



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG

Social Dialogue, Social Rights, Working Conditions, Adaptation to Change  
**Social Dialogue, Industrial Relations**

### **European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee in Local and Regional Government**

*Report of working group meeting on 28 October 2008 on “Tackling Third Party Violence  
in local and regional government”*

#### **1. Presentation of the Communication on the European Sectoral Social Dialogue**

**Jean-Paul Tricart**, new head of unit “Social Dialogue, Industrial Relations” in the European Commission, introduced himself and presented the future Communication on the European Sectoral Social Dialogue and especially the Consultation of social partners that will underpin the new Communication amongst other contributions. Mr Tricart expressed his wish to draft the Communication prior to summer 2009 with a view to have it adopted in September 2009. Mr Tricart raised some issues that the Consultation might help to clarify:

- Implementation of agreements;
- Lack of visibility;
- Inactive sectors;
- Pressure of tight financial and human resources (especially when the number of involved sectors will be increased).

Questions from the social partners to the European Commission within the Consultation are welcome. A preliminary analysis of responses should be available early 2009.

#### **2. Presentation of the EU Healthy Workplaces campaign: promoting prevention through risk assessments**

**Malgorzata Milczarek**, project manager in the European Risk Observatory Unit at the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), presented the EU-OSHA campaign on risk assessments. This campaign promotes risk assessment with material in 22 languages, one of the tools is a PowerPoint presentation on work-related stress, which Ms Milczarek presented to the working group. A report will be published in 2009, followed by a workshop in autumn 2009 to discuss results and to explore concrete measures how to tackle third party violence and harassment.

Third party violence is one cause for work-related stress and it is often encountered in education and health sectors, in public administration and the defence sector. This was found out with a questionnaire focused on third party violence and harassment at work to focal points. EU-OSHA has focal points in every Member State and in EFTA countries, often as organs of ministries or labour inspectorates. They identify national experts,

disseminate information and provide statistical data. To avoid third party violence (as well as other risks), risk assessment can be done in most contexts in five steps:

- Identify the hazards and those at risk;
- Evaluate and prioritise the risks;
- Decide on preventive action;
- Take action;
- Monitor and review.

Even though risk assessment is an employers' task, it is most effective when employees are involved. More information on: <http://osha.europa.eu/en/campaigns/hw2008>

### 3. Case studies from CEMR/EPSU members

#### ➤ Overview of UK experience in tackling third party violence

*Steve Sumner*, health and safety policy adviser at LGE (Local Government Employers), presented the UK legal framework and sources of national data regarding violence. Local and regional governments are very much concerned by third party violence, because there is a proportion of jobs that interface with the public. But it is difficult to estimate the scope of the problem because of under reporting.

The approach to prevent and manage violence:

- Incident reporting;
- Decide on action to take;
- Take action;
- Tell customers your policy (→ no tolerance);
- Support victims.

The autonomous social partner agreement on work related violence is in a first draft stage and will definitely cover third party violence.

#### ➤ Presentation of case studies from the UK and Sweden

##### Case study from Hertfordshire:

*James Ottery*, health and safety (education) team manager from Hertfordshire County Council, presented the case study with *Peter Wootton*, health and safety officer at UNISON, who was sick.

Mr Ottery informed us that the social care sector is most concerned by third party violence and that the Hertfordshire County Council tries to minimise this risk by early intervention:

- Personnel safety training (early warning signs, avoiding violent situations, de-escalating situations);
- Use of technology (cyber trace phones, panic buttons, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) etc).

Mr Ottery explained how these and other measures were taken for child protection suites, for school security and in mobile or one-staff libraries.

Concerning the job design, there are possibilities to reduce the risk:

- Risk assessment and care plans;
- Flagging system (information about aggressive customers, for example if he/she is especially aggressive towards women etc.)
- Information sharing with other agencies;
- Security arrangements for those working alone.

Case study from Stockholm:

*Anna Björkdahl*, project manager, and *Olof Leijon*, mental health worker, presented the Stockholm County Threat and Violence Project, based on the so-called Bergen model to train psychiatric nurses and mental health workers on violence prevention and management.

The Bergen training model includes theory, physical techniques and role-play. But most important is the fact that staff members become trainers to teach their colleagues which allows them to really bring theory and practice together and to act as a team in difficult situations.

The project includes the evaluation of violence-related injuries, a survey on perceived safety on the ward before and after the training and interviews on the effectiveness of the Bergen model. The project will go on at least during 2009.

Comment from the audience: In Norway this and similar models are used in more than half of all municipalities to improve services etc.

**4. Update on the implementation of the EU cross-sectoral agreement on violence and harassment at national level**

Tour de table:

Sweden: The Framework Agreement is translated and made available to the entire labour market in a bilingual (Swedish / English) brochure. The Local Authority and Regional Work Environment Council has selected one employer and two union representatives to coordinate strategic issues involving implementation of Framework Agreements and Programs in this sector.

Finland: The Framework Agreement is translated into Finnish and a working group has been set up.

Denmark: The Framework Agreement was implemented as part of the collective bargaining in the public sector in spring 2008. At regional level, works councils in each region will have to establish guidelines on how to prevent, identify and manage violence and harassment at the workplace. At local level, there are discussions on how to bring these guidelines into life.

UK: Individual local and regional authorities have already done projects on violence and harassment.

Estonia: The Framework Agreement will be translated.

Norway: The Framework Agreement is translated but not yet distributed.

## **5. State of play of the multi-sectoral initiative on third party violence, planned activities and next steps**

*François Ziegler*, European Commission, explained that on third party violence 4 sectors are involved so far (local and regional government, private security, commerce and hospital).

HOSPEEM, leader on the employers' side of the project "Respect" for a multi-sectoral initiative on third party violence, is expecting a decision whether the bid will be approved in the near future. There would be a research phase from December 2008 to June 2009 with a joint conference in October 2009 to present the results. The next meeting will be in December.

*Kelvin Scorer*, LGE, stated that there is still the question why there should be a multi-sector initiative when the problem of third party violence is already dealt with at national level. And it is still not agreed what kind of action should be taken (an agreement, guidelines etc.). Even in the end of a successful project "Respect" these issues have to be clarified.

## **6. Presentation of recommendations concerning insecurity in local public transport**

*Jean Dekindt*, UITP, explained that the recommendations were signed in 2003 by UITP (Union Internationale des Transports Publics), IRU (International Road transport Union), ETF (European Transport's worker's Federation), CEEP and CER (Communauté Européenne du Rail). Studies showed that in some cities steps had been taken to tackle the problem of violence before, but not within Social Dialogue.

5 cities (Antwerp, Barcelona, Berlin, Stockholm and Valenciennes) were involved. For each city a study report was published. In the final summary report good practices are presented in the fields of:

- Prevention;
- Repression;
- Damages.

The recommendations and the report do not only tackle third party violence, but violence in various forms:

- Vandalism;
- Incivility;
- Theft;
- Aggression.

## **7. Debate and conclusions**

Participants concluded that it was a successful workshop and that the good practices presented could be of use in future work. But there is still the problem how to address countries that are not involved (the transport sector faces the same problem), especially New Member States. In this context participants were shortly informed about the workshop and plenary meeting in Bratislava on 11 and 12 December.