



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

## **50th MEETING OF THE DIRECTORS GENERAL RESPONSIBLE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**Brdo, 28 and 29 May 2008**

**Multisectoral workshop on third party violence, 14 March 2008,  
Brussels**

### **EUPAN/TUNED Joint Report**

#### **1. Background**

The European social partners BUSINESSEUROPE-UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC signed a cross-sectoral Framework Agreement on harassment and violence at work on 26 April 2007.

The Agreement condemns violence and harassment at work and reminds employers of their duty to protect workers in line with EU and national legislation.

It aims to increase awareness of employers, workers and their representatives at all levels through an action-oriented framework to identify, prevent and manage harassment and violence at work.

It commits the members of the signatory parties, including the 6 central government administrations affiliated with CEEP, to implement the agreement before April 2010 in accordance with management and labour regulations in the EU Member States, Candidate Countries and non-EU countries of the European Economic Area.

Whilst violence from third party at work applies to the agreement "*where appropriate*", the social partners most affected by this problem have taken the initiative to explore the specific nature of this problem further. These are social partners in local and regional governments, hospitals, commerce and private security.

As a first step, a workshop was organised on 14 March 2008 with the support of the European Commission to explore, on the basis of case studies, how best to complement, not replace, the cross-sectoral agreement from a more specific and/or multisectoral point of view. Other sectors were



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

invited, such as transport, education and central government administrations.

Within the framework of the Test Phase on social dialogue in central government administrations, EUPAN and TUNED agreed to participate as observers in the workshop for the following reasons:

- Recognition that violence and harassment at work affect their sector and that external violence in particular deserves further attention
- The opportunity to gain insight in formal social dialogue in practice.

## **2. Key points of the workshop**

The workshop was attended by 200 participants from some 24 European countries and 16 different sectors. From TUNED and EUPAN, 18 representatives attended – see list attached.

In his welcome address, Armindo Silva, director in DG Employment, stressed that only a third of EU citizens are aware of their rights if they happen to be victims of discrimination and/or harassment. It was reiterated that third party violence is often concentrated in a number of sectors of public administration, such as health, education and security. The workshop was a first step towards further follow-up, which the Commission would continue supporting.

Background information about the Agreement on violence and harassment was provided by representatives of CEEP and ETUC. The agreement followed on from a consultation of the Commission. It was preceded by an Agreement on stress at work (2004), which took 10 months to negotiate. Article 4 is the most substantial article, condemning violence and harassment and outlining the procedure to follow to prevent, identify and manage problems of violence and harassment. The agreement covers external violence in a limited way. The Agreement will be reviewed 5 years after the date of its signing.

The European Foundation on improving living and working conditions provided an overview of the impact of violence and harassment at work based on a survey of employees in 2005. It found that 1 in 10 employees had been exposed to physical violence, bullying or harassment over the past 12 months, with great national differences. Physical violence, be it internal or external, is a minority phenomenon but on the increase. Third



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

party violence is more widespread than violence between colleagues and/or from management. There is a strong gender dimension with women being much more often subject to psychological violence and slightly more often to physical violence. Age plays also a role. The high response level to the survey reflects awareness of the issue rather than cultural differences.

Different risk factors are at play, such as company size, working time (day or night), isolation of workers and work organisation. One reason that public sector workers are more affected by violence or the threat of violence in the workplace is the high level of interaction with the public, some of whom are from a disadvantaged background. In addition to the human cost, violence and harassment have economic costs (absenteeism, compensation schemes, etc.). Both victims, who are 3 times more likely to suffer depression, and witnesses, twice as likely, need support.

The following case studies were presented jointly by trade union and employers:

- Commerce sector at EU level
- Helsinki social services department – guidelines on preventing and managing violence at work
- Cash transit in the UK
- Hospital sector in Ireland

Each case study raised specific questions, some being more limited to a single country (e.g. cash transit in the UK, which accounts for 75% of all reported accidents in this sector in Europe). Cases of murder or serious injury were reported from the health sector, labour inspectorates and cash transit.

However, a number of commonalities were identified, such as the need to develop a workplace risk assessment to identify, manage and prevent violence; the importance of work organisation, including working time, work intensity, level of staffing, turn-over, realistic objective-setting and training; and the impact of restructuring, including outsourcing and privatisation.

Developing a policy against external violence requires human resources, commitment at all levels, notably from management, and good cooperation between public services. Whilst it can lead to higher reporting levels of violence it is often a case of getting worse before it gets better.



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

The importance of integrating the issue of violence in a broader national framework of social partnership was underlined, notably in the Irish case, as the most appropriate instrument to prevent and manage violence at work.

In their conclusions, the social partners reiterated their commitment to combating external violence. At the time of this writing, discussion was still underway on the possibility of negotiating a complementary multisectoral agreement whilst at the same time ensuring good implementation of the cross-industry agreement.

### **3. EUPAN/TUNED response**

EUPAN and TUNED welcome the multisectoral initiative and acknowledge the important role that social dialogue plays in efforts to eliminate violence and harassment at work as part of an overall commitment to improving safety and well-being in the workplace.

It is recognised that parts of public administrations are amongst the risk sectors, and EUPAN and TUNED therefore recommend that the subject be kept on the social dialogue agenda, including the following themes:

- Relevance and usefulness of the European cross-industry agreement and further multisectoral initiatives
- Definition of violence including psychological, verbal and physical abuse
- Role of governments as policy maker, public service provider, regulator and employer
- Policy development including risk assessment, prevention, training, remedies, impact of work organisation and restructuring
- Image of civil servants
- Role of labour inspectors and emergency services and cooperation between different public services within the framework of good governance

EUPAN and TUNED welcome the opportunity to continue their joint participation as observers in future activities aimed at enhancing awareness of the importance of eliminating all kinds of violence at work. Experience and information gained with this type of multisectoral initiative may be useful for future activities in order to eliminate violence at work in central government administrations as well. EUPAN and TUNED also believe that a mapping of national implementation in central government administrations



Slovensko predsedstvo EU 2008  
Slovenian Presidency of the EU 2008  
La Présidence slovène de l'UE 2008

affiliated with CEEP and any other EUPAN members interested in the issue could serve as inspiration.

With a view to increasing awareness and understanding on this issue as well as on the valuable work currently undertaken by social partners at European level, this report will be presented to the DG meeting on 29 May with a view to it being disseminated to EUPAN and TUNED members.

EUPAN and TUNED recognise that violence is an important stressor, and therefore some continuity will be ensured through the discussion on stress at work under the EU presidential Trio (France, Czech Republic and Sweden).