

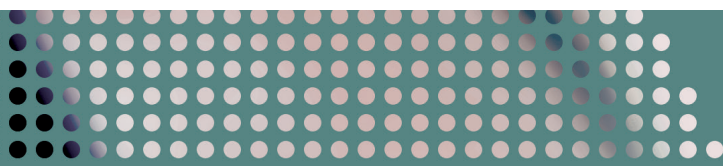
# RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Guide  
for companies

**CARVE** | COMPANIES  
AGAINST  
GENDER  
VIOLENCE



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The project entitled  
"Companies Against gender-  
based Violence – CARVE" aims  
to raise awareness and prevent  
gender related violence  
committed against women  
through a comprehensive  
European campaign involving  
companies.

It was implemented in  
Belgium, Bulgaria, France,  
Greece and Spain by a  
consortium of eight partners,  
with the purpose of tackling  
gender-based violence,  
by breaking the taboo of  
addressing this issue at the  
workplace.

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The partners who implemented the CARVE  
project and developed this guide are:



COORDINATOR: FONDATION  
AGIR CONTRE L'EXCLUSION



POUR LA SOLIDARITÉ



CEPS PROJECTES SOCIALS



CENTER FOR WOMEN'S  
STUDIES & POLICIES



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY



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PROJECT CO-FUNDED BY THE DAPHNE III  
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**François-Henri PINAULT**  
Kering Chairman and CEO,  
Kering Corporate Foundation Chairman

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Preventing and combating violence against women is a moral and civic duty.

Throughout the world today, one woman in three is or will be a victim of domestic violence, raped or otherwise abused in her lifetime. This means that statistically each one of us, regardless of social class, culture or nationality, is surrounded by victims of this scourge.

The numbers are so high that one's initial reaction is disbelief. And yet...

When I first became aware of the scope of this problem, which is still a taboo, I wanted to act. In 2009, I created the Kering Corporate Foundation in order to combat violence against women and to engage with public authorities and non-profit organisations.

The Kering Foundation rolls out its strategy in three ways: long-term partnerships with NGOs that provide holistic support for survivors; grants awarded to social entrepreneurs working to empower women; and promotional campaigns designed to raise collective awareness on the issue. In this context, we have also set up dedicated training sessions on domestic violence for Group employees.

Companies can play a major role in combating violence against women. The latest statistics show that a majority of women victims of domestic violence are employed. It is therefore crucial to define how to tackle this issue, which every corporation is confronted by. While the firm cannot replace associations taking care of the victims, it can and must provide them with support and refer them to dedicated organisations.

This guidebook "Responding to violence against women – Guide for companies" constitutes a valuable tool. It provides a broad overview of all existing methods, compares experiences and highlights efficient practices. And most important, it sheds light on ways of addressing this violence within a company.

There is still much work to be done. My hope is that this guide will be widely read. Only by pulling together can we efficiently combat violence against women.



**Věra JOUROVÁ**  
Commissioner for Justice,  
Consumers and Gender Equality

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Violence against women is a flagrant violation of human rights.

In our effort to fight violence against women, we all have a part to play: policy makers, civil society organisations, companies, individuals.

The guide "Responding to violence against women – Guide for Companies" is a valuable tool to help companies address violence through the workplace. It helps break the taboos surrounding such violence.

Companies are well placed to support women who are abused in the private sphere. Creating a supportive culture can encourage women to report the violence they experience and to convince them they are entitled to live a life free of violence. Each individual, each employee, each company can make a difference. By providing women with a safe space and an income that makes them financially independent, companies can play a vital role in protecting victims and empowering them to leave abusive relationships.

How do you identify a case of violence? How do you interact with employees who suffer from violence? How do you raise awareness about this phenomenon and break the taboos around it? These questions and many others are addressed in this guide.

I highly recommend it to all business managers willing to make a stand for their female staff members.



# INTRODUCTION

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This compilation of best workplace practices to address gender-based violence reflects the interest and labor of organizations participating in the CARVE project. Its broader aim is to contribute to and encourage businesses' efforts to combat all forms of gender-based violence, and promote equality between men and women. Gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) are often used interchangeably, as statistically most gender-based violence is inflicted by men on women and girls. Gender-based violence against women is violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. Although it is difficult to distinguish between different types of violence experienced by women as they are not mutually exclusive, for the purpose of this project, when speaking about companies' efforts to address gender-based violence outside the workplace, we refer to:

- domestic violence;
- intimate partner violence;
- sexual assault/molestation;
- rape;
- stalking;
- homicide by spouse/intimate partner

As with many similar guides for companies, this initiative grew from a simple proposition to provide guidance to businesses on how to respond in a meaningful way to the phenomenon of gender-based violence, by supporting the victims, raising awareness in the workplace about prevention, protection and reintegration of women employees experiencing it outside the workplace and by setting up mechanisms for effective and safe responses.

With the heightened debate on corporate responsibility signalling a new perspective on the interaction between business and society, and citizens placing increased expectations on companies to help solve major social issues, progressive businesses are becoming aware of the impact of gender-based violence and its interconnections with their equal opportunities policies and the management of their human resources.

