

# INTEGRATE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTO COMPANY AND GLOBAL AGREEMENTS

## INTERACTIVE PATHWAY FOR (RE)INTEGRATION AT WORK OF WOMEN FACING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



### Step 5 Follow-up and communication



# INTRODUCTION

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For a company, talking about domestic violence is not easy. It is commonly accepted that violence is part of the private sphere and that an employer cannot intervene in this area. However, having a job allows women to achieve stability and financial independence so that they can break the cycle of violence and become empowered.

Many share the idea that, in order to have a stable job, women must first be out of violence. The partners of the European consortium ACTIV have decided to defend the fact that companies can commit themselves to welcoming or supporting women who have been or are victims of domestic violence. By working on their professional inclusion, companies can help these women to consolidate their economic independence and help them regain their self-confidence.

To this end, the ACTIV project partners offer you this guide in the form of model clauses to involve your organization in integrating the subject of domestic violence into company and global agreements.

Providing a strategic framework for management helps to plan and coordinate the roles, responsibilities and activities of everyone in the company.

Collective bargaining can take place at the level of a company, a facility or a group of facilities. This bargaining can produce different types of agreements. Before negotiating a company agreement, it is necessary to be aware of and to rely on other agreements (group, branch, global). On the other hand, the existence of a branch agreement on professional equality does not exempt companies in the branch from having their own agreement or action plan.

Unlike the global agreements, which will include recommendations, company agreements must develop the processes provided for in the event of employees facing domestic violence in order to formalize the measures already in place.

Thus, domestic violence may be a separate chapter within the equality agreement, or it may be attached to the chapter on violence against women more generally.

Depending on the country, the obligations concerning company agreements and in particular the equality agreement may differ. For this reason, we invite you to find out about the legal obligations in your country.

\*In France, for example, the equality agreement is mandatory for all companies with 50 or more employees. This mandatory annual negotiation must also cover the quality of life at work. If they do not have an equality agreement, companies must have at least an action plan in order to avoid a financial penalty. In this agreement, a minimum of 3 objectives must be chosen for companies with less than 300 employees, and 4 objectives for companies with more than 300 employees, among the following 7: elimination of pay gaps (mandatory), access to employment, vocational training, career development and professional promotion, working and employment conditions, job mix, and coverage of old age insurance contributions for part-time employees.

# MODEL CLAUSE

## General advice

- ➔ First of all, bring the company into line with the gender equality policy, because domestic violence is a direct consequence of it.
- ➔ Involve the social partners in the negotiation/drafting of the agreement.
- ➔ Liaise with the human resources department to ensure that procedures are in place to protect employees from domestic violence.
- ➔ The effectiveness of agreements in company practices is not always guaranteed. There is always a risk that companies will comply with regulatory obligations without really getting involved. To avoid this situation, it is advisable to have recourse to internal and external sources of expertise; to union training; to the mobilization of tools for measuring discrepancies (creation of indicators, for example, to monitor the number of employees who have been made aware of the issue or trained); to the systematic monitoring of results (agreement monitoring committee); to the anchoring of the approach among employees, managers and HR.

## In introduction:

- Recall the key figures, the different forms of violence and their impact on the workplace;
- It may be useful to define the words, terms and concepts used, such as "domestic violence", "intimate partner or relationship" or "workplace".

## Example :

Worldwide, 1 in 3 women have experienced physical<sup>1</sup> or sexual violence in their lifetime, most often by a partner or ex-partner.

Domestic violence can take different forms: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, verbal violence, economic violence. Each situation is specific. Victims and perpetrators belong to all social categories and can be women or men.

This violence also has an impact on work (lateness, absenteeism, reduced productivity and fear of losing one's job, anxiety among colleagues, withdrawal, refusal to take part in certain events, hindrance to professional promotion, etc.).

37% of European women victims of domestic violence talked about the violence they experienced at work, mainly with colleagues and friends rather than with managers, HR or union representatives<sup>2</sup>.

