RESPECT

Effective approaches to tackling third party violence in the workplace

REPORT

by GHK - Consulting Ltd

Birmingham Office
30 St Paul's Square
Birmingham
**B3 1QZ**

HOSPEEM

RESPECT

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 POLICY BACKGROUND

Research carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in the European Working Conditions Survey indicates that approximately one in ten workers in the European Union report that they have suffered violence, bullying or harassment at work in the previous year (results 2005 survey). According to data from the survey, third party violence at the hands of clients, customers or patients is more common than violence suffered at the hands of work colleagues (Table 1). Certain countries (including the UK, France, Finland, the Netherlands and Ireland) appear to find themselves more prone to third party violence than others (e.g. Italy, Hungary, Cyprus and Bulgaria). The differences between countries in this regard have not been sufficiently investigated or explained.

Figure 1: % of workers exposed to violence in previous 12 months
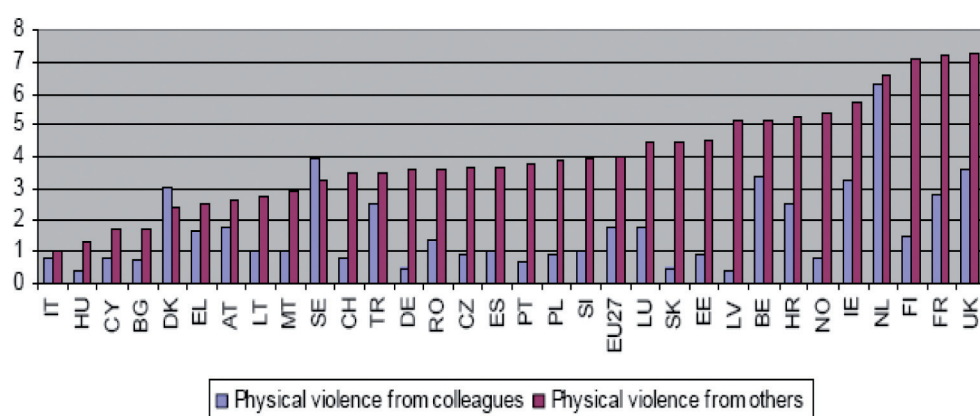
Source: Presentation by John Hurley, European Foundation, Multi-sectoral conference on third party violence, 14 March 2008

Threats of violence and actual violence from third parties are most common in a number of sectors including health and social work, transport, public administration, and education, but are also widespread in other sectors including retail and private security (Table 2).

Table 1: Violence at work: the most exposed sectors and occupations in the EU

Sector	%	Occupation	%
Health and social work	15.2	Life sciences and health professionals	15.3
Land transport; Transport via piplelines	11.5	Personal and protective service workers	14.6
Public administration and defence	10.8	Life science and health associate professionals	13.4
Hotels and restaurants	8.1	Drivers and mobile plant operators	9.5
Education	7.9	Customer service clercks	8.2
Other service activities	5.2	Teaching professionals	7.6

Source: European Foundation, European Working Conditions Survey (2005)

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The impact on the mental and physical health of worker of such experiences is significant and ranges from distress and feelings of humiliation suffered to actual severe physical injury (or even death) and severe mental trauma often leading to long absences from work (and associated lost productivity) and difficulties with staff retention. Table 3 shows the significance of the problem of violence and harassment in the workplace in relation to overall absence due to work related health problems, as well as the magnitude of the number of days lost per year.

Figure 2: Days absence due to work-related health problems (proportions of workers absent and number of day absence)
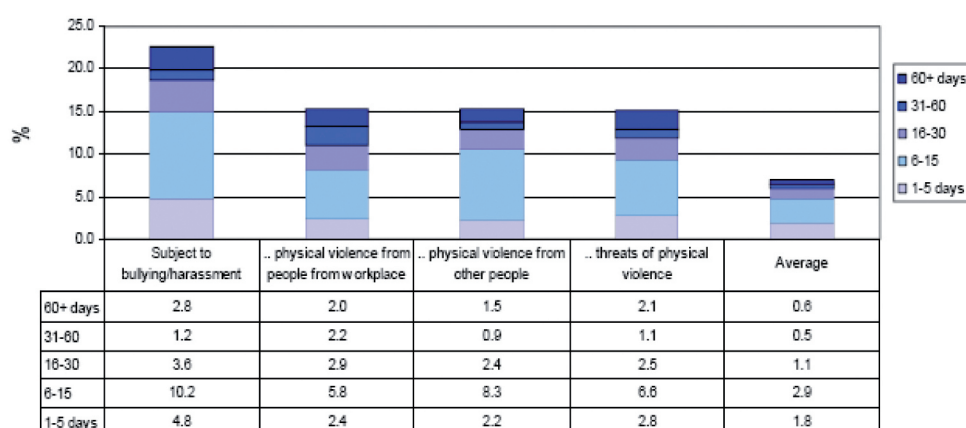
Source: Presentation by John Hurley, European Foundation, Multi-sectoral conference on third party violence, 14 March 2008

	Subject to bullying/harassment	.. physical violence from people from workplace	.. physical violence from other people	.. threats of physical violence	Average
60+ days	2.8	2.0	1.5	2.1	0.6
31-60	1.2	2.2	0.9	1.1	0.5
16-30	3.6	2.9	2.4	2.5	1.1
6-15	10.2	5.8	8.3	6.8	2.9
1-5 days	4.8	2.4	2.2	2.8	1.8

