



## Webinar and Workshop on Violence against Women and Girls

### Mobilizing Euro-Med Employers and Policy Makers to Combat Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

#### Background:

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Workplace harassment remains a pervasive issue affecting women and girls globally, with significant implications for their safety, well-being, and professional development. The Euro-Mediterranean and MENA regions, in particular, face considerable challenges in addressing this issue.

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, workplace harassment is a serious concern, with awareness and intervention levels varying significantly across countries. According to a 2022 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), over 20% of people globally have experienced some form of violence or harassment at work, with women disproportionately affected<sup>1</sup>. In the European Union, The European Working Conditions Telephone Survey (EWCTS) found that, on average, 12.5% of workers in the EU experienced some form of adverse social behaviour at work in 2021; however, the share of women experiencing adverse social behaviour at work was consistently higher than that of men.<sup>2</sup> These figures are particularly high in sectors like hospitality and healthcare, where women constitute a large portion of the workforce.

In the MENA region, workplace harassment remains a critical yet underreported issue. According to various the latest ILO report on the issue, when looking at gender differences in high income countries, women were more likely to experience violence and harassment over their working life at 38.7 per cent, compared to men at 26.3 per cent. By contrast, in both upper-middle income countries and low and lower-middle income countries, men were more likely than women to experience violence and harassment in their working life (by 5.9 percentage points and 1.0 percentage point, respectively). These

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<sup>1</sup> ILO 2022 <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/experiences-violence-and-harassment-work-global-first-survey>

<sup>2</sup> European Union 2023 <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2023/violence-workplace-women-and-frontline-workers-face-higher-risks>



reports also emphasize that **young women and migrant women are particularly vulnerable**. **Reporting barriers and cultural stigmas significantly contribute to the underreporting of these incidents, leading to a lack of comprehensive data**. Additionally, the enforcement of legal frameworks remains inconsistent, with many countries lacking robust policies to protect women in the workplace.

On the international front, efforts to combat workplace harassment are being spearheaded by global organisations such as UN Women and the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#). [ILO's Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment](#), aims to eliminate workplace violence and harassment across all sectors. Despite these advancements, challenges remain, particularly in enforcement and compliance, which vary across regions.

Local initiatives in the MENA region, however, offer hope. The [PathFinder International Project](#) in Egypt has made strides by implementing community-based programs aimed at raising awareness and supporting survivors of workplace harassment. Similarly, in Morocco, recent labour law reforms have been introduced to enhance protections for workers against harassment, though implementation challenges persist. These case studies underscore the importance of localised efforts, robust support systems, and the need for effective legal protections to combat workplace harassment effectively. At regional level, the American University of Beirut's [SAWI project "Support and Accelerate Women's Inclusion"](#), focuses on making workplaces and Human Resources (HR) systems more inclusive, with dignified work at the core of all that they do. This focus is upheld by three pillars:

- 1- Building decision-maker capacity: They empower HR managers and leaders with the tools and insights necessary to critically examine exclusionary structures and actively pursue inclusive practices.
2. Mobilizing partnerships: By collaborating across borders, languages, disciplines, and generations, they strategically advance the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women in the MENA region.
3. Structural change: Leveraging data-driven insights, the SAWI project champions and implements inclusive HR policies and practices.

Workplace harassment remains a significant challenge in the Euro-Mediterranean and MENA regions, with profound implications on women's safety, professional advancement, and well-being. Policies addressing harassment at both national and organizational levels play a critical role, as demonstrated by the successful examples mentioned in various countries. Policies effectively implemented can serve as a cornerstone for broader gender equality initiatives.

# Webinar and Workshop on Combating Workplace Harassment

19 November 2024 — 10:00 – 13:00 Barcelona Time



Overall, addressing sexual harassment requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, engaging governments, private sector employers, civil society, and international organizations. This collaboration is essential to policy reform and practical enforcement across diverse work settings. Despite the persistence of harassment, it remains underreported due to cultural stigmas and a lack of robust organizational support structures. In this context, harassment is a substantial barrier to women’s retention and advancement in the workplace, which further impacts inclusive, sustainable economies in the Mediterranean region. Current data underscores the prevalence of harassment and its consequences on workplace dynamics, productivity, and women’s economic participation.

