



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality


Preventing sexual harassment

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Prevention of sexual harassment in Greece

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Abstract

In terms of response to sexual harassment, Greece follows the international and EU legislation, while in 2021, 190 ILO Violence and Harassment Convention was ratified. Good practices include the creation of the "MeTooGreece" platform, awareness campaigns, free legal support services to survivors and trainings. The practices of Denmark and the Netherlands could be applied in Greece, focusing on collaboration among relevant actors, promotion of campaigns and the vital role of the media to raise awareness, as well as the appointment of a public officer specialised in the subject. In order to effectively prevent sexual harassment, collaboration among the state and relevant actors and CSOs is necessary, as well as regular monitoring, research and awareness-raising initiatives.

1. The Greek context on prevention of sexual harassment

1.1 The Greek context on sexual harassment

The Greek MeToo Movement became widespread in January 2021 after the Greek Olympic champion in sailing, Sofia Bekatorou, publicly announced that she had been sexually assaulted at the age of 21 by a member of the Hellenic Sailing Federation¹. Complaints regarding sexual harassment or abuse from a wide range of professional sectors from athletes, students, journalists and actresses followed. Actors' allegations attracted particular attention from the media, and several alleged perpetrators face criminal procedures.

Shortly after the Bekatorou revelations, the #MeTooGreece platform² was launched which aims at educating citizens about sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and authoritarian violence. The General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality (the governmental authority for gender equality) is responsible for the operation of the platform. Currently, the available information focuses on sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape, and contact information to report the incident and receive support.

Furthermore, in 2021, the General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality announced a new national action plan for gender equality for 2021-2025. The national action plan is organised around four pillars of priority, the first pillar

¹ BBC News (Kostas Kallergis), Greece #Metoo: Women ending the silence of sports abuse shake Greece, 20.1.2021, accessible in [Greece #Metoo: Women ending the silence of sports abuse shake Greece - BBC News](#), Friedrich Neumann Foundation (Aret Demirci), #MeToo Greece: Women ending the silence of sexual abuse, 19.3.2021, accessible in <https://www.freiheit.org/greece/metoo-greece-women-ending-silence-sexual-abuse>, Greek City Times, Survey finds 65% of women in Greece have experienced sexual harassment, 28.1.2021, accessible in <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/01/28/65-women-greece-sexual-harassment/>

² MeTooGreece platform, accessible at <https://metoogreece.gr/>

being prevention and combat of gender-based and domestic violence³. Among others, the national action plan refers to the implementation of the Istanbul Convention on violence against women and domestic violence (Law 4531/2018) and the ratification of the 190 ILO Convention against sexual harassment in the workplace (Law 4808/2021). Especially regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, the national action plan refers to strengthening the role of the Labour Inspectorate, involving companies and piloting initiatives against sexual violence in universities.

There is currently a public discussion on femicides in Greece, as there has been a significant rise in the last few years; 12 in the first seven months of 2022⁴. More and more people argue that preventive measures should be taken to empower women and bystanders report violent incidents.

1.2 The Greek legal framework on prevention of sexual harassment

Greece follows the international and EU legislation in terms of legal framework against sexual harassment. In June 2021, Greece ratified the 190 ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (Law 4808/2021⁵). Among the provisions of the new law is the establishment of an independent department that monitors cases of violence and harassment in the workplace, as well as a more active engagement of companies through the obligation to take preventive measures, and for bigger enterprises to develop specific policies and to organise internal complaint procedures.

The Greek legal framework defines sexual harassment in Law 3896/2010, which integrated and adapted the European Directive 2006/54/EU to the national context⁶. According to art. 2d of Law 3896/2010, "sexual harassment" is any form of unwanted verbal, psychological or physical conduct of a sexual nature, resulting in an infringement of the personality of a person, in particular by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment around it⁷. Sexual harassment is also included among the forms of behaviour categorised as "gender-based harassment" per art. 4 of Law 4808/2021. Moreover, sexual harassment constitutes an act of discrimination on sexual grounds and is therefore prohibited per article 3 par. 2 of Law 3896/2010.

The criminal consequences of sexual harassment are included in article 337 of the Greek Penal Code (crime of violation of sexual dignity). The law also addresses the crimes of cyber sexual harassment and harassment in the workplace⁸.

