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

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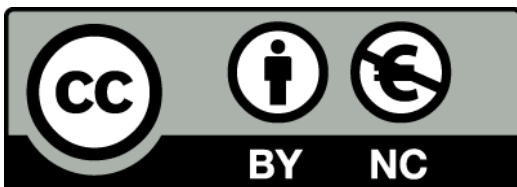
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Introduction

This advocacy paper for policy makers is part of the communication actions implemented in the framework of the PRESS project. The project "[PRESS](#): Preventing, RESponding, Supporting young survivors of gender-based violence" is implemented under the CERV Project Grants for the period February 2022 - January 2024, with EU funding. The coordinating organisation of the project is the Diotima Centre and the partners are the Department of Communication and Media Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and Genderhood, while the project is supported by The Greek Ombudsman and the Association of Social Workers of Greece. The project aims to identify and prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence at an early/early stage, with a focus on online sexual violence, and to provide services to women, young and LGBTQ+ people, survivors or people at risk of experiencing these forms of gender-based violence.

The expected results of the project are: (a) an increase in reports/reports of sexual harassment incidents; (b) increased knowledge and awareness of frontline professionals on issues of sexual harassment and sexual violence; (c) increased knowledge of young people (16-35 years old) about their rights, existing support services and empowerment, (d) targeted and coordinated support for survivors, (e) changing the attitudes and beliefs of media professionals and the general public, and (f) integrating sexual harassment and violence into the public debate/policy agenda in Greece and the EU, (g) promoting the inclusion of sexual harassment and violence in the public debate/policy agenda of Greece and the EU.

Since the start of PRESS (February 2022) until today, the project consortium has completed a wide range of activities for the prevention, response and support of young survivors of gender-based violence. Both the [research](#) (state of the art) and the field activities of the partners have contributed to the collection of empirical and quantitative data that indicate the need for institutional steps by policy makers and actors at national and European level. More specifically, having already implemented a number of activities regarding research, support for survivors and survivors (psychosocial support, legal counselling, legal assistance and representation), empowerment and awareness-raising for adolescents and adults, capacity building activities for key professionals who are on the front line of contact with people who have suffered - or are likely to suffer - gender-based violence and information and awareness-raising for adolescents and the general population, the project consortium has identified challenges and barriers regarding the prevention and response to gender-based violence, especially sexual harassment/violence and cyberviolence, which is a new form of violence perpetrated through the internet and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

In this advocacy paper, we attempt to identify the main challenges and make proposals aimed at both prevention and comprehensive and systematic support for survivors. This advocacy paper for policy makers at national and European level to prevent and address sexual harassment, sexual violence and cyber/ digitally assisted gender-based violence, aims more specifically at:

- **Submit recommendations/proposals to the competent bodies that formulate and implement relevant policies.** In particular, we hope to contribute to the renewal and improvement of the existing institutional framework with the ultimate goal of strengthening prevention on the one hand, and on the other hand, more comprehensive and effective support for survivors and addressing the consequences of sexual (online) harassment and violence.
- **Strengthen awareness raising and information.** Through the advocacy document we seek to contribute to creating a culture of respect and safety for all.
- **Highlight the voice, needs and barriers faced by survivors of gender-based violence** based on the experience of the Diotima Centre's Support Centre for people who have experienced sexual (cyber) harassment and violence.
- **Strengthen cooperation between relevant governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations.** It is common ground that preventing and addressing gender-based violence requires cooperation and networking of all concerned and relevant agencies, organisations and communities at all levels and contexts, as well as the inclusion of the wider civil society, media, academia, local communities and active citizens/cultures, etc.