1. Devastatingly pervasive : 1 in 3 women globally experience violence. (2021, 9 mars). World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>

### **For the company's general objectives and commitment:**

- Specify the company's objectives on the subject;
- Specify the different commitments made by the company (signing of commitment charters, associative partnerships, membership in a business network, etc.).

### **Example :**

The company is committed to fighting sexism, harassment in all its forms, whether physical, sexual and/or psychological, violence at work or in everyday life, and incivilities of any kind.

Any behavior that affects the dignity of women or men in the workplace or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, undermining the respect due to each person, is contrary to the company's fundamental values.

The company reaffirms its commitment to fight against domestic violence. In this respect, the company has made a commitment to the Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion to create the European inter-company network "OneInThreeWomen" to fight against domestic violence.

### **For resources and actions :**

- Develop all actions implemented or planned by the company;
- Write down the resources available and the processes in place in order to clearly identify them;
- Develop the process in a fair and clear manner for workplace accommodation, leave of absence, transfers, workplace security and time to attend court hearings;
- Clarify the role and missions of internal partners and ensure the link with the prevention of psychosocial risks, and with the professional equality policy.

**Example :**Role of the social service:

At the interface of professional and private life, the occupational social worker accompanies employees and/or guides them in complete confidentiality while respecting professional secrecy.

In the case of violence within the couple, the employee can contact the occupational social service. This service provides listening, information, support and guidance.

The occupational social worker can accompany employees in external procedures or towards specialized structures (legal proceedings, medical consultations/emergency medical/legal service, associations for victims of violence within the couple, etc.).

They also work with internal partners (HR, manager, occupational health service...) and can contribute with his/her social expertise to the management of the consequences on the employees' professional life (mobility, emergency cradle...).

Proposed measures:

Requests for time off work by victims of domestic violence in order to carry out their procedures will be facilitated. The occupational social service will accompany these requests to HR departments and managers. Five days, which can be split into half-days, may be granted upon request by the occupational social service.

A specific emergency rehousing scheme may be offered, subject to a complaint being filed. It is implemented by the occupational social workers.

An information leaflet on the measures taken by the company to support employees who are victims of domestic violence will be produced and made available to employees (financial assistance, administrative formalities, etc.).

Internal and external numbers:

Employees can also have 24/7 confidential support from external clinical psychologists by calling the internal number. After this initial contact and telephone support, each employee can receive support in the form of face-to-face interviews with an external psychologist from the service provider's network and in local proximity.

Managers and HR staff also have access to a dialogue line provided by these external psychologists, for any psychological advice in the exercise of their roles in order to support the delicate human situations they may encounter, in addition to the company's prevention actors.

Finally, other emergency mechanisms have been set up by the government and are listed here: [national or local emergency numbers].

# DEPLOY AND INTEGRATE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INTO GLOBAL AGREEMENTS

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Incorporating domestic violence into company agreements is possible, and several companies have already done so. If the company agreement already includes all the details of the resources and actions on the subject, integrating general recommendations into global agreements allows these actions to be deployed and enables establishments in other countries to take note of them when negotiating their company agreement. Incorporating general recommendations concerning domestic violence allows each country to adapt and implement support measures for women facing domestic violence according to its resources and the specificities of the establishment.

## **Example :**

With regard to domestic violence, the company undertakes to offer employees who are victims of such violence and who so request, support measures adapted to the situation, such as, for example, and depending on the local context: adjustment of working hours, change of workplace, emergency relocation assistance, emergency financial assistance, etc. In addition, the employees concerned may be referred to external organizations such as specialized partner associations. The Group wishes to develop training and awareness-raising initiatives for employees and managers on these subjects as well as on the related policies and procedures.

## CONCLUSION

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By including domestic violence in company and global agreements, companies are helping to remove the taboo of the impact of such violence on the workplace. This makes it possible to communicate widely on the role of the employer in the face of this societal scourge, to anchor the measures put in place within the company, and to deploy them within the Group.

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Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



*The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of its contents, which are the sole responsibility of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein (2020-1-BE01-KA204-074919).*