the world of work through EU Social Dialogue.

The cross-sector social partners' autonomous Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work of 2007, as well Multi-Sectoral Guidelines on Tackling Third-Party Violence and harassment at Work from 2010 – currently being revised – are important initiatives previously undertaken by social partners at cross-sectoral and multisectoral levels. An analysis of the implementation and impact of the 2007 Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work and guidelines should be conducted. An update of the agreement should be placed on the agenda of EU social dialogue and included in the upcoming work programme.

Continue to campaign for ratification and full implementation of ILO C190 and Recommendation 206 and the Istanbul Convention.

ETUC will further support affiliates' campaigns for ratification of ILO C190. ETUC and affiliates will monitor implementation of ILO C190 for those countries who have ratified the Convention and identify gaps to be subsequently addressed by new legislation. ETUC will explore the option of calling for the implementation of ILO C190 through an EU Directive. The Istanbul Convention remains an important tool to combat gender-based violence, in particular with view to the recent EU accession to the Convention.

Mainstream measures tackling gender-based violence in upcoming legislative initiatives relating to the world of work.

Measures to tackle gender-based violence in the world of work should be mainstreamed and integrated in upcoming legislation, in particular in a new proposal for a Directive on Artificial Intelligence in the world of work, as well as a new Directive on psychosocial risks and well-being at work. Occupational safety and health legislative initiatives should be implemented and used to the fullest. As gender-based violence and psychosocial risks intersect, measures to prevent gender-based violence must be expressly integrated in new legislation and in mandatory risk assessments at workplace level. In the same vein, the unregulated use of Artificial Intelligence in the world of work is likely to have deep impacts on working environments. New legislation must include measures mitigating risks of gender-based violence, including the potentially new legislation on telework and the right to disconnect.

In full respect of the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality, women's financial and economic independence should be mainstreamed throughout EU legislation, in particular in the field of social - and labour market policy, but also taxation. Measures and tools related to the GDPR, the transpositions of the Pay Transparency Directive and the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages, for example, could be of relevance. The impacts of economic violence, in a life cycle approach, should also be addressed and integrated in particular in care and pensions issues. The effective exercise of democracy at work by trade unions and workers' representatives should be strengthened to eradicate gender-based violence at work.



Continuing support for collective bargaining and sharing good practices

Following-up on the recently concluded ETUC project “Tackling violence and harassment against women at work”, the ETUC will continue to collect and showcase good practice, in particular via collective bargaining, to better equip ETUC affiliates. Under the new project “Wage-Up”, the specific focus on the Pay Transparency and its transposition will help the ETUC to address a key tool to prevent and eradicate gender-based economic violence.



Annex I Background

- The *Directive combatting violence against women and domestic violence* (EU/2024/1385) has been adopted on 7 May 2024. Article 28 provides for “Specialist support for victims of sexual harassment at work” which entails counselling services for victims and employers. Article 45 (3) provides for an assessment “whether further measures at Union level are necessary to effectively tackle sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, taking into account applicable international conventions, the Union’s legal framework in the area of equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation and the legal framework on occupational safety and health” by 14 June 2032.
- As noted in the preamble of **ILO C190**, “*violence and harassment in the world of work can constitute a human rights violation or abuse, and that violence and harassment is a threat to equal opportunities, is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work*”.
- Article 3 of **ILO C190** specifies that the Convention “*applies to violence and harassment in the **world of work** occurring in the course of, linked with or arising out of work: (a) in the workplace, including public and private spaces where they are a place of work; (b) in places where the worker is paid, takes a rest break or a meal, or uses sanitary, washing and changing facilities; (c) during work-related trips, travel, training, events or social activities; (d) through work-related communications, including those enabled by information and communication technologies; (e) in employer-provided accommodation; and (f) when commuting to and from work.*”
- The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines **economic violence** as “*a common form of violence against women statistically defined as any act or behaviour which causes economic harm to an individual*”, intersecting with intimate partner violence. One form of economic violence in the form of economic sabotage can be to prevent a victim of attending employment.
- The recently adopted Council conclusions on economic empowerment and financial independence of women recommend to “*ensure that action plans against gender-based violence [...] include targeted measures for tackling economic violence and supporting women in their social and professional reintegration*” and call on Member states to “*promote measures to support victims of domestic violence, including measures to help them maintain or gain financial independence, such as measures to help them retain employment or measures providing for paid leave from work*”, among other.
- The ETUC Women’s Committee is finalizing the project “Safe at work, safe at home, safe online”. The study report and trade union guide take stock of trade union-led actions preventing and combatting domestic violence, third-party violence and cyber-violence, as well as AI management and digital surveillance. The deliverables of the project will be shared with ETUC Member organisations shortly.