The research in the context of CARVE revealed that although most companies are neither aware of, nor involved in initiatives against gender-based violence, there are some organizations and companies across Europe which have experience in dealing with its effects on the workplace. National research studies held as part of the project in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece and Spain in the first half of 2015 revealed the presence of some common findings despite the markedly different national context and business environment of project countries. Gender-based violence is not a topic that is easily discussed at the workplace and it is still broadly considered to be more a private issue than a problem of society as a whole. What happens in the family is rarely shared outside of it and there are psychological barriers hindering staff and management cooperation in situations of gender-based violence occurring outside the workplace. Several reasons can explain why this happens. Companies in the study countries lack information and data regarding the economic impact of gender-based violence. Corporate stakeholders that could actually support victims or perpetrators are neither trained to detect these persons, nor to accompany them in their search for a solution. Only few formal internal protocols and professional guides are developed for the needs of an enterprise. Finally, the privacy issue also arose during the interviews as one of the main obstacles justifying why companies are not reacting to suspected cases of gender-based violence against their female employees.

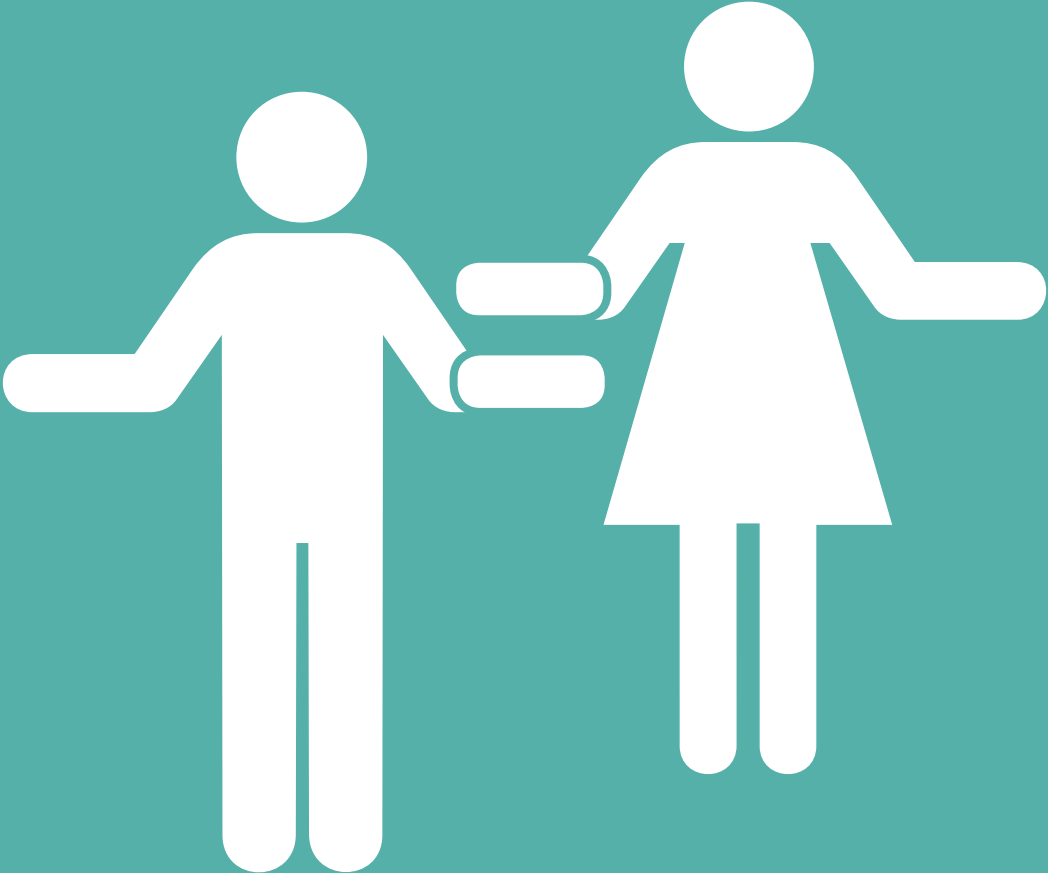
This guide of best practices is complemented by an overview of the facts about gender-based violence and examples of European companies already involved in this field.



It is aimed primarily at practitioners from businesses, employers' organizations and trade unions, which are interested in taking action against gender-based violence. The objective is to have a wide spectrum of companies and corporate stakeholders adopt these practices, adapting them and tailoring the recommendations to their specific circumstances.

The guide presents the perspectives of individual companies which have helped and supported women who have experienced violence, as well as general, applicable advice which can be distilled from these best practices. It also provides information on the policies and initiatives tackling gender-based violence and on the economic costs and impacts of this phenomenon at the workplace. The guide draws on the insights gained from collecting case studies and from interviewing more than 150 companies and organizations in five countries as well as on bibliographical research with regard to the legislation and policies about gender-based violence in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece and Spain.

By highlighting these cases and by providing some tips and techniques to help companies implement practices that benefit women experiencing violence, we hope that the guide will contribute to the changing of mindsets and to the development and launch of corporate campaigns and policies for the prevention and protection of women against gender-based violence.



# SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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## ► **Developing and implementing a workplace policy addressing violence against women**

Gender violence is not confined behind closed doors. By affecting the victims, gender violence also displays its effects inside a company. For this reason, many companies believe that prevention of gender-based violence and support to victims must also be implemented in a workplace setting and that responses should be very carefully planned. Corporate action plans tailored to gender-based violence form a solid foundation for a successful intervention, in conjunction with other corporate policies concerning gender equality, health and safety, and social issues. There are some basic steps identified as beneficial for developing and implementing a workplace policy addressing violence against women regardless of company size, although smaller companies can adapt sections where details are less relevant to their limited financial means and staffing capacity.

### **1 PLANNING**

It will be useful for companies to ensure that there is a specific protocol or action plan on gender violence in place, emphasizing zero tolerance, while highlighting the steps that will be taken should such an issue arise. The action plan should ideally be prepared in cooperation with experts such as NGOs specialized in gender violence, and should take the following four points into consideration: prevention, detection, support and action.

The first consideration is the needs and requirements of victims that could be staff members and this evidence is to be used to define the purpose and scope of the protocol and the actions to be taken. This protocol should detail the professional rights provided, as well as how employees can claim them. It must ensure the confidentiality of the information given and the security of the employee by keeping personal data (such as phone number, home address, email) classified.

## **2 INVOLVEMENT**

The management and HR departments should ensure all personnel is fully on board and committed to meeting the corporate policy objectives on gender-based violence. Therefore it is very important to ensure that staff, at all levels, fully understands the business responsibility and benefits of the policy addressing the issue, as well as any legal requirements. To this end, the policy should be made accessible to all employees in print, either in employee handbooks or given out in newcomers' 'starter packs'.

## **3 STRONG COMMITMENT**

Demonstrate a genuine commitment against sexism and violence of any kind and keep the company alert to any signs of abuse of women employees. This is essential for women victims of gender violence, as it could empower and help them by reducing their feelings of isolation. Moreover, a company denouncing all forms of abuses and violence that hinders its gender equality objectives provides victims with a safe space free from aggressions (psychological, verbal, financial, and physical). This safe space allows for a healing process to begin, and makes victims confident enough to disclose their situation and in the long run preventing gender violence altogether.

## **4 ESTABLISH INTERNAL GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS**

A contact point for gender-based violence within the company should be identified, in order to ensure that women's voice is heard when they experience any kind of violence. One option is an anonymous email address and/or letterbox and designated staff members trained to respond to gender violence.

These persons, such as prevention counsellors, corporate psychologists, corporate doctors, social workers should be known to all personnel likely to come into contact with victims. This information must be publicised and be easily available at all times (posters in company premises, info on the intranet, info at induction of each new staff etc.) for employees to know whom to contact, where to find these persons and what their role is. This is an important part of the information included in a protocol addressing this issue. Setting up a procedure with identified support actors will help the enterprise to pinpoint who is able to deal with such matters and who should receive training on the issue. Both the victim and the support actors are often at a loss when it comes to finding professionals capable to provide support. Therefore, properly identifying the corporate stakeholders that will be able to provide operational support to the victim, to help her better reconcile her professional duties with a major personal problem, is a core stake of the detection and protection of GBV victims in the workplace.

## BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**PSA Peugeot Citroën** is the second largest car manufacturer in Europe. Violence was addressed in a company-wide agreement in 2009 when a protocol to prevent and combat domestic violence was signed with the former Minister for Employment and Social Relations, Xavier Darcos. The latest agreement of 2014 includes an article on “supporting employees-victims of domestic violence” and encourages the various PSA sites to take action against gender-based violence. The three identified priorities are: 1) relaying national campaigns; 2) training social, medical and HR services; 3) supporting employees-victims of violence.

Each PSA site can implement different actions within its plant to meet these objectives. For example, the Vesoul site reached out to the Information Centre on Women's Rights and Families (CIDFF) to arrange training for the site's managers. 150 managers were specifically trained to identify GBV and an exhibition on the issue was organized. Awareness-raising initiatives were implemented, such as distribution of flyers including self-diagnosis (“are you a victim?”).

**The French telecommunications company Orange** has included in its 2014 agreement on gender equality an article about GBV. As part of the “Work organization, work-life balance, health and prevention”, this article offers to put in place an emergency action if a woman files a complaint. This emergency action concerns housing: thanks to the “Action Logement” initiative, employees-victims of violence can access alternative housing solutions with far more ease and much faster.

**The French Ministries of Finance and Economy** mention gender based violence in their 2015-2017 Gender Equality Plan. The 20<sup>th</sup> measure aims to raise awareness on moral and sexual harassment through a wide communication, specifying the obligations of the employer concerning prevention. The 21<sup>th</sup> measure integrates violence issues within the broader policy concerning hygiene, security and working conditions. Although the focus is on violence in the workplace, it is stated that the different actors of prevention (social assistants, occupational health staff) can be alerted about tough professional situations resulting from violence occurring in the personal sphere. The 22<sup>th</sup> measure consists in providing HR staff and managers with information and tools allowing them to take charge of a situation when needed. The possibility for the relevant staff to create partnerships with specialised NGOs is also mentioned.