## Objectives:

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This year webinar and workshop align with the **UN Campaign theme for the 16 Days of Activism Against Violence against Women and Girls 2024: “UNiTE! Activism to End Violence Against Women & Girls”**. Within this context, the UN has elaborated resources that reflect an integrated framework to drive meaningful change across sectors. Especially as we address harassment at work, the publication of the **joint [UN Women-ILO Handbook on Addressing Violence and Harassment Against Women in the World of Work](#)** coincided with the unprecedented mobilization of millions of women, behind #MeToo and other movements, in a global response to sexual harassment and sexual assault in the world of work. Building up on this, today’s webinar and workshop aim to:

1. **Highlight the implications of pervasive sexual harassment on women’s wellbeing and prospects for inclusive socio-economic development:** speakers will provide overview of women’s economic participation and why policies are needed to combat sexual harassment.
2. **Foster a deeper understanding of workplace harassment and importance of internal employer policies:** interactive discussion on criteria to define sexual harassment and mechanisms to report incidents.
3. **Provide actionable insights for organizations:** highlight of the main elements to be included in internal policies for employers in the Euro-med region.

## Agenda

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**Webinar Date:** 19 November

**Webinar Time:** 10:00 - 11:00 Barcelona Time

Time	Item
10:00 - 10:05	<p><b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambassador <b>Stephen Borg</b>, Deputy-Secretary General at the Social and Civil Affairs Division of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)</li> <li><b>Roger Albinyana</b>, Managing Director, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)</li> </ul>
10:05 - 10:45	<p>Panel of Experts (10 minutes each, moderated by <b>Carmen Geha</b>, Managing Partner of Soltara Consulting and IEMED Fellow on Gender)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set the scene: Current status of work harassment in the Euro-Mediterranean region by <b>Carmen Geha</b>, Managing Partner of Soltara Consulting and IEMED Fellow on Gender</li> <li>Role of higher education institutions in combating sexual harassment by <b>Dr. Fida Afioni</b>, Professor of HRM at the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and founding member of the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership (CIBL) at AUB.</li> <li>Media perspectives on work harassment by <b>Paula Solanas</b>, Journalist, Diari Ara</li> <li>Case studies and local and regional initiatives by <b>Engy Ghozlan</b>, Social Empowerment Team Leader, Pathfinder</li> </ul>
10:45 – 10:55	<p><b>Guided Q&amp;A</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>What is the current legislative landscape in the countries represented here today?</b></li> <li>- <b>From the employers in the room today, what policies and practices are you using to help employees report harassment?</b></li> <li>- <b>What do we need to do better as a business and policy community?</b></li> </ul>

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10:55 - 11:00	<p><b>Closing Remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of key points</li> <li>• Next steps</li> </ul>
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**Workshop Date:** 19 November

**Workshop Time:** 11:00 – 13:00 Barcelona Time

Time	Item
11:00 - 11:05	<p><b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the workshop and its objectives</li> </ul>
11:05 - 11:25	<p><b>Trainer Presentation</b> by <b>Carmen Geha</b>, Managing Partner of Soltara Consulting and IEMED Fellow on Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining sexual harassment</li> <li>• Explaining power imbalances at the workplace</li> <li>• Examples of penalization</li> <li>• Creating safer workplaces</li> </ul>
11:25 – 12:00	<p><b>Group Work/Discussions:</b> Guided activity on a case study with debrief questions</p>
12:00 – 12:40	<p><b>Facilitator Presentation of Template for a Sexual Harassment Internal Policy</b></p>
12:40 - 13:00	<p><b>Closing Remarks and Next steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of key points</li> <li>• Next steps by UfM</li> </ul>