The cross-sectoral social partners BusinessEurope, ETUC, CEEP and UEAPME already recognised the importance of the issue of violence and harassment in the workplace in their autonomous framework agreement on work-related stress, signed in October 2004. Considered as one of the important sources of stress in the workplace, it was seen to be sufficiently significant to warrant a separate autonomous framework agreement. A joint seminar on harassment in the workplace was organised in 2005 as part of the 2003-2005 work programme of the cross-sectoral social partners. At the same time, the European Commission launched its consultation on the issue of violence at work, which strongly emphasised the importance of tackling third party violence. In their 2006-2008 cross-sectoral social partner work programme BusinessEurope, ETUC, CEEP and UEAPME committed themselves to negotiating an autonomous framework agreement on harassment and violence. Negotiations started in February 2006 and ended in April 2007. The agreement reached[1] underlines that harassment and violence are unacceptable and it is in the common interest of the social partners to address the issue as it can have serious social and economic consequences. The cross-sectoral agreement moves on to emphasise the importance of existing health and safety regulation which defines an employers' duty to protect workers against harassment and violence in the workplace. In its introduction, the agreement specifically refers to third party violence and harassment as one of the areas to be addressed, but is not later referred to in more detail, leaving it up to national social partners to decide whether to cover this aspect in their implementation agreements.

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[1] The text of the cross-sectoral social partner framework agreement can be found on
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/dsw/public/actRetrieveText.do?id=8446

The cross-sectoral agreement aims to raise awareness of the issue and provide employers, workers and their representatives with an action-oriented framework to identify, prevent and manage problems of harassment and violence at work. It goes on to describe the phenomenon; how to prevent, identify and manage it; as well as setting out the implementation and follow-up process of the agreement.

National member organisation of the cross-sectoral social partner are currently in the process of implementing the agreements at national level in accordance with procedures and practices specific to management and labour in the EU and EEA countries. The deadline for implementation is April 2010.

Since the cross-sectoral social partner agreement on violence and harassment in the workplace leaves it up to national implementation to decide whether to include the issue of third party violence, a number of European sectoral social partners decided that the issue was of sufficient concern for them to consider the possibility of a multi-sectoral approach to raising awareness of the problem and encouraging prevention and the development of policies and partnership solutions at the national level. A first informal meeting was held on 28 June 2007, which was followed by another meeting co-ordinated by the European Commission on 20 September 2007. This was attended by employers' organisations from the postal, commerce, hospital and local government sector, as well as by trade unions from the postal, education, hospital, local government and commerce sectors. As a result, it was decided that a declaration of intent should be send to all relevant sectoral social partners, which would allow them to indicate the importance of dealing with the issue in recognition of the existing cross-sectoral social partner agreement and to commit to a multi-sectoral approach to addressing it. This would start with the organisation of a technical seminar to discuss the context of the issue of third party violence as well as a number of examples of dealing with this issue at local level.

The declaration of intent was signed by EPSU, HOSPEEM, CEMR, Uni-Europa and EuroCommerce, who were later joined by CoESS, representing employers in the private security sector.

The technical multi-sectoral seminar on third party violence was held on 14 March 2008. At the seminar, the European Commission expressed its support for a multisectoral initiative on this issue; the cross-sectoral social partners presented the history, aim and content of their autonomous framework agreement; the European Foundation provided statistical information on the prevalence of violence and harassment in the workplace and third party violence in particular from their surveys; and case studies and existing tools to deals with the issue were presented from the private security, commerce, local government and hospital sectors[2].

Two follow-up meetings were held subsequent to the technical seminar to discuss how to proceed in relation to a potential multi-sectoral initiative. At a meeting on 4 July 2008, HOSPEEM, CEMR Employers Platform, CoESS, EuroCommerce, EPSU and UNI-Europa agreed that third party violence at work is a growing mutual concern and recognised that joint action at all levels is necessary to tackle the problems.

[2] See http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/conference_en.htm

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The specific objectives of the project are to follow up on the agreement by HOSPEEM, CEMR Employers Platform, CoESS, EuroCommerce, EPSU and UNIEuropa to explore this subject further in order to establish whether joint multisectoral action is required at European level to help address the challenge of third party violence in the workplace. In doing so, it should build on discussions at the multi-sectoral seminar on third party violence on 14 March 2008 and the multisectoral meetings on 20 September 2007 and 4 July 2008 by gathering further information on how sectoral social partners at the national level are tackling the issue of third party violence in the workplace.

This part of the background research is carried out for the employers' organisations HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and Euro-commerce and is accompanied by complementary research being carried out on behalf of the trade unions EPSU and UniEuropa. The main purpose of this stage of the research is to establish common elements of good practice in tackling third party violence and harassment in the workplace based on existing practices in the European federations' member organisations.

1.3 METHOD

Joint and individual pre-meetings were held on 24th March 2009 to agree the approach to information collection. GHK agreed a questionnaire with HOSPEEM, EuroCommerce, CEMR and CoESS, which was subsequently sent to all their member organisations[3]. An emailed request for information was followed up by telephone to encourage the dissemination of the questionnaire at national level and to maximise response rates. Table 2 presents the number of responses received to date from members of the different partner organisations. Despite follow-up telephone calls, the response rate from some of the partner organisations' affiliates has been quite low. An interim meeting was held for the project on 1 July 2009 at which an appeal for additional responses was made. Further replies were received particularly from CEMR members following the interim meeting, thanks to additional efforts by the CEMR Secretariat to generate replies. Inevitably, a number of questionnaires only contained partial replies, which is reflected in the results presented below. A number of organisations provided their policy documents/training materials dealing with third party violence.

Table 2: **Number of responses received to the employer side questionnaire by 3.8.2009**

| Partner organisation	Number of responses
CEMR	14
CoESS	14
EuroCommerce	16
HOSPEEM	5
Total	49

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[3] A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Annex 1.

