Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace

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Foreword

The issues of violence and harassment have aroused considerable and growing interest across Europe in recent years. There remains, however, a great disparity between awareness and recognition of the problem within European countries. The real extent of the phenomenon remains unknown, but the Foundation's *European surveys on working conditions* suggest that a substantial part of the workforce in Member States is affected.

Faced with the persistent lack of comparative qualitative data on these complex phenomena, the Foundation commissioned in 2002 a project into violence and harassment in the workplace.

The present report identifies the different forms and patterns of violence and harassment in the workplace in the EU and describes the recent upsurge in activity and initiatives with respect to violence and harassment within the legal arena, with new legislation addressing these problems recently enacted or in the pipeline in a number of countries. It presents evidence of adverse effects on individuals, organisations and society, and assesses the potential financial costs. It also analyses the factors that may contribute to and cause physical and psychological violence, and reviews a variety of good practices with respect to preventing and managing violence and harassment at work.

This report should provide policy-makers, economic and social actors and researchers with a useful source of information and will undoubtedly provide a stimulus for further initiatives in this previously neglected area.

Raymond-Pierre Bodin   Eric Verborgh
Director   *Deputy Director*

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Introduction

Recent surveys in many European countries suggest that the issues of violence and harassment in the workplace affect a substantial part of the workforce (see, for example, Leather, 2001; Paoli and Merllié, 2001). As the economy becomes global and competition increases for market shares and survival, pressures mount on workers. With relatively high levels of crime in most EU countries, violence finds its way into the workplace in the form of robbery and assault, particularly affecting front-line staff and service-providers. Along with growing pressure, aggression may also build up within the workplace, making violence between workers more likely. Occupational stress has in recent years assumed epidemic proportions, affecting workers across most sectors and industries. Violence may be an important source of stress, but may also result from a stressful working environment. However, recent European studies indicate that it is psychological violence and harassment, rather than physical violence, which represents the greatest threat to most workers. Due to the increasing diversity of the workforce, a number of studies also show the frequent presence of harassment on the basis of race or gender.

Greater awareness of the problem has been followed up by a recent upsurge in activity and initiatives with respect to violence and harassment within the legal arena, directed at psychological violence in particular. New legislation addressing these problems has already passed, or is in the pipeline, in a number of countries.

The presence of violence and harassment in the workplace represents very considerable costs to individuals in terms of ill health and with respect to their employment relationship. In addition, violence and harassment in the workplace also represents substantial costs to the organisation due to the impact of absenteeism, productivity and staff turnover. Therefore, it makes good financial sense to combat bullying at the levels of the individual and the organisation, as well as for society as a whole (Hoel *et al, 2001b*).

While there is great disparity between countries, progress is being made with regard to intervention, both in the policy arena and in the development of intervention programmes designed to deal with violence in general and specific forms of harassment. However, while best practice models are emerging, attempts at intervention are still often sporadic, frequently lacking a theoretical basis and a means of assessing their effectiveness.

Structure of the report

Following this introduction, the report is arranged in 8 chapters, dealing with:

Chapter 1: The focus here is on concepts and definitions, with the aim of disaggregating the wider problem of violence, particularly focusing on various forms of psychological violence. While cultural differences are acknowledged, it is argued that a greater shared understanding of the concepts under consideration is emerging.

Chapter 2: Factors and antecedents that may contribute to and cause violence (physical as well as psychological) are discussed here, with evidence provided. Individual, situational, organisational and societal factors are addressed and a holistic framework for understanding workplace violence is put forward in the form of an interactive model.

Chapter 3: The focus here is on particular forms of vulnerability associated with the experience of violence. Vulnerable groups and occupations are identified. Particular attention is given to sexual

harassment and less recognised forms of harassment, such as harassment on the basis of race and sexual orientation.

Chapter 4: Patterns of exposure levels to various forms of violence and harassment are outlined and discussed. Risk groups are identified and key features of the experience examined. An attempt is made to point out particular trends in exposure and the relative risk of different types of violence.

Chapter 5: The issue of legislation is examined here, both at a European Union level and at the level of individual countries. Legislation recently passed in a number of countries is described and how the problem of violence and harassment is addressed in different countries by means of already existing legislation or through new emerging initiatives.

Chapter 6: The benefits of a workplace free of violence are highlighted. Evidence of adverse effects on individuals, organisations and society is explored and the potential financial costs assessed. This discussion argues in favour of a 'high road' approach that combines sound business management with attention to the health and safety of workers based on broad participation.

Chapter 7: A wide variety of good practices are reviewed here with respect to preventing and managing violence at work. A distinction is made between initiatives aimed at documenting practices and raising awareness; assessing and reducing risk; responding to violent incidents or managing the problem; and treatment and rehabilitation.

Chapter 8: Conclusions.

Concept development, definitions and culture

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The variety of behaviours that may be covered under the general rubric of 'violence at work' is so large, the borderline with acceptable behaviours is often so vague and the perception in different contexts and cultures of what constitutes 'violence' is so diverse — these issues make it a significant challenge to both describe and define this phenomenon.

Disclosure of the magnitude of workplace violence, particularly certain forms of it, is increasing. This is rapidly shifting the focus of attention and making new concepts and definitions popular, even in countries where these were totally unfamiliar until a few years ago. That is why a general concept and definition of violence at work has yet to be agreed in the European arena.

A first substantial effort towards a common understanding in this area was made at an expert meeting organised by the European Commission in Dublin in May 1995, where the following definition was proposed (Wynne *et al*, 1997):

> *Incidents where persons are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances related to their work, involving an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being and health.*

This definition was centred on the following legal figures (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000):

- **Abuse**: Behaviours that depart from reasonable conduct and involve the misuse of physical or psychological strength.
- **Threats**: The menace of death, or the announcement of an intention to harm a person or damage their property.
- **Assault**: Any attempt at physical injury or attack on a person including actual physical harm.

Abuse covers all forms of harassment, including sexual and racial harassment, bullying and mobbing.

The above definition became a milestone for definitions across Europe. It was able to distinguish clearly between different types of workplace violence and to catch the emerging importance of psychological violence against the traditional profile centred on physical violence.

Physical and psychological violence

While the existence of personal physical violence at the workplace has always been recognised, the existence of psychological violence has long been underestimated and is only now receiving due attention. Psychological violence is increasingly emerging as a priority concern in the workplace.

It should be noted that, in real situations, physical and psychological violence often occur simultaneously or consecutively, for example in cases of sexual harassment where occasional touching and comments with sexual connotation may combine on a specific occasion or point in time.

The following definitions are adapted from the WHO definition of violence (ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI, 2000):

> **Physical violence**: *The use of physical force against another person or group that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm.*

> **Psychological violence**: *Intentional use of power against another person or group that can result in harm to physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.*

The growing attention to psychological violence is clearly reflected in the following definition from the 'Opinion on Violence at the Workplace', adopted on 29 November 2001 by the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work of the European Commission. It is an expression of the recent conceptual development in this area.

> *Violence can be defined as a form of negative behaviour or action in the relations between two or more people, characterised by aggressiveness, sometimes repeated, sometimes unexpected, which has harmful effects on the safety, health and well-being of employees at their place of work.*

> *Aggressiveness may take the form of body language indicating intimidation, contempt or disdain, or of actual physical or verbal violence.*

> *Violence manifests itself in many ways, ranging from physical aggression to verbal insults, bullying, mobbing and sexual harassment, discrimination on grounds of religion, race, disability, sex or, in any event, difference and may be inflicted by persons both outside and inside the working environment.*

> *It is important to bear in mind that physical violence can have consequences that are not only physical but also psychological, which can be immediate or delayed.*

Whilst confirming the crucial importance of psychological violence, even when one is dealing with physical violence, this definition goes further in explicitly addressing a series of behaviours under the general notion of harassment. These are bullying, mobbing and sexual harassment, which have become the object of growing concern throughout Europe.

In dealing with these types of violence, the definition also stresses how the aggression that characterises workplace violence can be unexpected and also repeated. It thus introduces the crucial area of 'micro' offences.

Focus on sequence of minor acts

It is increasingly recognised that psychological violence is often perpetrated through repeated behaviour, of a type, which alone may be relatively minor but which cumulatively can become a very serious form of violence. Although a single incident can suffice, psychological violence often consists of repeated, unwelcome, unreciprocated and imposed actions, which may have a devastating effect on the victim. This is typical in bullying, mobbing, sexual and racial harassment, which are perpetrated through repeated or persistent behaviour.

A number of laws and official documents already reflect this new vision of psychological violence. For example, recently enacted in Belgium the Loi du 11 juin 2002 'relating to protection from violence, moral harassment (bullying) and sexual harassment at the workplace' clearly highlights the central role of repeated offensive acts in the build-up of all forms of moral harassment:

> *Repeated abusive conduct of whatever origin, whether from inside or outside a company or institution, manifested in particular by behaviour, words, threats, actions, gestures or one-sided texts with the purpose or effect of violating the personality, the dignity or the physical or psychological integrity of a worker or any other person to whom this chapter applies, in the conduct of their work, placing their employment in jeopardy or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.*

Along similar lines in France, Article L 122-49, Paragraph 1 of Code du Travail (Labour Code) states that:

> *No employee should have to suffer repeated acts of moral harassment which have for their purpose or effect a degradation of his working conditions liable to violate his rights and his dignity and to alter his physical and mental health or to compromise his professional future.*

The same concept is reiterated in the above-mentioned 'Opinion on Violence at the Workplace', adopted on 29 November 2001 by the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work of the European Commission:

> *Mobbing is a negative form of behaviour, between colleagues or between hierarchical superiors and subordinates, whereby the person concerned is repeatedly humiliated and attacked directly or indirectly by one or more persons for the purpose and with the effect of alienating him or her.*

Similarly, the Spanish Trade Union Institute of Work, Environment and Health (Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Ambiente y Salud or ISTAS, available at www.istas.net/asesora/acosomoral) states:

> *Where bullying differs from other problems related to the organisation of work is in the intention to cause harm, the targeting of one or more persons, repeatedly and over a period of time. In the absence of these characteristics, we can speak of psychosocial risk factors arising from shortcomings in the organisation of work, but not of bullying.*

Focus on dignity

As seen in the definitions above, which are paralleled by similar ones all around Europe, the focus of attention is widening from the traditional areas of health and safety and quality of work to include the areas of dignity at work, human rights and combating discrimination.

The principle of non-discrimination, already enshrined in the EC Treaty, has received new impetus by the Treaty of Amsterdam. In restating that principle in stronger terms, the Treaty of Amsterdam has added a new Article 13 to the EC Treaty: this enables the Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. It includes the following definitions, adapted from Article 2 of Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000, implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment between Persons Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin:

Direct discrimination: Where one person is treated less favourably on the above grounds than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation.

Indirect discrimination: Where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons in one of the above conditions at a particular disadvantage compared with persons in other conditions, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim, and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary.

In its 'Resolution on Harassment at the Workplace 2001/2339 (INI)', the European Parliament:

. . . urges the Commission to consider a clarification or extension of the scope of the framework directive on health and safety at work or, alternatively, the drafting of a new framework directive as a legal instrument to combat bullying and as a means of ensuring respect for the worker's human dignity, privacy and integrity; emphasises in this connection the importance of systematic work on health and safety and of preventive action.

The fusion of bullying and mobbing

The original conceptual distinction between bullying (primarily referring to situations of individual harassment) and mobbing (primarily covering situations of collective harassment) is now giving way to a conceptual assimilation of these two terms.

In the past, some researchers (for example, Zapf, 1999a) have made a distinction between bullying and mobbing, arguing that mobbing is often concerned with aggression from a group of people and that this aggression tends to be directed towards one single person. Similarly, the ILO refers to mobbing as 'ganging-up or mobbing a target employee and subjecting that person to psychological harassment' (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000). However, most researchers now make no distinction between bullying and mobbing with regard to the number of perpetrators or targets involved. One may argue that even if a distinction was accepted, the psychological processes involved appear to be the same.

Both mobbing and bullying involve offensive behaviour through vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group of workers. These persistently negative attacks on their personal and professional performance are typically unpredictable, irrational and unfair.

This progressive assimilation of mobbing and bullying does not mean, however, that the two terms are used interchangeably all around Europe. In some countries, such as Germany or the Nordic countries, the term 'mobbing' is the prevalent one, while for the same type of behaviour the word 'bullying' is used in Britain and Ireland. Even in countries with their own terms (such as *harcèlement moral* in France, *acoso* or *maltrato psicológico* in Spain, *coacção moral* in Portugal or *molestie psicologiche* in Italy), the two English terms, particularly mobbing, are becoming increasingly popular. This trend is exemplified by the appearance of two fundamental books on the subject recently in Spain — *El maltrato psicológico* (Gonzáles de Rivera, 2002) and *Mobbing* (Piñuel y Zabala, 2001).

The variety of behaviours that constitute bullying/mobbing is so large that it is impossible to list them all. The fact is that much behaviour may or may not constitute bullying/mobbing, depending

on the way it is carried out and its combination with other behaviours. Despite these difficulties in describing such behaviours, a large area of convergence can be detected across Europe, as seen in the points below taken from selected documents.

UK: *Guidance on Bullying*, UNISON, 1996

- making life difficult for those who have the potential to do the bully's job better than the bully;

- punishing others for being too competent by constant criticism or by removing their responsibilities, often giving them trivial tasks to do instead;

- refusing to delegate because they feel they cannot trust anyone else;

- shouting at staff to get things done;

- persistently picking on people in front of others or in private;

- insisting that a way of doing things is always right;

- keeping individuals in their place by blocking their promotion;

- if someone challenges a bully's authority, overloading them with work and reducing the deadlines, hoping that they will fail at what they do;

- feeling envious of another's professional or social ability, so setting out to make them appear incompetent, or make their lives miserable, in the hope of getting them dismissed or making them resign.

Ireland: *Report of the Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying*, 2001

- undermining an individual's right to dignity at work;

- humiliation;

- intimidation;

- verbal abuse;

- victimisation;

- exclusion and isolation;

- intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking;

- repeated unreasonable assignments to duties which are obviously unfavourable to one individual;

- repeated requests giving impossible deadlines or impossible tasks;

- implied threats.

Sweden: *Ordinance of the Swedish National Board of Occupational Safety and Health containing Provisions on Measures against Victimisation at Work*, 1993

- slandering or maligning an employee and his/her family;

- deliberately withholding work-related information or supplying incorrect information of this kind;

- deliberately sabotaging or impeding the performance of work;

■ obviously insulting, ostracising, boycotting or disregarding the employee;

■ persecution in various forms, threats and the inspiration of fear, degradation, e.g. sexual harassment;

■ deliberate insults, hypercritical or negative response or attitudes (ridicule, unfriendliness, etc);

■ supervision of the employee without his/her knowledge and with harmful intent;

■ offensive 'administrative penal sanctions' which are suddenly directed against an individual employee without any objective cause, explanations or efforts at jointly solving any underlying problems. The sanctions may, for example, take the form of groundless withdrawal of an office or duties, unexplained transfers or overtime requirements, manifest obstruction in the processing of applications for training, leave of absence and such like.

ILO: *Collective Agreement on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment-related Grievances*, *2001*

■ measures to exclude or isolate a protected (targeted) person from professional activities;

■ persistent negative attacks on personal or professional performance without reason or legitimate authority;

■ manipulation of a protected (targeted) person's personal or professional reputation by rumour, gossip and ridicule;

■ abusing a position of power by persistently undermining a protected (targeted) person's work, or setting objectives with unreasonable and/or impossible deadlines, or unachievable tasks;

■ unreasonable or inappropriate monitoring of a protected (targeted) person's performance;

■ unreasonable and/or unfounded refusal of leave and training.

Sexual and racial harassment as workplace violence

In a number of cultures, the very inclusion of sexual and racial harassment at work, especially in the form of 'jokes' or 'sexual innuendos', within workplace violence has long been questioned. This situation is changing. There is now a progressive recognition that sexual and racial harassment are not 'lesser offences' and like all other forms of workplace violence, they constitute an affront to dignity at work.

This new approach to sexual and racial harassment is clearly reflected in the provisions and definitions of the new directives addressing these types of violence. For example, on racial or ethnic harassment, Article 2, Paragraph 2 of Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000, implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment between Persons Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin, states:

> . . . *when an unwanted conduct related to racial or ethnic origin takes place with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment* . . .

While the definition in this directive is of a general type, the UK Commission for Racial Equality gives concrete examples of what constitutes racial harassment (CRE, 1995):

■ racist jokes;

- banter;

- insults;

- taunts;

- jibes;

- literature and graffiti;

- shunning people because of their race, colour, nationality or ethnic background;

- excluding them from conversations;

- making racist insinuations;

- being condescending or deprecating about the way they dress or speak;

- picking on them unnecessarily.

Harassment related to sex and sexual harassment at work

Definitions of both harassment related to sex and sexual harassment, which are due to constitute the common basis for all national legislations in this area, are provided by the recently adopted Directive of 5 June 2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council (amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions).

> **Harassment related to sex**: *Where an unwanted conduct related to the sex of a person occurs with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.*

> **Sexual harassment**: *Where any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.*

In 2001, the ILO produced a definition of sexual harassment applicable to its entire staff in its *Collective Agreement on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment-related Grievances* (ILO, 2001):

> *Any unwanted or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, in a workplace or in connection with work, which makes a protected person feel humiliated, intimidated, discriminated against or offended. The distress caused by the act or series of acts may be intentional or unintentional. Sexual harassment can be coercive sexual behaviour used to control, influence or affect the job, career or status of a protected person. It can also be manifested when one or more persons submit a protected person, at any level, to offensive behaviour or humiliation on the basis of that protected person's sex or sexuality, even though there may be no apparent impact on the career or employment of the protected person concerned. Sexual harassment can take many forms and may include:*
> *(i) deliberate and unsolicited physical contact or unnecessarily close physical proximity;*
> *(ii) repeated sexually oriented comments or gestures about the body, appearance or life-style of a protected person;*
> *(iii) offensive phone calls, letters or e-mail messages;*

(iv) stalking;
(v) showing or displaying sexually explicit graphics, cartoons, pictures, photographs or Internet images;
(vi) questions or insinuations about a protected person's private life;
(vii) persistent invitations to social activities after the protected person has made it clear they are not welcome; and
(viii) sexually explicit jokes or propositions.

Increasingly, legislators across Europe appear to respond to the progressive recognition of sexual harassment as a form of workplace violence by normative provisions that are as comprehensive and as exhaustive as possible.

However, the approaches used may vary. In some countries such as Belgium, the definition is intentionally wide in order to avoid behaviour not expressly mentioned from escaping the coverage of the discipline. Article 32 of Belgium's Loi du 11 juin 2002 'relating to protection from violence, moral harassment (bullying) and sexual harassment at the workplace' states:

> **Sexual harassment at work***: Any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, which the perpetrator knows, or should know, will affect the dignity of men and women at the workplace.*

With the same intent, in other countries such as the Netherlands, the legal provisions are more detailed. For example, Article 1.3 of the Netherlands' Working Conditions Act, 1994 states:

> **Sexual harassment***: Undesired sexual approaches, requests for sexual favours or other verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour in which the following points are present:*
>
> - *subjecting a person to behaviour of such a nature that it is explicitly or implicitly used as a condition for employing a person;*
> - *a person subjecting another to or rejecting behaviour of such a nature that it is used as a basis for making decisions that affect the work of the person in question;*
> - *behaviour of such a nature that it affects the work performance of a person and/or creates an intimidating, hostile or unpleasant working environment, or results in the work performance of a person being affected or an intimidating, hostile or unpleasant working atmosphere being created.*

In France, different definitions are used in the civil and penal legislation. For example, Article L 122-46 of the Code du travail (Labour Code) states:

> *No employee, no applicant for a job, a traineeship or a period of training in a company may be punished, dismissed or suffer any direct or indirect form of discrimination, in particular with respect to renumeration, training, regrading, award of a qualification, classification, professional promotion, change to or renewal of a contract for having suffered or refused to put up with acts of harassment by any person whose purpose was to obtain favours of a sexual nature for his advantage or for the advantage of others . . .*

Article L 222-33 of the Code pénal (Penal Code) states:

> *The act of harassing another with the purpose of obtaining sexual favours . . .*

Linguistic and cultural differences — towards a shared understanding

The European surveys on working conditions, carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, have shown that the dimension of the problem of workplace violence differs considerably from one Member State to another.

In considering disparities between Member States, it was noted in the *Third European survey on working conditions 2000* that 'legal and cultural differences between member countries may influence the way the questions are understood and hence determine the answers given. The level of knowledge or awareness about working environment problems and the attitudes and concern about such problems vary greatly from one country to another' (Paoli and Merllié, 2001).

Cultural differences, in particular, play a major role. Concepts and definitions are loaded with cultural significance and even when the same term is used it may be perceived in different ways in the various member countries. This is still an unexplored area. It would appear, however, from the above analysis that a new trend towards convergence is emerging across Europe and that a general shared understanding of workplace violence may be reached.

A number of factors are contributing to this evolution:

- increasing awareness of the problem in all Member States;
- conceptual fusion of certain terms across countries, such as mobbing, bullying, *harcèlement moral*, *acoso psicológico*;
- spreading of terms like 'mobbing' across Europe;
- introduction of new legislation specifically targeted to the problem or the adaptation of existing legislation to tackle the problem more effectively;
- path-breaking action of the courts;
- proliferation of collective agreements;
- debate surrounding new initiatives in this area; and
- action of the EU bodies.

When properly defined and explained in its variety of forms, the term 'workplace violence' seems progressively able to include both physical and psychological violence, since these are becoming more and more relevant for all Member States.

Within this general shared understanding, cultural and linguistic differences are certainly in operation and hence need to be taken fully into account and properly addressed. As regards linguistic differences, sometimes it is simply a matter of finding the terms most appropriate to the specific situation. Terminology differences, though important, are gradually becoming less of an impediment.

Cultural influence, however, is more relevant and requires more attention. In the area of sexual offences, for example, perceptions and understanding may be quite different — and cultural differences play a major role. In a number of European countries, sexual harassment at work is associated with deeply ingrained stereotypes about the roles of men and women in society.

Modifying these cultural beliefs requires a prolonged and deliberate effort, which involves the entire society and not only the workplace.

It is important that linguistic and cultural differences are taken fully into account and properly addressed by (ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI, 2000):

■ use of an appropriate terminology that reflects the commonly used language in a specific culture;

■ special emphasis on forms of workplace violence that have a particular relevance in a specific culture; and

■ a special effort to identify and unveil situations of workplace violence that are difficult to detect and accept as a reality because of specific cultural backgrounds.

Factors contributing to workplace violence

2

In order to be able to identify risk factors and thus prevent violence at work, it is important to understand its causes and antecedents. However, the nature of the relationship between individual, situational and organisational variables, and violence/harassment is, to some degree, open to interpretation. Due to the cross-sectional nature of most research in this field, a causal relationship between these variables and violence/harassment cannot be established; however, the existence of a relationship between these variables can. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, the variables discussed below are considered 'contributing factors' towards the likelihood that violence or harassment might occur in a given workplace. In line with what has already been agreed, a distinction is made between physical and psychological violence throughout this discussion.

Reflecting developments in the field, the focus is on situational and organisational factors, while acknowledging the impact of individual and socio-economic factors (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000; Leather *et al*, 1999). However, it should be noted that harassment on the grounds of gender, race and sexuality may have their own explanations and set of antecedents (*see Chapter 3*).

Individual factors

Individual factors can influence the incidence and process of violence in the workplace and can apply to both the perpetrator and to the victim of the violence/harassment. By individual factors, we refer to:

- socio-demographic variables (such as gender, age, educational level, marital status);
- personality characteristics, traits and styles;
- specific behaviours; and
- specific characteristics of the individual's affiliation with their workplace (such as tenure, level of experience and level of training).

Physical violence
The harasser
Considerable attempts have been made to identify individual characteristics that may render a person more likely to commit a violent act. Typically, such attempts at profiling (see, for example, Mantel, 1994) have identified the following characteristics of the harasser or perpetrator:

- young;
- male;
- having a history of violent behaviour;
- having a troubled childhood;
- suffering from severe mental illness;
- having access to weapons or firearms.