The study implemented within the framework of the project revealed that indeed few companies in the countries examined have the same awareness, resources and knowledge to create specific policies or internal protocols on prevention, protection and reintegration of women who are victims of violence. However, most of them were involved to some extent in tackling the problem and their practices and initiatives are collected and presented in the present Guide as successful practices on addressing violence against women outside the workplace.

## ► **Identifying and responding to the problem at the workplace**

According to the research carried out within the project most employees who have been victims of VAW do not feel comfortable or do not have the opportunity to disclose their situation to their employer or colleagues, since they anticipate negative consequences of such disclosure for their employment and career. While this desire must be respected, it can be helpful if the employer and employees are able to identify the problem, so as to provide victims with guidance on support services and with efficient assistance.

In reality, detecting victims of violence against women in the workplace can be extremely challenging. The research showed that detection most often is not a formalized process and usually employers have a case-by-case approach. The approach depends very much on the national legislation, size of the company, hierarchy, organizational culture and established relationships within the teams and with the management. It also depends on the personality and sometimes on the gender of the employee who supports or is in charge of personnel (the interviews, held within the project revealed that women find it easier to communicate these problems with female staff and managers).

Different actors were identified in the five studied countries as being practically involved in the detection process: colleagues, production and line managers, owners in small companies, social workers, career counsellors, occupational physicians, and social corporate agents.

However the detection of women victims of violence is still limited and the number of victims is under-reported. The following points highlight some possible practical steps that could be undertaken by employers to facilitate detection and support process.

## **1 TRAIN AND INFORM THE STAFF AND MANAGERS**

Ideally training programs on the effects and consequences of violence on the workplace (including violence happening outside of it, but having a negative impact on the workplace) should involve all employees, including supervisors and managers. All staff members should be at least provided with a few necessary tips enabling them to respond to a situation of violence (including gender based violence outside the workplace), since anyone could someday be “on the front line”. When it comes to colleagues a basic awareness-raising seminar should aim at lifting the taboos surrounding the issue. To avoid overloading scheduled training sessions and sensitization-days, which can already be rather numerous, the topic of gender-based violence could be included in broader training sessions on sexual harassment and violence at work, gender equality or work-family reconciliation informational events.

In large and medium sized companies, staff training could be instrumental to prepare for addressing the issues and assist successfully the persons experiencing gender-based violence. It is highly recommended to organize training sessions for staff members identified as possible points of contact. Entrusting people from HR or other relevant department with the task of being the point of contact means asking to them act as dedicated internal counsellors. Internal counsellors should be trained to handle questions such as how to escape, where to get help outside the workplace, what to do once the victim escapes, etc. Along with a better understanding of the issue of gender-based violence, such training sessions may provide dedicated internal counsellors with answers and enable them to help the victim in finding solutions both outside the workplace (accommodation, psychological support, financial assistance for medical treatment etc.) and negotiate solutions within the company (keeping the victim’s job position, supporting her professional reintegration after coming back to work). When resources allow it, it is advisable to extend awareness-raising trainings to all employees, so as to ensure the efficient application of a workplace policy on prevention of violence.



In smaller companies, where contact points for violence cases often turn out to be the owners themselves, it is recommended that they prepare themselves and receive some education on gender-based violence, or at least acquire advance information on where to refer someone to get the right help. In this way, when faced with a crisis, the response can be immediate and effective, as even after only 24 hours it may be too late. Many examples from the small companies studied within the project (which are also statistically prevalent in Europe) showed that the immediate, planned reaction of first contact points (including owners and production managers) was an invaluable, sometimes life-saving, emergency help for the victims.

## BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**Kering**, a world leader in apparel and accessories, launched its Corporate Foundation in 2009 to combat violence against women. The Foundation focuses on one cause in each of the following regions:

- Sexual Violence in the Americas
- Harmful Traditional Practices in Western Europe (France, Italy, UK)
- Domestic Violence in Asia

The Kering Foundation supports NGOs' projects and social entrepreneurs and organizes awareness campaigns involving the 38 000 Group's employees.

To understand what Domestic Violence is, prevent stereotypes and create a supportive work environment for survivors, the Kering Foundation designed a 3-hour training session for Kering's employees with Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes (FNSF). Kering formalized its commitment to training its employee and cascade national campaigns on Domestic Violence through the signature of a "Charter to prevent and combat Domestic Violence" by Mr Pinault, Chairman and CEO of Kering. It has been signed in France with FNSF, Italy with DiRe and the UK with Women's Aid. To date, more than 500 Kering employees have attended a training session.

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*More information: <http://www.keringfoundation.org/#KeringForWomen>*

**In 2010, upon initiative of Amnesty International Belgium (AIB),** a mass-distribution company hosted a training session to raise its staff's awareness (especially those from the HR department) about partner violence. On the occasion of this training session, AIB published an article in the corporate newspaper, displayed a poster in resting areas and distributed leaflets with contact numbers for associations and women's shelters<sup>1</sup>. AIB organized a similar campaign in 2012 in a big consulting company: the NGO distributed folders and displayed posters in the corporate premises. Within the framework of the campaign, it also invited employees to take part in a sensitization marathon against domestic violence. Participants were invited to distribute free practical guides designed for victims or potential victims of partner violence. In return, the company donated 1 Euro per distributed guide to finance the AIB campaign "Stop Domestic Violence".