Regarding the reporting, law enforcement authorities (police, public prosecutor, courts) are responsible for receiving complaints. In addition, survivors can be supported from

³ General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, National action plan for gender equality for 2021-2025, November 2021, accessible in Greek in [ΕΣΔΙΦ-2021-2025.pdf \(isotita.gr\)](#)

⁴To ethnos (Katerina Karavia), Article published on 2.8.2022, accessible in <https://www.ethnos.gr/greece/article/218534/pestesmetoonomatoy512gynaikoktoniesmesase7mhnes>, Ethnos newspaper, 25.9.2021, Video accessible in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPR8F4C8DS4&t=159s>

⁵ Law 4808/2021, accessible at <https://www.taxheaven.gr/law/4808/2021>

⁶ Law 3896/2010, accessible in <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ergasia-koinonike-asphalise/n-3896-2010.html>

⁷ Gov.gr, Direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual harassment at work, 31.5.2022, accessible in <https://www.gov.gr/en/sdg/employees/equal-treatment/gender-equality-at-work/direct-and-indirect-discrimination-on-grounds-of-gender-and-sexual-harassment>

⁸ Article 337 of the Greek Penal Code, accessible in <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomikes-plirofories/nomothesia/pk/arthro-337-poinikos-kodikas-prosvoli-tis-genetisias-axioprepeias>

the consulting centres and the helpline 15900⁹ and NGOs with relevant services. When sexual harassment occurs in the workplace, the labour inspectorate and the Greek Ombudsperson are competent. In the latter case, the survivor can report the incident to their trade union and be supported before the respective administrative and judicial authorities. The survivor has also the right to claim compensation in the civil court according to articles 57, 59, 914 and 932 of the Greek Civil Code.

1.3 Official data and research

According to the report on Violence against women published by the responsible authority, the General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, from November 2020 to September 2021, 3% of the cases reported to the consulting centres concerned sexual harassment, in relation to the vast majority of reports, which concerned domestic violence (85%)¹⁰.

In 2004 extensive research was conducted on the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace by the Research Centre for Gender Equality supervision¹¹. The research sample comprised 1200 women over 18 years old. Some noteworthy findings from the anonymous questionnaires are: 10% of the sample mentioned that they had had a personal experience of sexual harassment in their workplace; in most cases, the management had not understood that the incident had occurred (67.5%), but even in cases where the managers noticed the incident, they did not adopt any preventive measures (56.7%).

In addition, three research initiatives on sexual harassment in the workplace were published in 2020 - 2022:

- Research and national report organised in the frame of the KMOP-led and EU-funded project TEAMWORK – Combat Sexual Harassment in the workplace¹².

TEAMWORK project aims to strengthen the combat against sexual harassment in the workplace in Greece, Bulgaria, Spain and Italy. In Greece, 126 employees and 27 employers participated in the survey held by anonymous online questionnaires. Noteworthy findings: 52,3% of employees stated that they had experienced SH; 42,8% of employees stated that they had witnessed SH against a colleague; 91,2% of employees found that women are more exposed to SH; 48% of employers stated that there are no preventive measures in their companies. In the national report some policy recommendations include: strengthening the research on the subject of sexual harassment; integrating clauses on sexual harassment prevention in collective bargaining agreements and company contracts; dissemination of simplified guidelines explaining the steps one should follow to report sexual harassment and trainings of all relevant actors (legal authorities, trade - and employers' unions associations and NGOs).

⁹ Official website of platform womensos.gr, accessible in [15900 – SOS HELP LINE – Βία Κατά Των Γυναικών \(womensos.gr\)](https://www.womensos.gr)

¹⁰ General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, report on Violence against women, November 2021, accessible in <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2h-ethsia-ekthesi.pdf>

¹¹ Report of the Research Centre for Gender Equality (“KETHI”) on Sexual Harassment in the workplace, 2004, accessible in <https://www.kethi.gr/ereunes-meletes/i-sexoyaliki-parenohlisi-kata-ton-gynaikon-stoys-horoys-ergasias>, Artinopoulou, Papatheodorou Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Nomiki Vivliothiki, 2006, accessible in <https://www.nb.org/i-sexoyaliki-parenochlisi-stin-ergasia.html>

¹² TEAMWORK project, National report Greece, 2020, accessible in <https://www.teamworkproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Teamwork-national-report-Greece-vf-1.pdf>

- Research and report “Not Part of Our Job” by ActionAid¹³

The research conducted by ActionAid and supported in part by Open Society Foundations aimed to investigate the extent of sexual harassment at the workplace against women and make recommendations for policies and legislative measures. Two research cycles were developed, the first targeting the broader women population and the second targeting women employed in hospitality and tourism sectors. Noteworthy findings of the survey among the general population of women are: 85% stated they have experienced sexually harassing behaviours in the workplace; 6% of survivors lodged an official complaint. Noteworthy findings of the survey among women employed in the hospitality industry and tourism: 85% stated they had suffered sexually harassing behaviours in the workplace; 22% of women reported having been victims of sexual assault or rape¹⁴.