Supporters of profiling also emphasise that the greater the presence of such factors within a population, the greater the risk of expressions of violent behaviour. While there may be some currency in applying such profiles in certain situations, their lack of accuracy suggests that they may falsely identify a potential aggressor and may also be open to abuse.

While many researchers have strong reservations about profiling or are against any one-sided emphasis on personality characteristics, most contemporary models of violence acknowledge the influence of individual factors. Typically, such factors may include Type A behaviour, negative affectivity, low self-monitoring behaviour and holding pro-aggression values (see, for example, Anderson *et al*, 1996).

Another factor often identified as an antecedent of violence is the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs. While there is some evidence for such a claim, the relationship between alcohol/drug-use and violence appears to be complex, with people under the influence of alcohol/drugs not necessarily more likely to behave in an aggressive or violent manner than others if they perceive that there are alternative ways of behaving. However, as the perception, and thus the assessment, of the situation may be obscured under the influence of substance abuse, one may conclude that such abuse represents a risk factor of violence (Leather and Lawrence, 1999).

The harassed
The following characteristics can be attributed to the harassed or victim of physical violence:

- being young;

- wearing a uniform;

- personal appearance and behaviour;

- personal attitudes and personality.

Wearing a uniform and personal appearance could function as risk factors for violence (Standing and Nicolini, 1997). The former may act as much as a deterrent as an antecedent or cause of violence depending on the general attitude towards people in uniform or towards particular groups of uniformed employees (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000). Personal attitudes and personality would tend to affect how people deal with individual situations and how they respond to clients and members of the general public. In this respect, responding in an intolerant or impatient manner may influence whether the aggression escalates or diminishes. Being young is also an important risk factor.

Research has also showed that employees with less training and experience are more vulnerable to attack than their better-trained colleagues (see, for example, Balloch *et al*, 1998).

Psychological violence
The harasser
Little European research has been undertaken on this issue. However, in most instances of sexual harassment the harasser tends to be:

- male;

- a colleague or a supervisor.

A common characteristic of many harassers is that they tend to read or interpret acts of a friendly nature in a sexual manner, which was not the intention of the individuals they then harass (Stockdale, 1993).

The interest in the role of individual factors and personality traits of the aggressor as well as the victim in explaining workplace bullying has, from the start, been informed by research into school bullying (Olweus, 1997). Consequently, the perpetrator or the bully has been identified with personality characteristics such as:

■ high levels of aggressiveness;

■ impulsiveness.

To explain these findings, researchers have pointed to early childhood experiences, emphasising the role of parenting. In this respect, bullying has been associated with a learnt set of behaviours, with a strong impact of processes of modelling (Randall, 1997).

It has been argued that individuals with inflated views of themselves may respond aggressively when threatened in order to protect their self-esteem. Individuals with high self-esteem may also have low regard for others. Similarly, having unstable self-esteem may lead to aggressive responses to any form of threat (Baumeister *et al*, 1996).

Further studies (such as Vartia, 1996) have pointed to other personality characteristics essential in engendering hostility, including:

■ envy;

■ jealousy;

■ competitiveness;

■ lack of insight into their own behaviour.

For example, in a German study of bullying, 60% of victims endorsed the statement 'was felt to be a competitor' and 40% 'the bully was jealous of me' (Meschkutat *et al*, 2002). It has also been argued that bullies may lack a degree of self-reflection or insight into their own behaviour, suggesting that they may be unaware of the full impact of their own behaviour (Einarsen *et al*, 1994a).

The harassed
Based on a number of surveys of sexual harassment in EU countries (European Commission, 1998), the following characteristics were identified for the harassed or victims:

■ female;

■ young (20-40 years);

■ single or divorced;

■ lower level education;

■ tenure (long- or short-term).

In addition to these characteristics, a Spanish study (part of the European survey mentioned above) noted that victims were found to be of normal physical appearance and, on average, had been in their present job more than ten years (European Commission, 1998). By contrast, a British

study by the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) of cases of sexual harassment, which were taken to an industrial tribunal, reported that in most cases the victim of harassment had been working for the present employer for less than a year (EOC, 2002).

A Norwegian study of sexual harassment found that high levels of irritability and aggressiveness were other characteristics identified with victims (Einarsen *et al*, 1994b). However, the authors point out that such behavioural characteristics could be a result of the experience, as well as a predisposition to such behaviour.

Most researchers distance themselves from the simplistic view that bullying is the result of pathologies or psychopathic personality traits (as expressed by, for example, Field, 1996). However, evidence with regard to personality traits as antecedents of bullying is still sparse (Hoel *et al*, 1999). When individual antecedents have been the subjects of study (see, for example, Einarsen and Raknes, 1991; Vartia, 1996), victims have been identified with the following characteristics:

■ low self-esteem;

■ high anxiety levels;

■ introverted, conscientious, neurotic and submissive.

In a recent Irish study by Coyne *et al* (2000), the characteristics of victims were compared with those of a control group: victims were found to be less assertive and competitive than the controls. However, the extent to which these personality characteristics should actually be considered causes of bullying, or whether they should be considered a result of being bullied, is still an open question. Thus, Leymann (1996) argues that their behaviour needs to be interpreted as a 'normal response to an abnormal situation'.

According to Schuster (1996), social incompetence is a potential antecedent of bullying and a factor that may come into play at the stage of group entry, where failure to read informal group rules may translate into a rejection by the group. Moreover, violation of the social rules may also evoke stricter rule-compliance by the rest of the group.

Situational factors

Based on analyses of large numbers of violent incidents, it has been increasingly recognised that some work situations appear to be particularly associated with an enhanced risk of violence (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000). However, the various situational or organisational antecedents are unlikely to affect different demographic groups uniformly (Hoel *et al*, 2001a).

Physical violence

■ *Working alone and working at night*: Solitary work is particularly common in certain occupations and jobs, such as taxi-drivers, bus-drivers and some types of retail outlets (petrol stations, kiosks and small shops). Common to many of these jobs is that workers frequently have to work outside of normal working hours, including night shifts. According to the British Crime Survey (1998), almost half of assaults at work and a third of threats happened after 18:00 (6pm). This implies that the risk of violence is higher for those working late in the evening or during the night, such as healthcare personnel on a night shift (Høgh and Dofradottir, 2000).

■ *Working in contact with the public*: Increased risk of exposure to violence also faces those working at the interface between the organisation and the general public, for example, in the health service, local government, passenger transport, banking institutions and hotels and catering. Typical examples of employees facing violence are those working in an enforcement capacity, including child-welfare workers, probation officers and security guards.

■ *Working with valuables and cash handling*: Front-line staff handling cash may be at risk of violent crime, such as theft and armed robbery. For this reason, employees in banks and retailing will be particularly at risk of assaults and threats. These risks are escalated when security measures, such as guards and alarms, are not in place.

■ *Working with people in distress*: For those working with people in distress, displays of anger and aggression on the part of clients is commonplace, to the extent that many workers consider such incidents as 'part of the job'. Among groups most typically facing distressed people are social workers, psychiatric nurses, prison and probation officers, particularly where the precarious status is combined with inadequate training.

■ *Job insecurity*: The number of people holding casual or precarious jobs is increasing. In many cases, this kind of work situation can place the worker at particular risk of violence due to the perception that their status in the workplace is second-class.

■ *Perceptions of injustice*: One of the most common factors found to influence aggression and violence of a physical as well as a psychological nature is perceptions of injustice and unfairness (Hoad, 1993). While most aggression resulting from feelings of injustice appears to be directed against its perceived sources, there are examples of so-called displaced aggression directed at third parties or against the organisation in the form of sabotage and attack on property (Neuman and Baron, 2003). The latter phenomenon would tend to be associated with situations where outcomes are perceived to be controlled by the organisation.

Psychological violence

■ *Working in jobs or occupations with an unequal sex ratio*: A common finding in surveys of sexual harassment in EU countries is that incidents of sexual harassment are more common in male-dominated jobs as opposed to gender-balanced or female-dominated jobs; this is particularly the case where women (or men) are employed as the only representative of their sex (European Commission, 1998). However, while women in such an environment may be more conscious about their situation, they are less likely to label their experience as sexual harassment since they may tend to consider their experience 'normal'.

■ *Power differential*: Power differences are likely to affect all forms of psychological violence, although the power may be of a formal nature (such as status) as well as informal (such as experience). Sexual harassment appears to be more likely in organisations where there is a substantial power differential between men and women. This is particularly true for those situations where female employees gradually have improved their position in relation to their male colleagues. In such cases, instances of sexual harassment may be the result of exclusionary behaviour on the part of men (Veale and Gold, 1998).

■ *Job insecurity*: Job insecurity may also function indirectly as an antecedent of harassment from managers by influencing cost-benefit considerations (Björkqvist *et al*, 1994) and, therefore, management behaviour, since the risk of retaliation from targets under such conditions is likely to be reduced. According to a German study, people on contingent work contracts were also

perceived to have less time for conflict resolution and fewer opportunities for socialising, which tended to isolate them from their colleagues (Zapf *et al*, 1996b).

- *Change of supervisor or manager*: There is nothing unusual about managers changing jobs or work groups being allocated a new supervisor. However, research has consistently found that harassment and victimisation coincided with a change of manager (HSA, 2001; UNISON, 1997).

- *Working in industries with a high customer service orientation*: With greater emphasis on customer satisfaction and the ethos that 'the customer is king', workers may be increasingly exposed to abusive behaviour and excessive demands from clients and customers. Thus, high levels of bullying by clients in the service sectors (such as retailing, hotel and catering, and the health service) have been found in several studies (see, for example, Hoel and Cooper, 2000).

- *Multiple risk situations*: It is worth noting that the impact of individual and situational antecedents is likely to vary between occupational settings. Nevertheless, while certain features of a work environment may apply to an entire occupation or organisation, it is also likely that discrepancies between groups of workers within an occupation will exist. In some cases, the particular job would include multiple risk situations. Social workers provide a notable example of an occupation beset by multiple risks, including (Rowett, 1986):

  - allocation of scarce resources;

  - compulsory admission of some mentally ill and mentally impaired people to hospital;

  - removal of children from some homes against the wishes of the parents;

  - investigation of cases of non-accidental injury to children;

  - compulsory removal of some elderly people from home to hospital;

  - supervision of men and women in the community with a history of potential or actual violence, some with an associated mental disorder.

Organisational factors

In some cases, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between physical and psychological violence. Thus, the grouping of factors presented below may be somewhat artificial, with overlaps existing between categories. For a more comprehensive review of organisational antecedents of workplace bullying, see Hoel and Salin (2003).

Physical violence

- *Leadership and management*: Since very few incidents of aggression between managers and employees appear to be of a physically violent nature, the role of leaders with respect to physical violence will be of a moderating nature. In this respect, levels of support available within the organisation appear to play a vital role as to how the individual is able to cope with the situation. For example, a British study of violence in the leisure industry (public houses) found a clear link between situations where the organisation is perceived to provide satisfactory support and outcome measures (Leather *et al*, 1998). Such measures included support from line managers and support functions, such as personnel, training and security departments.

■ *Poor work organisation*: Poor work organisation is another factor influencing levels of violence. Thus, where workload is excessive or unevenly distributed, situations may be created that bring about a violent reaction from clients. For example, large queues and excessive waiting time, sometimes for no apparent reason, could instigate violent behaviour. A similar effect may arise from inadequate provision of training. Beliefs about the inadequacy of health and safety measures and the organisation's ability to protect its employees against violence (for example, by having insufficient staff present) may in itself be related to fear and expectations about becoming a victim of violence (Poster, 1996).

■ *Change*: Economic uncertainty, downsizing, tougher competition for promotion, often combined with budget cuts — factors such as these have been associated with higher levels of aggression and violence in the workplace (Elliott and Jarrett, 1994).

■ *Culture and climate*: An increased risk of threats and fear of becoming a victim of violence have been found in situations where there is a lack of harmony within a work group and where there is little or no support from fellow-workers (Cole and Grubb, 1997).

■ *Stress*: Violence and aggression may be an important source of stress in many cases. However, as has been highlighted above, the dynamics of the stress experience suggest that stress may also function as an antecedent of violence. In this respect, violence can be related to a number of social or situational stimuli, such as perceptions of unfair treatment, increased workforce diversity, organisational change or a growing use of workplace surveillance (Neuman and Baron, 1998). Violent incidents have also been linked with 'powerlessness'; in other words, individuals who may perceive themselves as having no control over the situation may use violence as an outlet for their frustration and anger (Bulatao and VandenBos, 1996). However, due to the cross-sectional nature of most studies, cause and effect remain unclear. It is possible that exposure to violence creates, in turn, feelings of lack of control, dissatisfaction with the job and so forth.

■ *Physical work environment*: Certain physical aspects of the work environment may also act as antecedents of aggressive behaviour and violence. Hence, work undertaken in noisy, hot (or cold) circumstances or in cramped conditions have been found to be associated with increased feelings and attitudes of hostility (see, for example, Anderson *et al*, 1996).

Psychological violence

■ *Leadership and management*: The influence of style of leadership on psychological violence has been researched. In particular, two styles of management have been found to be associated with harassment and bullying — an authoritarian style and a laissez-faire style.

In a national Irish study, O'Moore (2000) found that a significantly greater number of victims of harassment reported that they worked in units or organisations managed in an authoritarian manner than those who were not harassed. Looking at this from a constructive management perspective, similar evidence was provided by a Finnish study in which Vartia (1996) found that people who had neither been bullied nor had observed bullying taken place reported that disagreements at their workplace tended to be solved by negotiation.

Abdication of leadership, or a so-called laissez-faire style of management, may also provide a fertile ground for bullying between peers or colleagues (Einarsen *et al*, 1994a). In addition, managers' ignorance and failure to recognise and intervene in cases of bullying may indirectly contribute to bullying by conveying the message that such behaviour is acceptable.

■ *Change*: Organisational restructuring has been found to act as a risk factor of bullying in several studies (see, for example, Meschkutat *et al*, 2002). The risk of bullying may grow if managers adopt more autocratic practices to bring about change (Sheehan, 1999). A nationwide Irish study explored the impact of technological change and change in ownership and found that, in both cases, the risk of being bullied was substantially greater in organisations where such change had taken place (HSA, 2001).

The potential for horizontal bullying or peer bullying was also highlighted in a German study (Zapf *et al*, 1996b), which showed that victims reported higher rates of enforced co-operation or team-working than those with whom they were compared. While team-working can be very beneficial to employees and an organisation, enforced team-working may be considered a possible antecedent of bullying as a fertile ground for conflict development, particularly if linked to inter-team competition for limited rewards (Klein, 1996).

■ *Culture and climate*: When considering organisational antecedents of bullying, the organisational culture has been seen to play a decisive role, as new members adapt to organisational or group norms by mean of processes of socialisation (see, for example, Einarsen, 1999). A study of harassment in a British Fire Brigade identified the training process as a powerful source of socialisation of behaviour, in particular where every uniformed member of the organisation shares the same experience, amplified by factors such as the 'watch' culture where the individual is allocated to the same tight-knit work team, providing little room for diversity (Archer, 1999). Moreover, it is hard to break the cycle in an autocratic leadership culture, where every uniformed staff member has passed through the same training and is nurtured by the same traditions.

According to a Dutch study of employees in a telecommunications company on the impact of organisational culture on the incidence of unwanted sexual behaviour, employees who assessed their work climate positively reported less unwanted sexual behaviour (Timmerman and Bajema, 2000). Furthermore, those who believed that their unit had a positive attitude towards equal treatment of men and women reported fewer negative behaviours. Moreover, those who considered their organisation to have a positive attitude towards combining work and family responsibility also reported less unwanted sexual behaviour. In contrast, organisations where there is a tolerance or acceptance of 'socio-sexual' behaviour report higher incidents of sexual harassment. The same is the case for sexualised workplaces where behaviour of a sexual nature or with sexual connotations (such as suggestive comments about appearance or male-dominated sexualised humour) is commonplace (European Commission, 1998).

Bullying has been found to be prevalent in organisations where employees and managers feel that they have the support, or at least implicitly the blessing, of senior managers to carry on their abusive and bullying behaviour (Einarsen, 1999). Such a view seems to be confirmed by the fact that over 90% of respondents in a large survey of members of UNISON, the British public sector union, identified 'bullies can get away with it' as a cause of bullying.

Zapf (1999a) provides support for the view that bullying is associated with a negative work environment. Comparing victims of bullying with a control group of non-victimised individuals, victims assessed their environment more negatively than members of the control group on all features related to the quality of the environment. The fact that respondents were questioned about their work environment prior to assessing their experience of bullying appears to strengthen the view of a relationship between a bad work environment and bullying.

■ *Stress*: Several studies have concluded that bullying was associated with a negative and stressful working environment (Leymann, 1996; O'Moore, 2000). This relationship can be explained as various work environment factors are considered to produce or elicit occupational stress, which again may increase the risk of conflict and bullying.

■ *Job complexity and control*: The common perception is that work situations characterised by monotonous tasks and low control over the work environment may be linked to bullying and intimidation. Some researchers have gone so far as to put forward the view that bullying may sometimes be a result of boredom (see, for example, Thylefors, 1987). A German study by Zapf *et al* (1996a) contradicted this view, finding that bullying was not related to monotony and general work control deficit; however, since victims were found to have less control over time, it was considered possible that pressure of time may indirectly affect bullying by undermining the opportunity to resolve conflicts.

■ *Conflict and ambiguity of work roles*: Role conflict, which describes the extent to which employees perceive contradictory expectations, demands and values in their jobs, has been especially linked to bullying. In a survey of Norwegian trade union members, not only were victims far more likely to report role conflict than those reporting not being victimised, but observers of bullying were also more likely to report higher levels of role conflict (Einarsen *et al*, 1994b). In addition, role ambiguity seems to be associated with higher levels of bullying. Thus, bullying seems to thrive where employees perceive their job situation and work goals as unpredictable and unclear (Vartia, 1996).

Societal factors

A natural question to ask is to what extent economic and social factors in the wider society may affect levels of violence in the workplace. The following factors may on their own or in combination influence the risk of violence in a given society:

■ *Levels of violent crime in society*: There appears to be a general agreement that in those countries with high rates of homicide, other forms of violence, including violence in the workplace, would be commonplace (see, for example, Chappell and Di Martino, 2000).

■ *Economic change*: In order to sustain competitiveness in an increasingly global marketplace, most European organisations at the beginning of the new millennium are still in the midst of struggling with the effects of dramatic change processes, with downsizing and organisational restructuring as a common result. Under such circumstances, the relationships between employees are likely to be affected (see, for example, Sheehan, 1999).

■ *Rapid social change*: As well as economic change, rapid social change appears often to be associated with increased levels of workplace violence, as evidenced by findings from a recent international case study of violence in the health sector (Di Martino, forthcoming). In some cases, a number of factors may combine to increase levels of violence. For example, in Portugal, a combination of factors such as, on the one hand, social deprivation, shortage of adequate school buildings and teaching facilities, and, on the other, a lack of child supervision due to a shortage of nursery places and a high participation rate of men and women in employment — such a mix is seen to influence levels of violence in schools in general and against teachers in particular. In this respect, violence has been associated with inadequate supervision of children, often exacerbated by social mobility (such as migration from rural to urban places), so that the grandparents' generation (which in many cases could have provided coverage for parents before and after school, when not in full-time work themselves) may no longer live in close geographical proximity.

- *Immigration and the rise of the informal economic sector*: The number of immigrants across the EU has risen sharply in recent years. Immigration, particularly illegal immigration, is in many countries associated with a rise in the informal sector of the economy, which in some European countries accounts for a substantial part of GDP. It is widely recognised that working conditions in such workplaces are often bad, with high levels of accidents and violent incidents that often go unreported (Diário de Noticias, 2002; 24 Horas, 2001; Público, 2001).

Conclusions

On the basis of the above review of evidence regarding the causes of violence and harassment, we can draw the following conclusions:

- no clear profile of individuals, whether the harasser or the harassed, the perpetrator or the victim, has emerged;

- no unambiguous profile can be found with regard to those situations that may give rise to violence; and

- no profile of organisations and groups most at risk of violence has emerged.

However, we may conclude that:

- physical and psychological violence do occur frequently in the workplace;

- there is sufficient evidence to suggest that some groups can be considered to be more vulnerable to violence than others; and

- violence and harassment involve complex and dynamic processes.

In order to deal successfully with violence in the workplace, the whole picture must be considered and the evidence used appropriately. Hence, a number of perspectives and models have been introduced to explain violence and harassment of a behavioural as well as a predominantly cognitive nature. In recent years, an interactive analysis of individual, organisational and societal risk factors, which particularly acknowledge the role of the situational context in which particular work is undertaken, has received growing attention and increasingly more sophisticated models are emerging, such as the General Affective Aggression Model (Anderson *et al*, 1996). Thus, in many instances, violence can be considered a product of social interaction between people where action and reaction are interwoven and where a response to an attack increases the risk of escalation and thus new attacks, often to a point where the opportunity for a peaceful resolution of the situation appears to be limited (Leather and Lawrence, 1999).

According to the social-interactionist perspective (Felson, 1992), situational and external factors may affect violence by eliciting rule and norm-violating behaviour. Bullying may, in such incidents, be seen as an intentional response to such behaviour and an instrument for social control (Hoel *et al*, 1999). In this respect, violence and harassment should be viewed as complex and dynamic processes, where both action and reaction should be understood within the social context in which they take place.

Many of these interactive models build on the seminal work of Poyner and Warne (1987), who suggest that five basic factors have to be considered: the perpetrator, the victim, the situation (e.g. care provision, inspections, robbery), the situation in which violence occurs (e.g. solitary working,

cash handling) and the particular outcome of the incident (e.g. physical injury, threat). A modified version of this model by Chappell and Di Martino (2000) is presented in Figure 1.

While the original model focused entirely on physical violence from the public, the modified model also addresses psychological violence between co-workers. Still, in the case of bullying and victimisation (as well as with respect to harassment on the basis of gender, race and sexual orientation), where persistency and long-term duration of conflicts are considered defining characteristics, the model must be read in a dynamic way to fully capture the dynamics of the processes involved. Similar reservations may apply to harassment on the basis of gender, race and sexual orientation.

Figure 1   Interactive model of workplace violence

Source: Chappell and Di Martino (2000)

Violence, gender and vulnerability   *3*
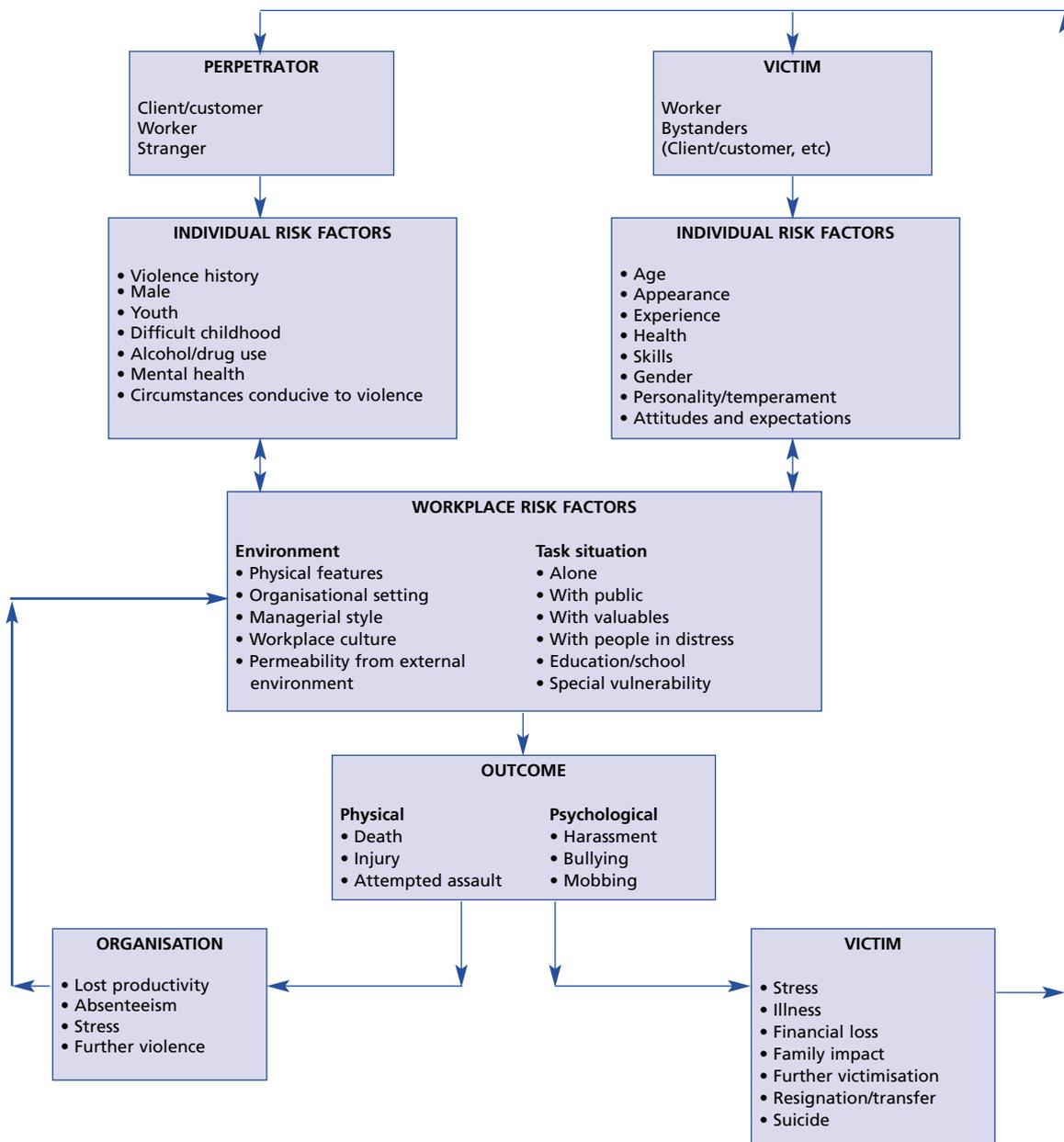
Both men and women are at risk of workplace violence, but the amount and type of violence perpetrated against women is dramatic, particularly in certain sectors, occupations and jobs.

