News Release

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**Eurofound publishes a report on physical and psychological violence in the workplace:**

**Bullied workers report significantly higher levels of work-related ill-health**

**(Dublin, Ireland): 6% of European workers report having experienced some form of workplace violence in the past 12 months, according to a new study from Eurofound. Double that amount (12%) of workers has experienced non-physical forms of workplace violence - such as verbal abuse, threats of physical violence and unwanted sexual attention - in the past month. Workers exposed to psychosocial risks report significantly higher levels of work-related ill-health than those who are not. Although these findings confirm a downward trend in levels of exposure to physical violence since 1995, there are still big differences between countries and sectors.**

Violence at work can manifest itself in many ways. The variety of negative behaviour covered under the general umbrella term of workplace violence is so large and diverse that it makes it difficult to adopt a unified and integrated approach dealing with all the forms of workplace violence.

While the existence of physical violence at the workplace has always been recognised, psychological violence has only relatively recently attracted public attention and common concerns as expressed by workers, trade unions, employers, public bodies and experts across a broad international spectrum.

There are various reasons for this increased public and government recognition of psychological violence. In the first place, numerous research studies have indicated that psychological violence, particularly bullying, is a social problem of considerable magnitude with detrimental effects for the health and well-being of workers. Evidence comes also from administrative data showing that an increasing incidence of work-related health problems is due to psychological and psychosocial rather than physical causes.

Overall, approximately 6% of European workers report having experienced some form of workplace violence, either physical or psychological, in the past 12 months. Non-physical forms of workplace violence (such as verbal abuse, threats of physical violence and unwanted sexual attention) experienced in the past month are reported by 12% of workers.

Overall, levels of reported psychological violence are higher than those of physical violence.

Eurofound has charted and monitored workplace violence since 1995, and an analysis of time trends in the different waves of Eurofound’s European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) shows a downward trend in levels of exposure to physical violence. In 2010, 2% of European workers said they had experienced physical violence at work in the previous 12 months, as against 4% in 1995, and 5% in 2000 and 2005. For workplace harassment or bullying, reported levels of exposure have gone down one percentage point since 2005.

Of the diverse types of psychological violence, bullying or general harassment is more prevalent than sexual harassment.

There are variations in exposure to workplace bullying between European countries. On the whole, exposure to bullying or harassment is comparatively greater in France and the Benelux countries while reported levels are lower in southern and eastern European countries. The country variations of reported exposure may reflect different levels of awareness of the issue and willingness to report, as well as of actual occurrence.

Both physical and psychological violence have serious implications for the health and well-being of workers. Workers exposed to psychosocial risks report significantly higher levels of work-related ill-health than those who are not. The most common reported symptoms are stress, sleeping problems, fatigue and depression. Exposure to psychological violence is correlated with higher-than-average rates of absenteeism.

Work environment factors contribute to the incidence of workplace violence. For example, high levels of work intensity (tight deadlines, working at very high speed), a high number of work pace constraints and working in frequent contact with customers, clients and other non-colleagues are associated with a higher likelihood of being bullied.

**Download the Foundation Findings at** [**http://bit.ly/1ja4v6x**](http://bit.ly/1ja4v6x)

For further information contact Måns Mårtensson, Media Manager, on email: mma@eurofound.europa.eu, telephone: +353-1-204 3124, or mobile: +353-876-593 507.

**NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions (Eurofound) is a tripartite European Union Agency, whose role is to provide knowledge in the area of social and work-related policies. Eurofound was established in 1975 by [Council Regulation (EEC) No. 1365/75.](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:01975R1365-20050804:EN:NOT)

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