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**PRESS / Preventing - RESponding – Supporting – young survivors of GBV:
sexual harassment, sexual and cyber violence**

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**Work package WP5 – RAISING AWARENESS ON SEXUAL
HARASSMENT AND CYBER HARASSMENT**

Deliverable 5.5. – Advocacy paper for media stakeholders

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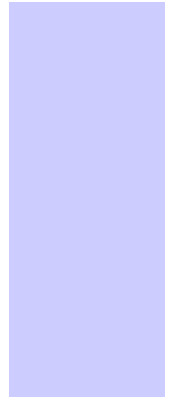
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Credits

Authors: George Pleios, Sophia Kanaouti and Patricia Gerakopoulou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Scientific Responsible for the project: George Pleios, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

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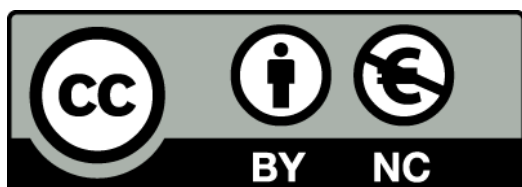
Project Partners:

- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens - Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
- Genderhood

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The PRESS project

The European project PRESS (Preventing - RESponding – Supporting – young survivors of GBV: sexual harassment, sexual and cyber violence) addresses sexual harassment and violence in multiple ways, supporting survivors, media stakeholders, and policymakers in the effort to tackle those new (cyber) and old types of harassment and violence against women, young people, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Among the main objectives of the PRESS project is to address possible gaps in the national and EU policies regarding the media coverage of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline.

The project is implemented with the cooperation of the Diotima Centre (Project Coordinator), The Department of Communication and Media Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, and Genderhood (project partners), and the welcomed support of the Greek Ombudsman and the Hellenic Association of Social Workers. PRESS aims to promote early detection and prevention of sexual harassment and violence, with a particular focus on gender-based cyber-sexual violence, and offers support services to women, young people, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community, in general to individuals who suffer (or may potentially suffer in the future) from these types of gender-based violence. Within this context, PRESS also addresses media stakeholders and media institutions who wish to be informed and receive education and training about these phenomena in their field and in society, with a view to changing possible problematic attitudes and representations, as well as the media “atmosphere” in general, and, where it is needed, re-direct policies with regard to sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, and its reporting and coverage in the media.

The Department of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Athens, as a project partner, is particularly focused on highlighting the role the media can play in ameliorating the conditions that survivors of sexual harassment and violence need to face in Greek society and beyond. Greek and EU institutions can play a role in reshaping identified gaps in policies and practices in regard with the media.

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Identifying policy gaps

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) recently addressed the issue of the lack of European policies for women and the media in their 2020 policy brief.¹ EIGE noted that “the media were not mentioned as a priority in the European Commission’s strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 or in the Council of the EU’s pact for equality between women and men 2011-2020” and that “the EU’s overarching gender equality commitments and measures have rarely addressed women and the media”. Policy actions such as the 2018 Revised Audiovisual Services Directive, which updated the EU legal framework on media in favour of more inclusive representation regarding sex, and the European Parliament action calls regarding gender discrimination in the media offer important insights into the needs of the EU member states regarding media representations of sexual harassment and violence. Directives and calls to action however have the character of suggestions, and the possibility of implementation needs to be continually monitored.² Besides, EU suggestions/Directives face the multitude of differences in gender equality policies of member states and of different media organisations. Additionally, the implementation of new technologies in everyday life and work, puts women, young persons, and members of the LGBTQ+ community at risk of harassment and violence in new ways. Further, links between harassment and violence, online and offline, are acknowledged but are rarely considered in the media representations of harassment and violence.

The realization that sexual harassment is a precursor of severe forms of sexual violence was found in the research activities conducted by the NKUA in the context of the PRESS project, and is in line with other studies.³ Media representations have the power to normalize violence, which is one of the root causes of its continuation, as forms of violence

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¹ EIGE, 2020, Beijing + 25 Policy Brief: ‘Area J – Women and the media: harmful stereotypes persist’, report that can be downloaded at https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/beijing-25-policy-brief-area-j-women-and-media?source_url=%2Fnode%2F6942&token=VyTxFOVHrBYAYIs3NXIljbUin2I342Yjnh_hGpfDpiU, DOI: 10.2839/70713

² The Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action Against Violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO) is expected to publish their report on Greece later in 2023.