In its 'Resolution on Harassment at the Workplace 2001/2339 (INI)', the European Parliament (2001) points out that, according to some research, women are more frequent victims than men of every type of harassment, whether it is 'vertical' harassment of a subordinate by a superior or vice versa, peer group ('horizontal') harassment or harassment of a mixed type.

Violence by gender

Generalisation in this area can be misleading. Data from the *Third European survey on working conditions 2000* indicates that the percentage of female workers exposed to all violence (physical and psychological) is only slightly higher (+1%) than that of male workers (Paoli and Merllié, 2001). However, women's vulnerability to violence is only apparent when the different types of workplace violence are scrutinised by gender. Then it emerges that women are subjected to certain types of violence to a much greater extent than men. Figure 2 shows how more women than men are exposed to intimidation in the EU as an average.

Figure 2   Workers subjected to intimidation by gender
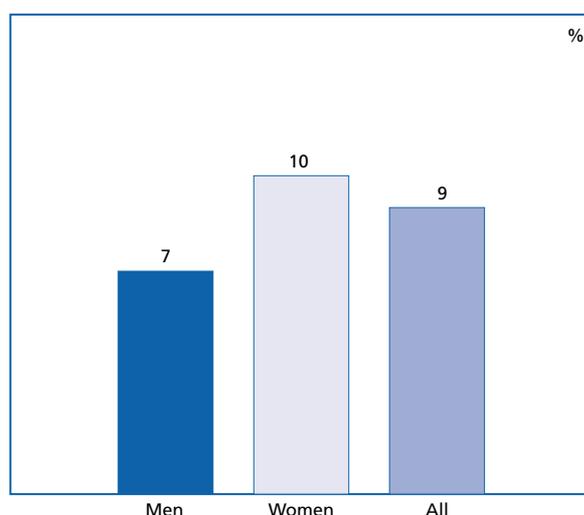
Source: Paoli and Merllié (2001)

This general trend is fully confirmed and further specified by national studies. Table 1, showing the distribution of bullying victims by gender in several European countries, reveals that in all such countries, with only two exceptions, women are subject to more bullying/mobbing than men. How much this data is an expression of objective situations or individual perceptions/attitudes is a matter for discussion.

In a recent cross-sectional survey-study covering 1,000 members of SEFE (a Finnish nationwide professional organisation for employees with a university degree in business studies), more women reported being victims of victimisation than men (11.6% compared to 5%). This included being ordered to do work clearly below their level of competence, being required to carry out tasks outside their job description and being excluded or ignored.

Table 1   Gender distribution of bullying victims

Country	Reference	Men %	Women %	Sample n
Austria	Niedl, 1995 (hospital)	37	63	98
	Niedl, 1995 (research institute)	18	82	11
Denmark	Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002	9	91	118
Finland	Björkqvist *et al*, 1994	39	61	70
	Salin, 2001	33	67	6
	Vartia, 1993	33	67	95
	Vartia and Hyyti, 2002	86	14	145
	Kivimäki *et al*, 2000	12	88	302
	Nuutinen *et al*, 1999	35	65	84
Germany	Zapf, 1999b (Bielefeld study)	35	65	99
	Zapf, 1999b (DAG study)	32	68	56
	Dick and Dulz, 1994	26	74	200
	Zapf, 1999b (Gießen study)	30	70	50
	Halama and Möckel, 1995	25	75	183
	Zapf, 1999b (Konstanz study)	44	56	86
	Mackensen von Astfeld, 2000	41	59	115
	Zapf *et al*, 1996b	38	62	183
Ireland	O'Moore *et al*, 1998	30	70	30
Italy	Ege, 1998	51	49	51
Norway	Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996	46	54	96
	Matthiesen and Einarsen, 2001	23	77	85
Sweden	Leymann and Gustafsson, 1996	31	69	64
	Leymann and Tallgren, 1990	50	50	24
	Leymann, 1992	45	55	85
Switzerland	Holzen Beusch *et al* (in press)	32	68	28
United Kingdom	Rayner, 1997	53	47	581
	Quine, 1999	18	82	418
	Hoel and Cooper, 2000	48	52	553

Source: Zapf *et al* (2003)

Commenting on these results, the researcher (Salin, 2002) noted that there might be several plausible explanations for why women are over-represented in those reporting bullying. One possible explanation is that women are actually subjected to negative acts more often than men. However, it is also possible that women are more sensitive to bullying and less hesitant than men to label themselves as bullied. The fact that men typically emphasised the role and responsibility of the victims, whereas women typically explained bullying by way of perpetrator characteristics or group dynamics, may also be associated with a lower willingness among men to label themselves as bullied. The higher prevalence rates reported by women could thus be seen as the result of an interaction between both higher actual exposure rates to negative behaviours and less reluctance to classify these experiences as bullying.

It must also be said that the composition of the sample can affect the significance of data. Looking at Niedl (1995), Björkqvist *et al* (1994) and Nuutinen *et al* (1999) in Table 1, women appear more often among the victims even when the composition of the sample is considered. However, in most other samples (such as Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996; Kivimäki *et al*, 2000; Leymann, 1992; Leymann and Tallgren, 1990; Niedl, 1995; Rayner, 1997; Vartia, 1993), the men/women ratio of the victims corresponds to the respective ratio in the overall sample. The percentage indicated must be therefore 'weighted' against the composition of the sample and adjusted accordingly (Zapf *et al*, 2003).

High-risk occupations

A further explanation for the likelihood of different genders to be the victims of workplace violence can be explained in terms of the numbers working in high-risk occupations. A large female workforce is concentrated in many of these occupations, particularly as teachers, social workers, nurses and other healthcare workers, as well as in banks and shops (*see Figure 3*).

Figure 3   Occupations at risk, Sweden
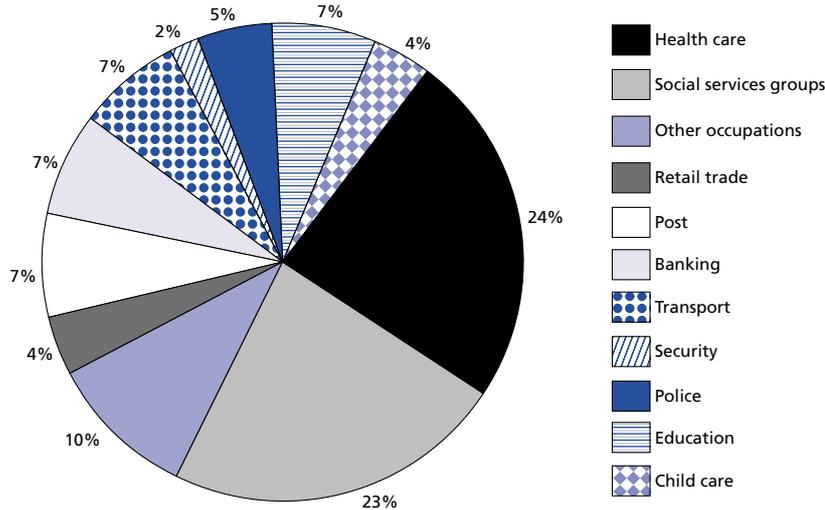
Source: Based on ILO data, adapted by Nordin (1993)

Segregation and vulnerability

Another contributory factor to the problem is the continued segregation of women in precarious employment, with low paid and low status jobs, while men predominate in more permanent, better paid, higher status jobs and supervisory positions.

The *Third European survey on working conditions 2000* confirms the importance of gender segregation in the EU (Paoli and Merllié, 2001). For example, 51% of women reported a man as their boss in 1995 against only 7% of men reporting a woman as their boss in 2000. Even in occupations dominated by women (such as clerical and sales/service jobs), men are more likely to be in a hierarchical position (68% of clerks and 55% of sales/service workers have a male boss). Men are also more likely to have people under their supervision (24%) than women (13%).

A higher proportion of women than men also work in precarious forms of employment in the EU. Research has started to show a link between precarious work, gender and violence in the workplace. For example, in Spain, a national survey conducted in April 2000 by the Secreteria confederal de la mujer de Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO's Confederal Secretariat for Women) indicates that while sexual harassment amounts to 18.5% for all working women, where women are working without a regular contract of employment up to 27.1% report sexual harassment (CC.OO., 2000).

As shown in Figure 4, the exposure to sexual harassment for women in EU workplaces is above twice the average for the whole population, as is that of workers with a precarious status. The exposure to sexual harassment is even higher for young women and workers in the service sector.

Although these percentages cannot be simply added to one another, it is evident that a young woman on a short-term job in the hotel and catering sector can be at special risk of violence.

Figure 4   Exposure of employees to sexual harassment
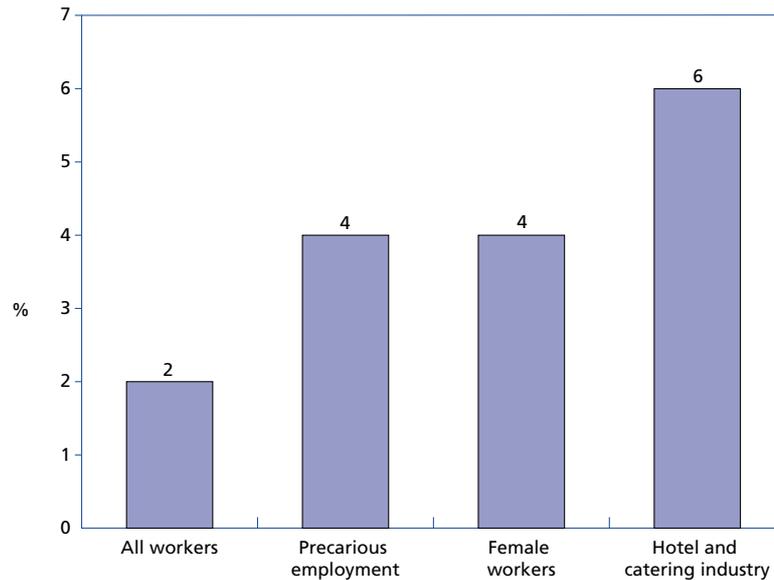
Source: Paoli and Merllié (2001)

Sexual offences

The above data on the special exposure of women to sexual harassment is fully confirmed by national studies, although the percentages reported are usually substantially higher. This difference in the reported levels of exposure to sexual harassment may be a reflection of the dimension and composition of the sample, the type of questions administered and, most important, their significance and perception in various national contexts.

Many national surveys have found that anything between 40% and over 90% of the women questioned have suffered some form of sexual harassment during the course of their working lives. The European Commission (1998) reports as follows:

■ High incidence of sexual harassment has been identified in national surveys carried out in Austria, Germany and Luxembourg, and in branch studies in Austria, Germany, Norway and the UK. These studies find exposure is recorded between 70% and 90%.

■ Medium incidence rate of 25% – 60% has been identified in national Dutch, Finnish and UK studies, as well as in most branch studies from the various countries.

■ Low incidence rate of 2% – 25% has been identified in national and branch studies from Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the Netherlands.

Recent studies help complete this picture:

■ A study of workers in a German call centre found that 75% of female employees had experienced sexually harassing telephone calls (Sczesny and Stahlberg, 2000).

- A survey by the Spanish Comisiones Obreras, based on a stratified sample of 1,000 workers, showed that 18% of women, compared to 9% of men, had experienced sexual harassment during their lives (CC.OO., 2000).

- 2% of women, as compared to 1% of men, reported having been sexually harassed in the last 12 months (Statistiska Centralbyrån/Statistics Sweden, 1999).

- A Danish national work environment cohort study found a drop in sexual harassment from 1995 to 2000, with 1.7% currently subject to sexual harassment. However, as the question asked at the two points of measurement were not entirely identical, it is impossible to conclude that the figure is really falling (Høgh, 2002).

It is noteworthy that when sexual harassment has been measured by means of single questions in larger household surveys, the incidence rate appears to be substantially lower than when measured by means of surveys particularly targeting the issue of sexual harassment.

Despite their importance, the above figures may disclose only part of the reality. In the area of sexual offences, perceptions, understanding and cultural differences play a major role. Different sensitivity to such a delicate issue in different contexts may also contribute distortions in reporting, leading to either over-reporting or under-reporting. In some countries, high sensitivity to, or awareness of, the problem may correspond to high rates of victimisation reported, thus 'penalising' such countries compared to other countries where sensitivity and awareness are lower.

In addition, many forms of workplace violence do not currently find their way into the official records of the police, employers or other authorities in most countries. This lack of reporting may be influenced by a number of factors and many workers, in particular women, may feel constrained to remain silent about their victimisation because of fear of reprisals being taken against them, including the possibility of losing their job. Alternatively, a lack of trust in those bodies, or a belief that there is little they could do to provide any real redress, may also cause under-reporting (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000).

Although it is overwhelmingly women who experience sexual harassment, it is not exclusive to women. Men also experience such harassment, sometimes in a substantial way, as research is progressively showing. For example, in the report compiled for the European Commission (1998) on *Sexual Harassment in the workplace in the European Union*, the UK figures, although based on a very small sample, reveal that sexual harassment among male healthcare workers was reported at 51% (*see Table 7, Chapter 4*). Other research has found similar evidence. A recent study from Portugal shows that men in a health centre were more frequently victims of sexual harassment than women, which helps to highlight the danger of stereotypes (Antunes *et al*, 2002).

A study on sexual harassment in the health and social services sector was conducted in 1996 by the Social Science Research Institute of the University of Iceland. As shown in Table 2, the results of the 'male and female exposure to sexual harassment' indicate how, depending on the type of question, percentages would change — sometimes showing a prevalence of victimisation for women, or similar levels of victimisation for men and women, or even more victimisation of men compared to women.

Table 2   Results of the 'Violence against nurses' study, Iceland 1996

Question/Sample (n)	Men			Women		
	'No'	'Yes'	Sample (n)	'No'	'Yes'	Sample (n)
Have you experienced verbal sexual harassment in your work for the past 6 months? (n = 785)	93.1%	6.9%	101	92.8%	7.2%	684
Have you ever been verbally sexually harassed in your work? (n = 767)	80.8%	19.2%	99	79.8%	20.2%	668
Have you experienced physical sexual harassment in your work for the past 6 months? (n = 786)	98%	2%	102	93.4%	6.6%	684
Have you ever been physically sexually harassed in your work? (n = 772)	86%	14%	100	79.8%	20.2%	672
Have you ever experienced rape or rape attempt in your work? (n = 771)	98%	2%	100	99.6%	0.4%	671

Source: University of Iceland (1996)

Sexual orientation

While sexual harassment, and more recently mobbing/bullying, has received considerable attention in the workplace, harassment on the grounds of sexuality is still largely a taboo (Ishmael, 1999). Moreover, although discrimination appears to be the main problem facing other minority groups, harassment seems to be more problematic for lesbians and gays. Part of the problem also appears to be the 'invisibility of gayness'. The fact that many gays and lesbians choose to hide their sexuality from their work colleagues combines with harassment and discrimination to keep the problem underground, increasing their vulnerability.

Little information is available about the experience of lesbians and gays at work. However, what is available demonstrates that lesbians, gays and bisexuals represent vulnerable groups in the workplace.

■ In one of the largest European studies on harassment of gays and lesbians ever undertaken, the British campaigning group Stonewall reported that 52% of lesbians and gays had been harassed at work due to their sexuality (Stonewall, 1993). The most commonly encountered forms of harassment reported were jokes or teasing (79%), homophobic abuse (51%), aggressive questions (41%), threats (14%), other (17%). Among the 'other' group, the most frequently experienced acts were isolation and being ignored, followed by sexual harassment, gossiping and false accusations.

■ A more recent British study of 450 lesbian and gay trade union members confirms these findings, with 44% reporting that they had suffered discrimination at work related to their sexuality (TUC, 2000). This study concludes that lesbian and gay shop floor workers, teachers and doctors were all vulnerable to harassment.

■ Harassment was also the single biggest problem for gays and lesbians who contacted the UK-based advice service for Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights (LAGER, 2002). LAGER reported that the employer or a manager was involved in 3 out of 4 cases of harassment on the grounds of sexuality. In most cases, the person seeking advice has been dismissed or suspended or forced to leave; only a few had taken out a grievance.

■ In Sweden, a survey of 650 lesbians, bisexuals and gays revealed that 27% had been harassed at work (ILGA – Europe, 2002a).

■ Three German surveys of violence against lesbians reported that 98% had experienced verbal abuse, 44% sexual abuse and 24% physical attack (ILGA – Europe, 2002b).

The problem is now specifically addressed by Directive 2000/787/EC, which establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. The Directive expressly contemplates, for the first time, sexual orientation (Art. 1) and prohibits any form of direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Art. 2.1). Harassment — *any unwanted conduct having the purpose or the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment* — is considered as a form of discrimination (Art. 2.1).

Racial harassment

The issue of racial discrimination is emerging as a high priority within the European Union. Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000, implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment between Persons Irrespective of Racial or Ethnic Origin, although not exclusively targeted at the workplace, sets the scene for important changes to follow in relation to the adaptation of national legislations to the new Directive, due by July 2003.

Studies from the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia show that further action is needed in the Member States to make that adaptation effective (EUMC, 2001-2002). The EU bodies are strongly promoting such action. In its decision of November 2000, the Council established a Community Action Programme 2001-2006 (2000/750/EC) to combat discrimination, while the Commission in its Communication of June 2001 (COM (2001) 291 final) explicitly recommended that action be targeted to eliminate racial discrimination in employment:

> *All states should take practical measures to eradicate racial discrimination and to promote equal treatment in employment and to promote the integration of discriminated groups, in particular by supporting innovative action by public authorities, social partners and civil society.*

In line with this message and under the pressure of a problem that is becoming a major one in all Member States, initiatives in this area are multiplying:

■ in 2001, a reform of the Works Constitution Act was approved in Germany, which provided for an extension of the areas of intervention of the works councils to expressly tackle xenophobia and racism in the workplace (EIRO, 2001a);

■ in July 2002, Norway issued a plan of action against racism and ethnic discrimination, which aims to combat racism and ethnic discrimination in all areas, including working life (EIRO, 2002);

■ in 2000, the Portuguese government announced a set of measures to combat clandestine work and thereby improve working conditions for immigrant workers and help combat racism and xenophobia (EIRO, 2000);

■ in Ireland in 2001, the Equality Authority promoted an 'Anti-racism in the Workplace Week', in conjunction with the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the Construction Industry Federation (CIF). The purpose of the anti-racism week was to give employers, trade unions and workers the opportunity to focus attention on the issue of racism at the workplace (EIRO, 2001b).

Despite these important efforts to fight discrimination in the EU, attention for and understanding of racial harassment at work is far from being satisfactory. The issue is apparently loaded with preconceptions and wrong assumptions. There is an underlying fear surrounding racism, which explains the unwillingness to acknowledge that it exists — an acknowledgement that is necessary in order to combat it effectively in the workplace.

Racial harassment is sometimes viewed as an emotive issue, which people are not comfortable with or willing to discuss for fear of being blamed for its existence. It is also a political issue and because of this, policies too often cloud the social aspects, creating an area of taboo.

Dealing with sexual harassment at the workplace is, in one sense, easier to cope with. This is because there is a wider level of awareness about gender issues and most people have, or know of others who have, had first-hand experience of sex discrimination. In contrast, most people's experience of racial harassment comes second- or third-hand by the perpetuation of assumptions and myths. This blocks practical development around solutions and maintains it as a taboo subject, giving assumptions and stereotypes more power than they deserve (Ishmael, 1999).

The real dimension of racial harassment is also largely unknown. The *Third European survey on working conditions 2000* indicates that the percentage of ethnic discrimination in the workplace across Europe is 1%, with no variation in respect of the second survey carried out in 1995.

However, when in 2000 the UK Department of Health carried out a major survey of racial harassment in the health sector (with 495 workers and 52 NHS trusts, including acute, community, mental health and combined trusts), much higher figures emerged (Department of Health, UK, 2000a). It was found that 46.2% of participants in the survey had experienced racial harassment in the previous 12 months; 37.9% had witnessed racial harassment; and 57.7% had either experienced or witnessed racial harassment. Staff in front-line jobs were 1.5 times more likely to have experienced racial harassment than others. When racial harassment was considered in respect of the type of perpetrator and type of offence, figures become even more significant, showing the complex nature of the problem and the risks of generalisation (*see Tables 3-5*).

Table 3   Racial harassment against black staff by patients

Behaviour	Number of NHS Trusts	Percentage of NHS Trusts
Verbal abuse by patients	42	79.2
Refusing care or treatment	27	50.9
Being ignored or excluded	19	35.8
Verbal abuse from relatives	17	32.1
Indirect or subtle discrimination or abuse	16	30.2
Physical aggression	15	28.3
Malicious complaints	12	22.6
Stereotyping	9	17.0
Criticism and/or humiliation	8	15.1

Source: Department of Health, UK (2000a)

Table 4   Racial harassment by colleagues of black staff

Behaviour	Number of NHS Trusts	Percentage of NHS Trusts
Verbal abuse by colleagues	37	69.8
Being ignored or excluded	28	52.8
Collusion with racist behaviour by patients or members of the public	15	28.3
Stereotyping	14	26.4
Unjustified criticism	13	24.5
Denial of authority	11	20.8
Malicious complaints	10	18.9
Jokes	9	17.0
Having to prove themselves	8	15.1
Victimisation	7	13.2
Inter-racial tension	3	5.7
Misinterpreting behaviour	1	1.9

Source: Department of Health, UK (2000a)

Table 5   Racial harassment by management of black staff

Behaviour	Number of NHS Trusts	Percentage of NHS Trusts
Lack of training and/or development opportunities	43	81.1
Unfair work allocation	17	32.1
Unfair criticism	15	28.3
Being ignored or excluded	14	26.4
Unequal treatment of black staff	13	24.5
Inappropriate management style	12	22.6
Intimidation	11	20.8
Stereotyping	9	17.0
Unfair performance review	8	15.1
Verbal abuse	8	15.1
Having to prove themselves	6	11.3
Unfair pay rises/remuneration	3	5.7
Lack of equal opportunities in partner organisations	2	3.8
Abuse of equal opportunities monitoring	2	3.8
Jokes	2	3.8
Physical aggression	1	1.9
Restricting the number of black staff in mixed teams	1	1.9

Source: Department of Health, UK (2000a)

This is a specialist area and one in which further specific research is greatly needed. Different levels of vulnerability will have to be addressed to understand how racial and sexual harassment manifest themselves and to prioritise the allocation of often limited resources to those areas where they are more urgently needed.