2 LEVEL AND IMPACT OF THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

2.1 MONITORING THE INCIDENCE OF THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE

In order to successfully tackle third party violence and harassment in the workplace, it is important that such incidents are regularly monitored. This does not only enable employers to identify whether they have an issue with clients/customers/patients/the public threatening or actually harming staff members and can allow them to target intervention where it is most relevant, but also allows them to assess the impact of any measures taken. Figure 3 below demonstrates that less than half of survey respondents indicated that incidents or third party violence and harassment affecting their staff where regularly monitored[4]. This number may appear surprisingly low, given the importance of the third party violence phenomenon in the participating sectors. However, it must be borne in mind that the level of monitoring indicated by these figures is likely to be skewed by the fact that in a significant number of cases, the responding organisation was the sectoral organisation at national level. Statistics on the number of incidents of third party violence tend to be kept at the local, organisational level are is not necessarily reported "upwards" to the sectoral federation. It is therefore fair to assume that the level of monitoring is likely to be higher in practice that our figures would indicate. Further research would be needed downstream at organisational level in order to verify this assumption and to highlight any differences which might exists between sectors or countries. Such additional research would go beyond the remit of this project.

Figure 3: **Percentage of respondents indicating that incidents of third party violence are monitored/not monitored**
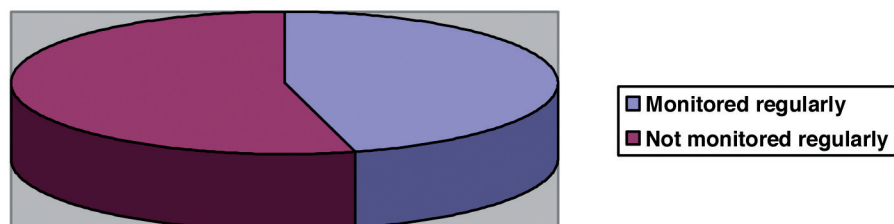
Source: GHK survey of HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and EuroCommerce members (2009)

■ Monitored regularly
■ Not monitored regularly

The number of respondents who were able to provide precise data on the prevalence of third party violence was even lower than the number of those indicating that these incidents were indeed being monitored. This could again be due to the fact that sectoral organisations themselves do not monitor such trends, but will be aware that their individual members at local level do gather relevant information. Where figures were available, the number of incidents reported per annum was particularly striking in the retail, health care and local government sectors with the ratio of reported incidents per employee being somewhat lower in the private security industry. In this regard, the distinctiveness of private security industry must be understood, as it is a sector whose very raison d'être includes allaying potential and actual threats of violent and criminal behaviour. Again, the above indications are not statistically relevant and do not provide a picture of the severity of the violence or harassment suffered.

Figures reported by the European Foundation make it clear that the number of verbal threats and intimidation is significantly higher (though not necessarily any less damaging) than the number of incidents of actual physical harm.

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[4] There are some, statistically not relevant, differences between sectors. Whereas all respondents from the hospital sector indicated that incidents of third party violence are always monitored, just under half of employers from the local and regional government, private security and commerce sectors reported regular monitoring.

Responses to our survey provide a rough indication of trends regarding the level of third party violence in the workplace. Forty percent of respondents respectively either saw an upward trend in third party violence or argued the number incidents varied year on year, while 20% perceived a downward trend.

Figure 4: **Percentage of respondents reporting an upward/downward trend in incidents of third party violence**

Source: GHK survey of HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and EuroCommerce members (2009)

☐ Upward trend
☐ Downward trend
☐ Varies year on year
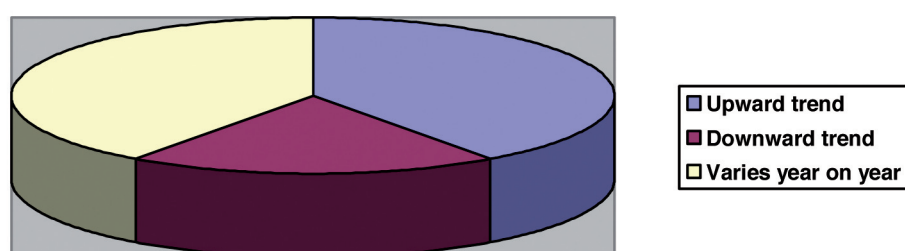
Three key reasons were given for the increase in violent and abusive behaviour by clients, where this was perceived:
> Greater expectations from service providers
> A generally less tolerant and more violent society
> Introduction of policies and sensibilisation of employees has led to higher reporting

All three points could have an impact and feed into the design of policy approaches to tackle the phenomenon, which will be elaborated in section 3 below.

2.2 IMPACT OF THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE

Other surveys, including the European Foundation's European Working Conditions Survey, have already clearly indicated the impact of violence and harassment, including third party violence on individuals in terms of their performance as reflected in levels of absence from the workplace, reduced productivity etc. (quite apart from the impact on their personal well-being and private life). Our survey also sought to gage the impact employers in the four sectors felt resulted from third party violence. Low staff morale was considered to be the most common impact, followed by absences from work and difficulties with staff retention. Other factors specifically highlighted included reduced productivity and increasing costs for psychological treatment.

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Figure 5: Impact of third party violence in the workplace (number of organisations mentioning key impact areas)
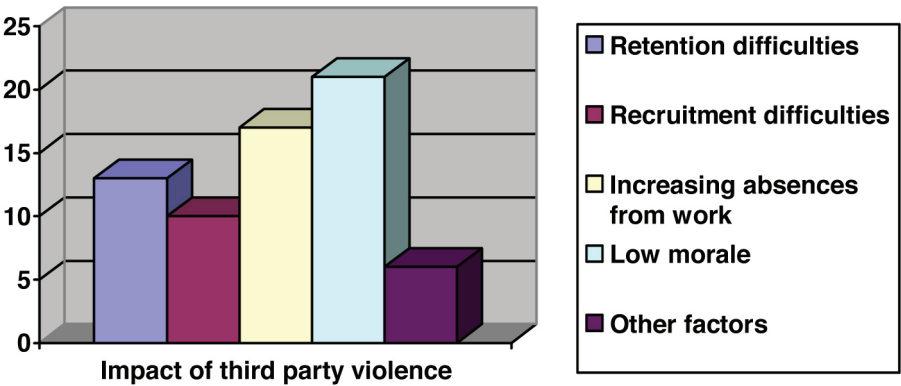
On the whole, the impact of third party violence on the efficiency and effectiveness of organisations as well as employees was considered to be significant. Our next survey question addressed to what extent these concerns have inspired organisations to introduce specific policies to tackle third party violence and harassment.