³ See for instance *Silence and Omissions: A Media Guide for Covering Gender-Based Violence*, Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence, Center for Women’s Global Leadership, State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick (see p.169)

traverse contexts.⁴ Sylvia Galdi and Franscesca Guizzo (2021) in particular suggested the creation of what they called a “Media-Induced Sexual Harassment framework”, which would address the link between media contents that sexually objectify women (sexually objectifying media) and sexual harassment of women, via cultural notions of how women ought to live and behave, and cultural notions of how women ought to be treated by others.⁵

The role of the NKUA in the PRESS project

The Department of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Athens (NKUA) was involved in the writing of the State of the Art for the project PRESS, providing a first mapping of the territory of sexual harassment and violence. NKUA also conducted a focus group with experienced journalists, in order to discuss the issues and challenges media professionals face at work with regard to the media coverage and reporting of sexual harassment and sexual violence (online and offline).

The Training of Trainers (ToT) Design Curriculum (deliverable 3.4.), written by NKUA, with Professor George Pleios, a member of the Greek National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) as Scientific Responsible, took the information that came from the literature review and the focus group of media professionals and formed a curriculum for a brief training activity addressed to media professionals and journalists. This curriculum was enriched by a systematic media monitoring research activity that aimed to record and highlight the current trends and the most prominent reporting approaches of sexual harassment and violence by the Greek media (deliverable 3.1.). The latter NKUA research project mapped the way in which the media addressed news about sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, via an examination of specific Greek media reporting for a period of four months (November 2022 to February 2023). Together with the previous tasks of the PRESS project, this research activity provided insights into specific gaps in policies regarding Greek media coverage of

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⁴ Kelly, Liz, 2016, ‘The conducive context of violence against women and girls’, *Discover Society*, accessed at <https://archive.discover society.org/2016/03/01/theorising-violence-against-women-and-girls/>.

⁵ Galdi, Sylvia, and Guizzo, Franscesca, 2021, Media induced sexual harassment: The Routes from Sexually Objectifying Media to Sexual Harassment’, *Sex Roles*, 84, 645-669.

sexual harassment and sexual violence, online and offline. Those findings were in line with European and international takes on the subject.

Addressing key institutions

This Advocacy Paper involves key institutions and stakeholders in the improvement of the media coverage of sexual harassment and sexual violence, and thus it invites national and European media associations, federations, and other organisations to a memorandum of operations in order to promote the choice of policies that can aid in addressing media coverage of sexual harassment and sexual violence, online and offline, in manners that can promote anti-sexism and protect survivors of harassment and violence.

The advocacy paper particularly addresses the following bodies:

- The Greek General Secretariat for Communication and Media
- General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality

- European Parliament
- Reporters Sans Frontiers
- Eurobarometer

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Independent authorities:

- European Center for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)
- European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA)
- National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV)
- European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA)
- Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Authorities (MNRA)
- Black Sea Broadcasting Regulatory Authorities Forum (BRAAF)
- Cyprus Radiotelevision Authority (CRTA)
- The European Broadcasting Union (EBU)

- Association of European Journalists
- The Greek Ombudsman Ο Συνήγορος του Πολίτη
- The Hellenic Labour Inspectorate – Επιθεώρηση Εργασίας

Unions:

- European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)
- Panhellenic Association of Journalists' Unions
- The Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers, (ΕΣΗΕΑ)
- Journalists' Union of Macedonia and Thrace
- Journalists' Union of Thessaly, Central Greece and Evia
- Journalists' Union of Peloponnisos, Epirus and Islands
- Periodical and Electronic Press Union
- Union of Cyprus Journalists (UCJ)
- Regional Broadcasting Union of Greece (radio)
- Association of Athens Private Radio Broadcasters
- Association of Radio Stations Owners of Greece
- Association of Municipal Radio and Television Media of Greece (ΕΔΗΡΤΜΕ in Greek)
- Hellenic Commercial TV Nationwide Broadcasting Union
- Union of Greek Regional News Television
- Online Publishers' Association of Greece
- European Newspaper Publishers' Association (ENPA)
- Athens Daily Newspaper Publishers Association

Research insights and proposals for improvement

This advocacy paper addresses the potential allies in the efforts to limit the gaps in policies, proposing several actions.

It, therefore, emphasizes the need for developing and promoting the following:

1. **Policies about educating media professionals on the *multiple and different forms of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline*.** These can take the form of state / EU campaigns in the media, or workshops. There is a need for media professionals to have access to information and training so to be able to recognize the many different forms of sexual harassment and violence if they are to report them accurately in the media. This could be expected to address issues about neglected forms of sexual harassment, which can at times be seen as less newsworthy and are severely underreported, and issues of sexual violence that seem to be reported in a manner of “token” (once it is reported once, new incidents can be seen as less newsworthy).
2. **Policies encouraging psychological support for journalists.** There is a need for policies that acknowledge the importance of the task and therefore **aid journalists** to address sexual harassment and violence coverage, online and offline, protecting and promoting the psychological well-being of all the involved actors. This support can have two forms: first, psychological protection of journalists being exposed to the sensitive nature and content of this kind of news, which often involves the trauma and the painful experiences of the survivors, and which can sometimes trigger their own trauma; secondly, psychological education of journalists and media stakeholders to hold a more open attitude in asking and receiving adequate professional support when approaching such complex matters, as well as when approaching with sensitivity the traumatized “Other”.
3. **Policies that require anti-sexist media campaigns to appear in prime-time media, and regular anti-sexist education initiatives.** Internalized sexism can find its way to reporting via language and social habit, and journalists are faced with the need to be constantly vigilant and be made aware. This can be accomplished with focused, possibly centralized campaigning (campaigns that appear in prime-time media), and with regular anti-sexist education initiatives (which may be institutionalized, so as to appear in regular intervals).

4. **Policies that create a culture and a social and political atmosphere of openness about correcting mistakes in coverage of sexual harassment and violence.** As was indicated in the previous point, subtle ways of sexist reporting, owing their existence to internalized sexism, can find their way to news reporting with journalists who are simply unaware that they are performing poorly at that point. A culture / social and political atmosphere of openness to addressing one's own mistakes regarding such sensitive matters needs to be cultivated by policies. To that end, a generalized effort by the country's / EU's institutions against sexism in language and in reporting in general, could be widely publicised, to operate as an example of purging sexist practices (for example, language that is not inclusive, omissions of information about institutions that help survivors).
5. **Policies that educate about consent.** As it was presented in the State of the Art, "unwanted sexual attention is exactly sexual advances that are uninvited, unwanted and unreciprocated by the recipient. These include both verbal and physical behaviors, including sexually suggestive comments and compliments, attempts to establish sexual or romantic/intimate relationships and unwanted touching". This is difficult to be acknowledged in an environment/society which is used to seeing some forms of harassment as a compliment. Campaigns that concentrate on consent, and the differences between harassment from complimenting/flirting, can be central to an anti-sexist campaign that affects and educates the media reporting of such issues.
6. **Policies that educate about how sexual harassment and violence need to be addressed in relevance with the character of the powerplay.** Also, in the State of the Art, it was made explicit that "gender harassment aims not to elicit sexual cooperation, but rather expresses insulting, degrading, or contemptuous attitudes about women". This powerplay indicates therefore that there is a need for media reporting to acknowledge the part of harassment that is related to bullying. Campaigns and educational initiatives can refer to that shift of focus when describing/covering sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, in the media.
7. **Policies on educating journalists and media professionals about approaching survivors.** There is a need that the media be addressed by policies as having social and

political influence, and therefore as more than businesses. As part of the media's social responsibility sectors, news corporations need to be educating their journalists and media professionals about ways in which survivors of sexual harassment and violence, offline and online, should be approached for interviews.

8. **Policies that encourage media campaigns educating the public (and the media stakeholders themselves) about the way in which survivors can be affected by insensitive news reporting** of sexual harassment and violence, can help with sexist practices of which the media are unaware / and with sexist practices that are seen as 'popular' and therefore good selling points by those who choose to promote views that flatter the audience's possible existing social /sexist bias.
9. **Policies that can result eventually in the formation of new Institutions, with specifically anti-sexist agenda.** Following from the above point, and from the findings of the Focus Group (deliverable 3.4. Design of ToT Curriculum - NKUA), there seems to be a need for a safe place for media professionals to feel that they are not bound by the rules of businesses which may flatter problematic views of the audiences if the general atmosphere in the media landscape seems to be such. This safe space could be a widely supported EU / national institution, with the power to intervene and publicise its recommendations.
10. **Policies that aim to change the media atmosphere of what is newsworthy/popular, in regard to covering sexual harassment and violence, as well as cyber violence.** The newsworthiness of a news item such as sexual harassment and/or violence, online and offline, can be affected by the audience's perceived wishes to be exposed to such news or not. A change in policy could mean that the news items could implicate the public in different ways than just receptor / informed. Policies that encourage changes in the political media atmosphere regarding such news items can render the public / the audience more willing to sympathise with the survivors and show interest in their full recovery, as parts of the #MeToo movement demonstrated.



We are confident that the organisations we address in this advocacy paper share our aims to work further to ameliorate the conditions for the media coverage of sexual harassment and violence (online and offline) and to promote discussion about those issues in the media. We share with them the desire to be responsive at a time when old habits of societies with a strong patriarchal past, and new realisations about how we wish to move away from patriarchy co-exist and continually strive to create a social, political, and moral media atmosphere that will be inclusive for all and of service to the community. For these reasons, we consider ourselves fellow travelers with them, and are prepared to work together with them to reach the conditions of understanding and continuously bettering the media contributions to our world.