## 2 BUILD TRUST

Employers need to focus on developing a feeling of trust in employees experiencing gender-based violence. Company management, as well as HR staff or the dedicated employees responsible for these issues, need to create a supportive non-judgmental environment, not hesitating to ask women employees to tell their story and to provide them with support. Most often the purpose of detection is to support the employee-victim. Therefore, the management and the personnel department or the dedicated employees should be sympathetic and attentive to possible signs of abuse, respect the victim's privacy and ensure the confidentiality of the information disclosed.

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<sup>1</sup> | <http://www.garance.be/cms/?Les-violences-conjugales#nh1> (22/10/15).

### 3 STANDARD PROTOCOLS AS PART OF THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT POLICIES

VAW may be incorporated into the health promotion activities at workplace level. In the context of health and wellbeing programmes that many businesses promote for their employees, standard screening and protocols for identifying and responding appropriately to victims of domestic violence should be in place. HR services and staff members dedicated to wellbeing at work could also participate to the detection of GBV victims by integrating questions on work-family reconciliation, violence in general, self-confidence, etc. in psychosocial surveys.

### 4 PROVIDE SUPPORT OR HELP FOR REFERRALS FOR CARE AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

Owners, managers, HR or the dedicated employees most often refer victims to nearby support resources and specialized agencies, if available, which deliver a more tailored approach, including counselling, legal assistance and other kinds of services that victims need. Companies provided support to employees also through formal intervention policies such as corporate psychological help, flexibility in changing shift or work location, temporary reduction in work hours, leave of absence and the possibility to transfer to other work locations throughout the country in more serious situations.

#### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**The French tire company Michelin** adopted in 2016 an Agreement on “the development of diversity and professional equality between men and women”. One of the paragraphs is specifically dedicated to domestic violence: the company commits to set up measures to improve the provision of care for victims. To that end, Michelin will work closely with the Regional Delegation to Women’s Rights. Information about the ways to provide help and support will be disseminated among the occupational health staff, social assistants and human resources staff.



**At CRAMIF, the State agency in charge of social security in the Ile-de-France region**, fighting violence against women results from the desire to directly help female employees who are victims by establishing a comprehensive emergency strategy and by appointing specific interlocutors.

CRAMIF thus implemented an emergency procedure when victims of violence are seeking support. This assistance includes a housing solution for male or female employees which can be accessed through an emergency number on the Intranet. It also includes appointments with the specific interlocutors (social worker and work psychologist) to tell the episodes of violence and help women to contact specialized NGOs.

**Aware of the impact personal issues can have on staff's work, a public hospital in Brussels** decided, together with other health institutions, to set up a common service based on extensive prevention plans aiming to help workers identify solutions to personal issues. The adoption of a cutting-edge prevention plan and the recruitment of professional supporting employees for private issues permitted to avoid the stigmatization of gender-based violence victims that might arise in case of procedures specifically dedicated to cases of violence against women.

The common service includes a corporate psychologist dedicated to staff members' private matters; in addition, prevention counsellors are in charge of seeking arrangements between managers – who are not systematically informed of the private issue the worker is facing – and the worker herself. The mutualisation of the prevention and protection services also allows the consortium partners to share best practices.

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More information: <https://www.ulb.ac.be/scppt/introduction.html>

## ► Interacting with employee-victims at the workplace

Discretion, consent and confidentiality must prevail as the colleagues and dedicated staff of the company may be the only source of outside help for victims. Some practical guidelines on how to apply these elements when interacting with victims are the following:

### 1 LISTEN

It is important to listen to the woman experiencing violence and listen to her specific needs, without being judgmental (many serious reasons may prevent a woman from leaving her violent partner, such as the actual risk of being killed).

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**In one of the cases of psychological violence detected in a Bulgarian middle-sized company,** the general manager and the production manager initiated a personal confidential conversation with a woman they suspected to be a victim of violence. The two managers gave her time to decide when she would be able to come back to work. The woman was given freedom to decide whether she would maintain her management position or whether she preferred to take another position with fewer responsibilities and less stress. The management also offered support in the event she decided to leave her husband and to assist her in finding a new home and providing financial help for childcare. The woman was assured that she was not alone in this situation and she should remain calm, returning to work whenever she was ready.

## 2 EXPLAIN AND INFORM

Domestic violence and abuse of women is often condemned by national criminal laws and in some countries the victims have certain rights to legal protection and special social support. The personnel department or the dedicated staff should be able to explain the relevant rights to the employees-victims of violence and guide them to where they could seek help (i.e. expert NGOs, specialized legal services, specialized sections of trade unions etc.). It is important for the company and staff to know and explain the difference between what the company can offer and what else is available for a victim outside the workplace.