This advocacy document is addressed to the following policy makers at national and European level:

MINISTRIES

- **Justice - Secretary General of Justice and Human Rights**
- **Labour and Social Affairs - State Secretary for Demographic Policy and the Family & General Secretariat for Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality**
- **Civil Protection**
- **Immigration and Asylum**
- **Digital Governance**
- **Education, Religious Affairs and Sport**

PARLIAMENT

- **Standing Committee on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice**
- **Standing Committee on Social Affairs**
- **Special Standing Committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights**

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- **Centre for Research on Equality Issues/ KETHI**
- **Directorate for Cybercrime**
- **National Documentation and Electronic Content Centre**
- **Regions & Union of Regions of Greece**
- **Municipalities & Central Union of Municipalities of Greece**

- **The Greek Ombudsman**
- **Association of Social Workers of Greece**

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

- **Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality**

EU AGENCIES

- **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)**
- **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)**
- **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)**
- **European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA)**
- **European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)**
- **European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT)**
- **Office of the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC Office)**

Council of Europe - GREVIO

I. Gaps in the prevention and response to sexual (online) harassment and violence

According to the European Parliamentary Research Service (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2021)¹ the main gaps and shortcomings that constitute obstacles in the fight against gender-based online violence and its many and diverse forms are first of all the lack of appropriate institutional tools at EU level. Furthermore, the absence of a uniform definition means that there are wide variations in the way the phenomenon is tackled, leading to wide variations in the protection of survivors, despite the fact that violence is developed and reproduced through ICTs and across borders. The main challenges relate, on the one hand, to law enforcement practices that often put individuals at risk due to greater pressure on their mental health, and, on the other hand, to the technical and legal problems that arise when assessing the evidence/evidence of incidents of gender-based violence that occur in online environments or through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Another serious gap relates to the lack of awareness and

¹ EPRS - European Parliamentary Research Service (2021), [Combating gender-based violence: Cyber violence European added value assessment](#). Authors: Niombo Lomba, Cecilia Navarra and Meenakshi Fernandes European Added Value Unit PE 662.621 – March 2021

information, both in the private and public spheres, about persistent gender-based violence. Victims are also often unaware of their rights and are likely to face many obstacles in accessing support, reporting crimes, dealing with the competent authorities and regaining control of their lives after an incident. These dimensions are linked to the under-reporting of incidents which, combined with the fear of retaliation by the abuser, contribute to, among other things, low prosecution rates. At the same time, the resources available for research into the prevalence and impact of the phenomenon are still limited, which also limits the general social awareness of the phenomenon. Finally, there are significant shortcomings in support services and measures to protect survivors of sexual (online) harassment and violence, and existing structures are often underfunded and unable to cover the costs of supporting survivors.

Particularly with regard to sexual harassment and violence, as pointed out in the PRESS Project Report (Deliverable 2.1. [State of the Art](#). p. 11-16), the relevant institutional framework at international/European and national level is quite extensive and includes numerous legislative provisions, conventions, directives and laws, such as:

- the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Convention](#) on Violence and Harassment, 2019 (No. 190 on violence and harassment and supplementary recommendation No. 260). Convention 190 was ratified by the Greek Parliament in 2021 by Law 4808/2021 (Government Gazette Vol. A' 101/19.06.2021).
- the [Istanbul Convention](#) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011), which was ratified by Law No. 4531/2018 (Government Gazette 62/A/5-4-2018); I) Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and adaptation of Greek legislation; II) Incorporation of Framework Decision 2005/214/JHA, as amended by Framework Decision 2009/299/JHA, on the application of the principle of mutual recognition to financial penalties and III) Other provisions under the competence of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights and other provisions.
- the EU Directives on sexual harassment ([Directive 2000/43/EE](#) on equal treatment between men and women irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, [Directive 2000/78/EE](#) establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, [Directive 2002/73/EK](#) amending Council [Directive 76/207/EC](#) 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, [Directive 2004/113/EK](#) on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in matters of employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, and [Directive 2006/54/EK](#) on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women in matters of employment and occupation).²

² It should be noted that the approach of the EU directives on gender equality is more restrictive than the Istanbul Convention and the ILO Convention. The directives call for the prohibition of harassment as a form of discrimination and the imposition of sanctions, but do not establish obligations that are sufficiently clear, and which would allow for appropriate monitoring and enforcement by the Member State or at EU level (ENLE, 2021: 88).

- Law [3896/2010](#) which transposes [Directive 2006/54/EC](#) on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).