Increasing vulnerability appears a key factor in this area. This concept is capable of cutting across traditional boundaries and stereotypes to offer a new understanding of violence based on the specific characteristics of workers and group of workers within their workplaces, rather than just on their sector of activity, occupation or sex. By re-assembling the information on workplace violence around the concept of vulnerability, the current picture of violence at work might be substantially reshaped and a more effective means of action offered to policy-makers and the interested parties within the EU.

Empirical evidence: Trends and patterns in the experience of violence and harassment

The growing interest in workplace violence has manifested itself in an increasing amount of data and information regarding its prevalence and expressions. In many EU countries, incidences of physical violence are incorporated into national statistics of occupational accidents, in line with national reporting systems and criteria. This helps to keep the issue in the public eye. However, within the wider field of workplace violence, the public attitude to, and interest in, particular forms of violence has somewhat shifted. Thus, while the late 1980s and early '90s saw an upsurge in the number of surveys undertaken into the issue of sexual harassment, the recent focus has been on the issue of generalised harassment, such as intimidation, mobbing and bullying.

The aim of this discussion is to establish the size and scale of workplace violence and how, and to what extent, the picture may be changing. To meet this aim, data from recent research will be presented and assessed. However, to reach any conclusion, issues such as comparability and quality of data, as well as the opportunity for comparison, need to be addressed. For the purposes of overview and clarity, the empirical evidence for different forms of violence is presented separately.

Comparability of data

In order for any data comparison to make full sense, one has to be aware of the large discrepancies between studies with regard to the following issues:

- *Scope of definition of violence*: Broad definitions of violence may impact on overall figures by, for example, incorporating violence from perpetrators external as well as internal to the organisation.

- *Study population*: As the risk of exposure to any form of violence may vary considerably between different populations, those populations considered must be clearly defined.

- *Measurement and operationalisation of concepts*: For psychological violence, two distinct approaches are identified. The first of these, the so-called 'labelling' approach, establishes prevalence rates by providing respondents with a definition of the problem; those who consider their experience within a certain time scale to fit the definition will be considered to be targets or victims. In contrast, the second approach involves respondents being presented with a list or inventory of behaviours associated with the phenomenon under consideration and a predefined set of criteria with respect to time scale; the number and frequency of behaviours encountered will then decide whether respondents will be considered as being victimised. This distinction is important since the latter method consistently produces substantially higher prevalence rates than the former (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001; Salin, 2001).

- *Time scale*: A distinction is often made between current experience (typically within the last 6 or 12 months) and experience over the period of an individual's career or working life.

- *Reporting and complaint practices*: In order to identify how serious and widespread the problem of violence actually is, effective reporting systems are essential. It is argued that, as long as national reporting systems are based on recording the outcomes of violent incidents and not the nature of the incident, vital information about the phenomenon is lost (Beale *et al*, 1995). To

get a realistic picture of the situation, national accident and injury statistics must be supplied with data from other sources, such as questionnaire and interview studies.

Where violence may be considered 'part of the job', employees may also be reluctant to take time off work, even if injured, with the result that the incident will fail to show up in violence statistics. This would be the case particularly where a strict system for controlling absenteeism may be in operation. Similarly, if our knowledge about various forms of harassment and psychological violence were to be based on the number of internal complaints filed within a specific time period, we are likely to seriously underestimate the real size of the problem since a number of factors may prevent employees from reporting an incident.

In many countries, experiences of harassment, in particular sexual harassment, may carry a stigma that often reflects badly on women. Thus, fear of being considered 'the guilty party' was emphasised in a Portuguese study (European Commission, 1998), which in effect could prevent women from seeking support among colleagues and family, as well as reporting their experience.

■ *Opportunity for comparison*: Strictly speaking, only studies using the same or at least similar methodologies are fully comparable. As a result, only a few studies provide comparable data across EU countries. These studies are especially valuable and are therefore granted extra attention within this report (*see Table 6*). Attention will also be paid to longitudinal studies, which may provide the most reliable information with regard to changing trends.

Physical violence — Evidence

A number of studies have been undertaken to assess the level of risk of violence within EU countries. Some of these studies are listed in Table 6.

Table 6 Studies of physical violence in EU countries

Country	Sample	N	Method	Risk of violence	Reference
Denmark	National representative sample of union members	1,989	Survey	7% (within last 12 months)	FTF, 2001
	National representative sample	4,000	Household survey	7.5%	Høgh and Dofradottir, 2001
Finland	National representative sample		Survey	5% of workers	Saarela, 2002
	National representative sample	2,972	Survey	14% of workers	Haapaniemi and Kinnunen, 1997
	Representative sample of teachers	2,038	Survey	9% victims of violence by pupils	Hakanen, 2002
Sweden	Random national sample	14,234	Survey	14% reporting violence/threats: 17% women, 10% men	Statistiska Centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden), 1999
	Random sample of nurses	720	Survey (comparative study)	59% 60% several times	Nolan *et al*, 2001
Norway	Representative sample of social workers	854	Survey	21%	Skarpaas and Hetle, 1996
United Kingdom	National representative sample	19,411	Household survey	2.5% report at least one incident (1.2% physically assaulted, 1.4% threatened)	British Crime Survey, 2000
	Random sample of nurses	720	Survey (comparative study)	71% 60% several times	Nolan *et al*, 2001
	Retail outlets	17,000	Member survey	5% of outlets	British Retail Consortium, 1999/2000

Key features of physical violence

■ *Levels of victimisation*: The figures in Table 6 suggest a considerable discrepancy in risk of exposure to physical violence between countries. However, the fact that figures also vary greatly between different surveys undertaken in the same country suggests that care must be taken when reaching conclusions.

■ *Victim characteristics*:
  – *Sex* — Most studies based on national samples suggest that men and women were exposed to violence in equal numbers. Within this picture, however, some studies have identified a significant increase in cases of reported violence, with a Finnish national study revealing a threefold increase in the number of reported incidents of violence for women (Haapaniemi and Kinnunen, 1997). A number of explanations may account for these findings, such as changes in reporting habits. However, as suggested earlier, there are substantial discrepancies within particular sectors or occupations.
  – *Age* — Younger workers were more at risk than older workers.

■ *High-risk occupations*: A number of studies have identified occupational groups that are particularly at risk of physical violence (see, for example, Høgh and Dofradottir, 2001). These include:
  – police officers;
  – healthcare workers (e.g. nurses);
  – social workers;
  – taxi drivers and public transport drivers;
  – hotel and catering employees;
  – teachers;
  – security personnel;
  – retail employees; and
  – employees in insurance and pension funds.

It is important to note, however, that identification of high-risk groups depends on whether risk is measured entirely on the basis of violence from the public (such as the British Crime Survey) or includes violence from supervisors and co-workers.

■ *Fear and concern about violence*: Where fear about victimisation has been measured, it has been found that a substantially higher number of people live with the fear that they could be potential targets of violence as compared to those who have actually experienced violence. According to the British Crime Survey (2000), 15% of the population reported being 'very worried' or 'fairly worried' about potential threats from a member of the public. Similarly, the figure for physical assaults was 12% (Budd, 2001). Levels of concern about violence were also found to be largely equivalent to actual risk of violence levels, with public transport workers and nurses reporting to being most worried.

Trends in levels of physical violence

To identify trends in the development of workplace violence, we have identified a few examples from authoritative national studies in the UK, Denmark and Finland. These studies clearly demonstrate the complex nature of the issues.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) is one of the most frequently quoted sources of data with respect to workplace violence (Budd, 2001). The BCS is a large nationally representative household survey

undertaken bi-annually and therefore represents an important source of information when determining trends. The definition of 'violence' in the survey incorporates all physical assaults and threats whilst working with members of the public.

According to the BCS, 1.3 million incidents of violence at work took place in England and Wales in 1999, approximately equally distributed between assaults and threats. This represents an increase of 5% when compared to the 1997 findings and to some extent a changing upward trend on previous measurements. By contrast, in the same period there was a fall in the risk of victimisation, with the number of victims declining since 1997 (*see Figure 5*).

Figure 5   Violence at work, UK

Percentage of workers victimised once or more
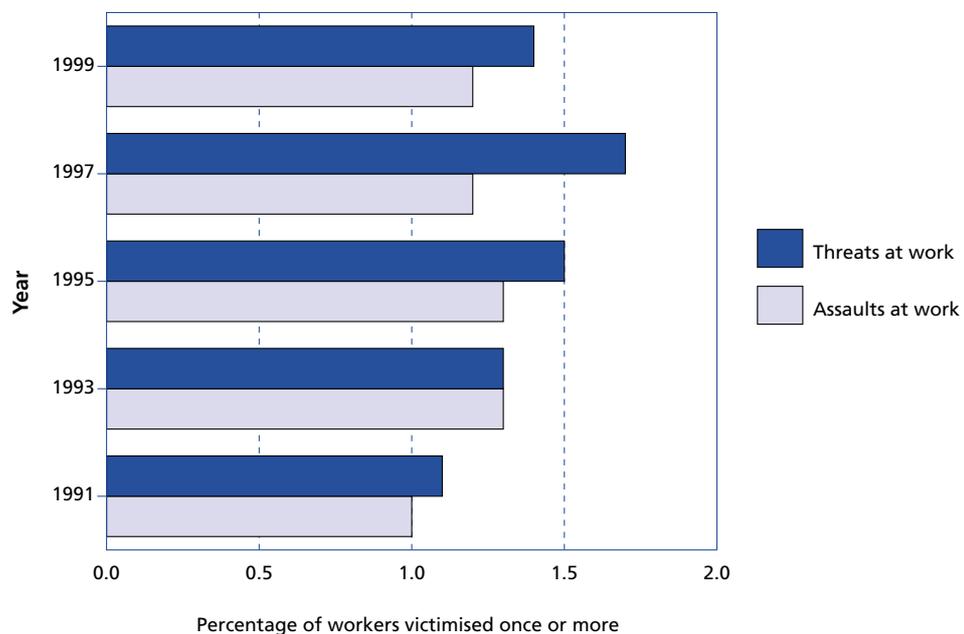
Source: Budd (2001)

These apparently contradictory findings are explained by a rise in multiple victimisation, with 26% of victims experiencing repeated incidents in 1999, up 4% from 1997. In total, 2.5% of the working population were exposed to one or more incidents of threat or physical violence.

The BCS data also suggests that in order to make any proper conclusions with regard to trends in levels of violence at work, a longer time-perspective is needed. Thus, although the figures in Figure 5 show a long-term rise in levels of victimisation, it may be too early to say whether the recent fall in risk can be sustained (Budd, 2001).

In a Danish longitudinal study of a national representative sample of more than 5,000 employees, the levels of physical violence appear to be quite stable, with 7.5% reporting experience of physical violence in 1995 as compared to 8% in 1990 (Høgh and Dofradottir, 2001). High levels of violence were consistently found for police officers, nurses and drivers of public transport. Recent trends suggest teachers are also highly at risk of violence.

Comparing differences in levels of physical violence in the EU

Around 2% (or 3 million people) are subjected to physical violence at work according to the *Third European survey on working conditions 2000* (Paoli and Merllié, 2001). The figures are based on face-to-face interviews with 21,000 employees. However, as Figure 6 shows, these figures vary substantially between countries, with highest levels of violence found for Sweden and the UK. By contrast, particularly low levels emerged for some of the southern European countries.

Figure 6   Workers subjected to physical violence over previous 12 months (%)
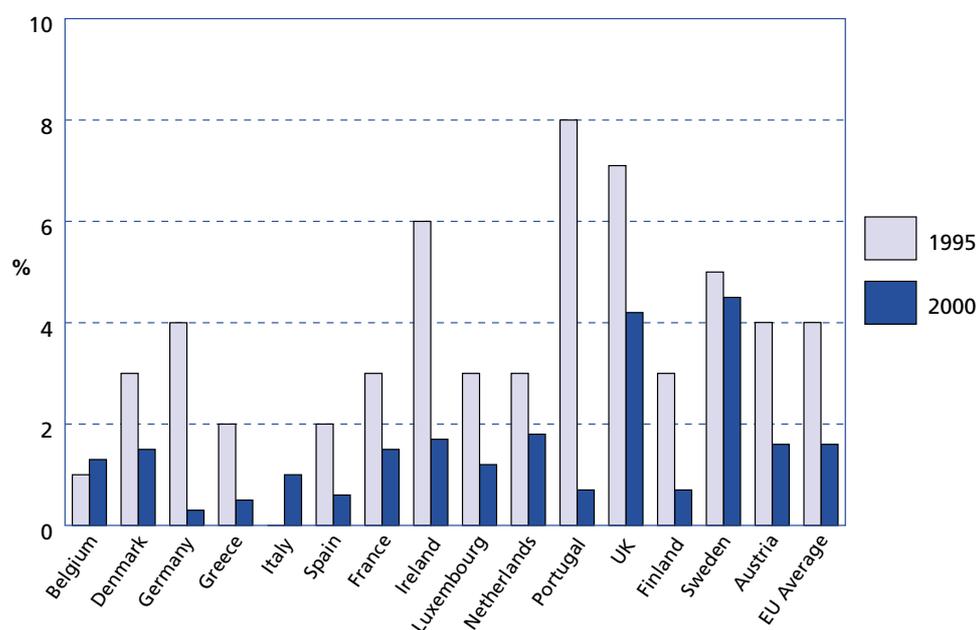
Sexual harassment — Evidence

A comprehensive report of sexual harassment in EU countries was compiled for the European Commission in 1998 (*see Table 7*). According to the report, between 30% – 50% of female employees have experienced some form of sexual harassment. When the particular type of harassment was considered, 10% – 26% were found to have experienced so-called *quid pro quo* sexual harassment and 1% – 6% severe forms of sexual harassment, such as assault or rape. The same study also concluded that, comparatively speaking, much fewer studies had been undertaken in southern European countries as opposed to northern Europe. (For a further discussion on sexual harassment, see Chapter 3.)

Intimidation and bullying — Evidence

There appears to have been a sharp rise in recent years in the number of surveys covering the issue of harassment and bullying. Moreover, compared with a decade ago when such studies were confined to Nordic countries, surveys of this nature have recently been conducted in most European countries, including Spain, Italy and Portugal. While some have focused on particular occupations, others have included a cross-section of the general population. New information about groups previously not surveyed has been revealed, including data on the armed forces (zur Mühlen *et al*, 2001) and professional dancers (Hoel and Cooper, 2000). The rise in the number of surveys undertaken may reflect the fact that the problem of bullying and harassment is still not fully appreciated by employers and policy-makers.

Table 7   Gender differences in harassment

Country	Harassment of women	Harassment of men
Austria	81% (national study) 73% (local government) 33% (several branches) 17% (training on the job)	
Belgium	29% (secretaries)	
Denmark	11% (national study) 3.1% (national study) 1.7% (national study)	
Finland	34% (11 occupational groups) 27% (national study on sexual life) 11% (university staff) [1] 17% (Finnish Parliament) 9% (SAK, several unions) 17% (union)	26% (11 occupational groups) 30% (national study sexual life) 11% (university staff) [1] 3% (SAK, several unions)
Germany	72% (national survey) 80% (local government) 30% (private sector) 50% at least (local government)	
Ireland	25% (civil service) 45% (Electricity Supply Board) 14% (retail sector)	1% (civil service) 5% (retail sector)
Luxembourg	78% - objective criteria (national study) 13% - subjective criteria (national study)	
Netherlands	32% (national study) 58% (several case studies) 54% (local government) 56% at least (police) 25% (secretaries) 13% (industrial office workers) 23% (lesbians, bisexual women)	27% (local government) [2]
Norway	90% (women magazine) 8% (several branches) 8% (labour union)	
Sweden	17% (national study) 2% (national study) 22% (health care) 53% (ambulance personnel) 30% (university hospital) 15% (university) 23% (wood industry) 27% (metro) 9% (social insurance office)	1% (national study) 14% (ambulance personnel) 4% (university) 4% (wood industry) 4% (social insurance office)
United Kingdom	54% (national study) 47% (temp. agency) 89% (health service) 90% (police)	approx. 9% (national study) 14% (temp. agency) 51% (health service) [3]

[1] This is an overall rate of both women and men.

[2] These are mainly indirect experiences, for example, as a witness to the sexual harassment of female colleagues.

[3] This result is based on a very small sample of 32 male respondents.

Source: European Commission (1998)

Prevalence of bullying

The prevalence of bullying varies greatly, with figures ranging from 1% at the lowest level to above 50% at the highest level, dependent upon the applied measurement strategy, occupation or sector, as well as country (*see Table 8 for an overview*). The highest figures normally relate to experience of bullying expanding over an individual's career.

Where bullying is measured by means of a precise definition and refers to a regular experience on a weekly basis, less than 5% of the population were found to be bullied. When we include experiences of occasional bullying, a figure of around 10% is often reached. By contrast, in cases where respondents were considered bullied if they had experienced one or more negative behaviours associated with bullying, figures of between more than 10% to nearly 40% are achieved (see, for example, Quine, 1999).

Table 8   European studies on the prevalence of bullying

Country	Reference	Target population	N	Findings
Austria	Niedl, 1995	Hospital employees	368	26%
		Research institute employees	63	8%
Denmark	Høgh and Dofradottir, 2001	Random sample	1,857	2%
	Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001	Students from the Royal Danish School of Educational Studies	99	2% / 14%
	Agervold, 2002	Hospital employees	236	3% / 16%
	FTF, 2001	Manufacturing company employees	224	4% / 8%
		Department store employees	215	1% / 25%
		Rural local authority, state agencies, social pedagogues	1,613	4%
		Trade union members		18%
Finland	Björkqvist *et al*, 1994	University employees	338	17%
	Salin, 2001	Random sample of business pros	385	9% / 24%
	Vartia, 1996	Local authority employees	949	10%
	Vartia and Hyyti, 2002	Prison officers	896	11% men; 17% women
	Haapaniemi and Kinunen, 1997 (Finnish Quality of Life Survey)	Random and representative sample	2,956	3%
	Kivimäki *et al*, 2000	Hospital employees		5%
Germany	Mackensen von Astfeld, 2000	Administrative employees	1,989	3%
	Meschkutat *et al*, 2002	Representative sample	1,317	3% - 6%
Ireland	O'Moore, 2000	Random national sample	1,009	17%
	HSA, 2001	Random national sample (telephone interviews)	5,252	7%
Netherlands	Hubert *et al*, 2001	Mixed production – office business	427	4%
	Hubert *et al*, 2001	Financial institution employees; stacked sample	3,011	1%
	Hubert and van Veldhoven, 2001	Mixed sample across 14 industrial sectors	66,764	2% *
Norway	Einarsen and Skogstad, 1996	14 different random sector-specific samples	7,787	9%
	Matthiesen *et al*, 1989	Nurses and assistant nurses	99	10.3%
		Teachers	84	6%
Spain	Piñuel y Zabala, 2002	Representative sample of general working population and representative sample of tourism sector	2,410	16%
Portugal	Cowie *et al*, 2000	Large multinational organisation	221	34%
Sweden	Leymann, 1992	Representative of employed except self-employed	2,438	4%
	Lindroth and Leymann, 1993	Nursery school teachers	230	6%
	Voss *et al*, 2001	Postal employees	3,470	8% for women
United Kingdom	Rayner, 1997	Part-time students	581	53%
	UNISON, 1997	Public sector union members	736	18%
	Quine, 1999	National Health Service employees	1,100	38%
	Cowie *et al*, 2000	International organisation employees	386	15%
	Hoel *et al*, 2001a	Nationwide representative sample	5,288	11%

Note: Where two percentages are given divided by a slash (/), the second figure refers to bullying at least weekly.
* Figure referring to mean of four items of aggressive and unpleasant situations often or always.
Source: Table adapted from Hoel *et al*, 1999; and Zapf *et al*, 2003

While a large number of studies on intimidation and bullying have been undertaken in northern European countries, very few have been conducted in southern Europe. Among the few exceptions is a recent Spanish study (Piñuel y Zabala, 2002), combining two samples — a broad sector-wide sample and a sample from the tourist sector (total n = 2,410). Some key findings from the study are:

- a total of 16% were found to be exposed to psychological violence. (In this case, psychological violence was measured as exposure to at least one negative behaviour associated with psychological violence for the last 6 months on a weekly or more frequent basis.) 45% had witnessed bullying taking place;

- according to the victims, the perpetrators were primarily bosses or managers (82%) or colleagues (16%);

- in 47% of cases, the violence had lasted more than one year and for 30% two years or more; and

- the most commonly reported behaviours were 'given meaningless work', 'given work below one's professional competencies', 'put under undue pressure' and 'systematically devaluing the effort of the person' (*authors' translation*).

Based on figures from the Portuguese General Inspectorate of Labour (Inspecção-Geral do Trabalho, 2001) concerning sanctions against enterprises due to breach of health and safety legislation, a total of 0.8% (57 out of 7,013) of cases were about 'moral harassment' or bullying. The Inspectorate refers to these cases as 'inactive occupations', where the victim or complainant was left without any role within the organisation, frequently without a desk, computer or other tools with which to undertake their work.

**Figure 7   Workers subjected to intimidation, by country (%)**
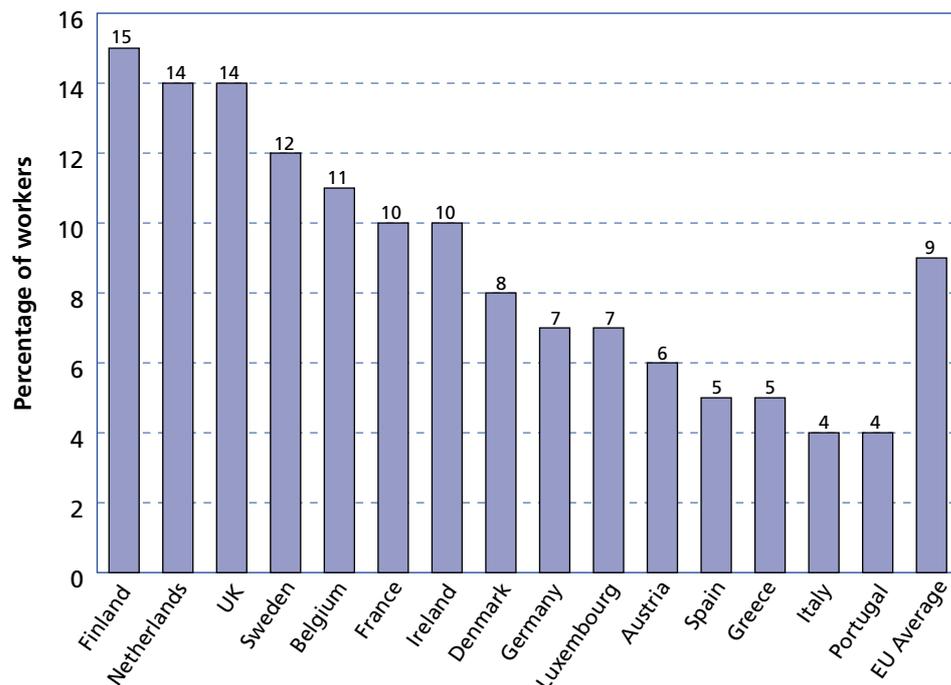
When risk of intimidation and bullying was compared between EU countries, the highest risk was found for Finland, the Netherlands and UK, whilst the lowest figures emerged for the Mediterranean countries (*see Figure 7*). However, different degrees of awareness about the issue may impact on figures.

Key features of psychological violence/bullying

Industry sector

The picture is inconsistent when it comes to establishing which industry sectors or occupations are most at risk of psychological violence and bullying. However, a recent review of European surveys of bullying identified several high-risk occupations (*see Figure 8*).

