



# **Women and violence/harassment in the workplace**

*Evidence from Foundation research*

*John Hurley,  
Research Officer, Eurofound  
Brussels, November 2007*



## **Sexual harassment, bullying and physical violence**

- State of the art is different in these three areas
- Be aware of overlapping forms of violence (physical violence may be a feature of bullying and of sexual harassment)
- Although not always linked with gender and sexuality, there are connections with gendered of organizations
- Regardless of differences, they are all violations and part of processes of intimidation in an organization



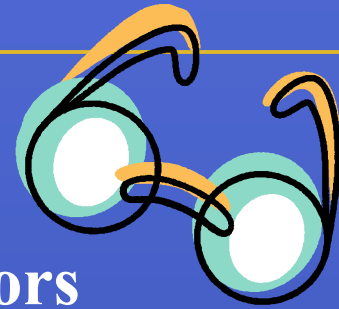
## Definition of sexual harassment

“Where any form of unwanted verbal, non verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.”

*Extract from European Directive 2002/73/EC*




## Main features in EU definition



- **Recognition of variety of abusive behaviors**
- **Physical and non-physical violence**
- **Unwanted nature of the conduct**
- **Intention of the perpetrator, not only effect on the victim**
- **Focus on dignity at work**
- **Severity of negative acts (consequences)**



## Beyond definitions...



**MOBBING  
HARASSMENT  
BULLYING**

**Whatever you call it – it hurts.**

**Workplace bullies hurt everyone.**

Bullies attack the best and brightest employees, eroding their self-esteem and dignity.  
They demoralize the departments they work in, and undermine creativity and joy.  
They jeopardize their employers reputation, and put them at risk of liability.  
They disrupt service to customers, and diminish value to shareholders.  
The serious consequences of mobbing are very real and hurt us all.  
It is time to say, "Enough is Enough!".

**www.mobbing.ca**

To learn more about mobbing and what you can do to protect yourself, your co-workers, your employees, or your company, visit <http://mobbing.ca/>

Copyright 2007 Mobbing.ca & British Columbia - Photo: David Johnson

*Canadian Campaign against workplace abuse (<http://mobbing.ca>)*



## How are we responding to the problem?

- ↓ Sexual harassment often equated with a type of discriminatory employment practice
- ↑ Sexual harassment included in some existing national legislation in response to European Directive 2002/73/EC
- ↑ Increasing legislative attention to sexual harassment in many EU countries - review of EIRO / EWCO articles provide evidence of this...



## Review of EIRO and EWCO updates

- Two main approaches:

Legislative initiatives: specific legislation or incorporation of specific provisions in existing legislation

Non-legislative initiatives: collective agreements and codes of practices



## How can a regulation be effective?

- Increased understanding and awareness of phenomenon
- Moving from an individual focused to an organisational focused approach
- Active involvement and commitment of employers and trade unions
- Participation of Labour Inspectorates
- Redress and justice for the victim instead of false hopes

Examples of impact assessment of national legislation  
→ Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Norway



## **Sexual harassment: a policy priority**

- European Commission: Sexual harassment at the workplace in the European Union, 1998
- ILO: Sexual harassment – An ILO survey of company practices, 1999
- Eurofound:
  - Third European Working Conditions Survey, 2000/01
  - Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace, 2003
  - Fourth European Working Conditions Survey, 2005