On the other hand, as pointed out in the [European Parliament's Resolution of 1 June 2023 on sexual harassment in the EU and evaluation of the MeToo movement \(2022/2138\(INI\)\)](#) sexual harassment and violence are not defined and criminalised in a uniform way in the EU, and this is a fact that creates fragmented rights and different forms of protection for victims across Member States, while demonstrating the need for a common EU approach, which can be achieved through the recognition of gender-based violence. In this context, the European Parliament reiterates its call to the Commission to submit, on the basis of the third paragraph of Article 83 TFEU, a proposal for a Council decision to designate gender-based violence as a new area of crime, calling on Member States to provide standardised gender-sensitive action protocols to support all victims of sexual harassment, including victims of cross-border sexual harassment. Also through the Resolution, the European Parliament calls on Member States to ensure effective reporting mechanisms and procedures in cases of violence and harassment in the world of work, to adopt the necessary measures to protect against victimisation or retaliation against complainants, victims, witnesses and whistleblowers in order to safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of the individuals involved and to ensure that privacy and confidentiality requirements are not abused. Finally, the Resolution calls on the Commission and Member States to allocate appropriate resources to promote the creation and maintenance of safe spaces in the workplace, both online and offline, in particular single-sex safe spaces, where women in all their intersectional diversity can go to exchange information, build community networks and receive peer support, with the aim of empowering and uplifting all women.

In the case of cyberviolence, the current situation is much more problematic and/or complex in terms of existing institutional and other provisions, given that at international and European level there is no common/uniform way of defining the different forms of interpersonal violence committed through the use of digital communication technologies. While a number of generic terms and labels are used in international and European reports (such as "technology", "digital", "cyberspace", "internet", "electronic" or "cyber") to describe different types of harassment, violence, aggression and abuse against women and girls involving technological devices or platforms, there is rarely a consensus among researchers and policy makers as to the most appropriate term to describe the ever-changing pattern of cyber violence (Henry & Flynn & Powel, 2020: 1830)³. The terms most commonly and alternatively used so far are: **cyber violence against women, forms of gender-based violence against women via the Internet and Information and Communication Technologies/ICTs, cyber gender-based violence and cyber gender-based violence against women** (ENLE and European

³ Henry N., Flynn A., (2019) Image-Based Sexual Abuse: Online Distribution Channels and Illicit Communities of Support. Violence Against Women. 2019;25(16):1932-1955. doi:10.1177/1077801219863881

Commission, 2021: 53⁴). As expected, the absence of a commonly agreed set of definitions that would include all forms of online violence against women/girls is also reflected in the institutional framework. For example, the Council of Europe conventions on violence against women and cybercrime include implicit references to online violence against women, while the European Commission, EU institutions and the Council of Europe apply different definitions in their institutions and programmes. This is also evident in the [Proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) (domestic violence according to the official translation) (European Commission, 2022), and more specifically in Article 8 (Harassment cyberstalking/ cyberbullying/ cyberstalking), Article 9 (cyber harassment), and Article 10 (cyber incitement to violence or hatred/ cyber incitement to violence or hatred), where the basic idea is intentional behaviour on the part of the perpetrator. On the other hand, the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention contains several articles that can be applied to cyber violence and hate speech against women online (Article 3b on intimate partner violence, Article 33 on psychological violence, Article 40 on harassment).

Therefore, at the **international level** there are a number of UN resolutions, strategies and reports (e.g. [UN Human Rights Council resolution on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights online, 2016](#), [UN General Assembly resolution on the protection of women human rights defenders, 2013](#), [General Recommendation 35](#) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/CEDAW Committee, 2017, etc. while at European level there are the Council of Europe Treaties, in particular the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and its Additional Protocol](#), adopted in 2001, which is the first international treaty focusing on Internet-related crimes, the Council of Europe Convention ([Istanbul Convention](#)) on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the [Lanzarote Convention](#) on the protection of children against sexual exploitation calls for the criminalisation of all forms of child abuse. Finally, at EU level, various regulations, directives, EP resolutions and European Commission policies apply directly or indirectly to various forms of cyber violence and hate speech online against women. Examples include: [Directive 2011/92/EE](#) on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography; b) [Directive 2021/29/EE](#) establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, contains provisions that protect victims of crime in the EU and provides a minimum level of rights, protection, support, access to justice and rehabilitation; and c) [Directive 2011/36/EE](#) on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and the protecting the victims.

