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Position Paper of the Trade Council 'Local and Regional Administration '

On violence against employees of local and regional administrations

As has been demonstrated by a recent Eurofound report, there has been a clear rise in the number of cases of violence and harassment at the workplace in Europe.¹ This violence takes different forms: it can take place inside and outside the workplace, it affects all sectors² and it is the result of the economic crisis, staff cuts and bad working conditions, amongst other reasons. Violence and harassment among and against employees bears serious consequences on the affected individuals' health and professional performance, of course (e.g. a proven increase in the number of burnouts). It is therefore extremely important to tackle this problem urgently.

To do so, CESI recommends the following actions take place:

On a legal level

1. CESI would appreciate greater attention be paid to this matter on a European level. In this context, CESI wishes to see a better implementation of the framework agreement against harassment and violence at the workplace that was signed in 2007 by the social partners.
2. CESI also recommends more references to this problem within the framework of a possible revision of the Safety and Health at Work Directive.³
3. It seems that this matter is little or badly regulated in the national legislation of some member states (namely in civil law). Thus, there is a need for a clearer legal position.

¹ Eurofound, *Violence and harassment in European workplaces: Extent, impacts and policies*, February 2015.

² Even if various studies on this issue have demonstrated that the public sector is affected to a greater extent by cases of external violence. Cf. for example the article published in the European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, *Workplace violence and the changing nature of work in Europe: Trends and risk groups*, Volume 22, Issue 5, 2013.

³ Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work.

Prevention

4. The current policies focus more on reactions to problems instead of on prevention. The prevention of risks should be the object of more attention. To do so, greater awareness about the matter should be raised (e.g. by means of national and European campaigns). CESI recommends more scientific studies be carried out on this matter.
5. CESI also recommends the exchange of best practices between member states in order to discover the most appropriate solutions.

Repression

6. In truth, only few complaints are filed. The amount of information available on the possible options must be increased.
7. In addition, autonomous and independent bodies (e.g. one-stop shops) must be set up. Once this has been done, they should be made more accessible and more independent, so that people use them.
8. It is important to protect the victims so that they do not fear making statements concerning incidents. For example, it is fundamental to ensure the anonymity of an employee who wants to denounce a case of violence or harassment. A mediator at the workplace could also play an important role.
9. CESI insists on the responsibility of the employer in conflict management and in the resolution of psycho-social problems. This responsibility should be highlighted to a greater extent.

On the political level

10. Since the financial crisis began, public administrations have been particularly affected by budget cuts that have had serious consequences for personnel. Staff shortages and lack of resources have often been the root cause of many tensions – both inside and outside the services. CESI therefore recommends an increase in the number of personnel and greater investments in these administrations.
11. Finally, CESI recommends that the image of the civil servants be improved and the value of their work highlighted once again, because they often suffer from a bad reputation.