2.3 PREVALENCE OF POLICIES TO TACKLE THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE

Under existing European and national health and safety regulations, employers have a duty of care towards their employees, which requires them to carry out risk assessments. Although it is more difficult to control the behaviour of third parties (clear disciplinary procedures can be introduced to protect against violence or harassment from other members of staff), certain working environments can be considered to make employees more prone to exposure to violence from clients/customers/service users or other members of the public. This can either be because of the nature of their "client" (for example in mental health care), their interaction (the need to restrict access either to entry, deny access to financial assistance or the need to remove children being only some examples) or the precariousness of the working environment itself (for example for lone workers, night workers or key holders). In such cases, risk assessment should provide an early indication of the need for precautions or interventions. In other situations, the potential threat of third party violence can be less difficult to establish, predict and therefore guard against. As a result of the general requirement for risk assessment, it might be considered unsurprising that despite the significant and increasing trend for the occurrence of such incidents, the number of specific policies developed and reported as part of our survey is relatively small. Figure 6 below shows that only 15 of the 49 respondents indicated that they had developed a specific third party violence and harassment policy[5]. HOSPEEM members were more likely to have a dedicated policy, while CEMR members were least likely to indicate a targeted approach.

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[5] Only 36 respondents answered this question.

However, two things must be borne in mind:
>   The absence of a targeted policy could simply indicate a mainstreamed approach through risk assessment;
>   Those organisations who did not consider third party violence to be a key issues have not invested in drawing up a policy to address the issue

Figure 6: **Number of respondents having developed specific third party violence policy**

Source: GHK survey of HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and EuroCommerce members (2009)
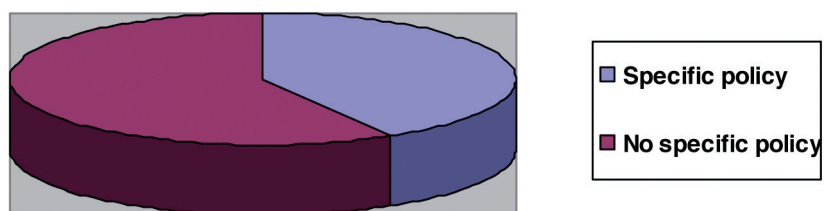
- Specific policy
- No specific policy

3 KEY ELEMENTS OF POLICIES TO TACKLE THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Specific policy approaches to dealing with third party violence and harassment in the workplace differ from organisation to organisation, depending on the precise nature of the service being provided and the level of threat faced by employees. Clearly, many policies also refer directly to relevant national legislation. Having said that, there are also significant similarities in the approaches used. This section will set out the core elements of these policies.

3.1 DEFINITION

While some organisations link their general policies on violence and harassment and dignity at work with their measures to address the specific phenomenon of third party violence, most of the examples submitted for our background research relate to dedicated policies to deal with aggression by service users/customers/the public.

The starting point for many policy approaches is to define what constitutes "unreasonable" behaviour, which would be considered to be unacceptable. Such definitions can include the following:
>   > Harassment on the grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation (some policies define the potential nature of such harassment in more detail)
>   > Verbal abuse or threatening behaviour
>   > Physical violence

Such incidents can be a one-off or repeated, vary in their severity and can constitute criminal offences aimed at the employee or organisational property. The majority - though by no means all - policies set out a "zero tolerance" approach in relation to staff being subjected to such behaviour by third parties. Around two thirds of respondents answering this question indicated the application of this approach, although this did not in all cases imply that all perpetrators are necessarily prosecuted or excluded (see monitoring, reporting and follow up). The latter are clearly linked to the level of severity of the offence against person or property.

3.2 PREVENTION

Prevention is the most important tool used to seek to reduce the number of incidents of third party violence and harassment against staff. Training is an important part of prevention, but such measures will be dealt with separately for the purposes of this report in section 3.3 below. As well as being linked to training and awareness raising, prevention is most closely associated with risk assessment and the implementation of measures to minimise risks. As mentioned above, the carrying out of risk assessments is a duty imposed on each employer by European and national legislation and therefore plays an important role in the management of third party violence. As the precise nature and level of the threat of violence and harassment differs from organisation to organisation and in different work settings, risk assessment provides the best approach to establish the level of potential threat and to plan and implement measures to address it.

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Box 1: The development of risk management tools in the private security industry in Sweden

BYA is the Training and Working Environment Council of the Swedish Guarding Industry. Working together in this Council, ALMEGA (the Swedish Employers' Organisation in the Private Security Industry and the Swedish Transport Workers' Union, developed a series of checklists to guide risk assessment for different activities in the private security industry. They emphasise the pro-active implementation of existing legal requirements on employers to carry out risk assessment, which call on organisations to:
> Prevent risks and achieve satisfactory work environment and working conditions
> Examine risks continuously and in a structured way
> Carry out any measures needed
> Follow up that required work is done
> Cooperate with workers and union
> Coordinate all work related to health and safety
> Divide tasks between responsible persons within the company
> Written documentation / policy / routines
The checklists assisting employers in carrying out risk and implementing any necessary changes to the work environment, tools and processes.