In Greece, there is no specific legislation on forms of online violence against women, girls and LGBTI people. However, the Istanbul Convention (Law 4532/2018), the Lanzarote Convention (Law 3327/2008) and the Budapest Convention (Law 4411/2016), which have been ratified by the Greek state, are key steps towards the future development of a legal framework on cyber violence

⁴ European Network of Legal Experts in Gender Equality and Non-discrimination and European Commission (2021), [Criminalisation of gender-based violence against women in European States, including ICT-facilitated violence. A special report](#). Authors Sara De Vido and Lorena Sosa. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

II. Policy proposals for the prevention and response to sexual (online) harassment and violence

The following proposals are based first of all on the experience gained in the context of the PRESS project and in particular on the needs of the survivors supported by the Diotima Centre in the framework of the Support Centre for survivors and persons at risk of sexual harassment - including cyber harassment, on what was recorded in the evaluation of the training and skills upgrading programmes of the different groups of professionals (social workers, lawyers, psychologists, teachers, etc.) implemented by Genderhood and the Diotima Centre, as well as in the empowerment programmes and awareness-raising and information actions implemented by Genderhood (for the youth/adolescent population) and the Diotima Centre (for adults). They are also based on proposals from international and European organisations and institutions (e.g. UN/UN Women, Council of Europe, European Parliament and European Commission, etc.) as well as on what was highlighted in the secondary research carried out in the framework of the PRESS project and the [State of the Art](#) (Deliverable 2.1.).

1) Conducting surveys and studies aiming at the interdisciplinary monitoring and recording of the phenomenon of sexual (online) harassment and violence

The fact is that the terminology provides a common framework for addressing the phenomenon at the legal/institutional level and for the effective implementation of laws, but also for recording and monitoring the phenomenon of sexual (cyber) violence. As mentioned above, the secondary research (state of the art) carried out by the PRESS project consortium identified the absence of a uniform and comprehensive definition of the phenomenon of online/digitally assisted gender-based violence and its different manifestations. This fact, combined with the absence of quantitative and qualitative data over time on the phenomenon and its impact on different/intersectional population groups (e.g. LGBTI+ people, people with a migrant/refugee profile, young people, etc.) makes the formulation and implementation of policies even more necessary despite significant gaps. It is obvious that in this context, in addition to the interpersonal level, it is necessary first of all **to strengthen research on (interdisciplinary) monitoring of the phenomenon in a variety of contexts**, such as the workplace, spaces of artistic expression, formal and non-formal education spaces, public transport, and public spaces in general. Quantitative and qualitative research and systematic monitoring over time will contribute significantly to understanding the phenomenon and to the development of policies and targeted measures and action plans to prevent and combat sexual harassment and violence in the physical and online space. Indeed, in this context, it is important to investigate the distinct violations and intersectional dimensions of sexual harassment and violence in order to develop and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies that take into account the intersectionality and unique experiences of socially excluded and/or marginalised population groups.

2) Introduction of a compulsory course of Inclusive Sexuality Education in mandatory education

According to relevant scientific reports and reports ([UNESCO](#), [Council of Europe](#), [International Planned Parenthood Federation – European Network](#), etc.) education/education of young people and young adults about (online) sexual harassment is crucial for the prevention of gender-based violence. In this context, it is first of all necessary to develop and implement distinct education and awareness-raising programmes for all levels of compulsory education, based on both relevant and long-standing European experience and practice. At the same time it is necessary to develop and implement training programmes and actions for higher and higher levels of education at central, regional and local level. **The aim is to develop knowledge and skills that will contribute significantly to the recognition and the response to the phenomenon and reporting of sexual harassment and violence.** In this context, it is appropriate for relevant programmes to focus on issues related to consent, the promotion of healthy interpersonal relationships, positive masculinity and gender equality. Furthermore, as stated in the [European Parliament Resolution of 1 June 2023 on sexual harassment in the EU and evaluation of the MeToo movement \(2022/2138\(INI\)\)](#), inclusive sex education for all, including boys and men, to recognise and prevent sexual harassment and abuse, including those forms of sexual harassment and abuse that are the result of phobic attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people.