- Research by the Civil Servants' Confederation (“ADEDY”)¹⁵

In 2022, the 3rd-grade trade union ADEDY – Kinoniko Polikentro, published a report based on research on sexual harassment in the public sector. In the interviews that took place with the participation of 26 women who had experienced sexual harassment at their work in the public sector, the following information was extracted: Most women described an unpleasant environment at work, using words such as "toxic", "negative", and "dangerous"; while more than half of the interviewees (14 women) chose not to report the incident to management. During the press release the need to update the legislative framework for civil servants, as well as to draft a protocol for the prevention and response of sexual harassment in the public sector following similar European good practices was highlighted¹⁶.

1.4 Actors' collaboration as a factor for lasting cultural change

Before the ratification of the 190 ILO Convention, representatives of trade unions and CSOs met with the representatives of the Ministry of Labour to discuss how a legal reform could better address sexual harassment in the workplace¹⁷. In addition, in February 2022, in the frame of the EU-funded project TEAMWORK – Combat sexual harassment in the workplace¹⁸, KMOP as project coordinator organised an online info day addressing stakeholders, media and the general public on sexual harassment in the workplace¹⁹, which was attended by 159 participants, as well as three online participatory events²⁰,

¹³ ActionAid, Not Part of Our Job, A research on sexual harassment at work in Greece: Examining the hospitality and tourism industry, Executive summary of findings, accessible in <https://admin.actionaid.fr/uploads/downloadFile/430/2020-1~3.PDF>

¹⁴ ActionAid, Not Part of Our Job, accessible in <https://notpartofourjob.actionaid.gr/>, ActionAid, Not Part of Our Job Report, November 2020, accessible in https://notpartofourjob.actionaid.gr/public/ActionAid_Harassment-Report.pdf, ActionAid, Not Part of Our Job, A research on sexual harassment at work in Greece: Examining the hospitality and tourism industry, Executive summary of findings, accessible in <https://admin.actionaid.fr/uploads/downloadFile/430/2020-1~3.PDF>

¹⁵ ADEDY – Kinoniko Polikentro, Research report on sexual harassment in public sector, February 2022, accessible in [SEXUAL-HARASSMENT-AT-WORK_whole.pdf](https://www.kinoniko.gr/SEXUAL-HARASSMENT-AT-WORK_whole.pdf) ([kpolykentro.gr](https://www.kinoniko.gr/))

¹⁶ Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE), Article published on 26.7.2022, accessible in <https://kede.gr/evnoiko-gia-sexoualiki-parenoxlisi-to-ergasiako-perivallon-sto-dimosio-symfona-me-erevna-tis-adedy/>

¹⁷ Capital.gr, Article published on 5.5.2021, accessible in <https://www.capital.gr/politiki/3543477/k-xatzidakis-ti-perilambanei-to-n-s-gia-tin-prostasia-tis-ergasias-gia-ti-bia-kai-ti-sexoualiki-parenoxlisi>

¹⁸ TEAMWORK project's official website accessible at <https://www.teamworkproject.eu/>

¹⁹ Kmpop.gr, Info day invitation and agenda, accessible in <https://www.kmop.gr/el/seksoualiki-parenoxlisi-ston-xoro-ergasias/>

²⁰ Kmpop.gr, Participatory events invitation and agenda, accessible in <https://www.kmop.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TEAMWORK-PE-agenda.pdf>

attended by 55 stakeholders in total. During the abovementioned awareness and collaborative activities, representatives of competent authorities, trade - and employers' unions and CSOs had the opportunity to discuss the extent of the problem, institutional response, prevention measures, and reporting among others. In June 2022, a Memorandum of Collaboration was signed among the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece ("KEDE"), the General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality and the Research Centre for Gender Equality on gender equality and sexual harassment in the workplace²¹.

2. Good practices

2.1 SOS Helpline and Consulting Centres

The SOS Helpline 15900 is a national service provided by the General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality which is available at all times to provide information to individuals and organisations and counselling to women victims of all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment²². In addition, the consulting centres across the country provide support to women survivors (information, psychological and legal support, hosting, referral or escort, and legal aid, in collaboration with bar associations)²³.