Measures arising from risk assessment can relate to:
> Clear information regarding the nature and level of service clients/customers/service users should expect
> The provision of "tools" aimed at safeguarding employees
> Workplace design
> Process design and work organisation

3.2.1 MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

In retail, health care, local authority service and private security environments, the management of customer expectations is critical to assist in reducing potential incidents of aggression or indeed violence. A number of policies therefore clearly emphasise the close link between organisational violence and harassment and customer care policies. This is particularly critical because many of the responses regarding the reasons for increases in incidents of third party violence indicated that they attribute this rise to increased expectations on the part of customer/client/service users. Expectations are clearly linked to levels of frustration if the service level expected is not seen to be delivered. Although this is clearly not an excuse for abusive, threatening or violent behaviour, the proper management of expectations can contribute to tackling third party violence.

Managing expectations is closely linked to resource issues, which may or may not be within the control of the organisation or individual manager and can therefore be difficult to address.

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Box 2: Policies and practices designed to help manage expectations

Health sector
Several of the policies submitted by NHS Trusts in the UK referred to the importance of being clear about waiting times in relation to hospital and surgery appointments and approximate waits in hospital emergency departments.

Retail sector
A number of retail sector policies encouraged stores to display information regarding stock levels and potential waiting times in order to manage customer expectations to provide up-front information.

Local and regional government sectors/Private security sector
Policy notices explaining reasons for denying access or providing clearly understandable guidance on access to benefits and services are measures suggested in these sectors to help inform customers and service users in advance of the level and nature of service they can expect to receive.

3.2.2 MANAGING RISKS BY DESIGNING "SAFE" WORKPLACES

"Safe" workplace design is an important element in reducing the threat of third party violence. Such methods are applied in policies in all the sectors covered and are most closely linked to risk assessment procedures.

For example, many of the sample policies submitted by EuroCommerce members relate to dealing with the risk of robbery and theft and the threats of aggression or physical violence linked to such events. Risk assessment and the reduction of those risks therefore often relate to workplace and process design as well as the provision of certain "tools" making processes safer. Their design and provision can be adapted to the nature and location of the retail environment.

Box 3: Prevention against robbery in the retail branch, Swedish retail sector

Examples of measures to ensure a "safe" workplace provided by this document prepared in the Swedish retail sector are:
> Designing shops in a way to ensure that:
  o Stacked stock does not obscure visibility
  o Doors can easily be secured
  o A secure area is made available to count cash
  o Lighting is good, etc.
> Tools and technology to make the retail environment more secure can include:
  o CCTV
  o Alarms with direct links to the policy
  o Store security guards
  o Secure tills
  o Vacuum sealed containers to transport cash, etc.

> ...

> Elements of process design and work organisation to reduce risk to staff include:
> o The establishment of secure routines for cash pickup or the transport of cash to banks
> o Limiting the amount to cash to be stored in tills at any given time
> o Staffing levels to ensure secure working, etc.

The local and regional authority services and health care sectors obviously provide extremely diverse working environments, each requiring different approaches to safe workplace design based on risk assessment. Some examples given from these sectors are:

Designing service environments in a way which:
> Can restrict direct access to staff in particularly vulnerable situations (for example in situations where social security and job centre administration facilities are merged, some settings ensure that individuals responsible for dealing with – or indeed refusing - benefit claims work from a secure location; similar precautions may be required in locations providing child services which may deal with difficult situations of having to remove children from their parents). High risk sites might also require additional protection from security guards or CCTV
> Some organisations have developed databases of clients/customers with histories of violent behaviour which can help staff be aware of potentially dangerous situations to allow them to take appropriate precautions
> The design of waiting areas is bright, calm and welcoming, offering distractions for users while at the same time providing clear information on potential waiting times
> Restricting access to items which could potentially be used as weapons

In all sectors covered by this work, specific policies are often designed to deal with the threats faced by lone workers (lone worker policies).

Box 4: Hertfordshire County Council Lone Worker Policy

The County Council employs a significant number of lone workers, for example in social care settings and as a result has developed a specific policy aimed a protecting individuals working in such settings.
Depending on the risk levels of the lone workers working environment, such individuals can be equipped with:
> Phones which can be tracked/GPS
> Panic buttons
> CCTV
> Personal alarms, etc.
The lone worker policies often also sets out particular procedures for reporting to a control room to ensure colleagues are always aware of their whereabouts to allow rapid intervention.

3.3 TRAINING AND AWARENESS RAISING

As mentioned above, training and awareness raising is a vital part of prevention. It can also influence the management of threatening and potentially violent situations facing workers. Training measures are therefore not surprisingly among the most common approaches implemented by employers to help deal with third party violence.

3.3.1 TRAINING

Training is usually designed to raise awareness of and help deal with potential and actual threats and is either targeted at and delivered to all employees (often as part of their induction process), or is aimed at managers to help them train their respective team members.

Key elements of training packages developed include:
> Raising awareness of potential threats of abusive behaviour, harassment and violence and what is considered to be unacceptable
> Awareness raising of relevant policies and their responsibilities in implementing the policies, including customer care policies
> Information about reporting, monitoring and follow-up procedures and various roles and responsibilities in relation to these processes
> Information about support and counselling services available to victims of third party violence
> Techniques for identifying and dealing with aggressive behaviour and potentially violent situations

Box 5: Training on conflict management, Carrefour retail

The Carrefour retail group has developed a specific conflict management training programme (SOS Conflit) delivered to staff as part of their induction process.

The aim of the training is to help workers understand the emotional mechanisms affecting other people's actions and decision making, as well as one's own responses and how these can be controlled and managed in order to avoid or deal with potentially threatening or violent situations. The training is based on videos, instruction and role play.

As well as informing managers and workers about the content of policies and reporting and victim support procedures, the main feature of existing training courses is to develop skills and capacities for diffusing aggression in order to prevent escalation. In some cases, training goes further to cover self defence and acceptable forms of restraint. Depending on the sector and types of threats being faced, training may need to include information regarding:
> Procedures for apprehending shoplifters
> Procedures for dealing with individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs
> Procedures for and specialised training for using physical restraint
> Procedures for the exclusion of perpetrators, etc.