Figure 8   Workers subjected to intimidation, by sector (%)
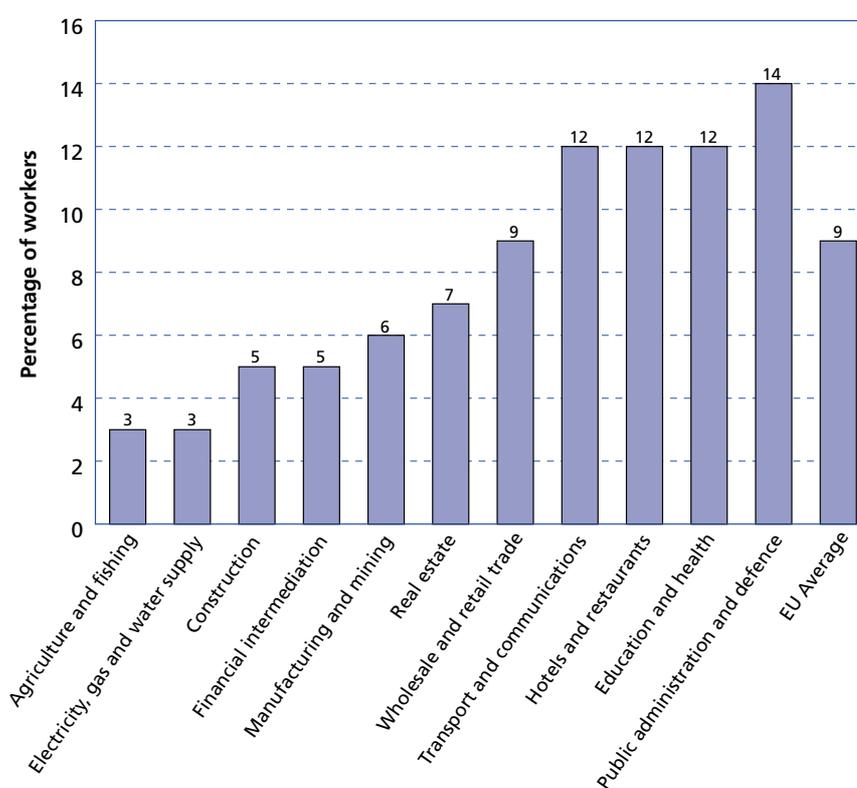
Overall, there appears to be a higher risk of bullying within the public sector than within the private. To explain this finding, it has been argued that the use of tenure or 'job for life' within the public sector provides less room for mobility, with fewer people leaving as a result of a conflict situation (Zapf *et al*, 2003). It is also argued that many of the jobs associated with a high risk of bullying also involve a large degree of emotional labour. In such circumstances, employees may be more inclined to greater personal openness and involvement in their relationship with colleagues as well as clients, possibly making them more vulnerable to psychological abuse.

These findings correspond well to those in the *Third European survey of working conditions 2000* (Paoli and Merllié, 2001).

Duration of the bullying

Incidents of bullying appear to last for a relatively long time, with a majority of studies reporting an exposure time of more than 12 months. In an Irish national study of bullying, victims were on average bullied for 3.4 years. No fewer than 30% of victims in a Finnish study of local authority employees reported an exposure time of 5 years or more (Vartia, 1996). The equivalent figure for a Spanish study was 15% (Piñuel y Zabala, 2002).

Victim characteristics

No clear picture has emerged for the relationship between age and bullying, although in most cases younger people reported higher levels of bullying than older ones. However, there seems to be more agreement about the fact that younger people are exposed to more negative behaviour than their older colleagues.

Organisational level

This refers to the formal position someone is occupying within the organisational hierarchy, such as a worker, a supervisor or a manager. Due to the importance of power in bullying relationships, one would intuitively believe that those at the lower end of the organisational hierarchy would more commonly report bullying. However, recent research shows that bullying may be equally common among supervisors and managers. Women in management positions are substantially more likely to have been bullied than their male counterparts (Hoel *et al*, 2001a).

Organisational level of perpetrator

Bullying can take place between subordinates and one or more persons in a superior position, as well as between colleagues. High levels of bullying from managers were reported in studies undertaken in the UK, Ireland, Austria and Italy (75% and above). By contrast, in Finland, Germany and Portugal, colleagues were most frequently reported as perpetrators (70% and above).

Comparing levels of exposure to physical violence, intimidation and sexual harassment in EU countries

The majority of studies of workplace violence have tended to focus on one aspect of violence in particular, for example, physical violence or sexual harassment. Only a few provide a comparison of exposure to different forms of violence (*see Figure 9*). In general, levels of psychological violence were found to be substantially higher than physical violence. Among types of psychological violence, bullying and intimidation appear to be more prevalent than sexual harassment or other forms of harassment. For example, in a Danish study of public sector employees, 7% reported experience of physical violence, while the figure for psychological violence was 18% (FTF, 2001).

In a Portuguese study of healthcare workers from a hospital (where n = 270) and a care centre (n = 221), exposure to different categories of violence was assessed (Antunes *et al*, 2002). Verbal harassment was by far the most frequent type of violence encountered, followed by moral pressure (bullying). Substantially fewer reported discrimination, physical violence and sexual harassment.

A less marked difference was found in a Finnish study of teachers (n = 2,038), 11% of whom reported having been bullied. The comparable figure for exposure to physical violence from pupils was 9%, of whom 17% had experienced violence several times (*personal communication from Hakanen, 2002*).

These findings appear to be consistent with the results of the *Second (1995)* and *Third (2000) European survey of working conditions* (Paoli and Merllié, 1996 and 2001), as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9   Trends in violence at work in EU countries (%)
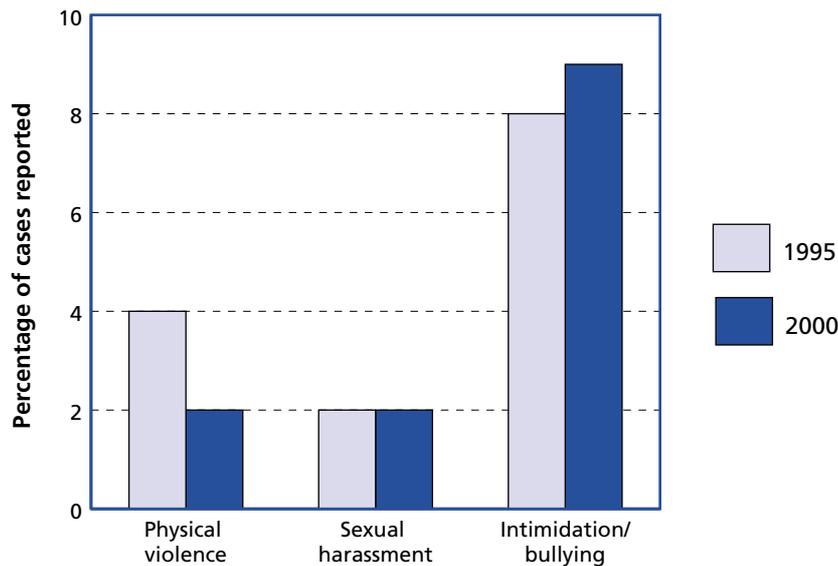
By contrast, in a study of members of the Royal College of Nursing (Ball and Pike, 2001), 17% reported having been bullied within the last 12 months, while 34% indicated that they had been harassed or assaulted by a client or a relative. The latter example suggests that the picture may vary with occupation and that one should be careful in making too firm a conclusion with respect to the relative risk of different forms of violence.

Whatever the exact level, whilst physical violence and sexual harassment appear to have been relatively stable in recent years, levels of psychological violence, such as bullying and intimidation, appear to be on the increase. However, it is too early to say whether this represents a real increase or whether the rise is associated with greater awareness of the phenomenon. It may also be the case that different forms of psychological violence (and in some cases physical violence) may previously have been tolerated as 'part of the job' and thus not perceived as acts of violence, a fact which, to a lesser extent, may be true today.

Regulatory instruments *5*

The situation in Europe concerning the regulation of workplace violence is extremely varied and constantly changing. Within Europe, the spectrum of regulatory options has been covered. In some countries, there is specific legislation to tackle the problem, while elsewhere existing criminal, civil, environmental and health and safety legislation is considered sufficient to deal with it. At the other end of the regulatory spectrum, some European countries tackle the problem with non-legislative measures, such as codes of practice, regulations and collective agreements, while other countries have only made initial efforts to regulate workplace violence.

According to Di Martino (2002c and 2002d), these different approaches to regulating and controlling the problems of workplace violence are a reflection of:

■ different perceptions and interpretations of workplace violence in European countries due to different cultural influences;

■ options available for tackling the increasing challenge of workplace violence, for example, using existing regulations or developing new regulatory instruments; and

■ different strategies as to the type of instruments to be used, favouring the progressive approach and flexibility of non-legislative ones or tackling the problem with straightforward legislation.

When new regulatory instruments are introduced, they often co-exist with previous regulations, either directly or indirectly relevant to workplace violence. This can create loopholes among different bodies and authorities with jurisdiction in areas governed by a variety of employment law, ranging from industrial relations to health. Harmonising these different regulations and ensuring that all relevant professionals are competent in the recognition and interpretation of any new regulations on workplace violence represents a major challenge.

Within this dynamic situation, the EU plays an increasingly significant role. New policy documents, recommendations and directives have addressed important aspects of workplace violence, setting the scene for further developments in this area in EU countries.

European Directives

The new Article 13 in the EC Treaty, introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty, enables the Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Within the scope of Art. 13, two directives have been adopted in 2000 and 2002 addressing sexual harassment and racial harassment, respectively:

■ Council Directive 2000/43/EC (June 2000) implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; and

■ June 2002 Directive amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of executing the principle of equal access for men and women to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.

These directives include new definitions of racial and sexual harassment applicable across Europe, provide directions on the effective enforcement of the law and sanctioning, and make clear the responsibility of Member States to designate a body or bodies to promote the work of the directives.

While the first directive applies to all situations of racial harassment, the second deals specifically, among others, with sexual harassment at work. This is an area where the EU bodies have concentrated their efforts for many years.

A code of practice on *Measures to combat Sexual Harassment* had been issued in 1992 by the European Commission and, as recently as 2001, the European Parliament had stressed the need for interventions tackling harassment in the workplace to be made a priority, particularly bullying and sexual harassment.

The European Parliament's 'Resolution on Harassment at the Workplace 2001/2339 (INI)' includes the following:

> *calls on the Member States, with a view to counteracting bullying and sexual harassment at work, to review and, if appropriate, to supplement their existing legislation and to review and standardise the definition of bullying;*
>
> *urges the Commission to consider a clarification or extension of the scope of the framework directive on health and safety at work or, alternatively, the drafting of a new framework directive as a legal instrument to combat bullying and as a means of ensuring respect for the worker's human dignity, privacy and integrity; emphasizes in this connection the importance of systematic work on health and safety and of preventive action;*

The new directive on sexual harassment, to be enacted in the Member States by 2005, will greatly change the existing panorama of national legislations in this area. Currently, only a few countries have specific sexual harassment laws, while in the majority of countries protection is granted under equal employment opportunity laws as well as labour, tort and criminal laws. Extensive jurisprudence and the provisions of collective agreements supplement these. Table 9 lists the essential relevant legislation in this area in the EU Member States:

Table 9   Legislation in EU Member States on sexual harassment

Austria	Federal Act to amend the Equality of Treatment Act, N° 44, 1998
Belgium	Loi du 11 juin 2002 'relating to protection from violence, moral harassment (bullying) and sexual harassment at the workplace'
Denmark	Equal Treatment for Men and Women Act, 1977
Finland	Act on equality between men and women, as amended by law 206/1995 of 17 February 1995
France	Loi 2002-73 of 17 January 2002 on social modernisation
Germany	Act to protect employees from sexual harassment at work, 24 June 1994
Greece	Law 1414.30.01.84 on Equality
Ireland	Employment Equality Act, 1998; Unfair Dismissals Act, 1977
Italy	Law 125/91 on Equal Opportunities and Positive Action
Luxembourg	Sexual Harassment Act of April 2000
Netherlands	Act of 2 March 1994 laying down general rules for the protection against discrimination; Act of 29 June 1994 to amend the Working Environment Act in connection with sexual intimidation and aggression and violence
Portugal	Lei n° 61/91 which guarantees adequate protection for female victims of violence
Spain	Ley orgánica n° 11/1999 modifying the Penal Code; Ley orgánica n° 10/1995 of the Penal Code
Sweden	Equal Opportunities Act, 1991
United Kingdom	Sex Discrimination Act, 1975

Source: European Commission (1998), ILO (1999)

Explicit reference on the safety and health of workers is made in the aforementioned European Parliament's Resolution to Directive 89/391/EE of 12 June 1989. This had established a general duty for employers to assess and prevent or reduce risks to safety and health at work. Indeed, under the terms of Article 6(1), employers are obliged to assess all the risks, including, inter alia, those related to chemical agents, work equipment and the design of workplaces. The list is not exhaustive and the national legislation enacted in application of this directive has been extensively used in relation to workplace violence.

No specific proposal for a directive dealing with the priority area of bullying, as identified by the Parliament's Resolution, has yet been advanced. However, various EU bodies have reiterated the need for further action in the area of workplace violence, including regulatory action.

In its Communication 'Adapting to change in work and society: A new Community strategy on health and safety 2002–2006' (COM (Brussels) 11.03.2002, 118 final), the Commission stresses the need to adapt the legal framework to cover the emerging psycho-social risks:

> *The increase in psycho-social problems and illnesses is posing a new challenge to health and safety at work and is compromising moves to improve well-being at work. The various forms of psychological harassment and violence at work likewise pose a special problem nowadays, requiring legislative action. Any such action will be able to build on the acquis of recently adopted directives rooted in Article 13 of the EC Treaty, which defines what is meant by harassment, and make provision for redress.*

> *The Commission will examine the appropriateness and the scope of a Community instrument on psychological harassment and violence at work.*

The European Commission's Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work, in its 'Opinion on Violence at the Workplace', adopted on 29 November 2001, calls for the issuing by the Commission of guidelines in this area:

> *The Commission should therefore draft guidelines based on the definition of the phenomenon in all its various forms and on its inclusion among the risk factors that employers are obliged to assess under the terms of the framework directive. A model for the assessment of the specific risk as part of the overall assessment would therefore be useful.*

Introducing new special legislation

The situation, as described below from a working paper of the Directorate General for Research of the European Parliament in 2001, is undergoing a substantial evolution (European Parliament, 2001b).

> *In most Member States, however, the legal remedies for bullied employees exist only insofar as certain isolated acts of the bullying process can be identified as general offences, such as an insult, libel or (sexual) harassment. The most typical actions of workplace bullying are much more subtle, thus undermining the legal protection available for the person concerned.*

Progressively, legislative interventions are becoming more effective at tackling the problem of psychological violence at work in a targeted way and increasingly address new forms of violence, such as bullying and mobbing specifically.

Sweden

The first instruments that addressed the problem in a focused way in Sweden were two ordinances introduced in 1993: *Violence and Menaces at the Workplace* (FS 1993) and *Victimisation at Work* (ASF 1993).

In both instruments, the emphasis is on combining prevention strategies to deal with violence from environmental and organisational issues, rather than containing violence at the individual level. The ordinances require employers to plan and organise work in a way that seeks to prevent the occurrence of violence and victimisation. Employers must also make clear that violence will not be tolerated at the workplace.

The two ordinances refer to the Swedish Work Environment Act, in which physical and psychological factors at work are given special attention and responsibilities for these are devolved to employers. Chapter 3, Section 2 of the Act indicates as part of such responsibility the following obligations:

- To develop a work environment policy declaring the employer's general aims, intentions and attitude to the employees.

- To design procedures to ensure that psychological and social work environment conditions, including personal response, work situation and work organisation, are as good as possible.

- To take steps to prevent people meeting with a negative response at work, e.g. by creating norms which encourage a friendly and respectful climate at the workplace. It is above all the employer and the employer's representatives who must set an example to others in creating a good working climate.

- To give managers and supervisors training and guidance on matters relating to labour law, the effect of different working conditions on people's experiences of work, the effect of interaction and conflict risks in groups, and the skills to be able to respond rapidly to people in situations of stress and crisis.

- To provide a good induction that will enable a new employee to adjust well to the working group and understand the rules governing the workplace.

- To give each employee the best possible knowledge of their activities and objectives. Regular information and workplace meetings will help to achieve this.

- To give all employees information about and involvement in decisions about how to prevent victimisation.

- To try to ensure that work responsibilities have substance and meaning, and that the capacity and knowledge of the individual are utilised.

- To give employees opportunities to develop their knowledge and their jobs, and encourage them to pursue this end.

The Netherlands

Since 1994, the Netherlands' Working Conditions Act, 1994 (*Arbeidsomstandighedenwet*) has obliged employers in the Netherlands to protect their employees from sexual harassment, (psychological) aggression and violence in the workplace. The legislation covers several kinds of

undesirable behaviour, including sexual harassment, mobbing/bullying, racism and aggression from clients, patients and public towards employees.

Article 4 of the Act explicitly states that 'within the general working conditions policy, the employer shall conduct a policy aimed at protecting employees from sexual harassment and aggression and violence'.

These provisions are supplemented by two recommendations from the Joint Industrial Labour Council: *Klachtrecht individuele werknemers* (1990) ['The right of individual workers to put forward complaints'] and *Met alle respect! Over bedrijfscultuur en omgangsvormen op het werk* (1999) ['With all due respect! On business culture and conduct at work'].

France

In France, in response to increasing concern for the dimension and severity of the problem, the law on *modernisation sociale* (Loi 2002-73 du 17 janvier 2002) has introduced new provisions dealing with sexual harassment and has specifically tackled *harcèlement moral* ['moral harassment'] both in the Labour and Penal Codes.

This had been preceded in 1999 by Debout's report to the Economic and Social Council, showed the amplitude and severity of the violence at work problem (Debout, 1999). Court decisions had produced extensive case law on the subject (Cassation criminelle du 12 juin 1992 and 30 avril 1996; Chambre sociale de la Cour d'appel de Riom du 22 février 2000; Court d'appel de Versailles du 20 mars 2000), culminating in two key decisions of the Supreme Court establishing the full responsibility of the employer for the behaviour of those to whom authority vis à vis the employees had been delegated (Cass soc., 15 mars 2000, n° 97-45.91; Cass. soc., 10 mai 2001, n° 99-400.59).

Following the introduction of Loi 2002-73, the Labour Code now defines *harcèlement moral* (Art. L 122-49, Para. 1), outlines the obligations for the employer to introduce all measures necessary to prevent such *harcèlement moral* (Art. L 122-51), and offers extended protection to the victim (Art. L 122-51) including the possibility of making recourse to an external mediator (Art. L 122-54). This Labour Code also accrues powers for the trade unions to intervene in cases of *harcèlement moral* in the public and private sectors. When there has been a breach of these provisions, sanctions of up to one year's imprisonment and a fine of €15,000 can be applied according to Art. L 152-1-1 of the Labour Code and Art. 222-32-2 of the Penal Code.

One year from its introduction, the implications of this new legislation have been analysed in detail and some initial assessment of its impact attempted. However, more time is required to confirm early experiences and comments (Bukspan, 2002).

Belgium

In Belgium. the Loi du 11 juin 2002 'relating to protection from violence, moral harassment (bullying) and sexual harassment at the workplace' modifies the Loi du 4 août 1996 'relating to the well-being of workers when at work', in particular Art. 32, and covers a wide range of situations of workplace violence, including physical violence, verbal aggression, bullying and mobbing, and sexual harassment.

The law outlines employers' obligations to put in operation a series of preventive measures to reduce the risk of violence in the workplace. These include the physical organisation of the working environment, establishing proper assistance and support for the victim, the availability of an advisor on prevention (*conseiller en prévention*), quick and impartial investigation of cases of workplace violence, provision of information and training, and the responsibility of the management at all levels in preventing stress.

Victims of workplace violence are offered different means of redress through the advisor on prevention, the supervisor or the management, factory inspectors or the competent jurisdiction. In order to protect the worker from reprisal, the working relationship cannot be terminated and the working conditions cannot be modified during the recourse procedure unless on grounds that are independent of the workplace violence.

The burden of proof rests with the perpetrator of the violence, since the defendant has to show that the acts and behaviours purporting to be examples of workplace violence did not in fact constitute violence.

Finally, workers are requested to participate actively in prevention, to abstain from any act of violence and to avoid any misuse of the means of recourse.

Denmark

In Denmark, a long tradition of industrial relations and labour regulation (based on collective bargaining rather than on normative intervention) makes the role of legislation not necessarily a central one in this area. However, the need for a new specific response to workplace violence has been high on the agenda and has resulted in a new, much-debated central agreement on the psychological working environment.

Under the new agreement, signed in 2001 by the Danish Working Environment Authority, the DA-Employers' Confederation and LO-Trade Union Confederation, bullying and harassment are to be dealt with by employers and employees within companies using local agreements to tackle these issues. In May 2001, the Minister for Labour authorised the Working Environment Authority to supervise the psychological and physical aspects of safety and health at work. This has been poorly received and interpreted as State intervention in labour market affairs and an attack on the Danish model of bargaining and co-operation. Consequently, the decision was reversed in October 2001.

Commentators indicate that 'the social partners are very satisfied with this agreement and industrial relations researchers support the organisations in the view that it is a major breakthrough for the use of agreements as an alternative to legislation, and that workplace problems are better solved through the industrial relations system than through legislation. The number of cases which arise concerning bullying and harassment in the future will be a decisive and significant measure of the ability of the social partners to shoulder this task'.

Guidelines have been produced by the Danish Labour Inspectorate: *Bullying and sexual harassment* in March 2002 and *Risk of violence in connection with work performance* in October 1997. In addition to the government response, other interested bodies have issued guidance addressing workplace violence. For example, the Danish Food and Allied Workers' Union issued

guidance on the psychological work environment, in particular bullying, in 2001, entitled *Have you talked with your colleague today?*, while the Danish Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees published information in 2002 specifically about bullying, entitled *Dialogue creates understanding*.

In June 2002, the Ministry of Employment Labour introduced a new Paragraph 9a to the Ministerial regulations concerning work performance, requesting that 'the work does not imply any risk of physical or mental health deterioration due to bullying/harassment including sexual harassment'.

Finland

In Finland, a new Occupational Safety and Health Act has been approved by Parliament in June 2002. This deals with physical and psychological violence, including threats of violence, harassment, sexual harassment and bullying. The new Act is the first organised attempt at tackling the emerging health problems at work that are causing concern in Finland.

Under the new legislation, employers are obliged to monitor the working environment, the condition of the 'work community' and the safety of working procedures, as well as to take the necessary measures to remedy grievances in this area once informed.

The Act has given employees responsibilities, too. The employee is not only the object of protection, but also an active participant who must by all available means take care of his or her own safety and that of other employees. The importance of co-operation between the employer and employee, and of training and orientation given to the employees, is emphasised.

Using existing legislation

Although initiatives are underway in many countries to introduce specific legislation on workplace violence, certain countries seem to have adopted the alternative for the time being — of using existing legislation to combat the problem.

Ireland

In Ireland, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) established a task force to investigate the prevention of workplace bullying. It carried out an in-depth audit of existing legislation and concluded that new legislation was not immediately necessary. Its report states: 'The Task Force is of the view that existing legislation is comprehensive in its application. Therefore, it would be premature, at this stage, to expand the already comprehensive code of labour law until one has been completely satisfied that it has been fully and properly utilised. The Task Force decided not to recommend that new or amending legislation be introduced' (HSA, 2001).

Among the laws currently addressing aspects of workplace bullying, the following were identified:

■ *Industrial Relations Act, 1990*: The Labour Court has always held that bullying affects the employee's conditions of employment and can be defined as a trade dispute therefore, falling under its jurisdiction.

■ *Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989*: This Act implements the provisions contained in the Directive 89/391/EE on safety and health of workers.

- *Employment Equality Act, 1998*: Sections 23 and 32, respectively, contain provisions specifying that sexual harassment and harassment by reference to the individual's relevant characteristics, in the workplace or in the course of employment, constitute discrimination by the employer, either on the grounds of gender or on whatever discriminatory ground is relevant to persons with the relevant characteristics.

The recommendations of the Task Force included the drawing up of three codes of practice to establish anti-bullying policies and to promote best practice at enterprise level. In the view of the Task Force, 'While such codes are broadly viewed as voluntary, they are developing a quasi-legal status'. The three codes, together with procedures for addressing bullying at the workplace, are now in operation, as follows:

- code of practice on the prevention of workplace bullying (HSA, 2002a);

- procedures for addressing bullying in the workplace (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Development, 2002);

- code of practice on sexual harassment and harassment at work (Equality Authority, 2002);

- guidelines on the prevention of workplace bullying (HSA, 2002b).

United Kingdom

In the UK, a similar approach to that of Ireland seems to have been adopted. There is no specific legislation on workplace violence, but several general acts have relevance in this area.