In case a company has no specialized personnel or trained people who could provide help and guidance, it should at least distribute information on the rights of victims and the existing assistance services and hotlines in the country. Similar examples were identified in Spain through company interviews. Some companies circulate campaign materials and posters against VAW at the workplace; others post small stickers with the emergency numbers and information for victims in women's restrooms or close to the cash machines in order to reach both employees and customers.

## ► **Supporting women victims of violence**

Women experiencing violence need varying levels and kinds of support and integration services, depending on their personal situation. Some victims are financially dependent on the violent partner, while others might need time off or flexible working hours to receive the appropriate medical care and psychological support. The following is a list of possible supportive measures that businesses could adopt.

### **1 SPECIAL LEAVES AND WORK REINTEGRATION**

Some companies are implementing policies supporting return to work after long-term absences. These cutting-edge policies often consider the reintegration of workers after maternity leave, burn outs or long-term convalescence. When a victim of gender-based violence is forced to abandon her position for a while (i.e. because she had to flee from home or recover from injuries), it is essential that measures are put in place to support her return to work and prevent her from losing her job and becoming financially dependent on a former perpetrator. Preparing the return of former victims does not mean waiting for a formalized policy, nor disclosing the reason of the worker's absence.

Yet the most difficult issue for the small companies interviewed was how to ensure confidentiality and what to tell colleagues, when it was evident that something was wrong. Talking with personnel helps them understand that they just need to behave normally with their suffering colleague, without any special attention, but avoiding to overburden her with too many stressful tasks, particularly in the first couple of months after her return to work. The management's support and the direct talks with the staff about how they are expected to react very often result in a smoother reintegration process.

## **2 OVERCOMING ISOLATION**

One of the core issues of violence against women is the isolation of victims. Therefore, it is useful for safe spaces to be made available at work, where solid relationships can be forged within work teams and personal issues can be discussed more informally. This is even more necessary for people who tend to work individually or people in teleworking. Again, this can be easily implemented by organizing quiet coffee spaces or rest areas, initiating staff meetings among small working teams where they do not exist, and organizing team-building activities.

## **3 FLEXIBLE WORK ORGANIZATION**

It is important to organize work (the premises, but also working hours, for instance) in such a way that it is possible for a victim to discreetly disclose her situation, either to managers/trustworthy colleague or to a support person among the staff. As for cases of burn-out, it is important that the team manager, the team itself and the HR department (if any) cooperate when the workload has to be reorganized during the worker's absence and progressively reorganized when she comes back, so as not to create tension among the other team members. It is also very important to keep in contact with the worker, so that she knows she is still considered as part of the staff.

## **4 OFFERING NEW JOBS**

Support can also be provided as a result of successful cooperation between employers and social/support services and national institutions in charge of prevention and protection of victims of violence or non-governmental organizations working in this field. Interviews in Greece, Spain and Bulgaria confirmed that cooperation between private and public sector may lead to successful practices supporting women trying to escape violence and securing their financial independence through jobs and psychological assistance.



## BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

### **AB Vasilopoulos (one of the major super market chains in Greece)**

has established an organized social service for its employees, who can seek assistance by a qualified therapist and social worker. This social service has already offered specialized support to employees who had experienced violence. Furthermore, AB Vasilopoulos participated in an initiative against human trafficking, promoted by the Delhaize Group in cooperation with the Samilia Foundation (Belgium). In this context, in addition to organizing information workshops on human trafficking, the Greek super market chain provided help to the victims by offering them job positions reinforcing their better and quicker reintegration and socialization. In Bulgaria, supermarkets belonging to the Delhaize Group also offered jobs for women-victims of violence. NGOs working on protection of victims normally guarantee that they will act as intermediates in that process and will provide psychological support to the women-victims applying for a job.



**The “Network of companies for a society free from gender-based violence”<sup>2</sup>** comprises eighty Spanish and international companies (e.g. BBVA, Danone, PSA, Mango) as well as six public companies, and works in collaboration with the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social service and Equality since 2012. It successfully accomplishes its two objectives: raising awareness on the issue of gender-based violence in the framework of the governmental campaign “Hay Salida”, and participating to the socio-professional reintegration of women who have suffered domestic violence. The collaborating companies have hired 1.426 women who have been in a situation of domestic violence.



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2| <http://www.violenciagenero.msssi.gob.es/sensibilizacionConcienciacion/iniciativaEmpresas/home.htm>

## ► **Ensuring employee-victim's safety and security at work**

Abusers may threaten the security and safety of their victims at the workplace, through psychological terror through phone, email or in person, or even physical threats. This can place the victim and her colleagues at risk. Actions aiming to ensure safety for the victims of domestic violence at the workplace should take into consideration:

### **1 SAFE WORK CONDITIONS**

Employers may want to minimise the risk by defining, together with the employee experiencing gender violence, safer work conditions adapted to the situation (for instance, not being in direct contact with customers or in public view). The Spanish law allows women in this situation to work in a different location, when the company can accommodate it.

### **2 CONFIDENTIALITY**

Simple measures could also include procedure for the employee's personal or contact details not to be disclosed over the phone, email, or to a stranger coming into the office and redirecting the phone line of the employee in question in order to avoid harassment situations.