These elements of training link closely with the importance for policy measures to include specific statements regarding the monitoring, reporting and follow up of incidents of third party violence.

3.3.2 AWARENESS RAISING AMONG THE PUBLIC

As well as awareness raising of the level of service to be expected, many organisations have also invested significantly in publicity campaigns to ensure customers/service users/the public are aware of what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour towards their staff. Such information campaigns also tend to highlight the measures which will be taken against anyone perpetrating violence against or harassing their employees.

3.4 MONITORING, REPORTING AND FOLLOW UP

Effective approaches to tackling third party violence require clear monitoring and reporting. Depending on the severity of the incident, reporting will either only be through internal (health and safety) procedures, or will involve reporting to the police or other external agencies. Reporting processes and requirements for different types of incidents should be clearly set out at part of the policy.

3.4.1 REPORTING, EXCLUSION, RESTRAINT AND/OR PROSECUTION OF PERPETRATORS

Whether or not a perpetrator of third party violence is prosecuted, barred or excluded largely depends on the severity of the incident.

Responses to our survey varied regarding the question whether – and in which way – perpetrators are dealt with. This will relate not only to policy, but also national legislation and sector of activity (for example it may be more difficult to exclude an individual from access to services in the health care sector or if they have legal entitlements to benefits). While most responses indicated that perpetrators of violence are prosecuted either in the civil or criminal courts (if possible), a significant number stated that no such prosecutions are currently taken.

Reporting routes and procedures should be clear depending on the nature of the incident and the likely outcome (e.g. will there be a prosecution, will the perpetrator be barred/excluded, has the perpetrator been restrained, etc.) and in each case relevant phone numbers and contact persons as well as forms to complete should
be provided.

Reporting and monitoring can include the compilation of a database of repeat "offenders" which can in certain situations be shared between related service providers in order to help them deal with potential threat levels. However, the gathering of such data will be strictly controlled by data protection regulations and other national provisions.

Reporting of incidents should feed into future risk assessment to influence workplace design and prevention measures.

3.4.2 VICTIM FOLLOW-UP SUPPORT

Immediately after the incident, a manager or supervisor should be informed to report the events and take appropriate action. It may also be useful to offer victims an opportunity to talk through the events with other members of staff present,

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their line managers or trade union representatives in order to be able to express their feelings, but also to potentially use the events as a learning experience. Any such intervention such of course be voluntary.

If required, prompt medical attention should be provided. Depending on the severity of the incident and the individual's reaction, the opportunity may need to be offered to leave work and to call on friends or relatives to offer assistance in getting home.

The availability of free and confidential support to victims of harassment and violence is a vital part of any third party violence policy. Policies should clearly state how such support can be accessed and should emphasise its confidential nature to avoid those affected from feeling further victimised by their need for psychological support or physical rehabilitation. Such support may not only be needed immediately after the event, but could be required over a longer period of time.

Ideally, different options should be offered to obtain psychological support, should a victim not wish to access "in-house" facilities (occupation health services, trade union representatives, or an agency mandated directly by the company). For example, information on victim support services offered by local or national voluntary organisations could also be provided.

Victims who are required to appear in court in support of the prosecution of a perpetrator should receive additional dedicated support from their employer.

3.4.3 POLICY EVALUATION

Evaluation is an essential tool in determining the success or otherwise of a specific third party violence policy approach. However, very few of the policy documents submitted so far, make any specific reference to periodic evaluation and follow-up.

It is clear that in relation to managing the incidence of third party violence, societal and other factors are at play which could influence the frequency of such events, which are outside the control of policy makers and those implementing the policy approach. As a result, aggressive and violent behaviour by the public could increase despite its successful implementation. Monitoring and evaluation is nonetheless important and different benchmarks and targets ought to be set not only to assess trends in the number of incidents, but also to monitor whether their severity might be declining as a result of better management, or whether their impact on staff morale, recruitment or retention is changing become clearer policy guidance and training generates a sense of being able to cope better or being more supported by management. Similarly, effective victim support can and should reduce any reduction in productivity or the need for time off in many cases.

4 AWARENESS AND IMPACT OF CROSS-SECTORAL AGREEMENT ON VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

4.1 LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF CROSS-SECTORAL AGREEMENT

As outlined in the introduction, the European cross-sectoral social concluded an autonomous framework agreement on violence and harassment in the workplace in April 2007, which acknowledges the relevance of third party violence, but leaves it up to national implementation to determine whether this aspect should be covered. Its substantive content largely focuses on violence and harassment by colleagues or managers in the workplace.

Among the members of the sectoral employers organisations HOSPEEM, CEMR, EuroCommerce and CoESS, the level of awareness of the cross-sectoral agreement was relatively high (see Figure 6 below), but maybe not as high as might have been expected, with just over 60% of respondents indicating that they had heard of the agreement.

Figure 6: Level of awareness of the 2007 cross-sectoral social partner agreement on violence and harassment in the workplace
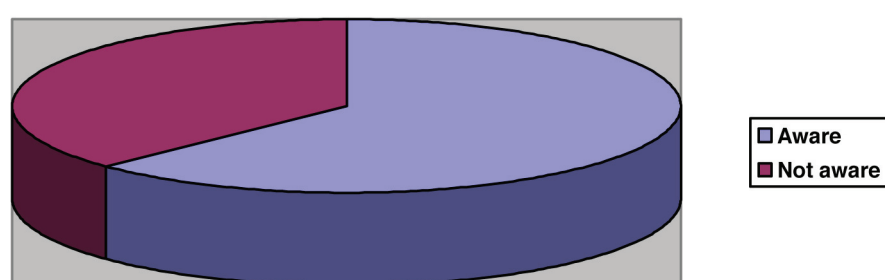
Source: GHK survey of HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and EuroCommerce members (2009)

☐ Aware
■ Not aware

The majority of member organisations of the four sectoral employers' organisations are aware of the BusinessEurope/UEAPME, ETUC and CEEP agreement. Where respondents indicated that they were not aware of the agreement, these were most likely to be individual members of the national sectoral employers' organisations affiliated to CEMR, CoESS, HOSPEEM and EuroCommerce. Knowledge of the existing agreement may have influenced the extent to which respondents felt the need for multi-sectoral action on the issue at the European level (see section 5 below).