2.2 Awareness raising activities

In 2021, the European Network against Violence launched the campaign #MeNow_MeToo against sexual violence for the Human Rights Day²⁴. Aim of the campaign and the awareness video²⁵ is to enhance awareness on sexual violence by publicising survivors' stories and facilitating collaboration among survivors to exercise their rights. It's worth mentioning that the 3rd-grade trade union, General Confederation of Greek Workers ("GSEE") made a press release on Women's Day 2022, specifically addressing the need to collaborate in combatting inequality, violence and harassment against women in the workplace²⁶. In addition, in 2017, the General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality released an online awareness campaign against sexual harassment. In the spots based on true stories, sexual harassment incidents occur in different circumstances; perpetrators are a lawyer, colleague, professor and doctor²⁷.

²¹ Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE), Article published on 29.6.2022, <https://kede.gr/3i-enimerotiki-imerida-tis-kede-gia-ti-sexoualiki-parenochlisi-kai-ti-via-sto-choro-ergasias/>

²² General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality Official Website, accessible in [General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs \(isotita.gr\)](https://www.isotita.gr/), Official website of platform womensos.gr, accessible in [15900 – SOS HELP LINE – Βία Κατά Των Γυναϊκών \(womensos.gr\)](https://www.womensos.gr/), Rape crisis network Europe website, accessible in <https://www.rcne.com/contact/countries/greece/>

²³ Official website of platform womensos.gr, Consulting Centres, accessible in [CONSULTING CENTERS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF GSSE – Βία Κατά Των Γυναϊκών \(womensos.gr\)](https://www.womensos.gr/)

²⁴ European Network against Violence, Press release for campaign #MeNow_MeToo, 9.12.2021, accessible in <https://www.antiviolence-net.eu/>

²⁵ MeNow_MeToo Video on YouTube, 24.11.2021, accessible in [#MeNow_MeToo - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeNow_MeToo)

²⁶ General Confederation of Greek Workers ("GSEE"), Press release, 8.3.2022, accessible in <https://gsee.gr/deltia-tyvou/%ce%b7-%ce%b3-%cf%83-%ce%b5-%ce%b5-%ce%b3%ce%b9%ce%b1-%cf%84%ce%b7%ce%bd-%cf%80%ce%b1%ce%b3%ce%ba%cf%8c%cf%83%ce%bc%ce%b9%ce%b1-%ce%b7%ce%bc%ce%ad%cf%81%ce%b1-%cf%84%ce%b7%cf%82-%ce%b3%cf%85%ce%bd/>

²⁷ General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, Online awareness campaign against sexual harassment, November 2017, accessible in <https://isotita.gr/en/online-awareness-campaign-sexual-harassment-initiated-greek-general-secretariat-gender-equality-november-2017/>, General Secretariat on Demographic and Family

2.3 “Speak Out”

“ActionAid” and “Women on Top” coordinate the “Speak Out” initiative, which aims to provide free legal counselling, representation and support to women survivors of sexual harassment at work. The service is provided remotely and the interested parties can contact the organisations anonymously²⁸.

2.4 Training material and online tools

Research Center for Gender Equality (“KETHI”) released in 2022 a guide entitled “Violence and Harassment in the World of Work” which includes interactive exercises to be used in relevant trainings²⁹. The Hellenic Federation of Industries (“S.E.V.”) also published in 2022 a guide targeting companies with information on the new legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace³⁰. In addition, the Information Centre of the 3rd-grade trade union “GSEE” includes updated and detailed information on the definitions and legal framework regarding sexual harassment³¹. The General Secretariat on Gender Equality has published since 2011 a manual aiming to strengthen the knowledge and preparedness of women employees, employers, and competent actors on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace³². In addition, in the frame of the EU-funded project TEAMWORK, KMOP implemented in late 2021 trainings in Greece to 47 employers and HR professionals in order to enable them to revise staff policies and 60 employees in order to inform them regarding their rights in case of sexual harassment. Furthermore, TEAMWORK partners collaborated in the creation of the following material which is publicly available in English and national languages at the project’s website³³: (i) Guidelines for HR managers with recommendations and policy templates on measures against sexual harassment in the workplace; (ii) Training material for HR managers and employees of all levels; (iii) online tool aiming to enable companies’ (anonymous) self-assessment in terms of prevention and protection policies against sexual harassment in the workplace; (iv) info-platform for victims of sexual harassment in the workplace which provides space to publish stories of sexual harassment anonymously and have access to information material. A noteworthy initiative is the establishment of Gender Equality Committees in Greek Universities focusing on reporting mechanisms for sexual harassment. A guide has been published by the Gender Equality Committee of the University of Crete, with information on case management of sexual violence and harassment³⁴.