Among the most significant is the Protection from Harassment Act, No. 40, March 1997. This has made it a criminal offence to pursue a course of conduct that amounts to harassment of a person. Although not specifically tackling violence at work, the legislation is of sufficient breadth to cover harassment at this and many other locations.

According to the Act, it is an offence for a person to pursue a course of conduct, occurring on at least two occasions, that is known or should be known to amount to harassment. It is not necessary to show an intention on the part of the harasser to cause the victim to feel harassed; the prosecution has only to prove that the conduct occurred in circumstances where a reasonable person would have realised that this would be the effect.

The Employment Rights Act, 1996 provides that employees may not be unfairly dismissed. Of particular relevance to bullying is the concept of 'constructive dismissal'. An employee is constructively dismissed when he or she voluntarily leaves her employment because the employer has fundamentally breached an express or implied term of the employment contract. Subjecting an employee to bullying could be a form of breach of an implied contractual term.

Some court decisions would appear to confirm this orientation, although the jurisprudence has not been consolidated. For example, in *Abbey National PLC v Robinson* (2000), an Employment Appeal Tribunal upheld a finding of constructive dismissal where the worker's manager 'had been bullying and harassing her in the workplace to a degree she found insufferable' (Yamada, 2003).

Guidelines for occupations at special risk, special types of violence and special audiences have also proliferated in recent years (*see Table 10*) and constitute an important complement to legislation in this area.

Table 10   'Special' guidelines for violence and harassment, UK

Department of Employment	*Sexual harassment in the workplace*: A guide for employers, London, 1992
Department of Health	*Tackling racial harassment in NHS, Good Practice Guidance – Key Principles*, London, 2000
Department of Transport	*Protecting bus crews – A practical guide*, London, 1995
Equal Opportunities Commission	*Sexual harassment at work: Consider the cost*, London, 1994
HSAC (Health Services Advisory Committee)	*Violence to staff in the health services,* London, 1987
HSC (Health and Safety Commission)	*Violence to staff in the education sector*, London, 1990
HSE (Health and Safety Executive)	*Violence at work: A guide for employers*, London, 1997
HSE (Health and Safety Executive)	*Violence to staff*, London, 1991
HSE (Health and Safety Executive)	*Preventing violence to retail staff*, London, 1995
HSE (Health and Safety Executive)	*Prevention of violence to staff in banks and building societies*, London, 1993
Industrial Society	*Harassment, bullying and violence at work: A practical guide to combating employee abuse*, London, 1999
Labour Research Department	*Stress, bullying and violence. A trade union action guide,* London, 1997
MSF (Manufacturing, Science, Finance Union)	*Working alone: Guidance for MSF members and safety representatives*, London, 1994
MSF (Manufacturing, Science, Finance Union)	*Bullying at work. Confronting the problem*, London, 1994
MSF (Manufacturing, Science, Finance Union)	*Prevention of violence at work*, London, 1993
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	*Personal safety for social workers,* London, 1994
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	*Personal safety for health-care workers*, London, 1995
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	*Personal safety for schools*, London, 1996
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	*Personal safety in other people's homes*, London, 1998
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	*Violence and aggression at work: Reducing the risks. Guidance for employers*, London, 1994
TUC (Trades Unions Congress)	*Guidelines. Sexual harassment at work*, London, 1992
TUC (Trades Unions Congress)	*Racial harassment at work: A guide and workplace programme for trade unionists*, London, 1993
UNISON	*Bullying at work. Guidance for safety representatives and members on bullying at work and how to prevent it*, London, 1996
UNISON	*Bullying at work. Guidelines for UNISON branches, stewards and safety representatives*, London, 1996
UNISON	*Working alone in safety: Controlling the risks of solitary work*, London, 1993
UNISON	*Violence at work. A guide to risk prevention for UNISON branches, stewards and safety representatives*, London, 1997

Germany

In Germany, along similar lines to Ireland and the UK, the extensive general protection offered to the worker by the *Arbeitsschutzgesetz* (Employment Protection Act) and the detailed obligations put on the enterprise by the *Betriebsverfassungsgesetz* (Works Constitution Act), together with the penal provisions of the *Strafgesetzbuch* (Penal Code), have up to now been considered sufficient to tackle workplace violence. For example, in Paragraph 75 of the *Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*, general principles of equality are formulated covering non-discrimination on the basis of gender and race. In addition, in Paragraph 3 of the *Arbeitsschutzgesetz*, an obligation is put on the employer to ensure workers' security and health at the workplace.

Court decisions are progressively targeting the problem in a more specific way. During 2001, the *Landesarbeitsgericht Thüringen* (Thüringen Higher Labour Court) issued two important decisions on mobbing. In the first case (Az: 5 Sa 403/2000), the Tribunal stated that mobbing had not only affected the personal dignity of the bank employee concerned, but also the health and safety of the victim to the extent that the physical aggression had penal relevance. The Tribunal confirmed a

previous decision against the illicit *Degradierung* ['humiliation'] of the worker concerned and threatened a fine of DEM 50,000 if the mobbing did not stop. In the second case (Az: 5 Sa 102/2000), the judge confirmed the dismissal of a mobber/manager of a supermarket as legitimate since he had insulted and 'broken' a worker to the point of attempting suicide. (These cases can be viewed online at www.wdr.de/tv/recht/rechtneu/rn9901/ra0109-05.htm.)

Collective agreements are also progressively tackling workplace violence. An agreement has been in operation at Volkswagen since 1996 and is aimed at establishing an enterprise culture based on partnership. It also develops a positive working climate as a pre-condition for the economic success of the company.

The agreement indicates that any form of racial and gender discrimination, sexual harassment and mobbing are violations of the dignity of the worker. It provides extensive means to combat these problems at the workplace. The management, works council, those responsible for women's issues, personnel office and health and safety offices — all are involved and must immediately intervene when situations of sexual harassment and mobbing are brought to their attention. The measure against the perpetrator is progressive and escalates to dismissal in the worst cases. Positive action is also envisaged by way of training, seminars, circulation of information and sensitisation campaigns.

This first agreement has inspired many other agreements with the trade unions and has been actively promoted with sample agreements being provided as policy models. For the private sector, IG Metall has published 10 example agreements on the Internet, all following the same structure but adjusted to the special characteristics of each enterprise (available at www.igmetal.de/betriebsraete/betriebsvereinbarungen/index.html).

In the public sector, an agreement on mobbing was signed in August 1998 for the employees of the City of Gelsenkirchen. In the agreement, mobbing is seen as a breach of the social peace within the enterprise and must be tackled firstly by means of consensus and co-operation among all concerned within the organisation. The agreement contemplates 5 steps to resolve situations generated by problems and at each step there must be meetings among the interested parties aiming to solve the problem. Only when all attempts fail must repressive measures be taken as a last remedy.

Searching for a regulatory response

In the countries discussed so far, distinctive, though not necessarily final, approaches have been adapted to the regulation of workplace violence. There are other countries, however, where the search for a regulatory response is still underway or has just started.

Italy

In Italy, no national legislation in this area has been enacted, despite several bills presented to Parliament to regulate this area — up to 6 in 2001 alone (Disegno di legge n° 986 del 20.12.2001; n° 924 del 5.12.2001; n° 870 del 21.11.2001; n° 848 del 15.11.2001; n° 422 del 9.7.2001; n°122 del 6.6.2001).

However, at regional level a new specific normative law has been introduced in Lazio in 2001. This regional law, adopted on 26 September 2001, rules that 'anti-mobbing units' (Article 4) should be

created in all local health and safety centres to offer consultancy, support and preventive tasks. These units, composed of a labour law expert, doctor specialised in public hygiene, psychologist, sociologist and social assistant, will periodically report to the 'regional observatory on mobbing' (Art. 6).

The 'regional observatory' will, in turn, operate as advisor to regional bodies in the geographic area, monitor and analyse the phenomenon of mobbing and will promote studies and research, as well as information campaigns. Local bodies (provinces and communes) will contribute to combating mobbing by undertaking initiatives to disseminate anti-mobbing information and by adding appropriate provisions in local collective agreements involving the workers concerned and organising training on the issue (Art. 5).

Court decisions are also setting the scene. Among the most relevant of these are the Tribunale of Forlì, sentenza n° 1234 of 15.3.2001; Tribunale di Torino, sentenza n° 5050 of 6.10.1999; Tribunale di Bari, ordinanza of 29.9.2000; and Corte di Cassazione, decision n° 5491 of 2.5.2000. The decision of the Supreme Court deals extensively with the issue of the burden of proof in the case of mobbing. According to the Court, the employer has to prove that all necessary measures to protect the psychological and physical health of the worker have been introduced at the workplace, while it is up to the worker to give evidence of the injury suffered and the occupational nature of such injury.

Finally, collective agreements have been concluded that specifically address the problem of workplace violence, such as those at dell'ATM/Satti in Torino, the Ministero dei Beni Culturali and ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale) of Catanzaro. These agreements essentially provide, in the first two cases, for the constitution of anti-mobbing committees (called *climate committee* in the ATM/Satti Agreement) and for the periodic evaluation of the risks of mobbing in the third case.

Spain

Similar developments are underway in Spain. Several attempts to introduce specific legislation have failed. In March 2002, the most recent attempt, a bill on *acoso moral* ['bullying'] was rejected, presented by the Grupo Parlamentario socialista (*Proposition de Ley sobre el derecho a no sufrir acoso moral en el trabajo 122/000157*).

This initiative had been preceded by the unanimous approbation of the Senate in June 2001. A motion of the parliamentary group Entesa Catalana de Progress urged the government to undertake legislative action to tackle the problem of *acoso moral (BOCG Senato, Serie I, 18 de Junio de 2001, NUM. 219 - 662/000135; Senato Pleno, 19 de Junio de 2001, NUM. 50)*. The Partido Popular, the government party, opposed the bill, indicating that Spain should not undertake unilateral initiatives while the European Commission is working on the issue.

Spanish courts are also active and have established important principles regarding workplace violence and harassment. The following are examples of legal action resulting in new case law:

■ decision of the Juzgado de lo Social de Pamplona/Irunã (sentencia 00058/2001) established that *acoso moral* at work has to be considered as a work accident;

■ decision of the Juzgado de lo Social de Madrid (sentencia JS-Madrid 1803/2002) established that, in the case of mobbing, the victim has to produce evidence of the alleged facts, but not direct proof (*la prueba directa*) that these constitute mobbing;

■ a series of decisions imposing substantial compensation to the victims;

■ a decision of the Supreme Court (TS 3a Secc. 6a S 23 July 2001) confirmed the previous condemnation of a public administration for obliging an official to work in an office without ventilation and light, denying him a meaningful job and taking an obstructionist attitude towards the medical certificate being presented. The Court declared in its decision that 'we are facing a real paradigm of how a public power should not behave in a State of Law'.

Other countries

■ In Portugal, a bill of law was presented unsuccessfully to tackle workplace violence (*Projecto de lei de proteccão laboral contra o terrorismo psicologico ou assédio moral*), presented by Francisco Torres and others on 27 June 2000.

■ In Luxembourg, a motion was presented to Parliament in early 2001 urging legislation on *harcèlement moral* ['moral harassment']. In April of that year, Luxembourg's first collective agreement aimed at combating moral/psychological harassment (essentially bullying) was signed at the Bram retail company. The new collective agreement establishes a committee made up of representatives of the works council (*délégation du personnel*), trade unions and management. The committee meets behind closed doors and, if appropriate, hears both parties and witnesses. According to how serious the matter is, the employer may take disciplinary action, including dismissal (EIRO, 2001c).

■ In Austria, a reform of the occupational, safety and health (OSH) legislation in January 2002 obliged business employers with more than 50 employees to consult occupational psychologists if the psychological risks are evaluated as high in their enterprise. The psychologists have to introduce preventive measures. (Further details are available at www.akwien.at/885_833.htm.)

The costs of workplace violence $\qquad$ 6

In Chapter 4, it was concluded that violence and harassment were a reality for a substantial proportion of the workplace. The presence of any forms of violence and harassment at work is likely to have negative consequences for those involved, for the organisation and for society in general. Violence also carries financial costs in terms of sickness absence, premature ill health and retirement, among others. Thus, in order to better utilise society's collective resources, it appears essential to minimise social and economic waste due to violence. In order to get a better picture of the potential benefits of a violence-free workplace, research evidence is reviewed below.

Improving the health of individuals

Adverse effects of physical violence on health

The evidence from research undertaken on the consequences and effects of physical violence and assault is quite limited (Budd *et al*, 1996; Rogers and Kelloway, 1997). The cited findings and evidence are often transferred or extended to the workplace on a secondary basis from crime survey data (Stanko, 2001). Some general findings may be highlighted.

It is assumed that the greater the frequency and the graver the form of violence, the more severe the effect would be (although even less severe abuse may also have severe negative effects). Effects may vary between individual targets, as individuals will differ in their perception of an event and their ability to cope with the situation. On the basis of recent research findings, the following effects can be identified:

- stress reaction and impairment of general health;

- reduced psychological well-being and greater risk of psychological problems;

- cognitive effects, such as concentration problems;

- reduced self-confidence;

- reduced satisfaction with work;

- fear reactions; and

- post-traumatic stress.

According to the British Crime Survey (2000), nearly half (46%) of assaults at work resulted in some type of injury to the victim and in almost one in ten incidents of physical assaults the victim saw a doctor.

A survey of members of the UK's Royal College of Nursing showed that nurses who were assaulted had poorer psychological well-being than those who were not assaulted (Ball and Pike, 2001). They were also twice as likely to have acute psychological problems, with frequently assaulted individuals most affected.

In a Swedish study of nurses, Arnetz *et al* (1996) reported that satisfaction with work was inversely affected by exposure to violence, although the authors acknowledge that the relationship between cause and effect is unclear. Similarly, more than half of Finnish prison employees who reported experience of violence at work also reported reduced job satisfaction (Vartia and Hyyti, 1999).

Physical violence and PTSD

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the psychological trauma reaction that may follow an assault. In this respect, it is the 'unexpected' aspect of an event that may eventually give rise to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD (Flannery, 1996). PTSD has been medically identified with the following symptoms: a re-experience of the event or frequent flash-backs, a tendency persistently to avoid stimuli associated with the trauma and a persistent feeling of irritability sustained for a relatively long period of time (Scott and Stradling 1994). The cumulative effect of repeated exposure to violent acts is often emphasised, with both immediate as well as previous exposure to similar incidents affecting the sufferer (Rippon, 2000).

Behavioural effects

Exposure to physical violence is also associated with behavioural reactions and change, such as social withdrawal and increased irritability. This may affect social relationships at work, as well as relationships outside work (Warshaw and Messite, 1996).

As previously shown, a substantially higher number of people worry about threats and physical assaults than those actually experiencing violence at work. In some cases, worrying about violence represents a health risk, with approximately one in ten respondents reporting that their health was affected 'quite a bit' or 'a great deal' (Budd, 2001). Similarly, in a Portuguese study of hospital staff, victims' experience of physical violence was associated with particularly high levels of hyper-vigilance and feelings of constantly being on their guard (Antunes *et al*, 2002).

Adverse effects of psychological violence on health

In general, research points to increased stress levels and reduced psychological well-being, with the most frequently identified negative health-related outcomes including:

- anxiety;

- depression;

- psychosomatic symptoms;

- aggression;

- fear and mistrust;

- cognitive effects, such as inability to concentrate or think clearly and reduced problem-solving capacity;

- isolation and loneliness;

- deterioration of relationships; and

- post-traumatic stress.

Sexual harassment

In a summary of sexual harassment studies undertaken in northern European countries for the European Commission (1998), it was concluded that in 7 out of 75 surveys reviewed, more than half of respondents suggested negative consequences for their general health and well-being. Similar outcomes were also reported by Alemany (1998) who, for the purpose of the same EC

study, reviewed a series of surveys undertaken in southern European countries. Among the most frequently reported effects were emotional and psychological consequences, and psychosomatic symptoms, such as muscular pains. Fear, anger and lack of trust were other common findings in these studies. Interpersonal dissatisfaction and deterioration of relationships is another reported outcome of sexual harassment (Stockdale, 1996), particularly affecting relationships with male colleagues.

Harassment, mobbing and bullying

According to a study by the Irish Health and Safety Authority (HSA, 2001), experience of bullying is strongly associated with stress reactions. In line with this, O'Moore (2000) indicated that 40% of victims report that bullying affected their physical health and 43% their mental health. Consequently, 26% and 92%, respectively, had been seeking medical or psychiatric treatment or professional help. One in five reported taking medication as a result of their experience.

According to the study of the members of the UK's Royal College of Nursing (Ball and Pike, 2001), bullying and harassment was the 'single most significant variable associated with a lower level of psychological well-being, with the strongest effect being felt by those who were most frequently exposed'. Moreover, compared with those who were assaulted by patients or their relatives, the problems of victims of bullying appeared to be more acute. It is noteworthy that, while victims of bullying often report enjoying normal health prior to their experience of harassment, many highlight that bullying subsequently ruins their mental and physical health (Einarsen and Mikkelsen, 2003).

In a study of employees in an Austrian hospital, Niedl (1996) found that individuals who reported themselves as being bullied had higher scores on depression, psychosomatic complaints, anxiety and irritation than those who were not bullied, at a level which was statistically significant. Similar results were found in a number of other studies, for example, in Germany (Mackensen von Astfeld, 2000) and Denmark (Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2001). Typical stress symptoms such as insomnia, melancholy and apathy are reported to be common outcomes (Björkqvist *et al*, 1994; Quine, 1999).

Based on a national Swedish study, Leymann (1992) concluded that 'cognitive effects' (such as irritability, aggression and problems with memory and concentration), as well as psychosomatic symptoms (such as gastric upset, loss of appetite and nausea), were the outcomes that accounted for the greatest difference between bullied and non-bullied subjects.

Some studies have particularly looked at the impact of harassment on gay and lesbian employees. Both groups reported to suffer negative health effects from their experience, with depression, isolation and loneliness commonly reported (Stonewall, 1993; TUC, 2000).

Links between psychological violence and PTSD

In the most severe cases of bullying, victims have frequently been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD (Leymann and Gustafsson, 1996). It has also been argued that in many cases, compared with patients who have been diagnosed as suffering from PTSD resulting from involvement in traumatic accidents, victims of bullying showed significantly higher levels of PTSD (Einarsen *et al*, 1999; Mikkelsen and Einarsen, 2002). The intensity of the bullying experience also appears to affect the level of PTSD.

Behavioural effects

There is evidence to suggest that being attacked repeatedly over a long period of time is likely to manifest itself in changes in the behaviour of targets. Frequently, the targets will start acting obsessively with respect to their grievance, which for the observer may become an irritant. This may gradually change the observer's previous opinion of the targets, seeing them as creators of their own misfortune (Leymann, 1996).

In addition to problems of concentration as highlighted above, bullying has been found to be associated with insecurity and lack of initiative (Leymann, 1992). Such reactions on the part of the target may in themselves lead to organisational effects, relating to a lack of motivation and creativity, as well as a rise in accidents and mistakes. Such responses were confirmed in a German nationwide study (Meschkutat *et al*, 2002), in which it was found that 72% of victims became de-motivated, 59% socially withdrew and 33% reported having made mistakes.

Violence and suicide

The severity of the effects of violence and harassment is evident as a substantial number of suicides may be linked to such experiences (Leymann, 1996). No firm evidence exists for such claims. However, the fact that up to 40% of targets in a large-scale Norwegian survey (Einarsen *et al*, 1994b) stated that they had at times contemplated suicide should emphasise the seriousness of the problem. Furthermore, the media has recently reported several such suicide cases associated with psychological violence and bullying. 'Der Spiegel' newspaper in Germany reported in August 2001 that a gay man committed suicide due to his experience of harassment at work. Similarly, in a recent UK Court ruling, the family of a black male postal worker was awarded compensation (posthumously) after he committed suicide as a result of long-term bullying by his colleagues, as stated in a suicide note to his parents (Britten, 2002).

Impact on witnesses or third parties

Violent incidents in the workplace also have wider ramifications beyond those directly involved. Research has shown that witnessing violence may lead to fear of future violent incidents and as such has similar negative effects as being personally assaulted or attacked (Leather *et al*, 1998).

Similarly, a study of sexual harassment found that the perception of a work environment as being tolerant of sexual harassment was considered a better predictor of negative mental health outcomes than actual reports of sexual harassment (Hulin *et al*, 1996).

Several studies of bullying have reported an effect on observers (Hoel and Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1999). Vartia (2001) in her study of municipal employees divided her sample into three groups — 'bullied', 'observers' and 'non-bullied' — and found that 40% of the bullied group were suffering a moderate to very high level of stress; of the two other groups, 25% of observers and 14% of the non-bullied were found to have similarly high stress levels.

Improving the health of organisations

Some of the key implications identified by research for organisations are discussed below.

Physical violence

Few studies have explored the relationship between physical violence and organisational outcomes. However, the following findings have emerged from the limited evidence:

- increased sickness absenteeism;

- higher turnover rates;

- reduced job satisfaction;

- fall in productivity; and

- increased insurance premiums.

A likely outcome of exposure to violent assaults or physical attacks is an increase in spells of sickness absence. The British Crime Survey of 1998 estimated that 3.3 million work hours were lost due to violence (Budd, 2001). However, a violent incident does not automatically lead to the recipient having to take time off work. A typical example here is the health sector, where physical violence or threat of violence is widespread, but where the majority of incidents do not lead to the recipient taking time off work (Boyd, 1995). 'Lower job satisfaction' and 'organisational commitment' are other likely outcomes of physical violence that could affect organisations negatively (Barling, 1996).

Violence has also been associated with increased levels of turnover. However, according to Holzen Beusch *et al* (in press), labour market considerations and fear of failing to find a new job will impact upon the victims' decision to leave.

The evidence of impaired performance and reduced productivity associated with violence and harassment is primarily anecdotal (see, for example, Bassman, 1992) and possibly inferred from evidence of reduced job and organisational satisfaction.

The British Retail Consortium Survey of 1995/96 found that in some situations the number of physical assault incidents might also be reflected in an increase in insurance premiums and the need for further investment in security measures (Standing and Nicolini, 1997). While an increase in incident rates does not necessarily lead to an automatic increase in premiums, it may be more difficult for the organisation to re-insure.

Psychological violence

As is the case with physical violence, relatively few studies have examined the organisational implications of psychological violence, although the number of studies exploring the organisational effects of bullying is on the increase. These studies have pointed to the following consequences for organisations:

- taking sick leave;

- demoralising effects, such as negative effects on job satisfaction;

- reduced productivity;

- increased sickness absence;

- complaints, grievance and litigation; and

- voluntary or involuntary transfers.

Sexual harassment

According to the survey by the European Commission (1998), leaving the organisation voluntarily (turnover) or involuntarily (dismissal) are the negative effects identified with sexual harassment. As far as turnover rates are concerned, in one study in the UK Police Service, approximately one in ten of those reporting having been sexually harassed left their organisation due to their experience (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary). Only one of the studies reported in the EC's 1998 survey explored this issue of productivity, with 11% of respondents in a UK national study claiming that their productivity decreased as a result of being sexually harassed.

Great differences exist between EU countries with respect to complaints' procedures and the practice and culture with regard to litigation/compensation. However, independently of the variation in national custom and practice, investigation and other activities arising from complaints or grievances are time-consuming affairs, involving investigators, personnel officers and interviewees. In cases of litigation, the result may represent a substantial cost to organisations. For example, according to the UK's Equal Opportunities Commission's review of sexual harassment cases heard between 1998-2001 (EOC, 2002), the compensation received by the complainant varied substantially between cases. The majority received between GBP£2,000 and £5,000 (approximately €3,200 and €7,900), with GBP£40,000 (approximately €31,600) as the maximum amount awarded.

In many cases of bullying and harassment, the situation has been resolved by separating complainant and offender, voluntarily or forcibly. It is acknowledged that such transfers would represent an element of disruption with a likely impact on productivity, representing a cost to the organisation in terms of replacement and additional training costs (Dalton, 1997).

General harassment and bullying

A number of studies have considered the relationship between general harassment and absenteeism. In a Finnish study of over 5,000 employees in two hospitals, a substantially greater risk of absenteeism was found among victims of bullying. Bullying was found to account for 2% of total sickness absenteeism. High numbers were reported by O'Moore (2000) and Meschkutat *et al* (2002), with 30% and 44% of victims, respectively, reporting sickness absence due to bullying.

Even where overall figures were low, where employees had taken time off work due to bullying, prolonged spells of absence appear to be rather common. Thus, in a UK study of police support staff, nearly one in three of those who confirmed that they had been absent due to bullying reported absence of more than 30 days (UNISON, 2000). Similarly, 30% of nurses on long-term sick leave reported to have experienced bullying and harassment (Ball and Pike, 2001).

However, in a review of the organisational effects of bullying, Hoel *et al* (2003) argue that the association between bullying and absenteeism is relatively weak. It may be that in some cases the negative implications of being absence often outweigh the need to recover physically and mentally before normal work participation is resumed. Thus, fear of further harassment or victimisation from the perpetrator(s), as well as being perceived as a malingerer among one's peer group, may force the victim to go to work.

A recent Swedish study of bullying in the Swedish Post Office argues that the disciplining effect would be particularly strong where absenteeism may be linked to an increased possibility of job loss, for example, in connection with downsizing and organisational restructuring (Voss *et al*, 2001).

There is evidence to suggest that violence and harassment affect turnover behaviour and the propensity to leave an organisation. For example, an Irish national study (HSA, 2001) reported that 54% of targets considered leaving their organisations, while 10.9% had already quit. While some people literally may be forced, or perceived as being forced, out of the organisation, many may consider quitting to be a positive coping strategy (Hoel *et al*, 2001a). This is also the advice given to targets by other victims of bullying in a recent German study (Zapf and Gross, 2001).

When comparing self-rated performance of people who had been bullied with those who were not bullied, Hoel and Cooper (2000) found a positive and significant relationship with productivity. A third of respondents agreed with a statement that 'bullying at my workplace reduces our efficiency' (Hoel *et al*, 2001b). It has been argued that the relatively weak relationship with productivity may suggest that victims try to demonstrate commitment to the organisation when under strong pressure. Consequently, victims might report relatively normal or, in some cases, even increased productivity.

According to an Irish national study (HSA, 2001), approximately 15% of victims of bullying have sought internal transfer. In a German national study (Meschkutat *et al*, 2002), 31% of victims had moved voluntarily, with 6% of victims forcibly transferred.

Where counselling is provided internally (or externally), a high number of cases may become a drain upon the organisation's resources. This would be the case whether the service is of a psychological therapeutic nature (see, for example, Therani, 2003; Vartia *et al*, 2003) or primarily an advisory service.

Bullying and harassment may also have implications for the industrial relations' climate. In some instances, a high number of bullying cases have led to industrial action being undertaken (Beale, 1999). In one case, the unions at Ford Motors UK considered strike action in response to allegations that managers tolerated and even encouraged practices of bullying and racial harassment in the workplace (Guardian, 1999).

Impact on witnesses or third parties
Several studies have found a ripple effect on witnesses, with a substantial number reporting having left their organisation (one in five respondents) in response to their indirect experience of bullying (UNISON, 1997 and 2000). Rayner (1999), in response to the results of the two UNISON surveys, pointed to the impact of a climate of fear identified through targets endorsing statements such as 'workers are too scared to report' (95%) and 'the bully has done this before' (84%).

Improving the health of society

Impact on health sector
Depending upon the national system for healthcare, medical expenses arising from violence and harassment may represent a substantial cost to society. Thus, by preventing or reducing incidents

of violence, scarce resources currently channelled to medication and treatment of victims of violence could be utilised more effectively (Stanko, 2001).

Impact on economy

Depending upon the national model for compensation, consequences of violence, such as long-term sickness absenteeism and premature retirement, may translate into an economic burden for society and lead to a drop in productivity and output.

Impact on service and quality of care

Employees carrying out their work in an atmosphere of fear are unlikely to provide care and service to the best of their abilities and the quality of service provision may suffer and deteriorate. A recent Swedish study has given support to such a claim (Arnetz and Arnetz, 2001). This longitudinal study of violence towards healthcare staff measured the violence experienced by staff and perceptions of quality of care by patients during the period 1994-97. Findings were that the presence of violence predicted the quality of care independently rated by patients.

Impact on family and friends

The results of exposure to stress and various forms of violence are likely to affect home and private life. O'Moore (2000) reported that bullying negatively affected family relationships in 28% of cases. A study by the Irish Health and Safety Authority (HSA, 2001) found that for 43% of victims, bullying had negatively affected their quality of life outside work. In many cases, the experience is putting an intolerable strain on relationships (see, for example, Earnshaw and Davidson, 1994). Thus, in a German national study of bullying, a total of 20% of the sample reported conflicts with partners or family, with 8.1% eventually leading to a separation from their spouse (Meschkutat *et al*, 2002). Further evidence of this is presented by Vartia and Hyyti (1999), who state that 16% of family members of prison employees reported to being threatened at least once and 6% on several occasions. The German study also suggests that private financial problems may be another outcome of violence, with 15% of respondents expressing such problems.

Financial and social considerations on the part of victims, with respect to potential job losses resulting from reporting their experience of sexual harassment, were also suggested as important explanatory factors for the low rates of reporting in many southern European countries (European Commission, 1998).

Economic benefits of a violence-free work environment

For various reasons, care must be taken when costs are assigned. Among the factors that need to be considered are:

- quality and trustworthiness of the data;

- comparability of data between sectors and nations; and

- the relationship between cause and effect.

Costs to individuals

While the focus here is on identifiable costs, it is important to note that costs may also be of a non-economic nature. The fear and pain associated with experience of violence may represent a cost equal to that arising from loss of earnings. Such intangible or 'human costs' will include fear and

pain, general reduction in quality of life and grief to friends and family. As far as economic costs to individuals are concerned, they may be sorted according to loss of income and medical costs. However, any attempts to assign figures to such individual costs will be heavily flawed since too many uncertainties exist.

Costs to organisations

For an in-depth discussion on this topic, see Hoel *et al*, 2001b. But in line with this review of the literature, the following factors should be considered:

- sickness absence;

- premature retirement;

- replacement costs in connection with labour turnover (recruitment, training and development costs);

- grievance and litigation/compensation costs;

- reduced performance/productivity (lack of added value to product and service); and

- loss of public goodwill and reputation.

Estimates of costs of violence to organisations

- Leymann (1990) in a Swedish study of mobbing calculated that every victimised individual would produce a cost to the organisation of approximately €30,000 – €100,000 annually.

- Kivimäki *et al* (2000) in a study of bullying at two Finnish hospitals found that those who had been bullied had 26% more certified sickness absence than those who were not bullied, when figures were adjusted for base-line measures one year prior to the study. On this basis, it was estimated that the annual cost of absence from bullying alone accounted for costs of GBP£125,000 (equivalent to €195,465).

- The British Retail Consortium estimated on the basis of their latest survey of 17,000 retail outlets that the full impact of crime and crime prevention amounted to GBP£2,044 billion in 2000 (equivalent to €3,196 billion), compared to £2,015 billion in 1999 (€3,150 billion). This represents £85 (€133) for each household and reduced the nearly 1% of UK retail turnover. Similarly, 3% of respondents to the British Chambers of Commerce Business Crime Survey in 2001 reported that crime had cost them over £100 (€156) in the previous 12 months.

- Hoel and Cooper (2000) estimated on the basis of self-rated productivity that victims on average had a 7% lower productivity than those who had neither been bullied nor had witnessed bullying taking place. Acknowledging that previous victims as well as witnesses would have some reduced productivity, a total productivity decrease of 1.5% – 2.0% was calculated.

- Based on a typical case of workplace bullying in a British local authority (Hoel *et al*, 2003), the following costs to the organisation were calculated:

Absence	£6,972
Replacement costs	£7,500
Reduced productivity	*
Investigators' time for grievance investigation	£2,110
Local management line-management time	£1,847
Head office personnel	£2,600
Corporate officers' time (including staff welfare)	£2,100
Cost of disciplinary process (hearing/solicitor)	£3,780
Witness interview costs	£1,200
Transfers	0
Litigation	* (0)
Effects on those indirectly involved	*
Miscellaneous (effects on public relations, etc)	*
Total costs (minimum)	**£28,109**

* Uncertain or impossible to estimate

Costs to society

Several consequences of violence may translate into an economic burden for society:

- absenteeism costs arising from long-term illness;

- premature retirement on the grounds of ill health;

- long-term unemployment and welfare dependency;

- premature and unplanned loss of productive employees, thus depriving the workforce of skills and talents, and affecting overall national productivity; and

- economic burden for personal care is passed on to family and friends.

The assessment of the total costs of violence to society is made more difficult by the fact that we cannot estimate such costs by simply adding up all the individual costs and all the organisational costs. This is because some costs are actually transferred between groups (Gordon and Risley, 1999). A typical example may be social security benefit, which is a transfer of taxpayers' money to individuals. To estimate the total costs of violence in the workplace is a near-impossible task because too many intangible factors are involved.

The 'high road' approach of enterprise and individual development

This review of the literature shows a growing awareness that in confronting workplace violence and harassment, a comprehensive approach is required. Instead of searching for a single solution for any problem and situation, the full range of causes that generate violence and harassment should be analysed and a variety of intervention strategies adopted. There is also growing awareness that violence and harassment at work are not merely episodic individual problems, but structural strategic problems rooted in wider social, economic, organisational and cultural factors. It is also increasingly recognised that violence and harassment are detrimental to the functionality of the workplace and any action taken against such problems should be considered an integral part of the organisational development of a sound enterprise.

Much of this anti-violence and anti-harassment response would be needed to develop a healthy competitive enterprise, thus making the violence-conscious manager a 'smart' manager. It is increasingly clear that a 'high road' response, based on a combined enterprise – individual

development, is not only possible but also necessary. Attention has, therefore, increasingly focused on the socio-economic costs of violence and harassment at work. These are being quantified, showing the magnitude of the negative impact of these problems on the efficiency and performance of the enterprise. The introduction of an economic dimension in organising the response to violence and harassment is proving a powerful weapon in addressing these problems effectively.

A 'high road' response is thus progressively emerging, whereby the health, safety and well-being of workers become integral parts of enterprise growth. Here, the emphasis is not only on traditional direct and indirect costs (such as accidents, illness, disability, absenteeism, turnover, reduced morale, reduced commitment), but also on the new intangible assets of the modern enterprise (such as knowledge, learning, quality and, most of all, people, whose development is totally incompatible with the presence of violence and harassment at work).

The adoption of a 'high road' to combat violence and harassment requires refocusing the entire approach to the problem from an exclusively normative one to a socio-economic and, eventually, to a developmental one. The traditional response to workplace violence and harassment, based on the mere enforcement of regulations, has in fact the disadvantage of not succeeding in many working situations that are of increasing relevance both in the developing and the industrialised world, including the small/micro, informal and virtual workplace.

The 'high road' approach opens the way to a natural process of proliferation of initiatives, largely based on their self-sustainability. By directly linking health and safety issues with managerial and developmental issues, this response offers the tools for immediate action in the workplace to reduce and eliminate violence and harassment at work. Policies should sustain this natural process by ways of stimulation and encouragement, creation of networks and raising awareness, which will be accompanied by the issuing of guidelines, best practices, framework and support legislation.

A virtuous circle can thus be activated that develops from inside the workplace to progressively expand in a strategic prospective, independently from the mechanics of short-term influences and forced interventions. Triggering the virtuous circle is the great challenge at stake (Di Martino, 2002a and 2002b; Di Martino *et al*, 2002).

Good practice in organisational interventions

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The description and publication of good practice is gaining increasing interest. At European level, it appears to have become a common tool for analysing and comparing experiences in the different Member States, as well as stimulating initiatives.

As the problem of violence and harassment at work has received considerable attention only recently, the question of practical and effective solutions has arisen more frequently. Currently, numerous guidelines and other guidance materials are developed and published by various stakeholders and institutions. Any evaluation of these recommendations, their implementation and impact, is, however, lacking.

The identification and description of good practice is an important instrument to provide concrete ideas to practitioners and information about what is feasible, creating a body of knowledge about the lessons learnt. This discussion on good practice aims to:

■ review the presence of documentation of good practice addressing violence and harassment at work in European countries;

■ provide examples of good practice with regard to policy and procedures, including evaluation; and

■ compare the strategies of good practice identified and draw conclusions.

Information on good practice has been obtained by an extensive review of information available on the Internet and in various libraries, and by contacting key informants. In every EU Member State, numerous institutions and experts — in the fields of occupational health and safety, workplace health promotion, equality, unions, professional associations and employer associations — have been contacted with requests for information on good practice.

Defining good practice

According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2000), good practice information is aimed at providing persons with occupational safety and health duties with relevant information on how to reduce risks to workers at enterprise level. Types of information include:

■ guidance materials from authorities, organisations and technical institutes;

■ case study examples, demonstrating a real intervention at the workplace; and

■ checklists, product information and standards.

The quality criteria include the credibility of source and content, as well as the currency, relevance and appropriateness of the information.

A summary compendium of good practice for the prevention of racism at work (Wrench, 1997) presents examples not only from the various sectors, such as public and private, but also from groups at different levels of activity, ranging from governmental to enterprise level.

In the present study, good practice has been included according to the following criteria:

■ relevance, giving practical information on how to address the risk of violence and harassment at work;

■ credibility of source;

■ inspiration for other organisations;

■ offering a broad scope of interventions at different levels, addressing different forms of violence;

■ balanced representation of countries (not more than two per country, where available); and

■ topicality (published 1997 or later).

Presence of good practice documentation

Surveys and systematic collections are hard to find in the literature on the subject of good practice, strategies and policies addressing violence and harassment at work. What does appear in the literature, however, is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg. In general, the impression arises that currently many initiatives aim to tackle the problem in all countries at different levels and from different viewpoints. The European Commission supports transnational projects and networks targeting violence, harassment and discrimination at work, thus encouraging information exchange.

To close the existing gap, at least partially, between reality and evidence in this area, information on good practice was also obtained through contacts with technical institutions concerned with occupational health and safety, or those working on the subject of violence in general, and through contact with trade unions in many countries.

However, where organisations and networks are working directly with enterprises, the internal information was usually declared confidential. The request for information was, however, forwarded through the co-ordinator to the members of such networks; only three enterprises sent materials on policies and procedures. Information on internal policies addressing violence could not be generated from the public websites of large enterprises. Information on good practice, where it is not published, seems to be accessible only in an indirect way through key informants and institutions as 'door-openers'.

In accordance with this, the encouragement to document strategies and their appreciation as models of good practice may therefore initiate a necessary cultural change regarding workplace violence in general, as described in Case 4 below (*page 76*) which highlights the shift from a victim-blaming culture to an atmosphere of open communication.

For the time being, good practice models appear to be more often documented in northern Europe and Scandinavia. But this does not mean that no good practices exist in southern Europe; rather, they are more difficult to access. A report of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, summarising initiatives preventing racism in the workplace (Wrench, 1997), shows evidence that good practice of efforts to create decent working conditions in general can be found in every European country. Another report by the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion describes models of workplace health promotion not targeting violence at work, but partnership-based management – again, this is an example of pan-European good practice (BKK Bundesverband, 1999).

However, it is highlighted in both these reports that socio-cultural differences exist and have to be addressed properly. The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion responded to these experiences by establishing a separate working group addressing the specific situation in southern Europe (ENWHP, 2002). The Foundation's report (Wrench, 1997) states that measures taken differ according to the national context: what works in one country may be inappropriate in another.

Though general recommendations from case studies and numerous guidelines on how to prevent violence and harassment at work and how to address the consequences can be regarded as universal, the translation of these into daily work practices needs to reflect the specific situation, structures and processes of an organisation, its workplaces and its socio-cultural context (Di Martino, 2002e).

Examples of good practice models

The collection of good practices presented here is far from being an exhaustive view of the situation in different European countries. Rather, they serve as examples to demonstrate the diversity of approaches in place. The emphasis is put on experiences at enterprise level.

Some of the case descriptions focus on special elements, rather than describing the whole comprehensive strategy in place, in order to provide a broad scope of inspiring ideas and avoid repetition. For those examples of previous years and without information of recent progress, attempts were made to provide a follow-up, but only in very few cases could additional information be obtained.

In the literature, intervention programmes are commonly differentiated into primary, secondary and tertiary intervention (Cox and Cox, 1993), representing measures of prevention, protection and treatment (Chappell and Di Martino, 2000; Mayhew and Chappell, 2001). The examples of good practice are grouped according to these different levels of intervention (*see Table 11*).

Table 11   Examples of good practice

Primary Intervention
An end to sexual harassment at work — Pandora Project, Spain
Involving the public. Preparing recommendations to prevent workplace bullying — Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, Ireland
Written policy: Partnership-based Conduct at Work — FRAPORT AG , Frankfurt/Main, Germany
Environmental intervention: The CPTED technique — Social Services, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Safer working practices — Ulster Community and Hospitals, Health and Social Services (HSS) Trust, UK
Managing diversity: Participative prevention of discrimination and harassment — GIANT Europe Manufacturing BV, Netherlands
Community-based action addressing potential perpetrators — Bremen Tram Company (Bremer Straßenbahn, BSAG), Germany
Community integration: Partnership with the police — Mid Cheshire Hospitals, NHS Trust, UK
Secondary Intervention
Employee-safety first: An employee security guide for potential situations of risk — Dublin Bus, Ireland
Simplify Reporting: The Violent Incident Form for Health Sector Workplaces — Karolinska Institute, Division for Occupational and Environmental Health, Stockholm, Sweden
Tertiary Intervention
Counselling in cases of sexual harassment and mobbing — Sexual Harassment and Mobbing Advice Centre, University of Vienna, Austria
A centre for post-traumatic support — RATP Metro Company, Paris, France

Primary intervention: Reducing the risk

In order to successfully implement any intervention programme, those concerned need to be aware. Initiatives to assess the dimension of the problem and to prepare policies or codes of conduct in accordance with the legislation may be started by unions or governmental authorities at enterprise or at national level.

Usually, it is a long way to go from raising awareness to concrete intervention. Cases 1 and 2 of the following examples (Spain and Ireland) describe approaches for obtaining information as the base for strategy development at national level.

Many of the examples identified illustrate good practice in the field of prevention. Preventive measures aim to reduce or eliminate the risk of violence and harassment. Cases 3 to 8 below cover a broad range of preventive action, starting with a collective agreement as an example for a company policy. This is followed by examples for the different fields of action, such as environmental measures, work procedures, norms and values of conduct, and interventions integrating the community.

Case 1: *An end to sexual harassment at work* — Pandora Project, Spain (European Commission, Daphne Programme)

The Spanish Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commissions (Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras or CC.OO.) initiated a research project on sexual harassment at work, aiming to gain a better understanding of dimensions, patterns and risk factors (CC.OO., 2000). Based on this evidence, recommendations for action should be developed to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment at work.

The Daphne Programme, an EU initiative to combat violence towards women, young people and children, funded the Pandora Project in 1998. Co-ordinated by the women's secretariat of CC.OO., a co-operation with the Spanish Instituto de la Mujer, together with partner trade unions in Sweden and Ireland, was established and the survey was conceptualised and carried out in parallel in the three countries.

The project recognised the importance of basing its findings on women's everyday experiences and problems. Several focus group discussions were organised to examine women's and men's perceptions of their work, their relationship with co-workers and their experiences of sexual harassment. The participants represented a cross-sectional sample of employees of different hierarchical positions and professional groups, with different functions.

The survey results showed for Spain that 18.4% of female workers had experienced sexual harassment, compared with 8.8% of male workers. Official figures probably did not represent the real size of the problem since many women prefer not to report an incident or choose avoidance and escape mechanisms in response to sexual harassment. Blaming the victim was found a usual consequence of complaints. A relationship between sexual harassment and the type of work women perform, combined with discrimination and lack of appreciation, was identified. The project concluded that sexual harassment is deeply rooted in workplace culture, including behaviour codes and promotion systems. Legislation alone would not solve the problem.

Two approaches were recommended as preventive measures:

■ promoting gender equality at work; and

■ raising awareness and fostering support among and for female staff.

Trade unions were identified as a major stakeholder in the fight against sexual harassment and discrimination, highlighting the need for more active advocacy through increased preventive interventions, building support structures and training of work inspectors.

Since raising awareness and information were found to be priority needs, the Pandora Project initiated a press conference and a publicity campaign. In the follow-up, a guide to sexual harassment was published to be used by management, workers and trade unions. Furthermore, a Europe-wide network was established to combat sexual harassment. In 1999, the Pandora Project received a second year's funding to continue its work. It was not possible in the framework of this study to follow up on the project's work, but it has been reported from an expert that activities are ongoing.

**Case 2: *Involving the public: Preparing recommendations to prevent workplace bullying —*
*Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, Ireland (HSA, 2001)***
This example demonstrates a participatory approach towards getting the information needed to develop recommendations for preventive strategies on workplace bullying. In 1999, the Minister for Labour, Trade and Consumer Affairs in Ireland established a task force on the prevention of workplace bullying. It was co-ordinated by the Health and Safety Authority, with participating representatives from different government departments, agencies and bodies dealing with workplace welfare and equality issues. The main objectives of the Task Force were to identify the size of the problem and the sectors most at risk. Based on this information, practical prevention programmes would be developed and a co-ordinated response from State agencies produced.

As a first step, an independent national survey was commissioned to identify the size of the problem and the sectors most at risk. In order to obtain as much information as possible, a participatory approach was chosen to involve the public. Besides the survey, a national advertising campaign was undertaken and the public were invited to make submissions to the Task Force on the subject of workplace bullying. In total, 256 submissions were received from a variety of sources, representing a broad body of views and information from individuals, groups and organisations. The submissions were analysed by a psychologist. More than half the responses were received from victims of bullying and the findings show that the majority of the victims suffered from severe effects on health, such as physical and emotional symptoms, which had often resulted in sick leave or quitting their job. The submissions from the public further provided information on the forms of bullying behaviour and the sectors of risk. Additionally, suggestions on how to address the problem were included, indicating that proper procedures in the workplace are needed as well as staff training and special anti-bullying policies.

The submissions received, together with the survey findings and a review of existing research, were carefully considered by the Task Force for the formulation of recommendations (*for further details, see Chapter 5, page 53*).

Case 3: *Written policy: Partnership-based Conduct at Work* **— FRAPORT AG, Frankfurt/Main, Germany (IG Metall, 2001)**

As one model of a written policy statement, the collective agreement of FRAPORT AG, Frankfurt/Main, Germany, will be summarised. It took effect in January 2001 and can only be terminated with one year's notice. It has been selected because it is one of the rare policy documents where the monitoring and evaluation aspects are integrated in the agreement and not subject to a separate procedure agreement.

In its preamble, a pledge is formulated for a corporate culture characterised by partnership-based conduct at work, aiming to combat a climate of hate and violence at work at its roots, prevent discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all employees. The principle of non-discrimination applies to all employees and covers all conduct leading to discrimination on the grounds of colour, nationality, ethnicity, religion, age and gender. This includes careless and intentional degradation, humiliation, harassment and assault.

Victims have the right to file a complaint. Several contact people and offices are responsible, such as superiors, works councils, youth representative, women's advancement co-ordinator or the personnel referent. Their responsibility is immediate or within one week after the incident is known. Their role is to advise and support those involved, to investigate and record the incident, to inform bodies and recommend measures. It is stated that submission of a complaint must not lead to disadvantages for the victim. Confidentiality has to be ensured.

Measures to be taken in the event of discriminative or other unwanted conduct in this regard are grouped in informal and formal sanctions. Informal sanctions may consist of verbal warnings, cautions or lectures. Formal sanctions apply according to work legislation, such as re-assignment, written warning or dismissal.

Equal opportunities are promoted mainly through training and personnel, and organisational measures that take into account the diversity of employees. Examples would be language courses for foreign workers or courses for their German colleagues addressing a better understanding of the needs and culture of foreign workers. Training programmes for superiors and election of moderators are mentioned, as well as a fair and balanced organisation of tasks and working time.

Management and works councils together are responsible for the implementation of the policy and the related programmes. The written policy is communicated to all staff.

One paragraph elaborates on the monitoring of the policy implementation and its evaluation: once a year a report on partnership-based conduct has to be presented to the works council, involving the women's advancement co-ordinator; the employer will recommend improvement measures to be taken on the basis of situational analysis in consultation with the works council; the results of the report, recommendations and measures are communicated to the staff through assemblies or internal publication media.