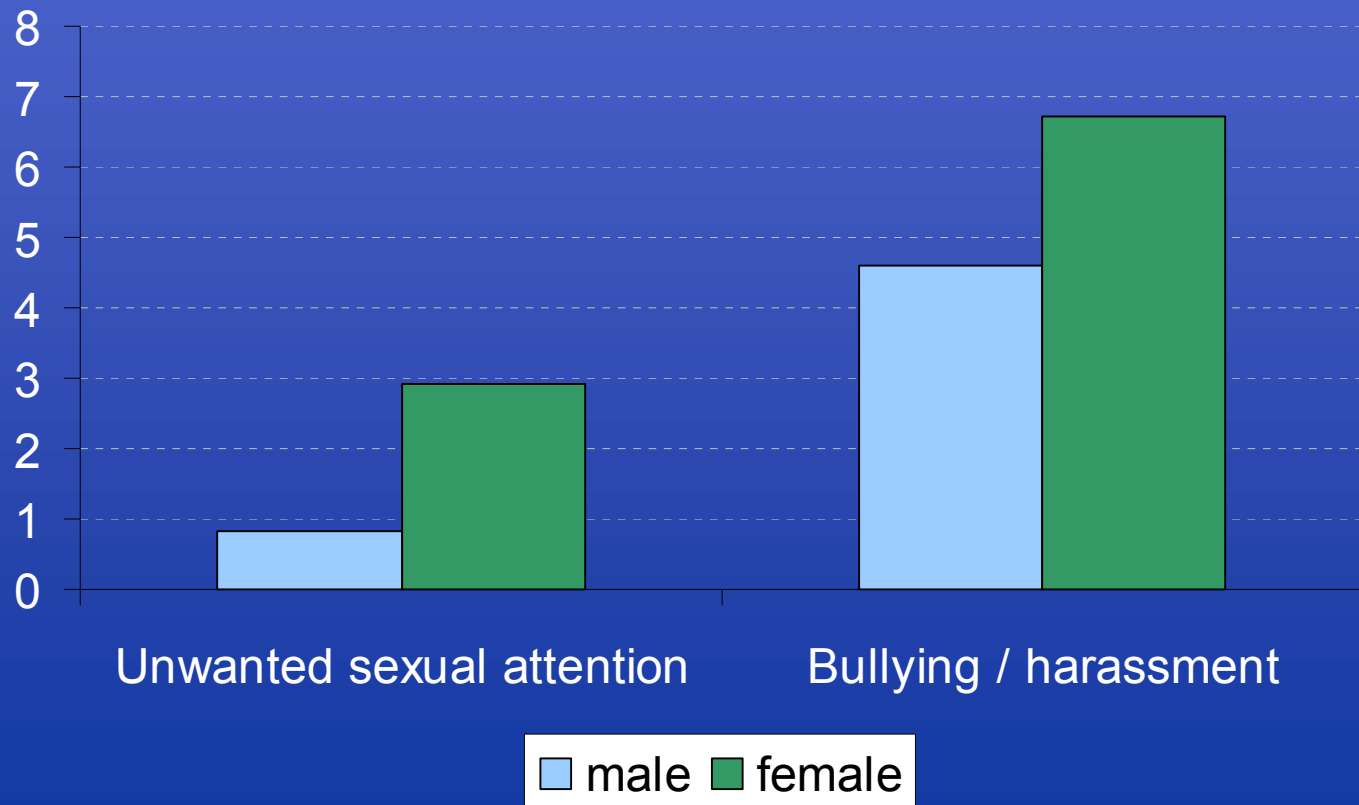
## Violence and harassment

Approximately 10% of workers report that they have suffered violence, bullying or harassment at work in the previous year