Policy and Gender Equality, Spots of the online awareness campaign against sexual harassment, November 2017, accessible in <https://isotita.gr/en/sexual-harassment-spots/>

²⁸ ActionAid, Speak Out, accessible in <https://speakout.actionaid.gr/>

²⁹ Research Center for Gender Equality (“KETHI”), Guide on “Violence and Harassment in the World of Work”, March 2022, accessible in https://www.kethi.gr/sites/default/files/attached_file/file/2022-04/KETHI_sexual_harassment.pdf

³⁰ Hellenic Federation of Industries (“S.E.V.”), Guide for companies on Violence and Harassment in the workplace, March 2022, accessible in https://www.sev.org.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Odigos_Via_Parenoxlisi.pdf

³¹ General Confederation of Greek Workers (“GSEE”), Information Centre for workers and unemployed, Sexual harassment in the workplace definitions and legal provisions, accessible in <https://www.kepea.gr/aarticle.php?id=2142>

³² General Secretariat on Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality, We do not tolerate sexual harassment in the workplace, Manual for women employees, employers, and social partners, December 2011, accessible in <https://isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/EGXEIRIDIO-SYMBOLIYTIKIS.pdf>

³³ TEAMWORK project website, Results and outputs, accessible at <https://www.teamworkproject.eu/results-outputs/>

³⁴ Gender Equality Committee of the University of Crete, Guide on Sexual Harassment in the workplace, accessible at https://www.eif.uoc.gr/images/%CE%9F%CE%B4%CE%B7%CE%B3%CF%8C%CF%82_%CE%91%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84_%CE%A3%CE%B5%CE%BE%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%BB%CE%B1_%CF%80%CE%B1%CF%81%CE%B5%CE%BD_%CE%91%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%81%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7.pdf

3. Transferability aspects

The situation in Greece is similar with Denmark and the Netherlands. Education on sexual health, sexuality and respect of sexual dignity and rights are already included in the Greek educational system³⁵. Following the recent legal reform on sexual harassment in the workplace, companies take a more active role against sexual harassment, which can have important impact on prevention. The need for cultural change in companies is valid for Greece as well: more responsibilities for the companies does not lead alone to safer workplaces. Employees should feel secure to report an incident of sexual harassment without being afraid of consequences. This requires multisectoral collaboration to ensure establishment of coherent and effective policies and broad dissemination of rights and obligations for all parts. The media also play a significant role, as prevention can be achieved when the subject is high in public discussion, and all parties are aware of the legal consequences. A commissioner on sexual violence matters could be beneficial as a central coordinating actor, who facilitates monitoring and guidance on the implementation of the legislation. Therefore, establishment of the MeTooGreece portal, as well as the independent department for cases of violence and harassment in the workplace, are steps in the right direction.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

International CSOs should collaborate to raise awareness and advocate for more actions at the legislative and policy level. EU-wide research initiatives could be useful to show the phenomenon's extent, compare the results per country and understand which preventive measures work best. At national level, research on sexual harassment should be promoted targeted to the general population and in sectors (i.e., labour market, education). Systematic joint actions and trainings could be useful to better understand the circumstances and apply preventive measures aligned with the victims' needs and bridging any gaps in the implementation of the legislation. Especially, members of trade unions should be trained on support of survivors before the competent authorities and collaboration with the employers on the development of policies and internal complaint procedures³⁶. Furthermore, as sexual harassment is a phenomenon linked with gender stereotypes and inequalities, lasting cultural change requires understanding the problem roots, the manifestations and its consequences. Education on gender issues and sexuality in order to develop respectful behaviour from an early age is important, as well as campaigns to raise awareness of the public and of bystanders. Collaboration of the state with actors who work closely with vulnerable social groups enables understanding and taking specific prevention measures to reverse the situation.

³⁵ Athensvoice, Article of 13.1.2022, accessible in <https://www.athensvoice.gr/epikairota/ellada/742095/i-sexoyaliki-diapaidagogisi-eftase-epiteloys-sto-elliniko-sholeio/>, Dikaiologitika.gr, Article of 24.3.2022, accessible in <https://www.dikaiologitika.gr/eidhseis/paideia/379002/ypoxreotiko-mathima-i-seksoualiki-diapaidagogisi-sta-sxoleia>

³⁶ ILO, Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment at Work, Guide to the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, 2013 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_630227.pdf

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