Case 4: *Environmental intervention: The CPTED technique* **— Social Services, Amsterdam, Netherlands (TNO Arbeid, forthcoming)**

This is an example of a prevention strategy, with measures implemented by the Social Services in Amsterdam. It addresses the risk of client-initiated violence and is oriented towards the technique

of 'crime prevention through environmental design' (CPTED). The CPTED approach includes strategies such as 'target hardening' and 'improved surveillance', aimed at eliminating hazards through redesign of the work site.

It is known from studies in criminal sciences that a pleasant, well-maintained environment is likely to reduce aggression, whereas certain physical factors may trigger or exacerbate stressful situations (Department of Health, UK, 2000b; Mayhew and Chappell, 2001). Preventive measures taken in the Amsterdam example start in the careful location of offices to ensure easy access for the public and in providing enough car parking space. The interior of the building and offices are created with respect to client-friendliness: signs to direct the way, a clear waiting-number system and provision of facilities, such as coffee automat and telephone. The waiting zones offer special space for children to play and entertainment for clients, such as TV and reading materials. The colours used create a calming atmosphere.

For the safety of employees, special attention has been given to the fixtures. Social Services developed, in co-operation with a design consultancy, special office furniture that improves the safety of staff, ergonomic and client-friendly at the same time. Two types of offices are available: counters and conversation rooms. Counters are designed to be broad enough so that an employee cannot be touched by a client and high enough so that nobody can jump over them. On the client side, a separation to the neighbouring place is constructed to provide privacy, enhanced by noise-absorbing materials. There is enough space for two clients to stand side by side. Equipment, such as monitors, is fixed to the counters and protected. In addition, there is a possibility to place safety glass between the employee and client. In conversation rooms, the desk size is dedicated to safety, being broad and high. A second exit is installed wherever possible. The desks are flexible and can be adjusted either to standing or to sitting conversations, if needed. Standing conversations tend to be shorter in time.

Security measures installed are alarms at the counter workplaces, as well as CCTV (closed circuit television/video system). Clients are informed of the CCTV and this has a deterring effect. Security personnel are employed to support staff (temporarily at high-risk times of the year or permanently in high-risk areas), which also has a deterring effect.

Besides the environmental interventions, measures for safe work practices have been implemented. One of the measures concerns the selection of employees, trying to ensure that only those are chosen who are capable of coping with difficult situations and people in distress. In addition, every new employee receives initial training on how to handle aggressive behaviour.

Working practices to prevent violence include the reduction of waiting times for clients, as well as the traceability of workers going on home visits (they must check out and leave an address where they are going and when they will return). In case the worker does not return in the agreed time frame, someone goes to look if help is needed.

Clients are informed of the code of conduct and the consequences of aggressive or violent behaviour towards employees.

Evaluation of the interventions

■ Reporting and recording procedures are in place to monitor the incidence rate and the effectiveness of measures in order to adjust and improve interventions where necessary. It has to be noted that the management of the strategy is organised in a decentralised way, so that each of the 19 offices evaluates and implements interventions according to the specific local situation. The central personnel office provides a checklist for recording incidents.

■ The results of the strategy are positive in various aspects, having reduced work stress and improved the working environment for employees, as well as improving service delivery for clients. A change in working culture has also been implemented, thus getting experiences with violence out in the open by creating an open communication atmosphere where incidents are discussed among the workers, with a shift away from a victim-blaming culture.

■ It is noted that a crucial success factor for the strategy is keeping it visible and dynamic. As one of the main failure factors, it is stated that many superiors still underestimate the seriousness of the problem.

■ Direct costs for the violence prevention strategy are €275,000 per year, compared to overall indirect violence-related costs (such as sickness leave) estimated at €900,000 per year.

Case 5: *Safer working practices* — Ulster Community and Hospitals, Health and Social Services (HSS) Trust (Department of Health, UK, 2000c)
Improving working practices, especially for staff working with the public, is a core intervention in violence prevention, as recommended in many guidelines (Wiskow, 2002). Staff working in the community in particular have to rely on safe working practices rather than being protected by environmental measures.

The Ulster HSS Trust developed new working standards to handle aggression after a staff survey had shown that the majority of health workers had experienced aggressive events in the previous two years. A participatory approach was chosen and a multidisciplinary working group established. The involvement of staff in drawing up policies has been crucial for their implementation and sustainability. The working group aimed to develop guidelines for staff, to serve as a basis for auditing actual practices and to give recommendations for the development of a training programme for all staff in the Trust.

As one of the results, a working standard was agreed upon for four key areas:

■ **Prevention**. Each worker will have an understanding of strategies aimed at the prevention of aggressive incidents.

■ **Management of aggressive behaviours**. Each worker will be trained in a repertoire of knowledge, values and personal skills.

■ **Debriefing measures**. After an incident, debriefing will consist of an assessment of individual staff members' needs and a response plan according to these needs.

■ **Corporate values**. Each staff member is requested to respect the individual and his/her inherent worth.

Furthermore, for each standard a set of key elements was identified and each element broken down into practical recommendations. The key elements of the 'Prevention' standard are described here

in detail:

Element 1: Staff members will plan and prepare appropriately for direct client contact.
Recommendations:

■ ensure to have detailed and accurate referral information prior to initial direct contact with the client;

■ obtain information on usual behaviour patterns of clients if already known;

■ be aware of risk assessment processes and undertake a risk assessment where possible.

Element 2: Staff should be aware of how their own behaviour may trigger an aggressive outburst.
Recommendations:

■ be aware of the impact of non-verbal communication during interactions with clients;

■ be aware of the impact of self-presentation, e.g. dress, badges, etc.

Element 3: Staff members will interact with clients in a manner that minimises the likelihood of an aggressive incident occurring.
Recommendations:

■ be punctual for appointments with clients and inform in advance if appointments have to be postponed or cancelled;

■ accept the client's right to feel angry and attempt to discuss the cause of the anger;

■ use listening skills to show the client that they are being heard.

**Case 6: *Managing diversity: Participative prevention of discrimination and harassment —
GIANT Europe Manufacturing BV, Netherlands (TNO Arbeid, forthcoming)***
GIANT is a bicycle manufacturer, which relocated the production for the European market from Taiwan to the Netherlands in 1996. The enterprise introduced a strategy addressing all forms of internal violence and harassment, with emphasis on sexual harassment and discrimination. This strategy is an integral part of the overall personnel management policy. As staff consist of 22 different nationalities, the need for managing this diversity positively became clear. The emphasis of the policy is prevention — promotion of a culture of open communication and respect for the diversity of persons. A zero tolerance statement regarding violence and harassment is clearly communicated to every staff member from the beginning.

Major efforts are made on prevention and maintenance of a good working atmosphere, with the main preventive instruments being:

■ *Workshops*: Several workshops are organised every year, discussing such subjects as job satisfaction and quality. Workshops are obligatory for every employee, being organised within working time and lasting for a couple of hours each. As a result of the workshops, all rules and regulations concerning conduct and communication at work have been developed together with all staff members.

■ *Meetings*: Meetings are organised every two weeks, giving staff the opportunity to talk about their feelings and problems in general.

■ *Communication*: Every new worker receives a folder with introductory information, including

the code of conduct and zero tolerance statement. Other channels to communicate the message to staff are blackboards and an internal newsletter.

■ *Leadership*: All superiors are informed of the strategy and trained on management of violence and harassment.

Grievance procedures are also in place. Victims can report to their direct supervisor, an external workers' representative or the internal social worker. The personnel manager has responsibility for measures to be taken. Procedures may vary between mediation and official investigation, and sanctions are clearly regulated. Victim support is ensured through the internal social worker.

The policy has been developed and implemented through middle management, who have to deal with it in their daily work, hence ensuring their support. Workers have been involved in formulating the norms and values described above. Sustainability of the policy is achieved through the ongoing participatory process of communication, which includes the yearly evaluation being discussed in the workshops. As a positive result, management states that a good working atmosphere scores high as a value among staff. Costs of the strategy are included in the personnel budget and cannot clearly be taxed apart. The structural costs of workshops, meetings and communication, however, are estimated to be paid back in terms of overall benefits.

Case 7: *Community-based action addressing potential perpetrators* — Bremen Tram Company (Bremer Straßenbahn, BSAG) (Nowak *et al*, 2002)

This is a promising example of a community-based intervention, aimed at addressing risks of violence at local level using a participatory approach. The Bremen Tram Company, a public transport company in a northern German medium-sized city, has implemented comprehensive strategies to address the problem of internal and external violence, including prevention, intervention and rehabilitation measures. The description focuses on one remarkable initiative taken voluntarily by driving staff of the company to address the risk of external violence and aggression towards staff.

In one area of the town known as a 'hot spot' or problematic social environment, conflicts emerged between young people and the staff of the tram company. The lack of leisure facilities for young people in the area led to a situation where one of the company's terminal stations was being used as a meeting point for the bored youth. The situation escalated, with vandalism, threats against clients and assaults towards staff. Police intervention was increasingly necessary, with a major intervention likely if damages and threats did not stop.

At this stage, a voluntary multicultural project team, founded in 1996 by employees to address conflicts with the youth under the slogan 'Communication instead of Confrontation', initiated co-operation with all parties concerned to solve the problem. They developed a community-based action at the terminal station, involving young people and other citizens of the area, as well as community services such as the Social Services and police. Together, they built a meeting point for the youth, with a shelter from the weather, organised get-togethers, meetings and discussions.

The outcome of this initiative has been very positive, with the main effects observed being the parties getting to know each other and thus creating a better mutual understanding of the day-to-day problems of all those involved and a willingness to look for solutions in cases of conflict.

Results for the company include:

- improvement of the working environment at the terminal station, with staff feeling safer;

- increased client satisfaction; and

- 30% reduction in damages due to vandalism, accounting for €300,000 per year.

Case 8: *Community integration: Partnership with the police* — Mid Cheshire Hospitals, NHS Trust (Department of Health, UK, 2000c)

Emergency departments are known to be at extreme risk of violence and harassment against staff. In one of the NHS Trust's hospitals in the UK, the levels of abuse were increasing so much that they were becoming part of daily work and the effects on employees were significant, describing themselves as becoming 'punch drunk'. Only the most serious incidents were reported.

Initial measures included the introduction of security cameras and protection screens for staff. However, this did not show sufficient results in reducing violent incidents and the physical and verbal abuse continued. Subsequently, a partnership with the local police was initiated. In the beginning, a police presence in the emergency department was agreed for Friday and Saturday nights, as well as for all nights over the Christmas and New Year periods. These times had been identified as those when staff were particularly at risk. The police presence was very successful not only in reducing the incidents of violence and harassment, but also in improving staff morale.

Encouraged by these positive effects, a next step was to relocate a police base in the hospital area itself, right besides the emergency department. Accommodation and car parking facilities are provided by the hospital, while the police carry all other expenses. This intervention has resulted in great mutual benefit, achieved at a low cost rate. Police are present now between 8.00am and 2.00am every day, which has had a deterrent effect on violence and harassment against staff. In addition, hospital employees feel reassured and greatly appreciate the police staff, leading to improved relationships between hospital and police, and a better understanding of each other's procedures.

Secondary intervention: Responding to violent incidents

Secondary intervention measures include responses in the event of a violent incident and effective reporting procedures. Compared to preventive measures, materials documenting good practice on immediate responses were hardly found. It has to be noted, however, that sometimes prevention and response overlap. The two examples presented below describe a guide for employees in risk situations and an instrument for reporting violent incidents.

Case 9: *Employee safety first: An employee security guide for potential situations of risk* — Dublin Bus, Ireland (1999)

The exposure of employees in public transport companies to confrontation with the public is particularly high. The Risk Management Department of Dublin Bus in Ireland published and distributed a guide for employees on what to do in potential conflict situations with third parties. This booklet describes 14 general scenarios faced frequently by driving and supervising staff, and provides recommendations. Each scenario is presented on a separate page, following by a standard structure — title of the scenario, employees most affected, brief description of scenario and

explanations, and recommendations on what to do. The information is succinct and easy to read. Scenarios covered include robberies, cash-handling, checking tickets, different situations of client conflicts and how to call assistance. Where possible, clear instructions are given and formulated as pointers, for example, 'In the case of robbery — CO-OP', an acronym for 'Concentrate, Obey, Observe and Preserve'. The overall message to all employees is to put their personal safety first.

Case 10: *Simplify Reporting: The Violent Incident Form for Health Sector Workplaces —* **Karolinska Institute, Division for Occupational and Environmental Health, Stockholm, Sweden (Arnetz, 1998a; Arnetz and Arnetz, 2000; Swedish Council for Work Life Research, 1996)**

In response to alarming numbers of violent incidents against health personnel, a research team at Sweden's Karolinska Institute conducted a research and intervention project. As part of this project, the Violent Incident Form (VIF) was developed as a practical tool for the measurement of all forms of patient-initiated violence towards staff. The instrument uses a broad definition of violence, including verbal abuse and threats, and covers minor incidents resulting in minor injuries. The VIF complements the official work injury report forms and aims to simplify the recording of violent incidents. It consists of a checklist of 20 items in a multiple-choice format, designed to summarise information on the incident, including time and place, details of the aggressor, the circumstances, the immediate response, the victim's injuries or reactions, and details of the victim.

In the frame of a controlled, longitudinal intervention study, the VIF tool was integrated into daily work routines at 47 health sector workplaces in Greater Stockholm, covering a representative national sample of registered nurses. The intervention included analysis of violent incidents and their discussion at the victim's workplace. The objective was to increase staff awareness of triggers of aggressive behaviours and to improve the coping skills of all staff.

The main results of the intervention project show that:

- the VIF instrument has satisfactory content validity and reliability;

- regular registration and review of violent events is an effective method to increase the understanding of violence in healthcare settings;

- staff reported better awareness of risks and how to handle aggressive patients; and

- a simple record instrument contributes to reduction of under-reporting: 50% more incidents were reported by the intervention group in comparison to the control group.

However, the study was not able to answer if increased awareness and better violence management skills would lead to a decrease in the number of violent incidents, in the one-year time frame of the research project. As a practical result of the project, several work sites continued to use the VIF instrument, having incorporated it into their workplace routines. An additionally planned follow-up will show whether this was a temporary trend or whether the VIF has proved to be a useful instrument in the management of violence at the health workplace.

Tertiary intervention: Treatment and rehabilitation

Once a violent incident has occurred, the treatment of the victim should be a priority concern. Other measures to follow up incidents are complaint and grievance procedures, as well as any

rehabilitative procedures aimed at establishing a normal working life for the victim and all those involved. Elements of complaint procedures are an integral part of company policies. The two examples presented below focus on the support of victims — one conceptualised for victims of internal violence and the other for those of external violence.

Case 11: *Counselling in cases of sexual harassment and mobbing* — Sexual Harassment and Mobbing Advice Centre, University of Vienna, Austria (Bukowska and Schnepf, 2001)

The Sexual Harassment and Mobbing Advice Centre was founded in April 2001, initiated by the Vice-Director of the Department for Human Resources and Women Promotion, following the alarming results of two studies, which revealed the high incidence rates of sexual harassment and mobbing at academic institutions in Austria. According to Bukowska and Schnepf (2001), it is the first advice centre of its kind at any Austrian university and hence may serve as a model for other such institutions. The Austrian Ministry of Science is funding this pilot project temporarily for a period of two years.

The main aim of the advice centre is to be a first refuge for victims of sexual harassment, racial harassment and mobbing. The centre is open to all employees and students of the university. It is operated by a female psychotherapist and social worker, under the responsibility of the Department for Women Promotion, and supported by a female lawyer. Information on the services of the advice centre, how to access it and basic information on sexual harassment and mobbing are published on the Internet, making it easily accessible for all members of the university.

The interventions are focused on debriefing and psycho-social counselling, face to face or by telephone, but legal advice and support are also offered. The services include:

■ crisis intervention: clarification of the situation and the necessary support, information on possible measures within the university or externally, referring to external long-term counsel for as long as required;

■ support in the decision-making process about any legal action to be taken; and

■ case-specific legal advice after clarification of the situation.

The service is free of charge, confidential and anonymous. A hotline is offered twice a week for initial contact. Appointments for personal counselling have to be arranged in advance in order to preserve anonymity. The advice centre is a measure of victim support on a voluntary basis. It is clearly stated that this service is not authorised to take any action to intervene or sanction, but informs what can be done.

Up to now, 100 consultations have been conducted, which is a high frequency for this kind of new initiative at an university. The majority (75%) of clients are female and 42% are aged between 40 and 50 years. The proportion of clients is balanced between support and scientific staff. One interesting finding is that 80% of the alleged perpetrators are in a superior position to the victim.

The work is evaluated on a continuous basis. Since it is a pilot project, monitoring and evaluation are important elements of the activities. The evaluation is carried out by two social scientists, using anonymised documentation that was developed for this project as well as regular interviews with the social worker and with users on a voluntary basis. The information is analysed and

documented in evaluation reports in order to identify any needs for changes of concept or improvement of work.

The effects of the project are very promising. Clients appreciate the concept of a first crisis intervention for orientation and information on how to proceed further, as well as other informal support. University management appreciates the service as additional support for other departments concerned with conflicts of personnel.

Case 12: *A centre for post-traumatic support* — **RATP, Metro Company, Paris (ANACT, 2000)**
The RATP, Metro Company in Paris created a centre for the psychological support of violence victims (Institut d'Accompagnement Psychologique Post-Traumatique or IAPPT) in 1999 as a response to the high rate of violent incidents towards its staff from the public. Support is organised on two levels:

■ a hotline for immediate debriefing after a violent incident. This service is offered on a 24/7 basis to ensure permanent accessibility; and

■ middle and long-term counselling services, including experts on post-trauma treatment.

The IAPPT is authorised to decide on sick leave for employees when required. It has to be highlighted that this was an important innovation at that time within the French social security regulations. The company RATP was the first employer to recognise officially that violent incidents were an occupational health risk. The urgent need for the psychological support provided is reflected in the extraordinarily high user rates — in 1999 a total of 700 consultations had been conducted in a 3-month period.

Issues to be considered

Preventive interventions are mostly represented in the good practice documentation. Though experts and literature agree that prevention is a priority for all action addressing violence at work, the question arises whether the attention given to secondary and tertiary interventions is sufficient.

An information gap is apparent concerning models of evaluation and monitoring. Only a minority of the good practice examples identified detailed procedures to evaluate their effectiveness. Separate models of programme evaluation could not be obtained for this study. This observation confirms the findings of previous studies. For example, Hoel *et al* (2001b) state that evaluation is a weak point of many violence intervention programmes. In accordance with this, Reinhart (1999) found that only 36% of companies responding to an ILO survey had established an evaluation procedure and 43% a monitoring procedure.

As reported in Case 4 above, on 'Environmental intervention' in Amsterdam, a crucial success factor for the sustainability of strategies and interventions is to keep them visible and dynamic on an ongoing basis. A policy, once implemented, has to be maintained and this is partially linked to the open question of evaluation procedures.

Though good practice documentation is becoming more common, model examples addressing violence at work are difficult to identify. The question is — is this an indicator of the reality of the situation or is there a gap between what is done in practice and what is documented? At this stage,

it can only be assumed that many positive models are implemented at enterprise level, which is difficult to access.

Publication of good practices is an important instrument to spread ideas, exchange experiences and inspire action. While guidelines and codes of practice are providing a framework for structures and procedures on a more theoretical basis, examples from the field may serve as 'the salt in the soup' to stimulate more definite action. Additional efforts to collect information on good practices should be encouraged.

Conclusions   *8*

This review of the literature has made a strong case for suggesting that violence and harassment represent very real problems for people at work within European Union countries. However, in order to make sense of the concepts under investigation, it appears to be necessary to make a distinction between physical violence in the form of assaults or threats, on the one hand, and psychological violence, expressed as bullying or harassment on the grounds of gender, race or sexuality, on the other. In this respect, the perpetrator may be a member of the public with or without any legitimate right to be on the premises, as well as a colleague or a member of the organisation. It is also emphasised that persistent exposure to what may individually be considered minor incidents or offences can have a pronounced effect equal to the effects of physical assault. Thus, the insidious effects of bullying and mobbing must be emphasised, where the psychological and behavioural effects of the experience may increase the target's chance of further victimisation.

While levels of knowledge and awareness of these phenomena vary considerably among EU countries, with generally better levels of awareness in northern European countries, the report has documented that understanding is gradually converging across Member States, aided by public debate and recent exchange of information about these problems. The activities of EU bodies and recent legal attempts to tackle these problems have stimulated further interest. In a very short time, comparatively speaking, these issues have captured the imagination of large sections of the population. However, the speed at which these issues have been translated into statutory legal instruments in some countries may also have its drawbacks. Thus, the impact of such changes may be more profound where the legal changes are the product of, or at least accompanied by, a public debate on the issues.

While acknowledging that some groups of employees (such as women, young workers and those in precarious employment) are, on the whole, more vulnerable to violence than their counterparts, the report distances itself from simplistic explanations of violence, which tend to focus on personality characteristics and profiles of offenders as well as of victims. By contrast, it is argued that only a holistic model, integrating individual, situational, organisational and societal or socio-economic factors, can reflect the complexity of the phenomena under investigation. Such a model must also capture the dynamics of the processes involved, where action and reaction are often tightly interwoven and where outcomes may not always be fully predicted. Still, it is unlikely that a single model or framework will fully account for all types of violence, physical and physiological. Thus, in order to fully explain harassment on the grounds of gender, race and sexuality, one may have to draw on more ideologically anchored theories and models.

High levels of physical violence appear to be closely associated with particular situational factors, many of which are associated with the type of work undertaken, and thus cannot easily be removed. In contrast, many of the organisational factors identified as antecedents of violence and harassment may be under the control of the organisation and thus susceptible to influence and change. Again, in contrast, where workplace violence is associated with the presence of socio-economic factors, such as illegal immigration and a large informal economic sector, any attempts to influence events must primarily come from sources external to the organisation. In such cases, appropriate EU bodies must take up the challenge to make a concerted effort to intervene.

An examination of the empirical evidence suggests that some sectors are at higher risk of violence and harassment than others. Thus, to some extent, the risk of violence can be predicted. However, no sector or industry is fully proofed against violence. When patterns of exposure to violence were

explored, it also emerged that, on the whole and without minimising the impact of physical violence, it appears to be various forms of psychological violence that constitute the most significant problem to employees across EU countries. Moreover, in many cases the presence of violence at work appears to be on the increase, particularly when a long-term perspective is taken. It is too early to tell whether this is a true reflection of the situation or simply a reflection of growing awareness of the problem. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that fear of violence and victimisation represents a problem in its own right to a growing number of people.

The negative effects of violence on individuals and organisations are fully documented. The evidence suggests that violence of all types, including fear of violence, would manifest itself mentally, physically and behaviourally, with an impairment of health and well-being as a result. As far as the more severe cases are concerned, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) appears to be a common outcome. The evidence linking experience of violence to organisational outcomes, such as increased absence, turnover rates and reduced productivity, is also increasing and accounts for a very substantial sum of money. The fact that third parties or witnesses of violence may also be affected further emphasises the importance of getting to grips with these problems. Moreover, as far as psychological violence is concerned, harassment and bullying may be considered the antithesis or opposite pole of valuing diversity, which effectively would undermine attempts to utilise fully an organisation's pool of skills and talents.

While in most EU countries, particularly in central and northern Europe, a number of initiatives have been taken to prevent and reduce the effects of violence, much less effort has so far been channelled into preventing psychological violence. However, as documented in Chapter 7 of the report, there is no reason to believe that a risk-assessment approach (as has often successfully been applied to hazards of a physical nature, i.e. physical violence) should not be equally applicable to psychological violence. For both types of violence, however, any approach that integrates a focus on prevention, protection and treatment is more likely to be successful where the workforce is fully involved at all stages of the intervention process. In any case, it must be an important objective to share best practice as widely as possible, particularly where such practices have been successfully monitored and evaluated (which for the most part has not been the case to date).

Finally, the authors of this report would like to stress that there appears to be considerable resistance to the idea that harassment of a psychological nature, in particular harassment corresponding to the labels 'bullying' and 'mobbing', should be considered work-related hazards, equal in importance to other hazards in the work environment such as physical violence. It is in the interests of all parties — employers and employees — to create as stress-free a working environment as possible. We hope that this report will make a contribution to raising awareness of what is a moral, as well as a work environment-related, issue.

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