STOP THE PANDEMIC

Digital violence and harassment

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Safety and health at work is everyone's concern. It's good for you. It's good for business.

Impact of digitalisation on third party violence and harassment

- Teleworking
  - Changed communication methods
  - Different management expectations

- Digital access to services
  - Changed expectations by clients, customers (instant response)
  - System failures can lead to increased frustration
  - Online can mean anonymous
  - Speed of sharing information can cause increased harm

- Blurring of private and work life
  - "Always on" culture
  - Access to workers' social media

- **Data protection is now also a health and safety issue**

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Fundamentals of prevention

- Employers have a legal duty to protect the health and safety of workers at work
- Health and safety includes both physical and mental health
- This includes protecting workers from harm from psychosocial risk factors, including third party violence, and harassment (bullying)
- This includes "online"/ "cyber" / "virtual" violence and harassment
- Visible recognition of gender and diversity dimensions
- Not everyone has the same vulnerabilities
  - Variation by sector, job
  - Strong gender dimension, also people perceived as "different"
- Need for holistic approach beyond OSH legislative requirements

Prevention of online 3PV and harassment

- **A holistic, systemic, and systematic approach**
  - Coherent policies for data security, harassment, telework, OSH
- **An up-to-date risk assessment that explicitly addresses these issues**
  - Taking into account teleworking, new digital systems
- **An easy-to-access reporting system for violence and harassment**
  - Where every issue is followed up
- **Ongoing dialogue with workers and stakeholders**
  - Parent-teacher associations, patient groups, policy
- **Repeated information, instruction and training**
  - Especially to supervisors and managers
- **Proactive interventions as well as post-incidence procedures**
- **Use mental health / wellbeing promotion approaches**
  - Can reach beyond OSH legislation

The challenge of non-reporting

- Occupational accidents and ill-health are frequently under-reported
  - Dependent on social insurance system
- Third party violence and (external) harassment often not reported
  - "Part of the job"
- (Internal) Harassment often not reported
  - Power imbalance between perpetrator and victim
- Action needed to "lower the bar" to talk about these issues
  - EU – Informal procedure / confidential counsellors
- There are ways of getting a better picture
  - E.g. workplace surveys – but these have their own challenges
- Reports must ALWAYS be followed up and victim kept informed

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Digital prevention methods for digital risks

- Online risk assessment tools (e.g. OiRA)
  - Can explicitly include digital 3PV and harassment prevention
- Web-based training for workers and employers
  - E.g. Swedish training programme (social partner driven) part of broader "Protection against robbery in the trade" programme run with Police for retail sector
- Online reporting of third party violence and harassment
  - Immediate reporting facilitating increased visibility
- Online counselling for workers who have suffered
  - Protect health for workers and identify remedial measures

Challenges to prevention

- The blurring of boundaries between work and life
  - Harassment/bullying as result of "always available culture"
  - Harassment/violence on workers' personal social media

- Under-reporting of harassment and 3PV
  - Scale of problem underestimated
  - Failure of authorities / employers to act

- Legislation, policy, compliance lagging behind technological development

- Failure to recognise the problem
  - Lack of leadership

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What is changing?

- **Mental health increasingly as a work issue**
  - Highlighted in new EU OSH strategy

- **Digital Europe is the new normal**
  - Recognition that change is happening and need for adaptation

- **Increasing recognition of the need for compliance actions for third-party violence and harassment by NLI**
  - Though online issues still not very visible

- **Cyber bullying and harassment and other digital issues at societal level becoming more recognized**

Harassment, bullying, and cyberbullying at work

- Harassment occurs when one or more worker or manager are repeatedly and deliberately abused, threatened and/or humiliated in circumstances relating to work (Framework Agreement)
- Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behavior directed towards an employee, or group of employees, that creates a risk to health and safety.
  - Unreasonable behaviour is that which would be expected to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten. (EU OSHA)
- Cyberbullying is where individuals are bullied through social media (EUROFOUND)
- Cyber harassment can take many forms, including… threats of violence by electronic means, or hate speech
  - Hate speech is language that denigrates, insults, threatens or targets an individual based on her identity and other traits (EIGE)
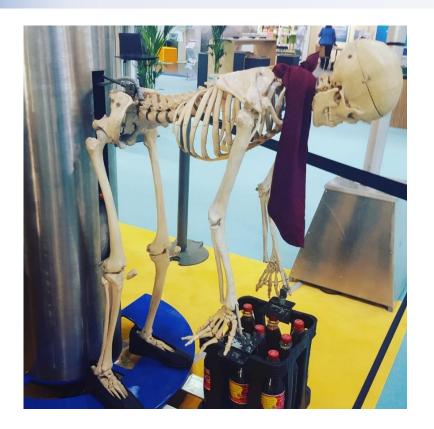
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Thank you

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