The positive experience of Genderhood and Diotima Centre in implementing empowerment and awareness-raising programmes for adolescents and adults, together with the conduct of capacity building seminars within the PRESS project, demonstrated the importance of highlighting issues of consent, boundaries and interpersonal relationships as well as the importance of training on these issues and were also very well received. Furthermore, the PRESS activities that took place within the school context added value to the existing curriculum, given that the members of the learning community that participated in the activities had the opportunity to understand, discuss and exchange views on important, often unseen or unknown aspects of consent and personal boundaries. Their responses to the evaluation questionnaire indicate an increased awareness and understanding of the need to respect personal boundaries and the boundaries of others. Participants expressed a desire to enhance their ability to interpret body language related to consent, recognizing its importance in promoting healthy, respectful relationships. In addition, participating individuals appreciated the interactive nature of the workshop, where discussions and activities facilitated a deeper understanding of the topic outside the context of formal education.

3) Capacity building actions for educational staff

Teachers who teach inclusive sex education (ISE) face distinct challenges compared to those who teach other subjects in schools. They must effectively draw on their personal experiences, values and beliefs, while also taking into account the different perspectives, beliefs and lived experiences that exist in their classrooms. Their teaching approaches should promote health and well-being, avoiding any form of shaming, stigmatisation or reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and avoiding prejudices that reproduce homophobia or transphobia.

The key attitudes that inclusive sex education trainers should have are a commitment to sex education as a lifelong learning process, respect for integrity and an understanding of boundaries.

This means setting an example by setting boundaries and respecting the ones of the student community. In addition, they should accept diversity and treat it with respect. In terms of the skills required, they should be able to create and maintain a safe, inclusive and conducive learning environment where students feel comfortable sharing lived experiences and concerns. The use of interactive teaching and learning approaches is an advantage, as different methodological tools are adapted to different learning abilities. In addition, it is very important that ISE teachers continuously attend capacity building activities in order to acquire up-to-date and accurate knowledge about sexuality education issues, some basic knowledge of health promotion and psychology and of course knowledge about different sexuality education approaches and their impact (see also: [UNESCO, Comprehensive Sexuality Education Toolkit](#)).

4) Effective mechanisms to prevent and address sexual (online) harassment and violence in higher education institutions

Education for equality and inclusion is at the heart of EU policy development, as a central element of the European Education Area and the European University Strategy. It is also a key theme of the European Higher Education Area. **Although gender equality committees exist in many European universities, it is important to note that the existence and functioning of these committees may vary between universities and countries in Europe.** These committees are set up to promote gender equality, tackle gender discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for all members of the university community, regardless of gender. The specific structure and functions of these committees may vary between universities, but their primary goal is to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment within the educational institution. Some universities may have well-established and active committees, while others may have fewer resources or a different approach to addressing gender equality issues. It is always recommended that the specific policies and initiatives of individual universities are investigated by the relevant Ministry of Education to better understand their efforts towards achieving gender equality.

It is obvious that supporting these committees (with material and human resources, policy measures, etc.) to actively participate in various activities such as organising awareness-raising campaigns, supporting gender-sensitive policies, conducting research on gender-related issues, providing support services for female students and staff of Higher Education Institutions, as well as cooperating with external organisations and initiatives focusing on gender equality, is absolutely necessary.

According to [Law 4957/2022 \(article 218\)](#), a Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Committee is established by decision of the Governing Board of each Higher Education Institution as an advisory body to the Foundation and its governing bodies. **The mission of the Committee shall be to promote gender equality and combat discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, health status/disability, age or sexual orientation at all levels of operation and in all processes and activities of academic life.** The Committee contributes to the prevention and response to all forms of discrimination and to the prevention and response to sexism, sexual

harassment and all forms of harassing behaviour in the institution, whether towards the student community or towards the teaching and administrative staff.

Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Committees have already been established in almost all Higher Education Institutions of the country, while a Network of Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Committees of Higher Education Institutions has also been established, which supports interdisciplinary struggles for equality in universities and society and seeks to eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics.

In this context, the Committees should be strengthened with resources (material and human) in order to carry out their work effectively and be supported by appropriate internal procedures and codes of conduct in order to be able to make a decisive contribution to the prevention and response to sexual (cyber) harassment and violence at the university and to the support of all survivors of gender-based violence.

5) Internal procedures to prevent incidents of (online) sexual harassment and violence and to intervene in the workplace

At national level, although sexual harassment is experienced by the majority of women working in the private and public sector, it is under-reported. This is reflected in the Greek Ombudsman's special reports on equal treatment and/or sexual harassment. According to the [2020 Special Report on Equal Treatment](#), "*allegations of harassment and sexual harassment have highlighted the little progress that has been made in shaping and embedding a culture of non-tolerance of intimate assaults by both employees and employers, in the context of the employer's duty of care. Directly linked to this deficit are the difficulties that continue to be encountered both when filing a complaint (fear of retaliation, disfavour, jeopardising a job) and during further investigation (difficulties in the evidentiary process, fear of colleagues testifying, etc.)*". Also according to the [Special Report of 2023](#) entitled "Harassment and sexual harassment at work" by the Ombudsman, which is a brief record of the findings from the cases handled by the Authority in the period 2011-2022 and includes a broad overview of the institutional framework, national, European and international, for the prevention and investigation of harassment and sexual harassment incidents, as well as the imposition of effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions, the following are found: **(a)** in the majority of the cases examined by the Ombudsman, **the person who commits acts of sexual harassment in the workplace exercises employer powers and holds an important position in the company**. This phenomenon is mainly observed in small and medium-sized enterprises in the private sector, but also in the public sector, where it is often a person who holds a position in the hierarchy. **(b) In large enterprises, there are often mechanisms for controlling and evaluating employment, because the employer is not able to supervise the execution of the work himself, due to the large number of employees**. Quite often, in such enterprises, even before the adoption of Law 4808/2021, employee codes of conduct were introduced and training seminars were organised for the smooth cooperation of employees, modelled on practices followed in other countries. The above are aimed, in principle,

at preventing incidents of harassment between employees in order to ensure the smooth running of the company. However, even in large companies there are cases where persons high up in the hierarchy harass employees at a lower level. **(c)** From the reports handled by the Advocate concerning private sector companies, it also appears that **when the person who displayed harassing behaviour was an employer, very often, he was also complained about other violations of labour and social security legislation** - back wages, unpaid overtime, uninsured work, etc. **(d)** **In the public sector, which is hierarchically structured, sexual harassment is also linked to the abuse of power, but also to the fact that people in positions of responsibility believe that they will not be removed from their posts or deprived of their responsibilities.** The above applies more so in cases of gender discrimination, where the harasser believes that because of his or her gender, colleagues may be treated unfavourably.

At the same time, according to a survey conducted by ActionAid (Papagianopoulou, M., Kasdagli, St., Mourtzaki, M., 2020⁵) with 1,001 women from all over the country and 376 workers in the catering and tourism sector, 85% of women in Greece have suffered sexual harassment in the workplace. For these reasons, it is important to create easy and safe reporting procedures for victims of sexual harassment and cyber violence, so that they can report incidents in confidence and receive the necessary support. It is considered necessary to immediately establish special departments in private companies, implementing Article 1 of the recent International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Violence and Harassment of 2019 ([No. 190 on violence and harassment](#) and [Supplementary Recommendation No. 206](#)). Under this provision, "*Members are called upon to address violence and harassment in the world of work in legislation relating to labour and employment, occupational safety and health, equality and non-discrimination, and in criminal procedure, as appropriate*". The Recommendation is divided into: basic principles; protection and prevention; enforcement, remedies and assistance; guidance, training and awareness-raising. This structure emphasises the holistic approach of the Convention and the importance of involving workers and their representatives in the design, implementation and monitoring of workplace policies. For this reason, every HRM department of companies in the private sector should have a specific policy for handling incidents of sexual harassment - including online harassment.

Furthermore, as underlined in the [European Parliament Resolution of 1 June 2023 on sexual harassment in the EU and evaluation of the MeToo movement \(2022/2138\(INI\)\)](#), social partners can play an important role in tackling harassment at work, including sexual harassment and cyberbullying at work. In this context, Member States, in consultation with the social partners, should ensure that employers take appropriate measures to ensure a safe working environment and support for victims and to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual harassment, cyber violence and third party violence at work. At the same time, employers should be prevented from dismissing, discriminating against or in any way disadvantaging workers who are victims of sexual harassment; notes, in this context, that workers should have the right to be supported by a trade union organisation and a

⁵ Papagianopoulou, M., Kasdagli, St., Mourtzaki, M., (2020), [Research entitled Not part of the job. Sexual harassment against women at work. Examining the catering and tourist sectors](#). Athens: ActionAid Hellas

workplace health and safety representative, and that Member States should take measures to promote collective bargaining on workplace practices to prevent and combat sexual harassment, including through awareness-raising and training of workers and employers, trade union representatives and workplace health and safety representatives; recognises the role that CSOs and business networks play in preventing and responding to incidents of sexual harassment at work, including through awareness-raising and assistance to victims.

6) Workplace training programmes

It is necessary to carry out training programmes in workplaces on the prevention of sexual violence and harassment for a number of reasons. First of all, preventing these violations in the workplace is a legal (and moral) obligation of every employer ([No. 190 on violence and harassment](#) and [complementary recommendation No. 206](#)) who must protect working people from violations and discrimination that violate their dignity. Workers have the right to work in a safe and sexually harassment-free environment. In addition, training programmes shall raise awareness and inform staff (in particular those in positions of responsibility or in charge of human resources management) about the nature and consequences of sexual violence and harassment and provide reliable information on how to manage incidents of sexual harassment within the company, informing them about procedures, how to report, the consequences for perpetrators, etc. This leads to a more supportive workplace culture where employees are more likely to recognize the signs of such violations and report incidents of harassment they observe or experience. At the same time, they promote equality and respect among workers.

It is obvious that training programmes are equally important in the case of online/digitally assisted sexual harassment. The digital age has created new ways for sexual violence and harassment to occur, and employees and workers need to be informed about the different forms and their effects. **Training should include education on internet safety, recognition of online sexual harassment and violence, proper practices for using social media, and ways to respond to and report incidents of violence and harassment.**

In summary, training on the prevention of sexual violence and harassment in the workplace is important as it promotes awareness, prevention, equality and safety of workers. In addition, training on cyber violence and harassment is necessary to address the new challenges that have emerged through and because of the use of digital media. Ongoing training and awareness are essential practices to prevent and combat sexual violence and harassment and to create a work environment that promotes respect, safety and equality for all working individuals without exception.

7) Actions to raise awareness among journalists and media professionals

In the framework of the PRESS project, the Department of Communication and Media Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, which is one of the partners of the consortium, has prepared an Advocacy Document ([Deliverable 5.5. - Advocacy paper for media stakeholders](#))

addressed to key stakeholders invested in improving media coverage of sexual harassment and violence, and invites national and European media associations and other organisations to a "memorandum of operations" that will promote the selection of policies that can help to continuously improve the coverage of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, in order to protect survivors of harassment and violence and promote anti-sexism.⁶

8) Information and awareness-raising activities for the general public

To achieve all of the above, political decisions are not enough if they are not communicated to the general population through information and awareness-raising programmes and campaigns. [The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in its Resolution of 1 June 2023 on sexual harassment in the EU and evaluation of the MeToo movement \(2022/2138\(INI\)\)](#) underlined the need for regular harassment prevention campaigns with updated posters and leaflets. At the same time, she stressed that *"preventive measures should aim to empower women and support men to challenge harmful gender stereotypes, educate them on the concept of consent, promote gender equality for a safe working environment and encourage everyone to act as positive role models for a society free of gender-based violence"*. This can be achieved through the design of information and communication campaigns by both institutional authorities and civil society organisations. It is essential that Member States ensure that funding mechanisms for programmes aimed at combating gender-based violence can be used to raise awareness and support for survivors and survivors.

Examples of actions and awareness-raising campaigns:

- Production of audiovisual material for public and private television
- Awareness campaigns on social media
- Distribution of information leaflets and brochures at key points (shopping centres, public services, educational and leisure facilities, public transport, etc.).
- Advertising banners in busy public places (public transport, main roads, etc.)

In the framework of the PRESS project, Genderhood and Diotima Center implemented the [#me_enoxleis](#) and [Cyber Violence Exists](#) campaigns, the results of which are summarized below as a good practice in addressing target groups of the Greek population:

- ✓ The aim of the 3-month online and offline communication campaign of Genderhood was consent and respect. Through the #me_enoxleis campaign, the intention was to provoke into focus on educating and sensitizing the youth on issues regarding body boundaries, individuals who do not practise consent and seek to make a positive contribution to familiarizing them with good practices. At the same time, the campaign's goal was to empower femininities in a

⁶ See more at: Pleios, G., Kanaouti, S., and Gerakopoulou, P., 2023, Advocacy Paper for media stakeholders regarding the media coverage of (online and offline) sexual harassment and violence, PRESS Project, CERV-2021-DAPHNE under the Grant Agreement 101049295.



culture contesting and reverting victim blaming. The campaign was launched in December 2022. It should be noted that the online campaign had a tremendous overreach given that it has reached more than 262.000 beneficiaries and the original target was 25.000 beneficiaries.

- ✓ The overall aim of the online campaign of Diotima Centre was to raise awareness about sexual harassment and cyber violence and its impact and also to promote a culture of consent, whereas the objectives of the campaign were: a) to inform the general public and raise awareness about cyber violence, its different forms and expressions (e.g. cyber stalking, image – based abuse, sextortion, sexism, hate speech, non-consensual sexting, cyber flashing); b) to sensitize the general public about the significance of consent when it comes to online communication/interaction and c) to contribute to the increase of the number of women addressing Diotima Support Centre for psychosocial support, legal counselling and legal aid. The overall reach of the online campaign exceeded the number set for the persons to be reached by 11%, thus reaching more than 166.000 people, which is considered a great success given that the original target set was 150.000 people.

Finally, and in line with the European Parliament Resolution (2023), awareness-raising and information actions and campaigns should be regularly updated and reinforced by various means, particularly with regard to the cross-cutting dimension of sexual (online) harassment and violence, so that ignorance and lack of awareness cannot be used as an excuse for flagrant violation of the rules and, in particular, of fundamental human rights.

Conclusion

Given that sexual (cyber/digitally assisted) harassment and violence, as well as other forms of violence, offensive or unwanted behaviour in the workplace, education, entertainment, politics, social action, etc., should be considered serious social phenomena, health and safety issues and not individual problems of survivors, it is obvious that their prevention and response requires long-term and holistic policies that will ensure more effective prevention and protection of survivors. In this context, it is necessary to coordinate the efforts of the European Union, the Member States, central and local authorities, civil society, the media, the education sector, trade unions, etc. in order to develop targeted policies for the prevention of sexual (online) harassment and violence with the necessary resources and to evaluate existing policies in order to identify gaps, shortcomings and policy areas that need to be improved or reformed. In particular, both at national and European level, in the context of our long-term strategy for gender equality, the relevant governmental and non-governmental actors can set priorities and targets to ensure the early prevention of sexual harassment, the immediate and adequate protection of all survivors, the establishment of holistic support mechanisms, the fight against all forms of discrimination and the imposition of effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions.



Genderhood, as a member of the EU co-funded PRESS project consortium, we invite national and European policy makers, relevant governmental bodies, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, competent independent authorities, etc., to engage in an open and meaningful debate and consultation and to work together on future-proof interventions, policies and legislation for the benefit of Europe's younger generation and to foster lifelong learning and non-formal education.