4.2 IMPACT OF CROSS-SECTORAL AGREEMENT ON POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Of the 33 organisations which responded to this question, 25[6] argued that the European agreement had no impact on the content of their policy. It was not possible to establish from the answers whether this was because there was in any case close alignment between the approach of the cross-sectoral agreement and individual policies or whether the European agreement was considered to be irrelevant (or indeed other reasons).

> ...

---

[6] It is not clear why 25 respondents indicated that the cross-sectoral agreement had no impact on their policy, when only 15 respondents stated that they had developed a specific policy. It can only be assumed that reference might be made here to wider health and safety policies.

Figure 7: Impact o the cross-sectoral agreement on violence and harassment on national/local agreements
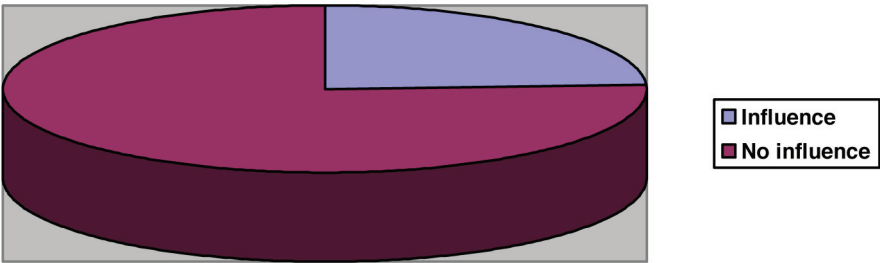
Source: GHK survey of HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and EuroCommerce members (2009)

It is interesting that among those organisations which noted that the European cross-sectoral agreement had been relevant in shaping their national/local policy approach a number remarked that it was the national implementation of this agreement which had/was likely to influence their approach.

5 SUPPORT FOR A EUROPEAN MULTI-SECTORAL INITIATIVE ON THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE

As indicated in the introduction, a number of multi-sectoral meetings and events have already taken place to assess the need for and possibility to agree joint action on the issue of third party violence. This project is part of the process of discussion. In advance of these detailed discussions it is too early to prejudge the desire, likelihood or precise shape of such action. Nonetheless our survey asked members of HOSPEEM, EuroCommerce, CoESS and CEMR to indicate their current feelings about the desirability of European multi-sectoral action on this issue.

Figure 8: Share of respondents welcoming a joint European multi-sectoral initiative on third party violence

Source: GHK survey of HOSPEEM, CEMR, CoESS and EuroCommerce members (2009)

■ Would welcome initiative

■ Would not welcome initiative
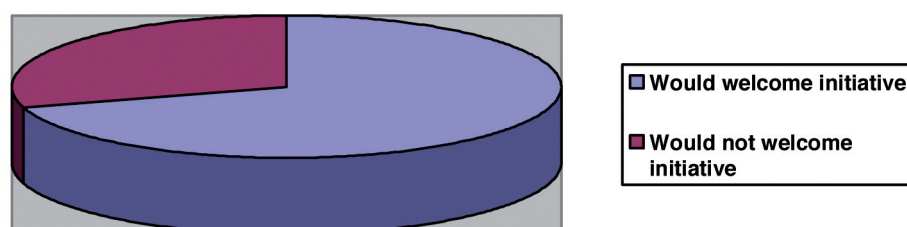
Around 70% of respondents indicated that they would welcome a joint European multi-sectoral initiative, without being specific about the precise nature of such an initiative. Support for such an initiative among CoESS and CEMR members was somewhat higher than among HOSPEEM and EuroCommerce members, but before of the overall number of responses and the differences in respondents (national member organisations or individual members), it is difficult to interpret these differences meaningfully. In some cases, responses may have been influenced by the fact that initiatives already exist in the sectoral social dialogue to address the issue of third party violence (for example in the commerce sector). It could also be the case that it is the multi-sectoral approach which is causing an issue for certain organisations who might feel that the specificities of their sector require a dedicated approach.

These are questions which need to be discussed in more detail at the main project event and in the follow up to this project and the results of this survey should not lead to any foregone conclusions.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

6.1.1 RELEVANCE OF POLICIES TO ADDRESS THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE

Findings from this and other research clearly indicate that third party violence is a damaging phenomenon showing an increase in incidents in most of the countries and sectors participating in this project. The impact of third party violence and harassment on staff morale, recruitment and retention and absence rates and productivity is significant.

It is therefore clearly in employers' interest to devise policies to tackle this phenomenon.

6.1.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR A MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH

A variety of regulations and measures already exist which contribute to devising effective policy approaches to tackle third party violence. With regards to legislation the most important is the requirement to carry out risk assessment and to address the risks identified.

In addition, the cross-sectoral social partners have drawn up an autonomous agreement to deal with violence and harassment in the workplace, which can (but does not necessarily) cover third party violence in its national implementation. Reporting on national measures taken to implement this agreement are still under way and it remains difficult to assess how many countries will cover third party violence specifically as part of their implementation strategy.

A multi-sectoral approach could therefore be very relevant, as the sectors taking part in this project show a particularly high incidence of third party violence and harassment in the workplace.

The next question is whether a multi-sectoral approach is indeed suitable in relation to such diverse sectors. The message which appears to emerge from comparing policy approaches designed and implemented in the different sectors is that there is indeed a significant amount of commonality in the core elements of the approach, although the specificities necessarily differ to reflect the specific risks facing each sector and working environment.

