

## **NORWEGIAN HARASSMENT AND SPECIFIC CASES: L. Schanke 28.1.2015**

### **Comparative European data for Portugal and Norway**

The best available comparative data is the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) 2012. This is survey conducted every fifth year including comparative data regarding self reported working conditions in 34 European countries, including Portugal and Norway. All data in the survey are from 2010 in addition to trends from 1991.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/ef1182.htm>

The Survey focuses on three main themes:

- Working conditions (e.g. employment, segregation etc.)
- Working environment and organization (e.g. harassment and other psychosocial risk factors)
- Quality of work and employment (e.g. salary, training and work life balance)

To make comparison easier, an index of exposure to adverse social behavior was constructed. Portugal is in the low end of the index with Kosovo, Turkey, Cyprus, Italy. Norway is at the top end with Finland and Austria.

However, it is difficult to interpret the differences between countries concerning the exposure to adverse social behavior, as the differences may reflect various factors:

- Variations in the actual prevalence of adverse social behavior;
- Cultural differences with regard to the type of behaviour that is considered adverse;
- Country differences in the likelihood of people reporting these types of behavior

### **Possible relevant issues**

1. Variations in the actual prevalence of adverse social behavior;
  - a. May be linked to prevalence of power/hierarchical structures re. gender, race, rank
2. Cultural differences with regard to the type of behaviour that is considered adverse;
  - a. May be linked to level of gender equality
3. Country differences in the likelihood of people reporting these types of behavior
  - a. May be linked to the safety of work and possible neg. effects of reporting
  - b. May be linked to the roles of trade unions
  - c. May be linked to the roles of local work environment officers (in Norwegian. verneombud)
  - d. May be linked to the existence of Ombud (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud)
  - e. May be linked to the existence of state institutions for reporting (Labour Inspection)
  - f. May be linked to the mechanisms for follow up and sanctions (Legal procedures)

## **HARASSMENT CATEGORIES**

In this project, Norway will distinguish between harassment from colleagues or superiors – or so called third party violence from clients, customers, patients, users, users' families etc. The Norwegian input will mainly focus on harassment by colleagues and superiors.

Moral and sexual harassment by colleagues and superiors may take place for purely individual reasons – and may be linked to lack of knowledge, competence or awareness on part of the harasser. Sexual harassment may be unconscious, i.e. comments or touching which may be due to a lack of sensitivity or understanding that the person in question does not want or appreciate the sexual attention. Also moral harassment from colleagues or superiors may be unconscious and due to a lack of sensitivity, e.g. relying on old fashioned and authoritarian

management and communication models – which are not appreciated by the workers in question. In these cases, training to increase sensitivity and understanding may help.

However, when it comes to strategic harassment, the harassment, has a specific purpose, e.g.

- preventing the person from keeping his job, advancing to a higher position, keeping the job.
- preventing change – e.g. preventing women from entering into male working arenas.
- maintaining indecent working conditions and , e.g. human trafficking or debt bondage.

### **HARASSMENT CASES**

- There is considerable media focus on harassment in Norway –at the work place, in schools and even kindergartens - especially by the biggest and most serious newspaper, Aftenposten,
- Another less serious newspaper, VG, has established a harassment blog – asking the readers for examples of harassment.

This overview shows some of the most well known cases from Norway. The cases are selected because most of them have received massive media coverage, which implies that they are of general interest to the public . Most of the cases belong to the category of strategic harassment – partly because these categories are probably more interesting to the media.

The cases are not necessarily typical, but it is possible that the media coverage in itself will increase awareness and reduce the risk of harassment in the future – also for cases that are less striking and interesting from a media perspective.

### **Sexual harassment**

- Sexual harassment in male dominated jobs: Young female electrician was harassed.
- Sexual harassment in politics: The Mayor in a small town harassed/abused a young girl

### **Harassment because of gender**

- Harassment in a male dominated sectors, the army : Male candidates, trade union and top leadership protested when a woman got one of the highest jobs in the military
- Harassment in sectors with traditional religious attitudes: Male priests did not want to cooperate with the first female bishop

### **Harassment because of reduced ability**

- HIV-positive waiter lost his job

### **Harassment because of sexual orientation**

- Lesbian priest was harassed by male colleagues – but kept her job.

### **Harassment because of ethnicity or religion**

- Woman did not get a job as a taxi driver because of being of Roma-like origin
- Woman did not get the job because of wearing hijab

### **Harassment because of age**

- Male journalist lost his job in the State Radio and Television Company because he turned 67

### **Harassment as part of illegal working conditions**

- Supermarket chain was closed because of illegal working conditions for Asian immigrants
- Immigrants from Europe face social dumping
- Domestic Workers face working conditions – not in line with their au pair contracts