### **3 SECURITY**

Emergency contact numbers could be displayed in the office and security staff should be informed that a violent partner may show up. Codes and key numbers for accessing the workplace should be revised regularly. All these measures should be discussed with the victim and her privacy has to be protected. Only key personnel (line managers, security staff etc.) are to be informed in cases of threats and always with the prior knowledge of the victim.

## ► **Raising awareness in the workplace on violence against women**

Raising awareness in the workplace is possibly the most important step to educate and find supporters for the cause internally. There are some practical steps<sup>3</sup>, recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Great Britain to business that can ensure the success of that endeavour:

- **Ask the Chief Executive of your organisation to talk about the issue** and provide leadership;
- **Establish a strong message** that perpetrators will be held accountable for their behaviour and that those who experience domestic abuse will be supported;
- **Promote information on domestic abuse on your intranet** - what it is, who to talk to, how to help colleagues. Make the link to your domestic abuse workplace policy;
- **Write articles about the 'domestic abuse is your business' campaign** for your intranet and newsletters - provide links to your domestic abuse workplace policy.

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**3** | Break the silence on violence. Domestic abuse is your business. Employers' Campaign pack available on line at [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdf/DA%20Employers%20Pack.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/DA%20Employers%20Pack.pdf)

## ► **Engaging with stakeholders on the issue of violence against women**

Gender-based violence is a societal issue and it can be interesting, as well as necessary for the company to engage with stakeholders to address it. Even though companies should take action, they are not expected to solve the problem of GBV on their own. Companies have the potential to be a relevant partner of specialized associations and public bodies in the fight against gender-based violence; nevertheless, the aforementioned easy-to-implement and financially realistic tips should be accompanied by partnerships with civil society organizations and national authorities able to take over. As a matter of fact, companies will rarely take care of the psychological support of the victim or her accommodation. Many civil society organizations employ professionals dedicated to victim and offender support. In this context businesses' activities can include:

### **1 COLLABORATION WITH SPECIALIZED STAKEHOLDERS**

National authorities, police, trade unions and specialized NGOs can be very useful for their expertise and resources.

- **NGOs, city councils, foundations, could pass agreements** with companies to develop programmes to reintegrate victims of gender-violence.
- **NGOs, providing support services to victims and trade unions** may have the relevant knowledge to provide training for employees to detect, prevent and support themselves (many women victims speak out after attending a course or event where they feel they can speak out and are safe) or a colleague victim of gender violence. This is paramount to design an efficient workplace policy on gender violence.

Epecially with regard to supporting the victims, each situation is different and involves complex decisions, which may need expert knowledge on different levels (psychological or legal). To have established contact with external experts, such as NGOs, national institutions and trade unions, is a good safety net for companies and their staff.

## BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**The “Ana Bella School for Empowerment”<sup>4</sup>** was created by the Ana Bella Foundation, an NGO formed by women survivors of gender violence that gives support to 1200 women per year. Since 2011 it collaborates with big companies such as Danone, MANGO, Ligeresa, who supports the School by offering work opportunities to women victims of violence. The School offers coaching, social workshops, professional training and job opportunities. It aims to support the empowerment of women to become sales persons and/or access middle management positions, hence targeting a strong reintegration into society.

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4 | <http://www.fundacionanabella.org/>  
<http://www.eveleblog.com/user/fighting-violence-against-women-the-danone-ecosystem-fund-commited-with-ana-bella-foundation/>

## 2 COORDINATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS

Multi-stakeholder collaboration can address a victim's needs at the workplace. Coordination between companies, NGOs and government agencies is needed to address VAW and to enhance support for victims.

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**In April 2013, Fournalis Group in cooperation with the City of Thessaloniki** undertook the initiative to fully equip and fashion a Guesthouse for Women and Child Victims of Violence in Thessaloniki. IKEA and Fournalis Trade offered products, while IKEA visual merchandisers designed the site transforming the new guest house into a warm and cosy place for the recovery and care of women and their children who have experienced violence. The main objective behind the establishment and operation of the Guesthouse was to empower women-victims who face difficulties at personal, social or professional level by providing them proper accommodation and food, counselling, psychosocial support and information. The goal is to eliminate problems and provide the conditions that will ensure a successful management of personal and family difficulties, as well as escape from a hostage and distress situation, thus reintegrating a healthy social and work environment.

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*More information: <http://www.fournalis.gr/default.aspx?page=home>*



## 3

## INCLUDE TRADE UNIONS' REPRESENTATIVES IN TRAINING SESSIONS AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Training and awareness raising should also be targeted toward trade union members to ensure they are aware of women's concerns, including issues of domestic violence and the underlying gender inequality and social norms that perpetuate the acceptability of violence. Trade union delegates in charge of occupational health and safety at work in the framework of the social dialogue should develop within their role regarding the prevention of GBV and the protection of victims.

### BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

**In Bulgaria, the Speak out Campaign (part of the global Avon Company Campaign)** is organized by the Avon Bulgaria in partnership with the Alliance for Protection against Gender Based Violence. Since 2011, it has been regularly held every year. The campaign, focusing on breaking taboos on domestic violence, involved many TV stars, sportsmen, popular Bulgarian families, journalists and artists speaking out against domestic violence. Since 2013, the campaign has donated financial resources to support shelters and services for victims through sales of brand jewellery. The message of the campaign was widely broadcasted through 30 media partners and over 200 articles, 5 TV interviews and over 20 interviews in on line and other media channels and specialized women's magazines, through posters in the metro and bus stations. The 2014 campaign established also a partnership with the Pro Credit Bank, which bought 200 sets of campaign products and offered them as a gift to their women clients on International Women's Day. Since "Speak Out" was launched in 2011, AVON Bulgaria has donated a total of 75,000 BGN in support of the cause. The funds raised provided more than 1000 free psychological and legal consultations for victims of domestic violence.





# INVOLVING BUSINESSES IN STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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The problem of violence against women has generated wide policy and legislative interventions in many countries and in various social and institutional settings. Despite the fact that violence has a significant economic impact and could also affect the human capital and the productivity of businesses employing women victims of violence, the involvement of companies is still rather limited and fragmentary. The following recommendations are derived from the research conducted in the context of CARVE and are intended for policy makers at the EU, national and local level.

## ► **Measuring the costs of GBV and the outcomes of measures combating GBV**

One of the main obstacles in getting enterprises involved is the lack of data on the economic cost of gender-based violence for enterprises. The stereotypes regarding the profile of the victims (often pictured, incorrectly, as underprivileged women) prevent employers from seeing the impact on their own business. Therefore, the availability of reliable data regarding the number of victims and perpetrators of GBV working in European companies, the number of victims having lost/left their job because of GBV and the financial losses due to GBV would be ground-breaking, sending a strong signal to companies.

Furthermore, it is necessary to develop relevant indicators on the effectiveness of the various interventions regarding the support of victims and the campaigns on VAW (e.g. how many women benefited from workplace policies for victims, which of them and in what conditions). Such information is necessary in order to assess the effectiveness and impact of regulatory measures and could be used for developing appropriate programmes.

## ► **Aiming campaigns on GBV at companies**

With data on the costs of GBV, campaigns could easily highlight the fact that tackling such issues is in companies' interest, both in terms of image and of finance. While taboos prevent victims or perpetrators from talking about such issues, the embarrassment can also be felt on the part of companies' representatives and trade unions delegates, who do not consider they have a role when it comes to private issues. Campaigns directed at companies could aim at making the role of the company clear and outlining how it can take action without intervening in a paternalistic or intrusive way.

Companies should also be encouraged to systematically disseminate and/or display information on violence against women, supporting structures (e.g. hotline numbers, shelters, counselling programmes etc.) and specialized NGOs, in their communication with their staff, through the company intranet and the display of posters at key locations in the company premises.

## ► **Create a platform of best practices and labels**

In order to stimulate the participation of the corporate world, organizing promotion spaces for companies that take action would also be welcome. This could take the form of a best practices platform similar to the platform for equal opportunity measures. Similarly, diversity labels already exist in some Member States; however, they do not include the issue of violence against women.

Setting up promotional tools for companies would be a great incentive while also creating a precious pool of policies for enterprises looking for concrete responses. Recognition (i.e. business awards, labels etc.) for businesses contributing to the fight against domestic violence could also show companies that such workplace policy is possible, rewarding and may have a positive effect on their brand image.

## ► **Recognizing the role of SMEs**

The term of “enterprise” encompasses a wide range of highly diverse entities. The size and the economic model obviously determine the means an enterprise has at its disposal to implement new policies. When developing public policies, campaigns or tools, public bodies will have to ensure these measures can be implemented in all kinds of enterprises. While sensitization tools (posters, flyers, phone books) can easily be displayed in any company, it can become more complicated when it comes to having trained and identified workers able to support the victim internally and redirect her towards the right organization. While small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) constitute the vast majority of employers in the EU, it is important to consider the fact that they are not composed of the same services and professionals. Thus, some measures could be pooled among enterprises in a common area: for instance, organizing a common awareness-raising seminar or sharing the cost of hiring an inter-enterprises delegate.

## ► **Provide appropriate institutional framework**

The legislation on gender violence should be complemented and include a specific part recognizing the role of business in combating GBV. The legal context could include the responsibility of employers to provide security and confidentiality at the workplace for victims of violence, incentives for companies to hire and integrate women who are victims of gender violence, the right to special leave for employees - victims of violence, etc. Strategies and policies can also be set up so as to translate such laws into practice. These interventions could be integrated into the National Action Plans developed by EU Member States for the prevention of and fight against VAW. Innovation and collaboration between the public and private sectors should be fostered so as to efficiently and integrally address this issue. The NAPs should encourage the participation of companies and ensure that their ability to act as intermediaries. With the actions of companies enshrined in NAPs, their needs in terms of training or information could be determined and the procedures for enterprises yet to engage against GBV would be facilitated, provided that concrete measures are foreseen and appropriate monitoring is planned.



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[WWW.CARVE-DAPHNE.EU](http://WWW.CARVE-DAPHNE.EU)