6.1.3 KEY POLICY ELEMENTS

The main elements of policies aimed at tackling third party violence are the following:
> Clear definition
> Preventative measures including:
    o Managing expectations by providing clear information regarding the nature and level of service clients/customers/service users should expect
    o Designing "safe workplaces" through risk assessment, including
        > The provision of "tools" aimed at safeguarding employees
        > Workplace design
        > Process design and work organisation

> ...

> Training and awareness raising
> Clear monitoring report and follow-up
> Provision of support to victims
> Procedures for policy evaluation and review

A number of policies mentioned the importance of the involvement of social partners and other key stakeholders in the design of policies.

6.1.4 NEXT STEPS

A conference will be held on 22 October at which the results of the study will be presented together with a number of selected good practice examples identified as part of the project. The conference will also provide the opportunity for all project partners to decide on any next steps.

This report will be amended following the closing conference to take account on any additional findings and recommendations, as well as the overall conference proceedings.

ANNEX 1

Questionnaire

HOSPEEM

CoESS
Confederation of
European Security Services

CCRE
CEMR

EuroCommerce
THE RETAIL, WHOLESALE
AND INTERNATIONAL
TRADE REPRESENTATION
TO THE EU

Dear members of EuroCommerce, CoESS, CEMR-EP and HOSPEEM

RESPECT Project - Effective approaches to tackling third party violence in the workplace

Research shows that one in ten workers in the European Union suffer violence, bullying and harassment at work in any given year. Among these incidents, violence and harassment on the part of customers/clients/service users towards workers - so called third party violence -is far more common than between staff of the same organisation. The impact on the mental and physical health of worker of such experiences is significant and ranges from distress and feelings of humiliation suffered to actual severe physical injury (or even death) and severe mental trauma often leading to long absences from work (and associated lost productivity) and difficulties with staff retention or recruitment.

In April 2007, the cross-sectoral social partners, BusinessEurope, CEEP, ETUC and UEAPME reached agreement on an autonomous framework agreement on dealing with violence and harassment in the workplace. The agreement mentions third party violence, but leaves it up to social partners at Member State level whether or not to include this aspect in their national implementation of the European text. It is for this reason that employer and trade union organisations in the European health, local and regional government, commerce and private security sectors decided to launch a study to explore good practices in tackling
third party violence, to explore common elements of such practice and to decide on this basis whether it would be possible and indeed useful to negotiate a multi-sectoral initiative on dealing with this issue.

HOSPEEM, CEMR-EP, EuroCommerce and CoESS have asked GHK Consulting to assist in this project. With this survey, they seek the invaluable support of their member organisations to quantify the problem and trends in its developments, as well as identifying proactive policies at sectoral and organisational level aimed at tackling third party violence. Your assistance in completing this questionnaire is much appreciated, as it will allow the consultant and the social partners to identify key elements of good practice which could be brought together and disseminated to help raise awareness and reduce the incidence of third party violence in the workplace. Please complete this questionnaire and return it to tina.weber@ghkint.com by 5th May 2009. Thank you very much in advance for your assistance. Should you have any questions about the RESPECT project, please contact GHK on the above email address.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tina Weber
Principal Researcher

1. Do you regularly record incidents of third party violence occurring in your sector/organisation?

   Yes ☐
   No (if no, go to question 5) ☐

2. If yes, how many such reported incidents have occurred in the last year for which data is available?

   ....

   ....

   ....

3. Describe the trend in the number of such incidents over the last 5 years.

   Upwards ☐
   Downwards ☐
   Varies year on year ☐

4. How would you explain this trend?

   ....

   ....

   ....

5. What is the impact of such violent incidents on the workforce?

   Increases the rate of absenteeism/sickness absence ☐
   Causes difficulties in keeping staff ☐
   Causes difficulties in recruitment ☐
   Affects staff morale ☐
   Other ☐

6. Has your organisation implemented a specific policy to deal with third party violence?

   Yes ☐
   No (if no, please state why not and move to question ?) ☐

   ....

   ....

> ...

7. Please describe the policy in relation to the following

Reasons for implementation

....

Date of implementation

....

Duration (completed or ongoing?)

....

Who was involved in designing the policy?
What has been the specific role of the social partners?

....

....

Who is involved in implementing the policy?

....

What are the key elements/targets of your policy?
Prevention ☐
Improving Partnerships ☐
Awareness raising ☐
Setting out a clear process of reporting ☐
Process of pursuing perpetrators ☐
Other ☐

Content of the policy/practice (attach relevant web-links/policy documents)

....

....

Does the policy apply a zero tolerance approach (i.e. a commitment to report all incidents to the authorities?

....

Do you prosecute perpetrators?

....

> ...

Do you exclude certain customers/clients who have perpetrated violence against your staff?

Is the route used the civil or criminal courts?

Impact of the policy (i.e. has it successfully reduced the number incidents of third party violence; number of prosecutions/individuals barred etc.). If it has not reduced the number of incidents, what is the reason for this?

8. Have you heard of the 2007 cross-sectoral social partner agreement on violence and harassment?

Yes ☐
No ☐

9. Has this agreement influenced your policy?

Yes ☐
No ☐

10. Would you welcome a multi-sectoral European joint social partner initiative on this issue?

Yes ☐
No ☐

Please return this survey to tina.weber@ghkint.com by 5th May 2009.

Multi-sectoral initiative on 3rd Party violence project

GHK - Consulting Ltd

Birmingham Office
30 St Paul's Square
Birmingham
B3 1QZ
Tel: +44 (0)121 233 8900
Fax: +44 (0)121 212 0308

Brussels Office
146 Rue Royale, B-1000 Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 275 01 00
Fax: +32 (0)2 275 01 09

www.ghkint.com

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