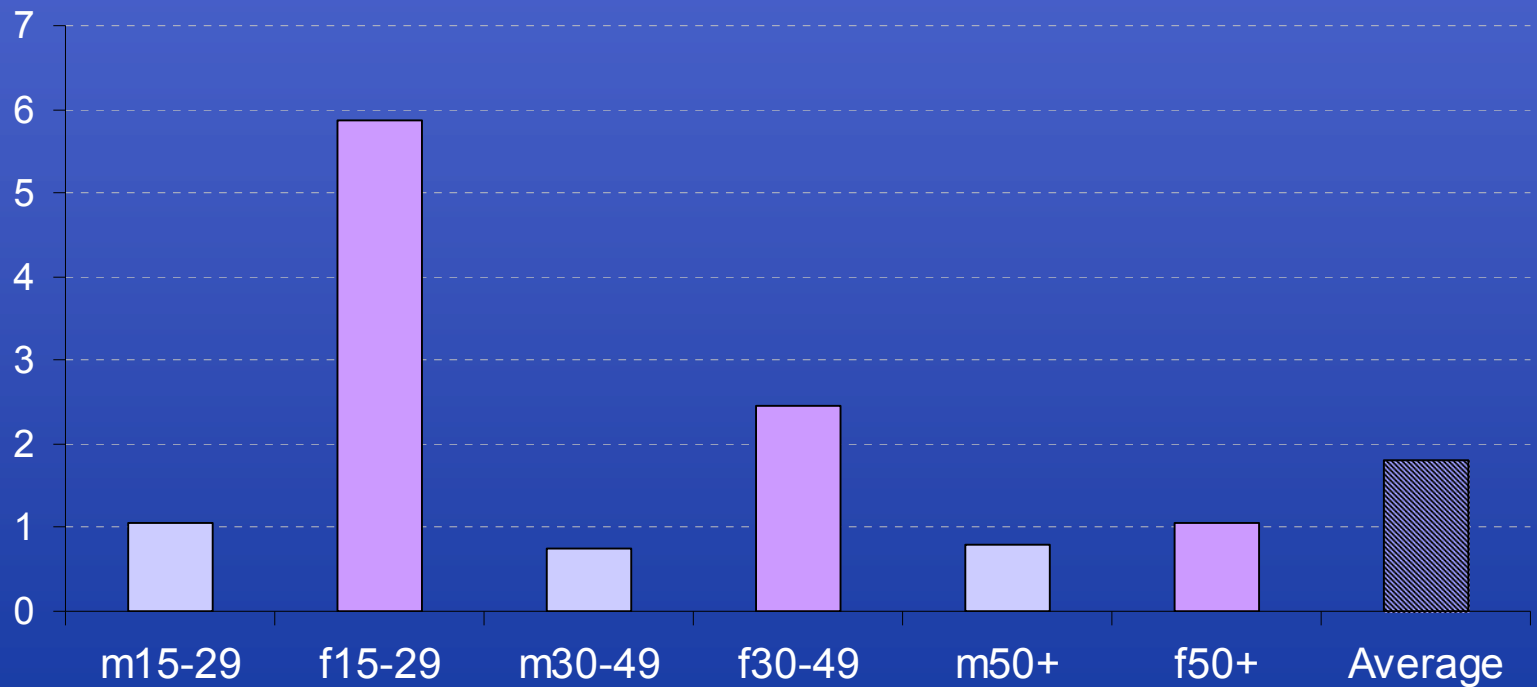


## Harassment and sexual harassment by gender, EU-27 (% of employees)



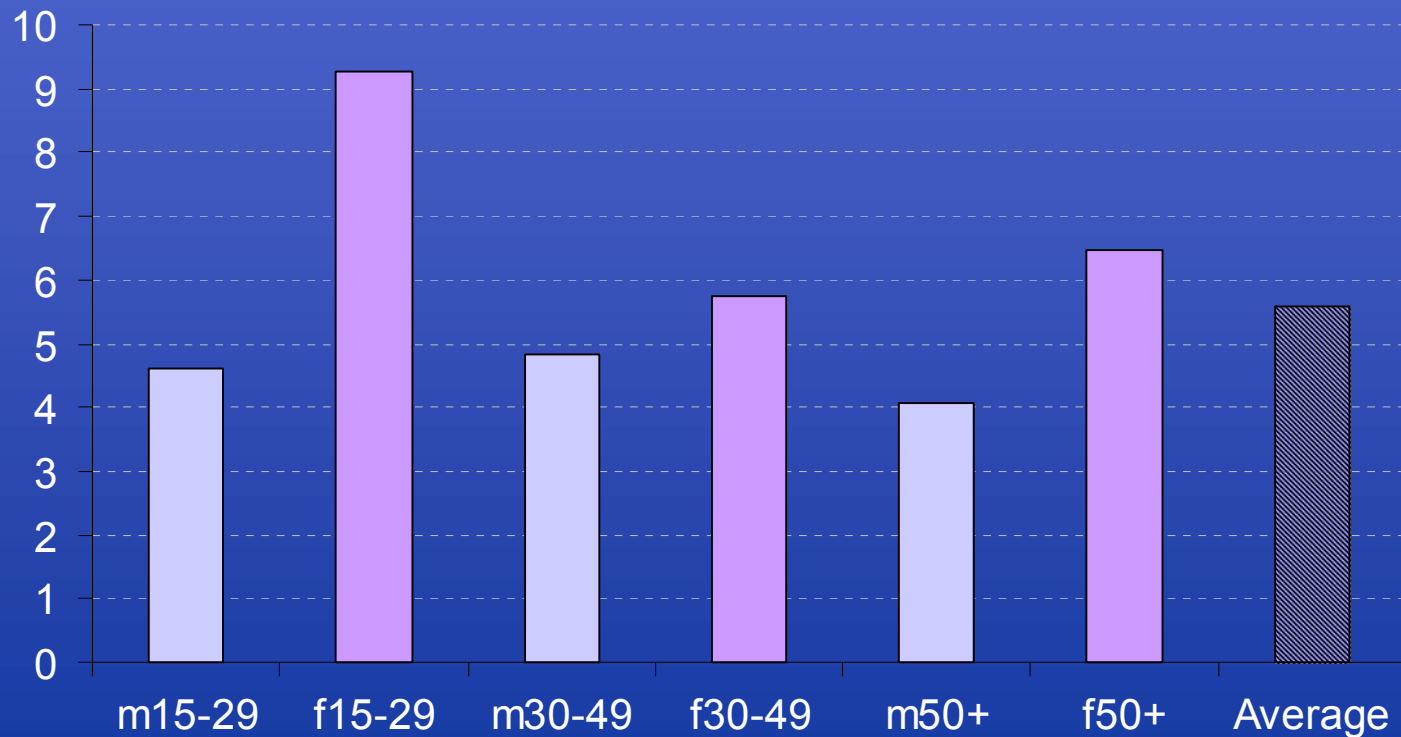


## Unwanted sexual attention by gender / age, EU-27 (% of employees)



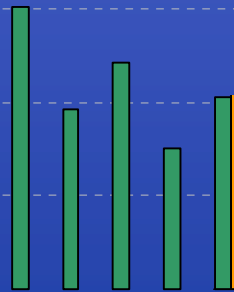


## Bullying / harassment by gender / age, EU-27 (% of employees)





## Bullying / harassment by country / gender, EU-27 (% of employees)





## Psychosocial risk exposure by sector, EU-27 (% of employees)





# Who is the harasser? Is gender a risk factor?





## Survey data: some key messages

- 
- 
-



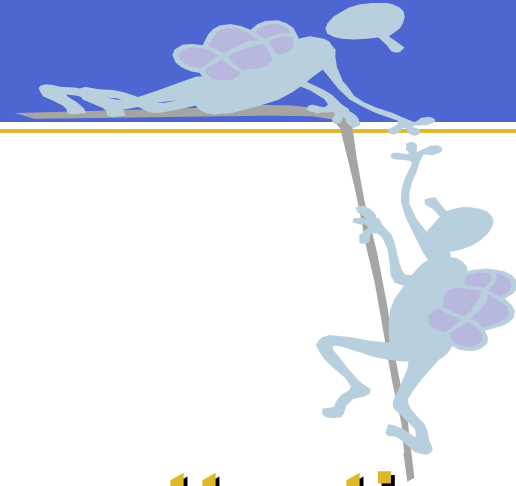
## Survey data: some caveats





# The way forward...





**Thank you for your attention!**

[joh@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:joh@eurofound.europa.eu)

[www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco](http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco)