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There can be no fair and decent work with violence at work

**ETF supports an ILO Convention
on violence and harassment in the world of work**

*“Verbal attacks...sexual assaults and the like. Touching of the rear and breasts, threats on the part of superiors if I complain [I am told]: ‘a woman must be able to cope when she works in a men’s profession.’
Railway worker*



The ETF represents more than 5 million transport workers from more than 230 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.



President Frank Moreels

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Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
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General Secretary Eduardo Chagas



The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) expresses its support for a comprehensive International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention, accompanied by a Recommendation, on violence and harassment in the world of work, with a strong focus on preventing, addressing and remedying gender-based violence.

Such a Convention will be discussed at the 107th International Labour Conference in June 2018. It has the potential to take a wide-ranging approach that would both include a strong focus on gender-based violence including the impact of domestic violence at work. This convention and recommendation would support governments to commit to a strong minimum legal framework at the national and European levels.

There is a need for a specific international legal instrument focusing on violence and harassment, including gender-based violence, in the world of work, as no such instrument currently exists. Whilst some existing ILO instruments refer to violence and/ or harassment, these instruments do not define what is understood by violence or harassment, do not provide guidance on how to address its various forms and do not cover all workers.

Addressing violence and harassment through this new international standard is key to the objectives of achieving decent and fair work for all and women's rights and equality in the workplace.

However, only an ILO Convention and Recommendation will adequately address the issue of violence and harassment in the world of work. A Convention, as a binding instrument, can address preventive measures in the workplace to reduce violence and harassment, including gender-based violence. It will also help to improve health and safety at work and improve industrial relations. A supplementary recommendation attached to the Convention would give valuable guidance on the implementation of the Convention, but – on its own – is not an acceptable alternative to a binding Convention.

Gender-based violence – the situation in the European Union

Violence against women in the EU is a problem of epidemic proportions. One-third of women have experienced sexual and/or physical violence and more than 50% experienced sexual harassment.¹

Whilst both women and men experience violence and harassment in the world of work, unequal status and power relations in society and at work often result in women being far more exposed to violence and harassment. Gendered violence is violence perpetrated against women because they are women. According to a report by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights is “violence against women, and specifically gender-based violence that disproportionately affects women, an extensive human rights abuse that the EU cannot afford to overlook”².

In addition to the human rights argument, the economic costs of violence and harassment against women are indicated by the European Commission at a staggering 225 billion Euro per year³. Creating an international mechanism to help identify and prevent violence and harassment in the world of work will help to reduce these economic effects.

¹ European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/saynostopvaw/about.html>

² FRA (2014): Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14_en.pdf

³ European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/saynostopvaw/about.html>



Violence against women at work in transport

The transport sector is still a male dominated industry. Only about 20% of all workers are women. To strengthen female employment in the sector, the European Commission launched the *Women in Transport - EU Platform for Change*⁴ in November 2017. One of the specific objectives is to improve working conditions to attract and retain women in the sector by providing zero tolerance to violence (safety and harassment) both between men and women workers and from customers.

In 2017, the ETF did a survey⁵ of more than 1400 women transport workers from across Europe, asking them about their experience of workplace violence. The study is the first of its kind **in Europe and it** revealed that violence is rarely a one-off event in the transport sector. The key findings of the survey show that:

- 63% of women transport workers have experienced at least one recent act of violence at work
- 25% of women transport workers believe that violence against women workers is a regular occurrence in the transport sector
- 26% of women transport workers believe that harassment is 'part of the job' in transport

Many women respondents to the survey spoke of a pervasive culture of sexual harassment and sexual intimidation in the workplace by colleagues, supervisors and managers. This takes the form of repeated, hostile and offensive verbal, non-verbal and physical forms of violence, including sexual harassment. These acts of violence are part of a culture where male colleagues, supervisors and managers believe they have an entitlement to abuse women, and if women "can't cope they should get out". This culture has resulted in many women being silenced and very isolated at work.

"A few years ago, when I worked as a flight attendant I was a subject to constant sexist jokes and invitations with sexual subtext, considering it part of the job. Although dealt with the situation successfully, I did not like it at all."

- Civil aviation worker, Bulgaria

"Several incidents: slapped on the behind by Master when I was a junior officer; grabbed by the collar and shouted at by the Chief Officer; unwanted sexual advances from various crew members – pestering for personal contact details from offshore ..."

- Seafarer, UK

The second form of violence at work reported on in the survey is violence and harassment from customers ('third-party violence'). The survey reveals alarming incidents of violence against women transport workers by customers. Risks of violence increase when a woman works alone and when they face customers, for example, in ticket checking, driving buses and trams alone, or working in ticket offices alone.

"All staff suffer abuse from customers but the abuse women have to put up with is more sexual and revolting."

- Railway worker, UK

"[One passenger said] 'No, not a girl driving, girls can't drive a bus ... shouldn't you be at home taking care of your husband and children?'"

- Urban public transport worker, Sweden

⁴ Women in Transport - EU Platform for change: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/social/women-transport-eu-platform-change_en

⁵ ETF summary report: Violence against women at work in transport (2017): <http://www.etf-europe.org/etf-news-online.cfm/newsdetail/11690/region/2/section/0/order/1>



Violence against women workers in transport has damaging physical and psychological impacts. Many respondents spoke of a loss of confidence and self-worth as a result of violence at work. This has also a major impact on retention of workers. Several women stated that they wanted to leave their jobs but were unable to do so as they were concerned about not finding another job; others felt that they had to either bury the problem and get on with the job or leave the job.

“You remain upset all day long. You get depressed. You feel powerless because you have to keep up professional behaviour.”

- Port worker, Italy

“Seriously depressed, 11 months off work, felt stressed and very nervous anxious... I had to leave the Merchant Navy after 17 years.”

- Seafarer, UK

The ETF survey show clearly, if women do not feel safe in their workplace they do not stay in their jobs.

As part of the ETF Fair Transport campaign, we demand a violence-free workplace and quality jobs for transport workers. A safe work place is good for all workers. Women belong in the industry!

Why is domestic violence a workplace issue?

According to figures by the European Commission, one-third of women have experienced psychologically abusive behaviour by an intimate partner.⁶ Domestic violence is a workplace issue because it affects women’s participation in work, job performance of survivors and perpetrators and workplace safety.

The report *Safe at home –safe at work* by the European Trade Union Confederation shows that “the workplace is closely connected to women’s wider roles that extend beyond it, in public places, in the community and in the private domain of the home and family. The workplace has long been recognised as playing an important role in preventing and eliminating gender-based violence, and is one of many settings that should be included in an integrated and multifaceted approach to this task.”⁷ In some EU countries, trade unions and employers already recognise the role of the workplace in preventing domestic violence and are working together to address the impacts of domestic violence on the workplace, e.g. through paid domestic violence leave provisions, counselling or changes in the work location.

Conclusions

To sum up, the ILO convention should (not exclusively) include:

- A broad definition of violence and harassment in the world of work in its diverse and multiple forms, including both physical and psychological harassment and violence
- A strong focus on gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work
- The recognition and identification of measures to address the issues faced by transport workers, a sector which is of high risk of violence and harassment
- A description of the groups most at risk of experiencing violence and harassment in the world of work such as women, LGBTI workers or workers in the informal economy
- Measures to address the impact of domestic violence in the world of work
- A role for collective bargaining in preventing and tackling gender-based violence and harassment at work

⁶ European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/saynostopvaw/about.html>

⁷ ETUC report Safe at home – safe at work (2017): <https://www.etuc.org/documents/safe-home-safe-work-final-report#.WpfcJmrwaUk>



- Duties for employers to introduce sectoral and workplace policies in consultation with trade unions, which include setting out prevention measures, and effective procedures for dealing with complaints, incorporating sanctions for perpetrators
- Provisions that workers and their trade union representatives should take part in the design, implementation and monitoring of such policies
- Measures to protect and support workers who are victims of violence in the world of work
- A broad definition of the “world of work”, including the physical workplace, commuting to and from work, attending trainings or social events, technology and the impacts of domestic violence in the world of work
- Specific provisions for the appropriate and sensitive treatment of complaints of violence and harassment, including protection from reprisals or penalties for complainants and their trade union representatives.

Having said this, it is time now to send a clear message that violence and harassment at work is not acceptable in any circumstances, that it is not “part of the job”. It is essential that workplace cultures are fostered that support equality and non-discrimination. It is essential that all workers are provided with a safe space at work. This is particularly critical if women are to achieve equal access to decent work in the transport industry.

The ETF urges the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States to support the establishment of a new ILO Convention, supplemented by a Recommendation, on violence and harassment in the world of work, with a strong focus on gender-based violence, and play an important/ active role in the negotiations at the International Labour Conference.

Brussels, 8 March 2018



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