



Beyond Fear

Building Safer Workplaces for Women

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WP2 -Transnational Research Report

Project Result 1



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Summary

This Transnational Research Report presents the main findings of Work Package 2 (WP2) of the BEYOND FEAR – Building Safer Workplaces for Women project. As Project Result 1 (PR1), it provides the evidence base for the development of the Training Curriculum (PR2), the Massive Open Online Course (PR3), the Employers' Compendium (PR4), and the Digital Self-Assessment Tool (PR5).

WP2 aimed to identify the main barriers that hinder the prevention, recognition and management of workplace violence and harassment against women. Research was conducted across Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Cyprus and Malta through legal framework analyses, surveys among women workers and employers, and mixed focus groups. In total, the research involved 135 women workers, 78 employers and 79 focus group participants, alongside six national legal framework analyses.

The findings show a clear gap between perception and lived experience. Workplaces are often perceived as broadly positive, respectful or inclusive, yet this perception does not always correspond with women's lived experience of safety. Women across the partner countries reported exposure to workplace harassment, particularly in subtle, informal, normalised or cumulative forms. These included inappropriate comments, sexual jokes, verbal harassment, exclusion, psychological pressure and "grey area" behaviours that are difficult to define, challenge or report.

A second key finding is the persistent under-reporting of incidents. Women often hesitate to report due to fear of negative consequences, lack of trust, uncertainty about procedures, fear of not being taken seriously, concerns about confidentiality and job or income security. Reporting mechanisms are therefore only effective when they function as a trust infrastructure: they must be visible, confidential, low-threshold, trusted and followed by meaningful action.

From the employer perspective, the report identifies important organisational challenges. Many employers recognise the relevance of prevention, but lack structured procedures, practical guidance, regular training and resources, especially in small and medium-sized enterprises with limited HR capacity. Employers may also underestimate organisational risk when policies, informal reporting routes or positive workplace culture are assumed to be sufficient.

The legal framework analysis confirms that all partner countries provide formal protection against sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, but that implementation differs. Key gaps remain in relation to psychological harassment, non-standard forms of employment, fragmented reporting mechanisms and the availability of disaggregated data.

Overall, the report identifies the need to move from formal compliance towards practical safety. Policies, training and reporting systems must not only exist, but must be understandable, trusted, usable and supported by everyday organisational behaviour. This requires practical training on recognising and responding to subtle forms of harassment, clearer reporting pathways, stronger employer accountability, improved communication of rights and procedures, and workplace cultures that encourage open discussion without fear of retaliation.

These findings directly inform PR2–PR5. The Training Curriculum and MOOC should focus on practical recognition, rights, response strategies, bystander skills and realistic scenarios. The Employers' Compendium should provide concrete guidance on policies, trusted reporting, prevention, manager preparedness and case handling, while the Digital Self-Assessment Tool should help organisations assess current practices, identify implementation gaps and define improvement pathways. The overall project approach should combine women's empowerment with employer implementation support.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

The *BEYOND FEAR – Building Safer Workplaces for Women* project has been developed in response to the persistent and widespread issue of gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace. Despite increasing attention at European and national levels, many women continue to face unsafe working environments, limited support structures, and barriers to reporting inappropriate behaviour.

The project aims to contribute to safer, more respectful, and inclusive workplaces by combining two complementary approaches: prevention and empowerment. On the one hand, BEYOND FEAR seeks to support employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in developing effective policies, procedures, and organisational cultures that prevent violence and promote dignity at work. On the other hand, the project focuses on empowering women workers by increasing their awareness of workplace rights, strengthening their ability to recognise unacceptable behaviour, and equipping them with practical tools to respond to and navigate such situations.

Through a structured set of activities, including research, training development, and digital tools, BEYOND FEAR adopts a comprehensive and transnational approach aimed at bridging the gap between policy and practice.

1.2 Relevance of the Topic

Workplace violence and harassment against women remain significant challenges across Europe and beyond. These issues manifest in various forms, ranging from subtle and normalised behaviours—such as inappropriate comments or exclusion—to more explicit forms of psychological, verbal, or physical violence.

Despite the existence of legal frameworks and organisational policies, several barriers continue to limit effective prevention and response. Women may hesitate to report incidents due to fear of retaliation, concerns about job security, or a lack of trust in internal mechanisms. At the same time, employers—particularly SMEs—often lack the resources, knowledge, or structured procedures required to adequately address these issues.

Furthermore, cultural and organisational norms may contribute to the normalisation or underestimation of harmful behaviours, making it more difficult to recognise and challenge them. As a result, workplace violence not only affects the well-being and safety of individuals, but also undermines organisational performance, social inclusion, and equality in the labour market.

Given the complexity and persistence of the problem, there is a clear need for evidence-based interventions that are grounded in the lived experiences of both women workers and employers.

1.3 Purpose of the Report

This report represents the main outcome of Work Package 2 (WP2) – *Knowledge Acquisition*, which serves as the empirical foundation of the BEYOND FEAR project. The primary objective of WP2 is to identify the obstacles and barriers that hinder the prevention, recognition, and management of workplace violence against women, through a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

To achieve this, WP2 brings together evidence from multiple sources, including legal framework analyses, surveys among women workers and employers, and mixed focus groups conducted in partner countries. This multi-layered approach enables the project to capture both individual experiences and organisational perspectives, as well as cross-country similarities and differences.

As Project Result 1 (PR1), this Transnational Research Report consolidates the evidence generated under WP2 and translates it into strategic recommendations for the development of PR2–PR5. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of workplace violence and harassment against women across the partner countries. Second, it identifies key patterns, barriers, and needs emerging from the data, highlighting both common challenges and context-specific dynamics. In line with the project's specific objective of identifying obstacles and barriers to prevention and response, the report systematically analyses the factors that hinder safe and inclusive workplace environments. Third, it offers evidence-based recommendations that directly inform the development of subsequent project results, including the training curriculum (PR2), the Massive Open Online Course (PR3), the Employers' Compendium (PR4), and the Digital Self-Assessment Tool (PR5).

As such, this report does not only present research findings but also functions as a strategic document guiding the design of practical tools and interventions aimed at fostering safer and more inclusive workplaces.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The BEYOND FEAR research adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to provide a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of workplace violence and harassment against women.

The study was implemented across six partner countries (Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Cyprus and Malta) and followed a dual-perspective approach, integrating insights from both women workers and employers. In addition, a legal framework analysis was conducted in each country, ensuring that findings could be interpreted within their national regulatory context.

In total, the research engaged 135 women workers, 78 employers, and 79 participants in mixed focus groups, providing a robust and diverse dataset for transnational comparison. An overview of the number of participants can be found in Annex 5.

This design enabled the identification of both common patterns and context-specific dynamics, as well as the interaction between individual experiences, organisational practices, and structural factors influencing workplace safety.

2.2 Research Questions

The research was guided by a set of core questions derived from the project's objective (SO1) to identify obstacles and barriers to preventing and addressing workplace violence against women.

The main research questions included:

- How do women workers experience and perceive violence and harassment in the workplace?
- What barriers exist in recognising, reporting, and responding to such behaviours?
- How do employers perceive and address workplace violence and harassment?
- To what extent do organisational, cultural, and legal factors influence prevention and response mechanisms?

These questions ensured alignment between data collection activities (T2.3, T2.4 and T2.5) and the overall aim of generating actionable knowledge to support the development of project outputs (PR2–PR5).

2.3 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through four complementary research activities implemented within Work Package 2 (WP2): the legal framework analysis (T2.3), the women's survey (T2.4.1), the mixed focus groups (T2.4.2/T2.5.2), and the employer survey (T2.5).

Legal Framework Analysis

A comparative desk research analysis was conducted in all six partner countries (n=6) to map existing legal and policy frameworks related to workplace violence and harassment.

This included the review of national legislation, labour regulations, and institutional mechanisms relevant to the prevention and management of gender-based violence at work.

The purpose of this activity was to provide a contextual foundation for the interpretation of the empirical findings and to identify structural gaps or inconsistencies that may have influenced workplace practices.

Survey among Women Workers

A standardised online survey was distributed across all partner countries to collect quantitative data from women aged 24–55 active in the labour market (Annex 1).

A total of 135 responses were collected across the six countries, exceeding the minimum target defined in the project proposal (120). All partners used a common questionnaire to ensure consistency and comparability of results.

The survey was structured around key dimensions defined in the WP2 workplan, including workplace culture, awareness and recognition, experiences of violence and harassment, barriers to reporting, and training needs.

The resulting dataset provided a robust basis for transnational analysis of women's experiences and perceptions.

Survey among Employers

A second survey targeted employers, including SME owners, managers, and HR representatives (Annex 2).

A total of 78 employer responses were collected across partner countries, exceeding the initial target (60). The survey explored organisational perspectives on policies, reporting mechanisms, awareness, and challenges in addressing workplace violence.

This dataset enabled the assessment of organisational practices and capacities, as well as a comparative analysis with the perspectives of women workers.

Mixed Focus Groups

In addition to surveys, six mixed focus groups (one per partner country) were conducted, involving a total of 79 participants.

Each focus group brought together women workers and employers and followed a semi-structured format, covering key topics such as workplace culture, awareness, reporting barriers, organisational responses, and support needs (Annex 3).

The mixed composition enabled direct interaction between perspectives, facilitating the identification of both alignments and discrepancies between employees and employers.

These sessions provided rich qualitative insights and contributed to the interpretation of survey findings, as well as the development of practical, evidence-based recommendations.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the different research activities were analysed using a combination of descriptive and thematic approaches.

Quantitative data from the surveys were aggregated and examined to identify trends, patterns, and distributions across key variables. These findings were complemented by qualitative data from focus groups, which were analysed thematically to capture recurring topics, perceptions, and narratives.

A cross-country analysis was then conducted to compare results between partner countries, highlighting both shared challenges and context-specific differences. This comparative perspective was essential for developing recommendations that are both evidence-based and adaptable to different organisational and cultural contexts.

Country-level reports and primary datasets developed during WP2 are maintained by the project partners and are available upon request, in line with data protection and GDPR requirements.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

All research activities were conducted in accordance with ethical standards and data protection regulations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Participation in surveys and focus groups was voluntary, and all data were collected anonymously to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

Special attention was given to the sensitive nature of the topic. Participants were not required to disclose personal traumatic experiences, and they were free to skip questions or withdraw from the research at any time.

3 Legal and Policy Frameworks

This chapter presents a synthesis of the legal framework analysis conducted under Task 2.3 of Work Package 2. It is based on the Cumulative Legal Framework Report, which consolidates the six national analyses carried out by project partners in Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands and Spain.

Across all partner countries, legal frameworks addressing workplace violence and harassment demonstrate a strong degree of alignment in principle. In each context, sexual harassment and gender-based harassment are prohibited, recognised as violations of dignity and equality, and addressed either as forms of unlawful discrimination or as occupational risks. Employers are consistently assigned a duty of care to prevent and respond to such behaviours.

Despite this shared foundation, important differences emerge in how these frameworks are structured and implemented. Two main legislative approaches can be identified. In Cyprus and Malta, recent reforms have led to the introduction of more dedicated legislative frameworks, with explicit and comprehensive provisions addressing workplace violence and harassment. In contrast, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain rely on a more fragmented or “patchwork” approach, where protection is distributed across multiple legal domains, including equality law, occupational health and safety regulations, civil law and criminal law.

While both approaches provide formal protection, the patchwork model may create greater complexity for both workers and employers when navigating rights, obligations and reporting procedures.

3.1 Alignment with International Standards

ILO Convention No. 190 serves as a central reference point across all partner countries. Four countries—Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Cyprus—have formally ratified the Convention, while Germany and Malta have not. Nevertheless, Malta has aligned its recent legislative developments with the principles of the Convention.

As a result, a shared conceptual framework exists across all countries, even where formal commitment differs. This allows ILO Convention No. 190 to function as a common basis for project development, training design and comparative analysis, while recognising variations in national implementation and enforceability.

3.2 Scope of Protection and Definitions

All partner countries provide legal definitions of sexual harassment that are broadly consistent and reflect the influence of EU equality legislation. However, a significant gap emerges in relation to psychological harassment, often referred to as mobbing or workplace bullying.

In most countries, this form of harassment is not clearly defined in statutory law and is instead addressed through broader legal interpretations or case law. This lack of a clear definition contributes to legal uncertainty and may make it more difficult for individuals to recognise, report and prove non-physical forms of harassment.

In terms of scope, most legal frameworks extend protection beyond standard employment relationships, including to trainees, interns and, in some cases, job applicants. However, freelancers, self-employed workers and other non-standard forms of employment remain less consistently protected in practice across the partner countries.

3.3 Employer Obligations and Reporting Systems

Across all countries, employers are legally required to take measures to prevent and address workplace risks, including violence and harassment. These obligations are typically embedded within occupational health and safety legislation.

However, the level of prescriptiveness varies significantly. In some contexts, such as Spain and Cyprus, employers must implement clearly defined procedures, including written policies, reporting mechanisms and designated contact persons. In other countries, including Germany and Malta, the legal framework sets out general duties without prescribing detailed preventive structures.

All countries provide both internal reporting mechanisms within organisations and external reporting channels, such as labour inspectorates, equality bodies or courts. Nevertheless, procedural differences—particularly regarding complaint deadlines and access routes—may affect the accessibility and effectiveness of these systems.

3.4 Key Cross-Cutting Gaps

A central finding of the cumulative analysis is the high level of consistency in the challenges identified across all partner countries. Five key gaps were observed:

1. The absence of clear legal definitions of psychological harassment

2. Persistent under-reporting and low levels of formal complaints
3. Weaker practical protection for non-standard and vulnerable workers
4. Fragmentation across enforcement and reporting mechanisms
5. Limited availability of disaggregated data

These challenges are not primarily related to the absence of legal frameworks, but rather to issues of implementation, awareness and accessibility. As such, they highlight the need to go beyond legal provisions and focus on practical application in workplace contexts.

3.5 Implications for Project Development

The findings of the legal framework analysis indicate that the main challenge lies not in the existence of legal protections, but in their effective implementation and use in practice.

For the BEYOND FEAR project, this has several important implications. The development of the training curriculum (PR2) should prioritise awareness, recognition and the practical application of rights. The Employers' Compendium (PR4) should translate legal obligations into clear, actionable guidance for organisations. The Digital Self-Assessment Tool (PR5) should reflect both the legal standards and the implementation gaps identified across countries.

Overall, the analysis confirms that training, awareness and organisational capacity-building are essential to bridging the gap between formal legal protection and the everyday experiences of women in the workplace.

4 Women's Experiences in the Workplace

This chapter analyses women's experiences in the workplace across Cyprus, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain. It combines the women's survey data with the mixed focus group findings and is structured thematically. Each section compares the six countries on the same topic, first drawing on the survey results and then using the focus group insights to interpret the figures and identify similarities, differences and underlying patterns.

The analysis focuses on five themes: workplace culture and perceived safety; awareness and recognition of harassment; experiences and forms of harassment; reporting behaviour, support and barriers; and women's training and support needs. The sample sizes vary by

country, with 20 women surveyed in Cyprus, 21 in Germany, 20 in Malta, 22 in the Netherlands, 22 in Italy and 30 in Spain.

Across the six countries, the data show a recurring tension: women often rate their workplaces as positive, respectful or inclusive, while at the same time reporting exposure to harassment, uncertainty about reporting pathways and concerns about whether organisational systems can be trusted in practice. The strongest finding is therefore not simply that harassment occurs, but that it often exists alongside apparently positive workplace cultures and remains difficult to name, challenge or report.

4.1 Workplace Culture and Atmosphere

The survey data show that women's overall assessment of workplace atmosphere is broadly positive in most countries, but with important differences in strength and consistency. Spain and the Netherlands show the most positive results: in Spain, 28 of 30 respondents rated the general workplace atmosphere with a high score of 4 or 5 (93.3%), while in the Netherlands this was 21 of 22 respondents (95.5%). Malta also shows a clearly positive pattern, with 17 of 20 respondents (85%) giving high atmosphere scores. Italy follows with 17 of 22 respondents (77.3%) rating atmosphere positively, although 2 of 22 respondents gave the lowest score. Cyprus and Germany show a more mixed pattern: in Cyprus, 12 of 20 respondents (60%) gave high scores and 7 scored the atmosphere as 3; in Germany, only 10 of 21 respondents (47.6%) gave high scores, while 7 scored 3.

A similar but not identical pattern appears in relation to feeling respected. The Netherlands and Spain again show very high scores, with 21 of 22 respondents in the Netherlands (95.5%) and 28 of 30 in Spain (93.3%) scoring 4 or 5. Malta follows closely, with 18 of 20 respondents (90%) reporting high levels of respect, and Italy also reports a positive result, with 18 of 22 respondents (81.8%) scoring 4 or 5, although 2 of 22 scored 1 or 2. Cyprus and Germany again show weaker results: 13 of 20 respondents in Cyprus (65%) and 11 of 21 in Germany (52.4%) gave high scores for feeling respected.

Perceived inclusion is the weakest culture indicator in several countries. Spain stands out positively, with 29 of 30 respondents (96.7%) giving high inclusion scores and no low scores. Malta also reports relatively strong inclusion scores, with 15 of 20 respondents (75%) scoring 4 or 5, followed by Italy with 16 of 22 (72.7%). The Netherlands shows a more moderate result: 14 of 22 respondents (63.6%) scored inclusion highly, while 7 scored 3 and 1 scored 2. Cyprus and Germany show the clearest concerns: in Cyprus, only 9 of 20 respondents (45%)

gave high inclusion scores and 7 scored 2; in Germany, 9 of 21 respondents (42.9%) gave high inclusion scores and 5 scored 2.

The focus groups help explain why positive atmosphere scores cannot be read as proof of safety. In Cyprus, 10 of 14 participants described workplaces as able to “tip into toxicity”, especially for expats and non-native Greek speakers, with themes of nepotism, informal networks, lack of transparency, gossip, sexism and ageism. At the same time, informality was also linked to warmth, flexibility and mutual care. In Malta, workplace culture was described as decisive for whether women feel safe to speak up, with silence and fear becoming normalised where clear policies, trusted reporting routes and visible consequences are missing. In Germany, the focus group identified a “culture of silence” around subtle disrespect, exclusion and microaggressions, while employers often described workplaces as respectful. In the Netherlands, participants described open and socially oriented workplaces, but noted that internal conversations on boundaries were less structured than external rules. In Italy, participants generally described the atmosphere as positive and collaborative, but later discussions showed that this can coexist with unclear procedures and hidden discomfort. In Spain, participants felt relatively positive about their current companies, but broader experiences revealed gaps between law and practice, including illegal questions about children in job interviews and risks linked to age, motherhood, nationality, socio-economic status and sector.

Overall, the workplace culture findings show three main patterns. First, Spain, the Netherlands and Malta report the strongest positive atmosphere and respect scores, while Cyprus and Germany show more mixed results, especially on inclusion. Second, inclusion is weaker than general atmosphere in several countries, indicating that women may experience a workplace as broadly positive while still identifying gaps for women with different backgrounds. Third, the focus groups show that informal or friendly workplace cultures can be double-edged: they may create warmth and flexibility, but they can also make boundaries, accountability and reporting less clear.

- Strongest positive culture scores: the Netherlands, Spain and Malta.
- Most visible inclusion concerns: Cyprus and Germany.
- Cross-country issue: positive atmosphere does not automatically mean psychological safety or practical trust.

4.1.1.1 4.2 Awareness and Recognition of Violence and Harassment

The women's survey shows high recognition of workplace harassment across all six countries, but also reveals differences in which behaviours are most strongly identified. In Cyprus, five behaviours were selected by 19 of 20 respondents (95%): offensive jokes or comments about women, unwanted physical contact, unwanted sexual comments, messages or images, shouting or humiliation, and threats about job or career. In Spain, recognition was also very high: unwanted sexual comments, messages or images were selected by all 30 respondents, unwanted physical contact by 29 of 30, shouting or humiliation by 27 of 30, and offensive jokes or exclusion by 26 of 30.

In the Netherlands, the highest recognised behaviours were shouting, humiliation or insults, exclusion or isolation, and threats about job or career, each selected by 19 of 22 respondents, followed by unwanted physical contact and unwanted sexual comments, messages or images, each selected by 18 of 22. In Italy, offensive jokes or comments were selected by 20 of 22 respondents, unwanted physical contact by 19 of 22, and unwanted sexual comments, messages or images by 17 of 22. In Malta, unwanted physical contact and unwanted sexual comments, messages or images were each selected by 18 of 20 respondents, while offensive jokes and shouting or humiliation were each selected by 16 of 20. In Germany, the highest recognised behaviours were offensive jokes or comments (17 of 21), exclusion or isolation (16 of 21), unwanted sexual comments, messages or images (15 of 21), and shouting or humiliation (15 of 21).

- Recognition is strongest for explicit verbal, sexual, physical and power-related behaviours.
- Exclusion and isolation are also widely recognised, especially in the Netherlands and Germany.
- Digital or out-of-hours forms are generally recognised less strongly than direct in-person behaviours.

Confidence in recognising unacceptable behaviour is also high. Cyprus reports 19 of 20 respondents (95%) as at least quite confident; Italy reports 21 of 22 (95.5%); Germany 19 of 21 (90.5%); the Netherlands 20 of 22 (90.9%); and Malta 18 of 20 (90%). Spain is slightly lower, with 24 of 30 respondents (80%) at least quite confident and 6 of 30 reporting that they were not very or not at all confident.

The focus groups show that this high survey confidence should be interpreted carefully. In Cyprus, participants identified a strong intergenerational divide: younger women recognised subtle forms such as irony, sarcasm, covert insults, sexualised comments, inappropriate

humour and low-level hostile commentary more quickly, while older participants initially focused on more overt forms. In Malta, harassment was recognised as serious, but women, especially younger or inexperienced women, could still be unsure whether behaviour “counts”, whether it is serious enough, or who to approach. In Germany, extreme forms were generally recognised, but subtler psychological pressure, systematic exclusion and repeated belittling were harder to identify. In the Netherlands, participants were aware of non-physical forms, but described “grey area” situations where intent, impact, cultural norms and personal boundaries differ. Italy and Spain both stressed that harassment may be subtle, relational and not always black-and-white, including unsolicited comments, persistent insistence, power plays, psychological manipulation and even harmful behaviour between women.

Overall, the awareness findings show both strong convergence and important nuance. Across all countries, women generally recognise explicit verbal, sexual, physical and power-related behaviours as harassment, and confidence levels are high in most samples. However, the focus groups show that practical recognition becomes more difficult when behaviour is subtle, repeated, informal, framed as humour, linked to power dynamics or embedded in everyday team culture. Spain stands out as the country where confidence is somewhat lower, while Cyprus, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Malta show very high self-reported confidence. The main conclusion is therefore that awareness exists, but training still needs to focus on grey areas, subtle forms and the difference between intent and impact.

- Most consistently recognised behaviours: unwanted sexual comments/messages/images, unwanted physical contact, shouting or humiliation, offensive jokes/comments and threats linked to job or career.
- Main grey areas: jokes, subtle exclusion, repeated belittling, psychological pressure, unsolicited comments and power plays.
- Key training implication: move beyond definitions and use real-life scenarios that help women identify ambiguous or cumulative behaviour.

4.2 Experiences and Forms of Harassment

Exposure to harassment, either personally experienced or witnessed, is reported in every country, but at different levels. Cyprus shows the highest survey figure, with 18 of 20 respondents (90%) reporting either personal experience or witnessing: 12 had experienced harassment themselves and 6 had witnessed it. Germany also reports a high level, with 16 of 21 respondents (76.2%) indicating experience or witnessing, divided equally between 8

personal experiences and 8 witnessed cases. Malta reports 14 of 20 respondents with experience or witnessing, with 9 personal experiences and 5 witnessed cases; this equals 70%, although the national summary text states 90%. The Netherlands reports 14 of 22 respondents (63.6%), with 8 personal experiences and 6 witnessed cases. Spain reports 19 out of 31 in the matrix summary (62%) with one respondent preferring not to answer; the table data elsewhere indicate 10 personal experiences and 8 witnessed cases. Italy reports the lowest level, with 7 of 22 respondents (31.8%), including 3 personal experiences and 4 witnessed cases.

The types of behaviour most frequently reported are predominantly verbal, psychological, social and sexualised rather than extreme physical violence. In Cyprus, the most reported behaviours were bullying, shouting or humiliating behaviour (14 of 20), unwanted touching or physical contact (11 of 20), sexual comments or jokes (10 of 20), and exclusion or isolation (9 of 20). In Germany, sexual comments or jokes, bullying or humiliation, and exclusion or isolation were each reported by 8 of 21 respondents, while online or digital harassment was reported by 6 of 21. In Malta, sexual comments or jokes and bullying or humiliation were each reported by 7 of 20, followed by unwanted touching or physical contact by 5 of 20.

In the Netherlands, the most reported behaviours were sexual comments or jokes (8 of 22), bullying or humiliation (6 of 22) and unwanted touching or physical contact (3 of 22), alongside open examples such as racism, questions about having children, not being fully accepted and being kept small. Italy shows a different pattern: sexual comments or jokes and exclusion or isolation were each reported by 7 of 22, bullying or humiliation by 5 of 22, online or digital harassment by 1 of 22, and no unwanted physical contact was reported. In Spain, the most reported behaviours were sexual comments or jokes (13 of 30), bullying or humiliation (9 of 30), exclusion or isolation (7 of 30), unwanted touching or physical contact (6 of 30), and online or digital harassment (5 of 30).

The focus group findings deepen this picture. In Cyprus, all 14 focus group participants had encountered harassment or violence in some form: 12 reported first-hand experience and witnessing, while 2 had witnessed incidents. The group also challenged the assumption that senior women are protected by status, concluding that seniority does not shield women from harassment or undermining. In Malta, harassment was described as often hidden due to fear, shame or lack of trust, with blind spots around freelancers, business owners and young women entering the labour market. In Germany, women shared examples ranging from overt sexual comments to being given lower-value tasks, being spoken over and unequal pay,

while employers sometimes framed problems as interpersonal conflict rather than structural gender dynamics.

In the Netherlands, concrete personal experiences were rarely shared in the mixed focus group, which may itself indicate discomfort in discussing incidents in a mixed setting. Indirect examples showed that boundary-crossing behaviour can be unintentional and only recognised after feedback. In Italy, some direct experiences were shared, including bullying or mobbing by a female superior early in a participant's career, and cultural differences were identified as a possible source of tension. In Spain, participants emphasised that women's workplace experiences are shaped by personal and social realities, including age, motherhood, nationality, socio-economic status and sector.

Overall, the experience data show that harassment is present in every country, but the scale and visibility differ substantially. Cyprus, Germany and Malta show the highest levels of reported experience or witnessing, followed by the Netherlands and Spain, while Italy reports the lowest level. Across countries, the most visible behaviours are not limited to severe or physical incidents: sexualised comments, humiliation, exclusion, bullying and power-related dynamics recur throughout the survey and focus group data. The main cross-country conclusion is that harassment often appears through cumulative everyday behaviours, and the key difference between countries lies in how visible, recognised and reportable these behaviours become.

- Highest reported exposure: Cyprus, Germany and Malta.
- Most recurring behaviour types: sexual comments or jokes, bullying or humiliation, exclusion or isolation, and unwanted physical contact.
- Important blind spots: senior women, young workers, freelancers, business owners, migrant women, mothers and women in dependent or precarious work situations.

4.3 Reporting Behaviour, Support and Barriers

Awareness of reporting options varies considerably across countries and is often partial rather than clear. Malta and Spain show the highest levels of clear awareness: in Malta, 9 of 20 respondents (45%) clearly knew the reporting options, while 6 of 20 (30%) had some idea; in Spain, 12 of 30 (40%) were clearly aware and 11 of 30 (36.7%) had some idea. Germany also shows moderate awareness, with 8 of 21 respondents (38.1%) clearly aware and 7 of 21 (33.3%) having some idea. In the Netherlands, 7 of 22 respondents (31.8%) were

clearly aware and 9 of 22 (40.9%) had some idea. Italy shows weaker awareness, with 6 of 22 (27.3%) clearly aware, 9 of 22 (40.9%) having some idea, and 7 of 22 (31.8%) not knowing. Cyprus shows the lowest clear awareness: only 3 of 20 respondents (15%) clearly knew the reporting options, while 13 of 20 (65%) had only some idea and 4 of 20 (20%) did not know.

The reasons for hesitation to report differ by country, but the underlying pattern is consistent: women often fear consequences, lack trust, do not know where to go, or do not consider reporting a realistic or appropriate option. In Cyprus, the strongest barriers were fear of retaliation and lack of trust in management or HR, each selected by 9 of 20 respondents, followed by fear of not being believed and confidentiality concerns, each selected by 7 of 20. In Germany, fear of not being believed and fear of retaliation were each selected by 7 of 21 respondents, followed by fear of gossip or stigma, lack of trust in management or HR, and confidentiality concerns, each selected by 6 of 21. In Malta, the most reported barriers were fear of losing job or income and not knowing where to go, each selected by 5 of 20, followed by fear of retaliation by 4 of 20.

In the Netherlands, the most striking result is that 10 of 22 respondents had not considered reporting. Other barriers included fear of gossip or stigma (5 of 22), lack of time, energy or emotional capacity (4 of 22), and lack of trust in management or HR (3 of 22). In Italy, 7 of 22 respondents did not know where to go and 7 had not considered reporting, while 6 feared retaliation and 4 feared losing job or income or not being believed. In Spain, fear of losing job or income was the strongest barrier, selected by 12 of 30 respondents, followed by not having considered reporting (10 of 30), fear of retaliation (9 of 30), and fear of not being believed (8 of 30).

Internal support options are also uneven. In Cyprus, 10 of 20 respondents reported no known internal support, while only 3 reported several options and 7 reported one or two. In Italy, 9 of 22 reported no known support and 6 were unsure, leaving only 4 reporting several options and 3 one or two options. Malta shows a mixed picture: 3 of 20 reported several options, 8 one or two options, 7 no known support and 2 were unsure. Germany is more balanced, with 6 of 21 reporting several options, 6 one or two, 5 no known support and 4 unsure. The Netherlands shows comparatively stronger internal support availability, with 8 of 22 reporting several options and 8 one or two options. Spain also shows relatively stronger internal support availability, with 13 of 30 reporting several options and 8 reporting one or two, although 6 still reported no known support and 3 were unsure.

Awareness of external support is low in several countries. Only 2 of 22 respondents in the Netherlands (9.1%) and 4 of 20 respondents in Cyprus and Malta (20% in each country)

reported being aware of external support. Spain reports 8 of 30 respondents (26.7%) as aware, while Germany shows the strongest external awareness, with 10 of 21 respondents (47.6%) reporting awareness. For Italy, the matrix notes uneven awareness rather than complete numerical data, with limited knowledge of external support contributing to gaps in help-seeking pathways, especially where internal mechanisms are weak or unclear.

The focus groups show why reporting remains difficult even when formal channels exist. In Cyprus, participants believed that unless an incident is serious enough for the police, little will happen internally. In Malta, barriers included fear of job loss, not being believed, being blamed, professional consequences, not knowing where to report and low trust. In Germany, participants described fear of not being believed, retaliation, shame, unclear or underused reporting channels, lack of anonymity in small companies and opaque outcomes. In the Netherlands, the key gap was the absence of a middle option between silence and formal reporting, especially for “grey area” situations. In Italy, participants highlighted uncertainty about whom to approach, particularly early in a career and in smaller companies. In Spain, barriers centred on fear of consequences, job loss, distrust in HR and the difficulty of producing valid proof.

Overall, reporting is the clearest area where the countries differ in detail but converge in outcome. Some countries show more awareness of reporting options than others, but in all six contexts reporting remains fragile because women are unsure whether systems are safe, useful or worth using. Cyprus stands out for low clear awareness and high trust-related barriers; Spain for fear of job or income loss; the Netherlands and Italy for high numbers of women who had not considered reporting; and Germany for concerns around belief, retaliation, confidentiality and stigma. The shared result is that reporting systems cannot be assessed only by whether they exist. They must be visible, understandable, confidential, trusted and connected to clear follow-up.

- Top reporting barriers across countries: fear of retaliation, fear of job or income loss, not knowing where to go, lack of trust in HR or management, and not considering reporting.
- Weakest clear awareness of reporting options: Cyprus, followed by Italy and the Netherlands.
- Strongest need across countries: low-threshold, confidential and trusted routes between silence and formal complaint.

4.4 Training, Support Needs and Women’s Recommendations

Women's training needs differ across countries but cluster around four recurring areas: rights and legal protections, reporting pathways, recognition of early signs, and practical strategies such as boundary-setting, bystander skills and managing emotional impact. Cyprus shows the strongest demand for legal and procedural content: 19 of 20 respondents selected rights and legal protections, while reporting/who to contact, bystander skills and managing stress or emotional impact were each selected by 15 of 20. Malta shows a similar pattern, with rights and legal protections selected by 16 of 20, reporting/who to contact and boundary-setting by 14 of 20 each, and managing stress by 13 of 20. Italy also prioritises practical response: reporting/who to contact was selected by 16 of 22, rights and legal protections by 15 of 22, managing stress by 15 of 22, and recognising early signs by 14 of 22.

Germany and the Netherlands show stronger emphasis on bystander skills and workplace culture. In Germany, the most requested topic was bystander skills (13 of 21), followed by managing stress or emotional impact (11 of 21), recognising early signs (9 of 21) and reporting/who to contact (9 of 21). In the Netherlands, bystander skills were selected by 17 of 22 respondents, recognising early signs by 14 of 22 and boundary-setting by 13 of 22. Spain shows high demand across multiple topics: rights and legal protections were selected by 23 of 30 respondents, recognising early signs by 21 of 30, and both boundary-setting and bystander skills by 20 of 30.

Preferred formats also vary. Cyprus favours short in-person workshops (12 of 20), short live online sessions (10 of 20) and blended formats (9 of 20). Germany differs from most countries, with self-paced online modules or a MOOC selected by 13 of 21 and written materials or guides by 10 of 21. Malta favours blended learning (10 of 20), short live online sessions (9 of 20) and self-paced online modules (9 of 20). The Netherlands favours collective and interactive formats: short in-person workshops and blended learning were each selected by 14 of 22. Italy favours blended learning (12 of 22), short live online sessions (10 of 22) and in-person workshops (9 of 22). Spain strongly favours short in-person workshops (23 of 30), followed by podcasts or videos (14 of 30) and blended formats (8 of 30).

The conditions for participation underline the need for accessibility and flexibility. Cyprus prioritises clear and simple language (12 of 20), short sessions (11 of 20), anonymous or private options (8 of 20) and employer support (8 of 20). Germany prioritises anonymous or private learning (11 of 21), smartphone accessibility (10 of 21) and clear language (9 of 21). Malta prioritises evening or weekend options (15 of 20) and short sessions (14 of 20). The Netherlands places strongest emphasis on employer support or time recognition (18 of 22)

and short sessions (15 of 22). Italy prioritises short sessions (13 of 22), smartphone accessibility (11 of 22), clear language (9 of 22) and anonymous/private options (7 of 22). Spain prioritises short sessions or micro-modules (25 of 30), clear language (17 of 30), anonymous/private options (11 of 30) and employer support (9 of 30).

The focus groups confirm that training should be practical, scenario-based and connected to real organisational contexts. In Cyprus, participants called for foundational literacy on subtle harassment, formal pathways of recourse and practical response skills, with face-to-face workshops supported by online and printed materials. Malta emphasised real-life scenarios, recognition, rights, reporting, documentation and protection from retaliation, including specific attention to freelancers and business owners. Germany prioritised scenario-based training on recognition, assertive communication, rights, reporting and emotional resilience, with interactive, modular and peer-learning formats. The Netherlands called for experiential methods such as role play and simulations, especially around grey-area situations and everyday interactions. Italy emphasised practical tools to recognise and handle uncomfortable situations early, using case studies and continuous training. Spain prioritised practical steps for responding, gathering valid proof and structuring written complaints, with preference for in-person or hybrid interactive workshops and limited interest in long written materials.

Overall, women's training and support needs are strongly practical rather than purely informational. Across countries, women ask for rights-based content, clearer reporting pathways, help with recognising early signs, boundary-setting, bystander skills and ways to manage emotional impact. However, the emphasis differs by context: Cyprus, Malta, Italy and Spain place strong weight on rights, legal protections and reporting, while Germany and the Netherlands place stronger emphasis on bystander skills, recognition and workplace culture. Format preferences also differ, but short, accessible, interactive and scenario-based learning is a common thread. These findings directly inform the design of the BEYOND FEAR training curriculum and MOOC, particularly through realistic scenarios, micro-learning, rights-based content, bystander skills and practical reporting guidance.

- Top cross-country training topics: rights and legal protections; how to report and who to contact; recognising early signs; bystander skills; boundary-setting.
- Top format needs: short sessions, interactive workshops, blended learning, online/self-paced options and practical scenarios.

- Top accessibility needs: clear language, micro-modules, privacy or anonymity, smartphone access, employer support and flexible timing.

5 Employer Practices and Perspectives

This chapter analyses employer practices and perspectives across Cyprus, Germany, Malta, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain. It draws on the employer survey and mixed focus group findings. Each section first compares the survey findings across countries, then uses the focus group insights to interpret the results and ends with the main cross-country patterns.

The employer survey included 78 responses in total: 24 from Cyprus, 13 from Germany, 10 from Malta, 10 from the Netherlands, 11 from Italy and 10 from Spain. The samples differ considerably in organisational size and profile. Cyprus, Malta, Italy and Spain are strongly shaped by micro and small organisations, often with owners or CEOs responding directly. Germany and the Netherlands include more medium and large organisations and a stronger presence of HR or managerial respondents. These differences are important because employer capacity, formalisation and reporting systems are closely linked to organisational size and HR resources.

Across the six countries, employers generally recognise the relevance of preventing workplace harassment and promoting respectful workplaces. However, the data show a recurring gap between intention and implementation. Policies may exist but not be communicated; reporting systems may be present but handled case by case; leadership may express commitment while managers remain insufficiently prepared. The central finding of this chapter is therefore that employer engagement is present, but organisational structures, knowledge and practical capacity remain uneven.

5.1 Existing Policies and Procedures

Policy formalisation differs strongly across the six countries. Germany and the Netherlands show the most developed policy landscape. In Germany, 8 of 13 employers reported formal policies, 3 informal guidelines and 2 no policy. Measures were widely present, especially codes of conduct (11), reporting procedures (9), written policies (8), disciplinary measures (8) and internal guidelines (8). In the Netherlands, 7 of 10 employers reported formal policies, 2 no policy and 1 was unsure. Measures included written policies (7), reporting procedures (7), codes of conduct (6), internal guidelines (4), disciplinary measures (2) and only 1 organisation reporting no measures.

Cyprus shows a broader but more mixed picture. Most organisations reported some form of policy or guidance: 9 formal written policies, 12 informal or partial guidelines and 3 with no policy. Existing measures included written policies (10), codes of conduct (11), formal reporting procedures (10), disciplinary measures (5) and informal practices (10). However, communication was inconsistent, with only 7 organisations communicating policies regularly, while 8 did so rarely and 2 never.

Malta, Italy and Spain show weaker formalisation. In Malta, only 2 of 10 organisations had formal policies, 4 had informal policies and 4 had none. Measures were limited: 1 written policy, 4 codes of conduct, 2 reporting procedures, 2 disciplinary measures and 3 informal practices, while 4 organisations reported no measures. Communication was weak, with 4 never communicating policies and only 1 doing so regularly. In Italy, only 2 of 11 employers reported formal policies, 5 informal policies and 4 no policies. Measures were mostly informal: internal guidelines (6) and codes of conduct (5), while no reporting procedure was reported. In Spain, only 1 of 10 organisations had a formal policy, 3 had informal policies and 6 had no policy; 6 also selected “none” for current measures, and 6 never communicated policies.

The focus groups confirm that policy presence alone is not enough. In Cyprus, participants noted that a formal legal and institutional framework exists, especially after Law 42(I)/2025, but employers, particularly SMEs, need practical help translating obligations into codes of conduct, complaints officers, risk assessments and reporting channels. In Germany, formal policies may exist on paper but are not always embedded in daily culture. In Malta and Spain, participants highlighted the absence of clear policies, trusted reporting routes and visible consequences, especially in micro and small organisations. In the Netherlands, house rules and confidential advisors may exist, but internal communication and onboarding remain weak. In Italy, larger organisations may have policies and reporting mechanisms, while smaller companies often remain less formalised and external support figures such as the Equality Advisor are not widely known.

Overall, policy development is strongest in Germany and the Netherlands, more mixed in Cyprus, and weakest in Malta, Italy and Spain. The key cross-country result is that policies and measures are often either informal, inconsistently communicated or not translated into everyday practice. This is especially visible in micro and small organisations where HR capacity is limited and responsibility often rests with owners or managers.

- Strongest formalisation: Germany and the Netherlands.
- Weakest formalisation: Spain, Malta and Italy.
- Main implementation gap: policies are not consistently communicated, practiced or connected to trusted procedures.

5.2 Reporting Mechanisms and Internal Processes

Reporting mechanisms are present to different degrees across the six countries, but the level of structure, consistency and trust varies substantially. Germany and the Netherlands report the most formalised systems. In Germany, 8 of 13 employers reported a formal reporting system, 3 an informal system and 2 no system. Case handling was divided between clear procedures (6), case-by-case handling (5) and informal handling (2). In the Netherlands, 7 of 10 employers reported a formal system, 2 no system and 1 was unsure. Case handling was split between clear procedures (4) and case-by-case handling (4), with 1 informal and 1 not handled.

Cyprus shows a relatively high presence of reporting routes, but these are often informal or handled inconsistently. Eight of 24 employers reported formal systems, 11 informal systems, 3 no system and 2 were not sure. Case handling was mostly case-by-case (14) or informal (5), while only 3 employers reported a clear defined procedure and 2 usually did not address cases. Employers rated employee trust relatively positively, with 12 reporting high trust and 9 moderate trust, but this should be interpreted cautiously because the handling of cases remains largely informal.

Malta, Italy and Spain show weaker reporting infrastructures. In Malta, only 2 of 10 employers reported formal systems, 3 informal systems and 5 no system. Case handling was often informal (4) or not handled (3), with only 2 using a clear procedure. In Italy, 2 of 11 employers reported formal systems, 3 informal systems and 6 no system; case handling was mainly case-by-case (4) or informal (4), with only 2 clear procedures. In Spain, only 1 of 10 employers reported a formal system, 3 informal systems, 5 no system and 1 was unsure. Case handling was mostly case-by-case (4) or informal (4), with only 2 clear procedures.

Employer perceptions of trust also differ. The Netherlands reports the strongest employer confidence, with 8 of 10 rating employee trust as high and 2 as moderate. Cyprus also reports relatively high perceived trust, with 12 high and 9 moderate responses. Germany is more cautious: only 1 employer rated trust as high, 9 as moderate and 3 as low. Malta and Spain show substantial uncertainty: in both countries, 5 employers were not sure about employee

trust. Italy shows a mixed picture, with 1 high, 5 medium, 2 low and 3 not sure. This suggests that employers often have limited insight into whether employees actually trust reporting routes.

The focus groups confirm that the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms depends on credibility, confidentiality and follow-up. In Cyprus, participants perceived internal reporting as weak unless incidents were serious enough for police involvement, and prioritised transparent complaint channels, trained complaints officers and visible follow-up. In Germany, reporting channels were described as unclear or underused, with small companies struggling to guarantee anonymity. In Malta, fear of job loss, not being believed, blame, retaliation and reputational harm were central barriers. In the Netherlands, participants identified a missing “middle option” between silence and formal reporting, especially for grey-area situations. In Italy, uncertainty about whom to approach was strongest for early-career employees and smaller organisations. In Spain, participants expressed deep distrust in HR, particularly where HR is perceived as protecting the company rather than the worker.

Overall, reporting is one of the clearest implementation gaps in employer practice. Germany and the Netherlands have more formal systems, but even there trust, consistency and case handling remain concerns. Cyprus has several reporting routes, but relies heavily on case-by-case handling. Malta, Italy and Spain show weaker formal infrastructures and greater uncertainty. Across all countries, the issue is not only whether reporting systems exist, but whether employees know them, trust them and see that reports lead to safe and meaningful action.

- Most formal reporting systems: Germany and the Netherlands.
- Weakest reporting infrastructures: Spain, Malta and Italy.
- Main cross-country gap: reporting often remains case-by-case, informal or mistrusted, even where systems exist.

5.3 Awareness and Knowledge Levels

Employers generally assess employee awareness of inappropriate behaviour as moderate to high, but training provision is much less consistent. In the Netherlands, employers reported the highest awareness: 8 respondents rated employee understanding at 4 and 2 at 5. Germany also reported moderate-to-good awareness, with most respondents scoring employee understanding at 4, although 5 of 13 scored 3 or below. Cyprus reported 15 of 24

employers rating employee understanding at 4 or 5, while 4 rated it 1 or 2. Spain also showed medium-high self-assessment, with 4 employers rating understanding as 5, 2 as 4, 3 as 3 and 1 as 2.

Malta and Italy show a more moderate picture. In Malta, employer scores were concentrated around 3 and 4, suggesting medium-high awareness but not strong confidence. In Italy, 7 of 11 employers rated employee understanding at 3 and 4 rated it at 4, with none giving the highest score. This indicates that employers perceive some awareness, but not necessarily deep or embedded understanding.

Training provision is the main weakness across countries. In Cyprus, only 2 of 24 employers provided training regularly, while 8 did so occasionally, 8 rarely and 6 never. In Germany, 3 of 13 provided training regularly, 6 occasionally, 2 rarely and 2 never. The Netherlands shows relatively better provision, with 3 of 10 training regularly, 4 occasionally, 2 rarely and 1 never. In contrast, Malta, Italy and Spain show weaker training structures: in Malta, 7 of 10 never provided training; in Italy, 6 of 11 never provided training and none did so regularly; in Spain, 5 of 10 never provided training, 2 rarely, 1 occasionally and 2 regularly.

The focus groups show that awareness gaps are not only about whether employers know the topic, but also how broadly they define it. In Cyprus, a strong intergenerational divide appeared, with younger participants recognising subtle forms such as sarcasm, covert insults, sexualised comments and inappropriate humour more quickly than older participants. In Germany, employers tended to define harassment more narrowly and legally, while women identified psychological pressure, exclusion, belittling remarks and microaggressions. In Malta, participants recognised harassment as serious but noted uncertainty about whether behaviour “counts” or is serious enough. In the Netherlands, grey-area situations remained difficult because boundaries differ by person, culture and context. Italy and Spain similarly emphasised subtle, relational and power-based forms, including persistent unwanted attention, psychological manipulation and harassment between women or from women to men.

Overall, employers often perceive awareness as adequate, but this perception is not matched by systematic training. The Netherlands and Germany show stronger awareness and comparatively stronger training provision, while Malta, Italy and Spain show weaker training structures. Cyprus sits in the middle: awareness is rated reasonably positively, but regular training remains limited. The main cross-country conclusion is that awareness cannot be

assumed to be embedded unless it is reinforced through repeated, practical and scenario-based learning.

- Highest reported awareness: the Netherlands, followed by Germany and Cyprus.
- Weakest training provision: Malta, Italy and Spain.
- Main knowledge gap: subtle, psychological, relational and grey-area behaviours are harder to recognise and respond to than explicit harassment.

5.4 Organisational Culture and Management Capacity

Employers generally rated respect and inclusion positively, but the data show weaker results for psychological safety, internal discussion and management preparedness. In Cyprus, many employers rated respect and inclusion positively, and 17 of 24 rated leadership commitment at 4 or 5. However, employee safety to speak up was more mixed: 14 rated it at 4 or 5, while 6 rated it 3 and 4 rated it 1 or 2. Internal discussion occurred at least occasionally in all organisations, but only 6 discussed these topics regularly.

Germany shows a clear gap between leadership commitment and practical capacity. Leadership commitment was positive, with 10 of 13 employers scoring it at 4 or 5, but psychological safety was weaker: most speaking-up scores were 3 or 2, and no employer selected 5. Internal discussion was mainly occasional, and manager preparedness lagged behind, with most scores at 3 or below. This suggests that commitment at leadership level does not automatically translate into confident management response.

Malta and Spain show moderate culture scores but weak internal discussion. In Malta, 60% of employers reported that respect and inclusion were promoted and that employees felt somewhat or very safe speaking up. However, 4 of 10 never discussed respect, inclusion or workplace behaviour internally, 3 did so rarely and only 2 regularly. In Spain, 8 of 10 employers rated respect and inclusion at 4 or 5, but internal discussion was limited: 4 never discussed these topics and 3 did so rarely. Speaking-up safety was mixed, with only 5 scoring 4 or 5 and 5 scoring 3 or below.

The Netherlands reports the strongest organisational culture indicators, but still shows a capacity gap. Nine of 10 employers rated respect and inclusion at 4 or 5, and 8 rated employee safety to speak up at 4 or 5. Internal discussion was frequent, with 5 regularly and

4 occasionally discussing these topics. Leadership commitment was high, with all employers scoring 4 or 5. However, manager preparedness was more moderate, with most scores at 3 or 4. Italy similarly shows a gap between positive values and operational readiness: respect and inclusion were rated positively, but speaking-up safety was moderate, with 7 scoring 3 and 4 scoring 4, and no score of 5. Internal discussion was mostly occasional, while management preparedness and leadership commitment were concentrated around 3 and 4.

The focus groups show that workplace culture can both support and obstruct effective response. In Cyprus, informal “family-like” culture was linked to warmth and flexibility, but also to opacity, gossip, sexism, ageism and weak procedures. In Germany, a culture of silence was identified, especially where subtle disrespect and exclusion are normalised. In Malta, culture shaped whether women felt safe to speak up, with silence and fear becoming normalised when there were no trusted routes or visible consequences. In the Netherlands, organisations were described as open and socially oriented, but often stronger on external inclusion than internal reflection. Italy emphasised respectful and collaborative workplaces but also hierarchical dynamics and the need for early-warning roles. Spain highlighted structural inequalities, motherhood discrimination, migrant experiences and vulnerabilities in small companies without HR.

Overall, employers often express commitment to respectful and inclusive workplaces, but management capacity is less developed than organisational values. The Netherlands shows the strongest internal discussion and leadership commitment, while Germany reveals a clear gap between leadership commitment and speaking-up safety. Malta and Spain show weak internal discussion despite relatively positive respect and inclusion scores. Cyprus and Italy show good intentions but uneven preparedness. Across countries, the main challenge is moving from positive culture statements to regular discussion, early intervention and manager readiness.

- Strongest culture indicators: the Netherlands.
- Most visible gap between leadership commitment and speaking-up safety: Germany.
- Main cross-country issue: respectful culture is often claimed, but internal dialogue and manager preparedness remain inconsistent.

5.5 Employer Challenges and Risk Factors

Employers identified several structural and organisational risk factors, but in many countries these risks were not matched by a high risk assessment. Cyprus shows this mismatch clearly. The most cited risk factors were high workload or stress (17 of 24), informal culture (10), lack of clear policies (9), gender imbalance (9), lack of training or awareness (7) and hierarchical power dynamics (4). Despite this, 16 employers assessed overall risk as low, 6 as medium and only 2 as high.

Germany is the clearest exception because employers recognised risk more realistically. High workload or stress was cited by 12 of 13 employers, followed by power imbalance (7), informal culture (6), gender imbalance (5), lack of training (4) and lack of policies (3). Overall risk was mostly assessed as medium (10), with 1 high and 2 low. This is one of the few countries where perceived risk broadly aligns with the structural risk factors identified.

In Malta, the main risk factors were lack of training and high workload or stress, both selected by 6 of 10 employers, followed by lack of clear policies (5) and informal culture (4). Yet 6 employers assessed overall risk as low, 1 as medium and 3 were not sure. The combination of weak policy structures, limited training and low perceived risk suggests that workplace risks may be underestimated, particularly in micro and small organisations where formal HR capacity is limited.

The Netherlands shows a different pattern. Employers identified informal workplace culture (7 of 10) and high workload or stress (6 of 10) as the main risk factors, followed by lack of training or awareness (4), gender imbalance (3), lack of policies (2) and power imbalance (2). Overall risk was still mostly assessed as low by 6 employers, while 2 assessed it as medium and 2 as high. This suggests that Dutch employers recognise cultural and workload-related risks, but many still interpret overall risk as limited.

Italy also shows a mismatch between identified risks and perceived overall risk. The main risk factors were informal culture (6 of 11), lack of training (5), gender imbalance (5), high workload or stress (5), lack of clear policies (4) and power imbalance (2). However, 7 employers assessed the overall risk as low, 3 as medium and 1 was unsure. This points to a pattern of under-formalisation combined with low risk perception, despite several structural and cultural risk factors being present.

Spain reports fewer selected risk factors, but this should be interpreted alongside its weak policy and reporting infrastructure. High workload or stress was the most common risk factor (5 of 10), followed by lack of policies (2), lack of training (2), informal culture (1) and gender imbalance (1). No employer selected power imbalance. Overall risk was perceived as

low by 6 employers, medium by 1 and uncertain by 3. The low risk assessment contrasts with the limited formal systems identified in earlier sections.

The focus groups confirm that employer challenges are both practical and cultural. In Cyprus, the challenge is to operationalise legal obligations in a context dominated by SMEs and informal networks, where many people have low awareness of formal institutions and limited confidence that complaints lead to results. In Germany, employers struggle with recognising subtle behaviour, responding to disclosures and ensuring confidentiality, especially in small companies or when senior staff are involved. In Malta, employers need to address fear, low trust, lack of information and risks faced by freelancers, business owners and young workers. In the Netherlands, the key challenge is dealing with grey-area behaviour and recognising blind spots in organisations that already see themselves as inclusive. In Italy, employers need clearer communication, stronger visibility of support channels and guidance for younger employees. In Spain, small businesses need practical frameworks for rules, procedures and complaint handling, while HR distrust and lack of evidence make reporting especially difficult.

Overall, the employer challenge data reveal a repeated mismatch between structural risk factors and perceived overall risk. High workload or stress is the most consistent risk factor across countries, while informal culture, lack of training, lack of policies and gender imbalance recur in several contexts. Germany is the strongest example of more realistic risk perception, with most employers assessing risk as medium. In Cyprus, Malta, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, however, employers often identify concrete risk factors while still rating overall risk as low. This suggests that many organisations recognise individual risk factors but do not yet translate them into a broader understanding of organisational vulnerability.

- Most common cross-country risk factor: high workload or stress.
- Most recurring structural risks: informal culture, lack of training, lack of policies and gender imbalance.
- Main analytical gap: employers often report concrete risk factors but still assess overall organisational risk as low.

5.6 Training, Tools and Support Needs

The employer survey shows that organisations differ substantially in the actions they have already implemented to prevent or address workplace harassment. Germany and the

Netherlands report the strongest level of existing action. In Germany, employers reported policies or guidelines (10 of 13), reporting systems (9), training or workshops (8), awareness actions (8), external support (3) and only 1 organisation selecting no action. In the Netherlands, employers reported policies or guidelines (7 of 10), awareness actions (6), training or workshops (5), reporting systems (5), external support (3) and only 1 organisation selecting none.

Cyprus also reports several actions, but the pattern remains mixed. Awareness actions were the most common measure (13 of 24), followed by policies or guidelines (11), reporting mechanisms (10), training or workshops (8) and external support (1), while 3 employers reported no implemented actions. This suggests that Cyprus has a base of activity, but still needs stronger formalisation, practical follow-through and external support mechanisms.

Malta, Italy and Spain show weaker implementation. In Malta, 6 of 10 employers selected “none”, while 4 reported policies or guidelines, 3 training, 2 awareness actions, 2 reporting mechanisms and 1 external support. In Italy, 6 of 11 employers selected “none”; only 2 reported awareness actions, 2 external support, 1 training and 1 reporting mechanism, and no employer reported policies or guidelines. In Spain, actions were limited and uneven: awareness actions were reported by 4 of 10 employers, none by 3, training or workshops by 2, policies or guidelines by 1, reporting systems by 1, and no employer reported external support.

Expectations for the digital self-assessment tool are strongly practical across countries. In Cyprus, employers prioritised practical recommendations (18 of 24), action plans (13), training resources (12), risk identification (11), benchmarking or scoring (11) and policy templates (8). In Germany, all 13 employers requested practical recommendations, while 10 selected risk evaluation, 9 action plans, 8 training resources and 8 policy templates. In the Netherlands, tool expectations focused on risk evaluation and practical recommendations (both 9 of 10), followed by action plans (7), training resources (6), benchmarking (5) and policy templates (4).

In Malta, tool needs were particularly high for practical recommendations and training resources, each selected by 9 of 10 employers, followed by action plans (7), risk evaluation (5) and policy templates (5). In Italy, expectations focused on risk evaluation (8 of 11), practical recommendations and action plans (6 each), and training resources and policy templates (5 each). In Spain, expectations were more limited but still practical: practical recommendations were selected by 6 of 10 employers, while risk evaluation and training

resources were each selected by 3, and action plans by 2. This suggests that employers, especially in contexts with weaker existing systems, need accessible first steps before more advanced benchmarking or policy development.

The focus group findings clarify what kind of training and support employers need. In Cyprus, employers need template codes of conduct, complaints officer guidance, risk assessment support, confidential reporting procedures and tools adapted to SMEs. Germany emphasised practical guidance on policy implementation, disclosure handling and respectful culture-building, with interactive and scenario-based formats such as video vignettes, role play and case studies. Malta highlighted the need for guidance on safe reporting systems, complaint handling, confidentiality, supportive first responses and retaliation prevention, including situations involving clients, freelancers and business owners.

In the Netherlands, training should focus on everyday interactions and grey-area situations rather than legal definitions alone. Employers and managers need tools to identify subtle behaviour, intervene early and address blind spots, with experiential methods such as role play, simulations and other interactive exercises preferred over passive e-learning. In Italy, employers need guidance on inappropriate behaviours and creating respectful environments, supported by practical, continuous training using workshops, case studies, real-life scenarios and both online and in-person formats. In Spain, employers, especially small businesses, need clear frameworks for rules and procedures, practical guidance on complaint handling and evidence, and interactive in-person or hybrid formats rather than long written handbooks.

Overall, the training and support needs identified by employers are highly practical. The strongest common demand is not abstract awareness-raising, but concrete guidance that helps organisations move from intention to implementation. Employers want recommendations, action plans, training resources, risk assessment tools and templates. The level of need differs by country: Germany and the Netherlands appear ready for more diagnostic and improvement-oriented tools, while Malta, Italy and Spain need more basic, low-threshold implementation support. Cyprus sits between these groups, with several actions already in place but a continued need for more consistent systems and SME-adapted guidance.

- Most implemented actions: policies or guidelines, awareness actions, reporting mechanisms and training workshops, especially in Germany, the Netherlands and Cyprus.

- Weakest implementation: Malta, Italy and Spain, where several employers reported no current actions.
- Top tool expectations: practical recommendations, risk evaluation, action plans, training resources and policy templates.
- Main support need: practical, SME-friendly tools that translate obligations and values into clear procedures, training formats and day-to-day management actions.

Taken together, Chapter 5 shows that employers across the partnership are not starting from indifference. Many recognise the relevance of safe and respectful workplaces and some have policies, reporting routes or awareness actions in place. The main challenge is that these measures are uneven, often informal and not always embedded in daily organisational practice. For the BEYOND FEAR project, this means that employer-facing outputs should focus on practical implementation: clear procedures, credible reporting routes, manager training, risk assessment, scenario-based learning and SME-friendly tools that can be used even where HR capacity is limited.

6 Comparative Analysis: Women and Employers

This chapter brings together the findings from Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Rather than repeating the survey results or focus group findings in detail, it interprets what becomes visible when women's experiences and employer practices are analysed side by side. The aim is to identify the deeper patterns behind the data: where women and employers broadly agree, where their perspectives diverge, and what these gaps mean for the development of the BEYOND FEAR project outputs.

The comparison shows that women and employers are not describing completely separate realities. Both groups recognise the importance of respectful workplaces, clearer procedures and practical training. However, they often interpret the same workplace conditions differently. What employers may see as a positive informal culture, women may experience as a context in which boundaries are unclear. What employers may describe as an available reporting route, women may experience as risky, inaccessible or unlikely to lead to meaningful action.

The overall comparative finding is therefore that the main challenge is not simply lack of awareness, nor only lack of policies. The core challenge is the gap between formal or

perceived safety and practical, lived safety. This chapter analyses that gap through five dimensions: shared starting points, mismatches between experiences and perceptions, reporting and response, structural and cultural barriers, and the implications for project development.

6.1 Alignment between Women's Experiences and Employer Perspectives

The first important finding is that women and employers share several starting points. Across the countries, both groups value safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces and recognise that workplace harassment is relevant to organisational wellbeing, not only to individual experience. This shared concern provides an important basis for project development, because it means that the BEYOND FEAR outputs do not need to start from convincing stakeholders that the topic matters. Instead, they need to support both groups in translating recognition into practice.

A second shared point is that both women and employers recognise that harassment is broader than physical violence or explicit sexual misconduct. Across the findings, verbal, psychological, social and power-related behaviours are repeatedly identified as relevant. Women highlight sexualised comments, humiliation, exclusion, grey-area behaviour and repeated subtle patterns. Employers also recognise a range of behaviours, particularly when they are clearly defined. This creates a common conceptual foundation, but it also shows why practical interpretation is crucial: the more subtle the behaviour, the more difficult it becomes to respond consistently.

A third area of alignment concerns training and tools. Women ask for practical knowledge: how to recognise early signs, set boundaries, understand rights, find support and report safely. Employers ask for practical guidance: how to assess risk, develop procedures, handle complaints, train managers and communicate policies. Although the target groups need different types of support, both point in the same direction: abstract awareness is not enough. Practical, scenario-based and accessible tools are needed.

The overall result of this alignment is encouraging: the data do not show two groups with completely incompatible views. Instead, they show a shared recognition of the problem, but different levels of power, responsibility and practical capacity. Women need confidence, information and safe routes to act. Employers need structures, tools and skills to respond.

The strongest project strategy is therefore a dual approach that supports both women's empowerment and employer implementation.

6.2 Gaps and Mismatches between Experiences and Perceptions

The main comparative insight from Chapters 4 and 5 is the gap between perceived safety and lived safety. Women often describe workplaces as broadly positive, respectful or socially supportive, but still report exposure to harassment, uncertainty about boundaries and hesitation to report. Employers similarly describe organisational cultures as respectful and inclusive, but their own data reveal uneven policies, limited training, inconsistent internal discussion and weak management preparedness in several countries.

This mismatch is especially important because it shows that positive atmosphere scores cannot be treated as evidence that harassment is absent. In many workplaces, the same informal culture that creates warmth and flexibility can also make boundaries less explicit. In small teams, "family-like" working relationships may reduce distance between people, but they can also increase dependency, make formal reporting feel disloyal and blur the line between personal and professional behaviour.

There is also a mismatch in how risk is understood. Women's experiences show that harassment often appears through cumulative, everyday behaviours rather than only severe incidents. Employers, however, often assess organisational risk as low even when they identify risk factors such as high workload, informal culture, lack of training or unclear policies. This suggests that employers may recognise isolated risk factors without translating them into a broader assessment of organisational vulnerability.

A further mismatch concerns the definition of effective action. Employers may view a policy, reporting channel or responsible person as evidence that the organisation is prepared. Women judge these measures differently: they look at whether the route is visible, confidential, trusted and likely to protect them from negative consequences. This difference explains why formal structures can exist while women still hesitate to use them.

Overall, the mismatch is not primarily between people who care and people who do not. It is between organisational self-perception and practical reality. Employers often believe they have a positive culture and sufficient mechanisms, while women's experiences reveal that safety depends on daily behaviours, trusted relationships, clear procedures and visible

follow-up. This gap appears across the partnership, but it is especially visible where formalisation is weak or where informal workplace culture is strong. The clearest practical expression of this mismatch is reporting: the point where organisational systems and women's willingness to use them either connect or fail to connect.

6.3 Reporting and Response: A Structural Disconnect

Reporting is the clearest point where women's experiences and employer practices disconnect. From the employer perspective, reporting mechanisms may appear to exist: a manager, HR contact, confidential advisor, informal route or written procedure may be available. From the women's perspective, however, the crucial question is not only whether a route exists, but whether using it feels safe and worthwhile.

This disconnect appears across several levels. Employers often understand reporting as an organisational provision: there is a person, a route or a procedure that can be used. Women understand reporting as a risk decision. Before speaking up, they weigh the seriousness of the behaviour, the likelihood of being believed, possible retaliation, damage to relationships, job or income security, and whether the organisation will actually respond. This means that a reporting mechanism can be formally present but practically unusable.

Chapters 4 and 5 show that this gap is particularly strong where reporting remains informal, case-by-case or dependent on personal relationships. Women repeatedly identify fear of retaliation, not being believed, job or income loss, stigma, confidentiality concerns and not knowing where to go as barriers. Employers, meanwhile, often report that systems or trusted contacts exist, but also show uncertainty about employee trust and rely on case-by-case handling. The result is a structural disconnect: reporting is treated as available by the organisation but experienced as unsafe or unclear by the person who would need to use it.

The focus group findings make this even clearer. In several countries, participants described reporting as something that is only considered when an incident is severe enough, provable enough or externally visible enough. For more ambiguous or low-level situations, women often lack a middle route between silence and a formal complaint. This is especially important for grey-area behaviours, such as repeated jokes, comments, exclusion, subtle intimidation or power plays. These behaviours may not feel "serious enough" to report formally, but they can still shape women's sense of safety and belonging over time.

This disconnect is intensified in micro and small organisations. In smaller workplaces, the person responsible for receiving a complaint may also be the owner, manager, colleague or even the person involved in the problem. Confidentiality is harder to guarantee, anonymity is almost impossible, and professional dependency is stronger. This makes reporting less a neutral procedure and more a decision with potentially direct personal and economic consequences.

For employers, the comparative data also point to a capacity gap. Even when employers want to respond appropriately, they may lack clear procedures, trained managers, documentation practices, external referral routes or confidence in handling disclosures. This means that women's hesitation is not only based on fear or perception; it often reflects real weaknesses in organisational readiness. Where follow-up is unclear, reporting can feel like exposing oneself without protection.

Overall, reporting should be understood as a trust infrastructure, not only as a procedure. A safe reporting system requires visibility, confidentiality, independence where possible, clear steps, protection against retaliation, and visible follow-up. The findings suggest that BEYOND FEAR should support organisations in developing both formal complaint routes and lower-threshold options for early discussion, advice and informal intervention before situations escalate.

6.4 Structural and Cultural Barriers

The comparative findings show that workplace harassment is not only produced by individual behaviour, but also by organisational structures and cultural patterns that shape what is recognised, tolerated and acted upon. These barriers explain why awareness and policy do not automatically lead to safer workplaces. They operate differently across countries, but the underlying logic is similar: where power is informal, procedures are weak or social norms discourage confrontation, harmful behaviour becomes harder to name and harder to address.

A first cross-cutting barrier is normalisation. Women's data show that many forms of harassment are not experienced as isolated extreme events, but as repeated comments, jokes, exclusion, humiliation, unwanted attention or subtle power plays. These behaviours can be minimised as "just part of the culture", "not serious enough" or "not worth making a problem about". Employers may also underestimate these patterns when they focus mainly on explicit incidents, formal complaints or legally clear cases. As a result, the behaviours that most affect everyday psychological safety are often the least likely to trigger organisational response.

A second barrier is informality. Informal workplace cultures can be valuable: they may create warmth, flexibility, trust and a sense of belonging. However, the findings show that informality can also replace structure. This was particularly visible in Cyprus, where “family-like” workplace culture was discussed as both supportive and problematic, and in the Netherlands, where resistance to over-formalisation can preserve openness but also leave grey-area behaviour insufficiently addressed. In small teams more generally, it may become unclear where boundaries lie, who has authority to intervene and how a concern can be raised without damaging relationships. This is especially relevant for SMEs, where roles are close, HR capacity is limited and the same person may be manager, owner, confidant and decision-maker.

A third barrier concerns power and dependency. The women’s findings show that economic insecurity, temporary contracts, client dependency, internships, early-career status, migrant status, motherhood, freelance work and small-company dynamics can all make speaking up more difficult. This is especially relevant in contexts where small organisations dominate the employer sample, such as Malta, Italy and Spain, and where freelancers or client-dependent workers were highlighted in the focus groups. Employer data confirm that many organisations, especially smaller ones, lack formal systems to reduce these dependencies or provide independent support. This means that vulnerability is not only individual; it is created by the relationship between a person’s position and the organisation’s structure.

A fourth barrier is capacity. Many employers recognise the importance of safe workplaces but do not have the tools, time, expertise or confidence to act consistently. This is visible in the gap between leadership commitment and manager preparedness, between policy existence and policy communication, and between reporting routes and actual follow-up. In practice, this means that even well-intentioned employers may respond too late, too informally or too inconsistently.

Finally, cultural and social norms shape whether workplace violence and harassment are discussed openly. In some contexts, participants described silence, shame, disbelief or fear of reputational damage. In others, the barrier was not denial but discomfort: people recognised the issue, but lacked the language, confidence or shared framework to discuss it. This is why training must address not only knowledge, but also communication norms, power dynamics and organisational habits.

Overall, the structural and cultural barriers identified across Chapters 4 and 5 show why workplace harassment cannot be solved only through individual awareness or formal policy. The same behaviour may be recognised, ignored or excused depending on organisational culture, power relations, trust, management capacity and available support. For BEYOND FEAR, this means that interventions must work at both levels: strengthening individual

recognition and confidence, while also helping organisations build clearer structures, safer cultures and practical response capacity.

- Main cultural barrier: normalisation of subtle, repeated or “grey area” behaviour.
- Main organisational barrier: informality replacing clear procedures and accountability.
- Main structural barrier: dependency and power imbalance, especially in small organisations and precarious work situations.
- Main implementation barrier: limited management capacity to respond consistently and safely.

6.5 Key Cross-cutting Findings

The comparative analysis across women’s experiences and employer practices points to five key cross-cutting findings. These findings are not separate from Chapters 4 and 5; rather, they bring together the main implications of reading both target groups side by side.

First, perceived safety and lived safety do not always overlap. Women and employers often describe workplaces as respectful, positive or inclusive, but the underlying data show that harassment can still be present, especially in subtle, informal or cumulative forms. This means that workplace safety cannot be assessed only through general atmosphere or employer intention. It must also be measured through trust, reporting behaviour, inclusion, everyday interactions and the ability to raise concerns without negative consequences.

Second, awareness is present but not yet operationalised. Both women and employers recognise many forms of harassment in principle, but this does not automatically translate into confident action. Grey-area behaviours, psychological pressure, repeated jokes, exclusion, subtle intimidation and power-based dynamics remain harder to name and respond to. The project outputs should therefore move beyond basic definitions and focus on practical recognition, interpretation and response in real-life situations.

Third, reporting is the weakest link between policy and practice. Formal reporting systems, policies or contact persons only become meaningful when they are visible, trusted, confidential and connected to clear follow-up. The findings show that women often evaluate reporting through the lens of risk, while employers may evaluate it through the lens of availability. This difference explains why reporting routes can exist but remain unused.

Fourth, SMEs and informal workplaces require specific support. The findings repeatedly show that small organisations are not simply smaller versions of larger organisations. They often have closer relationships, fewer formal roles, limited HR capacity, stronger dependency dynamics and fewer independent reporting routes. This makes generic policy guidance

insufficient. SMEs need practical, low-threshold tools that acknowledge their organisational reality while still strengthening accountability.

Fifth, effective prevention requires a dual intervention logic. Women need empowerment, information, confidence and safe routes to act. Employers need structures, management capacity, practical tools and guidance to respond consistently. Addressing only one side would leave the core gap unresolved: women may become more aware without having safe organisational routes, or employers may develop policies that women do not trust or use. The strength of BEYOND FEAR lies in combining both dimensions.

Overall, the comparative findings point to one central conclusion: safer workplaces require a shift from formal compliance to practical safety. Policies, training and reporting systems are necessary, but they only become effective when they are understood, trusted, used and supported by everyday organisational behaviour. This conclusion directly informs the recommendations in Chapter 7, which focus on practical training, employer guidance, reporting systems, organisational culture and the development of BEYOND FEAR project outputs.

- Main overall gap: between formal or perceived safety and lived, practical safety.
- Main training implication: use realistic, scenario-based learning focused on subtle and grey-area behaviour.
- Main employer implication: strengthen reporting, follow-up, manager preparedness and SME-friendly implementation tools.
- Main project implication: combine women's empowerment with organisational capacity-building.

7 Recommendations

Building on the comparative analysis in Chapter 6, the recommendations below are guided by one central principle: project outputs should help organisations move from formal compliance towards practical safety. This means that policies, training and reporting systems should not only exist, but should be understandable, trusted, usable and supported by everyday organisational behaviour.

To ensure a clear and structured link between the data collected in Work Package 2 and the development of subsequent project results, Table 1 below summarises the key findings from each research activity and their direct application to the project outputs (PR2–PR5).

This table serves as a reference framework for Work Package leaders and content developers, supporting coherence across the project. The recommendations presented in this chapter are based on and further elaborate the insights summarised below.

Task / Activity	Key topics to be collected (from this activity)	Corresponding project outputs (use of this information)
T2.3 – Legal framework analysis	• National laws and regulations on workplace violence and harassment (incl. gender-based violence) • Labour law and psychosocial risks (e.g. stress, bullying, harassment) • Existing employer obligations (policies, procedures, prevention duties) • Role of institutions (labour inspectorate, equality bodies, unions, complaint mechanisms) • Identified gaps or weaknesses in the current legal/policy framework	PR2 – Training Curriculum: content for modules on rights, legal context, and “what women can expect from employers” PR3 – MOOC: high-level explanation of EU/national frameworks and workers’ rights PR4 – Employers’ Compendium: minimum legal standards and obligations employers must meet, plus risks of non-compliance PR5 – Digital Self-Assessment Tool: baseline criteria and “must-have” elements (presence of policy, procedures, reporting channels) that reflect legal requirements
T2.4.1 – Women’s survey (≥ 20 women / country)	• Forms of violence and harassment experienced or witnessed (including subtle and “grey area” behaviours) • Barriers to recognition and reporting (fear, shame, dependency, lack of trust, cultural norms) • Awareness of rights and knowledge of internal/external support options • Perceived organisational culture (respect, inclusion, safety, leadership behaviour)	PR2 – Training Curriculum: definition of learning outcomes; selection and prioritisation of module topics (awareness, empowerment, legal rights, support, bystander skills); choice of methods and accessibility features PR3 – MOOC: structure and content of online modules; scenarios and examples; design decisions about micro-learning, language level, pacing and formats

	• Available support systems and unmet needs (HR, confidential advisors, unions, NGOs, hotlines) • Training needs and learning preferences (topics, format, accessibility, language) • Intersectional risks and barriers (e.g. migrant women, carers, freelancers, disabled women) • Recommendations for employers and for the project	PR4 – Employers’ Compendium: concrete examples of harmful practices and gaps in organisational support; women’s recommendations translated into employer guidance PR5 – Digital Self-Assessment Tool: indicators related to culture, support structures, communication and perceived safety from women’s perspective.
T2.4.2 – Mixed focus group (women + employers, 1 per country)	• Shared and contrasting views on workplace culture (respect, communication, inclusion) • How violence and harassment are recognised (or normalised) by both women and employers • Perceived barriers to speaking up and responding (from both sides) • Concrete “good practices” and “bad practices” in handling cases • Joint reflection on what should change in organisations (policy, culture, procedures, communication) • Co-created recommendations for training, awareness and tools	PR1 – Transnational Research Report: rich qualitative evidence, illustrative quotes, and cross-stakeholder analysis PR2 – Training Curriculum: realistic case studies, role-plays and classroom discussion points that reflect both women’s and employers’ perspectives PR3 – MOOC: interactive scenarios, video scripts, “dialogue-based” examples using both voices PR4 – Employers’ Compendium: central source of lived examples of good and bad practice, plus jointly formulated recommendations PR5 – Digital Self-Assessment Tool: basis for defining maturity levels (limited awareness → basic →

		advanced → proactive) and for shaping feedback messages and suggested actions
T2.5 – Employer survey (≥ 10 employers / country)	• Existence and quality of organisational policies and procedures on violence/harassment • Reporting pathways (formal/informal), confidentiality, and follow-up practices • Preventive measures and training currently in place (target groups, frequency, content) • Employers’ awareness of the scale and impact of workplace violence and harassment • Perceived challenges and needs (resources, tools, guidance) • Employers’ own recommendations for improving practice and support for workers	PR2 – Training Curriculum: background for explaining to women what they can realistically expect from organisations and how to navigate existing structures PR3 – MOOC: examples of existing organisational measures, used to contextualise women’s learning and suggest ways to engage with employers PR4 – Employers’ Compendium: main evidence base for chapters on policy, procedures, training, culture and typical “implementation gaps”; employers’ recommendations translated into practical guidance PR5 – Digital Self-Assessment Tool: key source for defining assessment dimensions, question items and improvement pathways tailored to SMEs (policy, training, reporting, monitoring, culture)

7.1 Recommendations for Training and Capacity-Building (PR2 & PR3)

The need for enhanced training and capacity-building emerged consistently across all WP2 activities, with complementary insights from women (T2.4.1), employers (T2.5) and the mixed focus groups (T2.4.2).

Findings from T2.4.1 – Women’s survey indicate that while women demonstrate relatively high levels of conceptual awareness, they often experience difficulties in recognising subtle or ambiguous forms of harassment in practice. In addition, women report a lack of confidence in responding to incidents and navigating support systems.

At the same time, T2.5 – Employer survey highlights that employers often lack the necessary knowledge and practical skills to manage disclosures, respond appropriately to incidents, and implement preventive measures. This is further reinforced by T2.4.2 – Mixed focus groups, where both groups emphasised uncertainty regarding roles, responsibilities, and appropriate actions.

Based on these findings, training programmes should:

- Focus on practical recognition of both explicit and subtle forms of violence and harassment (T2.4.1, T2.4.2);
- Provide concrete tools for response, including communication strategies, boundary-setting, and case handling (T2.4.1, T2.5);
- Clarify roles and responsibilities within organisations, particularly for managers and supervisors (T2.5);
- Use scenario-based and dialogue-driven learning approaches reflecting real-life situations identified in focus groups (T2.4.2).

In addition, findings from T2.3 – Legal framework analysis underline the importance of integrating information on rights, responsibilities, and organisational obligations into training. Participants should be equipped not only with practical skills, but also with a clear understanding of the legal context.

These insights directly inform the development of:

- PR2 – Training Curriculum, including learning outcomes and module topics;
- PR3 – MOOC, including structure, scenarios, and interactive formats.

7.2 Recommendations for Employer Practices and Organisational Policies (PR4)

The combined findings from T2.5 – Employer survey and T2.4.2 – Mixed focus groups reveal a significant gap between the existence of organisational policies and their effective implementation.

While many employers reported having general policies or guidelines, these were often described as insufficiently detailed, poorly communicated, or inconsistently applied. At the same time, women (T2.4.1) frequently expressed limited awareness of internal procedures and a lack of trust in existing systems.

Furthermore, T2.3 – Legal framework analysis indicates that many organisations are required to implement specific measures—such as clear reporting procedures and preventive policies—but these are not always fully operational in practice.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Develop clear, structured, and accessible policies that include definitions, procedures, and responsibilities (T2.3, T2.5);
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms as a trust infrastructure, not only as a formal procedure, by ensuring confidentiality, visibility, low-threshold routes for early advice, protection against retaliation and clear follow-up processes (T2.5, T2.4.1, T2.4.2);
- Improve communication of existing procedures to employees, ensuring that they are understood and trusted (T2.4.1, T2.4.2);
- Provide practical guidance for employers on how to handle cases consistently and effectively (T2.5).

The Employers' Compendium (PR4) should translate these findings into step-by-step, practice-oriented guidance tailored to SMEs, incorporating both employer experiences and women's perspectives gathered in WP2.

7.3 Recommendations for Awareness, Prevention and Workplace Culture

Across all WP2 activities, organisational culture emerged as a critical factor influencing both the occurrence of workplace harassment and the effectiveness of responses.

Findings from T2.4.1 – Women's survey show that harassment is often normalised, particularly when it takes subtle or informal forms. This is further supported by T2.4.2 – Mixed focus groups, where both women and employers acknowledged that “grey area” behaviours are frequently overlooked or minimised.

At the same time, T2.5 – Employer survey indicates that employers often perceive workplace environments as safe and inclusive, suggesting a gap between organisational perception and lived experience.

To address these challenges, organisations should:

- Promote open and inclusive workplace cultures where concerns can be raised without fear of repercussions (T2.4.2);
- Increase awareness of subtle forms of harassment and their impact (T2.4.1);
- Encourage proactive leadership in setting clear behavioural expectations and modelling respectful conduct (T2.5);
- Address informal dynamics in SMEs, ensuring that “family-like” cultures do not limit accountability or reporting (T2.4.2, T2.5).

Special attention should also be given to intersectional risks identified in T2.4.1, ensuring that prevention strategies are inclusive and accessible for diverse groups of women.

7.4 Recommendations for the Development of Project Outputs (PR2–PR5)

The WP2 findings provide a direct and structured foundation for the development of all project outputs, with each activity contributing specific insights.

Findings from T2.3 – Legal framework analysis inform:

- the integration of legal rights and obligations in PR2 and PR3;
- the definition of minimum standards and compliance criteria in PR4 and PR5.

Insights from T2.4.1 – Women’s survey provide:

- the basis for defining learning needs and preferences in PR2 and PR3;
- key indicators related to perceived safety, support structures, and organisational culture in PR5;
- concrete examples of unmet needs and harmful practices to be addressed in PR4.

Data from T2.4.2 – Mixed focus groups contribute:

- realistic case studies and scenarios for PR2 and PR3;
- jointly identified good and bad practices for PR4;
- input for defining different levels of organisational maturity and corresponding improvement pathways in PR5.

Finally, findings from T2.5 – Employer survey provide:

- evidence on current organisational practices, policies and gaps to be addressed in PR4;
- input for defining assessment dimensions and improvement pathways in PR5;
- contextual understanding for training content in PR2 and PR3, supporting alignment between employee expectations and organisational realities.

Together, these contributions ensure that all project outputs are firmly grounded in empirical evidence and reflect both women's experiences and employers' capacities. This dual-perspective approach is essential for developing tools and interventions that are practical, relevant, and applicable across diverse organisational and cultural contexts.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Key Findings

This report has shown that, across the partner countries, workplaces are often perceived as broadly positive, respectful or inclusive by both women and employers. However, this perception does not always correspond with women's lived experience of safety. Women reported exposure to workplace harassment in all countries, particularly in subtle, informal, normalised or cumulative forms that are difficult to define, challenge or report.

The findings highlight a consistent gap between perception and lived experience. Awareness of workplace harassment is present among both women and employers, but it is not yet fully operationalised in practice. Grey-area behaviours, psychological pressure, repeated jokes, exclusion, subtle intimidation and power-based dynamics remain difficult to recognise and respond to consistently.

In addition, the analysis reveals a significant disconnect between the existence of organisational policies and their actual use and effectiveness. Reporting mechanisms may be formally available, yet remain underused when they are not visible, trusted, confidential, low-threshold or clearly followed up. Reporting should therefore be understood as a trust infrastructure, not only as a formal procedure.

8.2 Implications

These findings underline that workplace violence and harassment cannot be addressed through formal policies alone. The central implication is the need to move from formal compliance towards practical safety: policies, training and reporting systems must not only exist, but must be understandable, trusted, usable and supported by everyday organisational behaviour.

The data demonstrate that effective prevention requires a combined approach: individual empowerment for women, organisational capacity-building for employers, and cultural change within workplaces. Strengthening awareness, improving practical skills, creating trusted reporting routes and supporting managers to respond consistently are all essential steps towards bridging the gap between formal structures and everyday realities.

8.3 Contribution to Project Implementation

The evidence generated in this report provides a strong and necessary foundation for the development of the BEYOND FEAR project outputs. By integrating the perspectives of both women and employers, the project can combine women's empowerment with employer implementation support, ensuring that training programmes, tools and guidance materials are grounded in both lived experience and organisational reality.

The findings directly inform the design of the Training Curriculum (PR2), the Massive Open Online Course (PR3), the Employers' Compendium (PR4), and the Digital Self-Assessment Tool (PR5). These outputs should support practical recognition of harassment, scenario-based learning, trusted reporting and follow-up, SME-friendly implementation tools and clearer links between rights, procedures and everyday workplace behaviour.

Ultimately, the results of this research contribute to a broader effort to promote safer, more inclusive and more responsive workplaces across Europe by supporting the shift from stated commitment to practical safety.

9 Annexes

9.1 Annex 1 – Women's Survey Questionnaire

This annex provides the common set of questions for the women's survey (WP2 – Task 2.4). The questionnaire will be implemented through Google Forms to ensure comparable data collection across all partner countries.

Section 0 – Intro & Consent

Form title:

BEYOND FEAR – Survey for Women Workers (24–55)

Description (intro text):

This survey is part of the European project *BEYOND FEAR – Building Safer Workplaces for Women*. The aim is to better understand women's experiences in the workplace, so that we can design training, tools and guidance that support safer, more respectful and inclusive work environments.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer. We will not collect any directly identifying information, and your answers will only be used in aggregated form for research and training design purposes.

If any question feels uncomfortable, you may leave it blank and move on.

By filling in this questionnaire, you give your consent for your anonymised data to be used for research purposes within the BEYOND FEAR project only.

Section 1 – Profile & Work Context

1. **Which age group do you fall into?** (required) – *Multiple choice*
 - 24–29
 - 30–39
 - 40–49
 - 50–55
2. **In which country do you mainly work?** (required) – *Dropdown*
 - Italy / Spain / Germany / Netherlands / Cyprus / Malta / Other (please specify)
3. **What is your main employment status?** (required) – *Multiple choice*
 - Employed with a permanent contract
 - Employed with a temporary or zero-hours contract
 - Self-employed / freelancer
 - Other (please specify)
4. **In which sector do you mainly work?** (required) – *Multiple choice*
 - Health and social care
 - Education
 - Retail, hospitality, or services
 - Office or administrative work
 - Industry or logistics

- Domestic or cleaning work
 - Agriculture, forestry, or fishing
 - Arts, entertainment, or media
 - ICT, technology, or telecommunications
 - Non-profit or community services
 - Other (please specify)
5. **How long have you been working in your current role?** – *Multiple choice*
- Less than 1 year
 - 1–3 years
 - 3–5 years
 - More than 5 years
-

Section 2 – Workplace Atmosphere & Culture

6. *“How would you describe the general atmosphere in your current workplace?”* – *Linear scale (1–5)*
- 1 = Very negative / unsafe, 5 = Very positive / safe
7. *“To what extent do you feel respected in your workplace?”* – *Linear scale (1–5)*
8. *“How inclusive do you feel your workplace is towards women with different backgrounds (e.g. migrant women, mothers, LGBTIQ+, disabled women)?”* – *Linear scale (1–5)*
-

Section 3 – Awareness & Recognition of Violence

9. *“In your view, which of the following behaviours can be considered workplace violence or harassment?”* – *Checkboxes*
- Offensive jokes or comments about women
 - Unwanted physical contact
 - Unwanted sexual comments, messages or images
 - Being shouted at, humiliated or insulted at work
 - Being ignored, excluded or isolated on purpose
 - Threats about your job or career if you do not “cooperate”
 - Unwanted messages or calls outside working hours (e.g. WhatsApp, social media)
 - I am not sure / I find it difficult to define
 - Other (please specify)
10. *“How confident do you feel in recognising when a behaviour at work is not acceptable or abusive?”* – *Multiple choice*
- Very confident

- Quite confident
 - Not very confident
 - Not at all confident
 - I am not sure
-

Section 4 – Experiences & Barriers

11. *“Have you ever experienced or witnessed behaviour at work that you would consider harassment or violence?” – Multiple choice*
 - Yes, I have experienced it myself
 - Yes, I have witnessed it happening to others
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
 12. *“If you are comfortable to share: what type(s) of behaviour have you experienced or witnessed?” – Checkboxes + optional*
 - Sexual comments or jokes
 - Unwanted touching or physical contact
 - Bullying, shouting or humiliating behaviour
 - Exclusion or isolation
 - Online/digital harassment (messages, calls, social media)
 - Other (please specify)
 - Prefer not to answer
 13. *“What made it difficult to recognise or name the behaviour as harassment or violence at the time?” – Checkboxes (optional)*
 - I thought it was “normal” or “just a joke”
 - I did not want to make a problem
 - I was afraid of consequences for my job
 - I doubted my own perception
 - I did not know my rights
 - I did not have anyone to talk to about it
 - Other (please specify)
 - Prefer not to answer
-

Section 5 – Reporting & Support

14. *“If someone wanted to report harassment or violence in your workplace, are you aware of the official options?” – Multiple choice*
 - Yes, clearly
 - I have some idea

- No, I do not know
 - There are no options (that I am aware of)
15. *“If you have ever considered reporting an incident, what were the main reasons to hesitate?” – Checkboxes (optional)*
- Fear of losing my job or income
 - Fear of not being believed
 - Fear of retaliation from the person involved
 - Fear of gossip or stigma
 - Lack of trust in management or HR
 - Confidentiality concerns
 - No time / energy / emotional capacity
 - I did not know where to go
 - Other (please specify)
 - I have not considered reporting
 - Prefer not to answer
16. *“Does your workplace offer any internal support for issues like harassment, violence, stress or bullying (e.g. HR, confidential advisor, union representative, wellbeing services)?” – Multiple choice*
- Yes, several options
 - Yes, one or two options
 - No, not that I know of
 - I am not sure
17. *“How accessible and helpful do you feel these internal support options are (if they exist)?” – Multiple choice + “Not applicable”*
- Very accessible and helpful
 - Somewhat accessible / helpful
 - Not very accessible or helpful
 - Not applicable / none available
18. *“Are you aware of external support (e.g. NGOs, hotlines, legal aid, women’s organisations) that women in your situation could turn to?” – Multiple choice*
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure

Section 6 – Training Needs & Preferences

19. *“Which topics would you find most useful in a training about safer workplaces for women?” – Checkboxes*

- Recognising early signs of harassment and violence
- Knowing my rights and legal protections
- How to set boundaries and say “no” safely
- How to report and who to contact
- How to support colleagues (bystander skills)
- Managing stress, fear and emotional impact
- Confidence and leadership skills
- Other (please specify)

20. *“What training formats would work best for you?” – Checkboxes*

- Short in-person sessions (e.g. workshops)
- Short online sessions (live)
- Self-paced online modules (MOOC)
- Mixed / blended (online + in-person)
- Written materials / guides
- Podcasts / videos
- Other (please specify)

21. *“What would make it easier for you to participate in training?” – Checkboxes*

- Short sessions (e.g. micro-modules)
- Clear and simple language
- Evening or weekend options
- Childcare or flexible timing
- Accessible on a smartphone
- Anonymous / private learning option
- Support from employer (time / recognition)
- Other (please specify)

Section 7 – Inclusion & Intersectional Barriers

22. *“Do you think women with different backgrounds (e.g. migrant women, mothers, LGBTIQ+, disabled women, part-time staff) face different risks or barriers in your workplace?” – Multiple choice*

- Yes, definitely
- Yes, to some extent
- No, not really
- I am not sure

23. *(Optional open question)*

“If you wish, please describe any specific risks or barriers you see for women with different backgrounds.” – Paragraph text

Section 8 – Recommendations & Final Thoughts

24. (Open, but optional)

“What is one thing your organisation could change that would make you feel safer or more respected at work?” – Short answer

25. (Open, but optional)

“Is there anything else you would like the BEYOND FEAR project to know about women’s experiences at work?” – Paragraph text

End text:

Thank you very much for your time and your trust. Your answers will help us design better support, training and tools for women and employers across Europe.

9.2 Annex 2 – Employer Survey Questionnaire

This survey is part of the Erasmus+ project BEYOND FEAR, which aims to better understand how companies prevent and address workplace harassment and gender-based violence.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to:

- identify current practices and challenges within organisations
- understand gaps in policies, awareness and management capacity
- collect input for the development of practical tools, including a digital self-assessment tool for companies

Your responses will be anonymous and used only for research purposes

SECTION 1 – COMPANY PROFILE

What is the size of your organisation?

- Micro (1–9 employees)
- Small (10–49)
- Medium (50–249)
- Large (250+)

In which sector does your organisation operate?

- Services
- Industry
- Public sector
- Education
- Other

What is your role in the organisation?

- Owner / CEO

- Manager
- HR
- Other

SECTION 2 – POLICIES

Does your organisation have a policy or formal guidelines addressing workplace harassment?

- Yes, a formal written policy
- Yes, informal or partial guidelines
- No
- Not sure

**Which of the following measures are currently in place in your organisation?
(Select all that apply)**

- Written policy on harassment
- Code of conduct
- Formal reporting procedure
- Disciplinary measures
- Internal guidelines or informal practices
- None

How are these policies communicated?

- Regularly ((e.g. training, meetings, onboarding)
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

SECTION 3 – AWARENESS & TRAINING

Employees in my organisation clearly understand what constitutes inappropriate behaviour or harassment

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Has your organisation provided training on this topic?

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Which of the following behaviours does your organisation consider as workplace harassment? (Select all that apply)

- Verbal comments (e.g. offensive jokes, inappropriate remarks)
- Physical contact or intimidation
- Social exclusion or isolation
- Inappropriate messages (emails, chats, social media)
- Abuse of power or authority
- I am not sure

SECTION 4 – REPORTING & RESPONSE

Does your organisation have a system for reporting inappropriate behaviour or harassment?

- Yes, a formal and structured system
- Yes, informal
- No
- Not sure

How are reported cases typically handled in your organisation?

- Through a clear and defined procedure
- Case-by-case decisions
- Informally
- Usually not addressed

How would you rate the level of trust employees have in the reporting system?

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Not sure

SECTION 5 – ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Employees feel safe speaking up about sensitive issues

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Respectful behaviour and inclusion are actively promoted in my organisation

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree

- Strongly disagree

Topics such as respect, inclusion, or workplace behaviour are discussed internally

- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

SECTION 6 – MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

Managers are adequately prepared to deal with cases of harassment or inappropriate behaviour

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Leadership actively supports the creation of a safe and respectful workplace

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

SECTION 7 – RISK & EXPOSURE

Which of the following risk factors are present in your organisation? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of clear policies
- Lack of training or awareness
- Strong hierarchical power dynamics
- Informal workplace culture
- Gender imbalance
- High workload or stress

How would you assess the overall risk of inappropriate behaviour or harassment in your organisation?

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Not sure

SECTION 8 – ACTIONS & NEEDS

Which actions has your organisation implemented to prevent or address these issues? (Select all that apply)

- Policies or guidelines
- Training or workshops
- Awareness actions
- Reporting mechanisms
- External support (e.g. consultants)
- None

What would you expect from a digital self-assessment tool for organisations? (Select all that apply)

- Identification of risks
- Clear scoring or benchmarking
- Practical recommendations
- Action plan for improvement
- Training resources
- Policy templates

Would you like to stay informed about the results of the project?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Your input is extremely valuable and will contribute to a better understanding of how organisations address workplace harassment and promote safer, more inclusive working environments.

The results of this research will support the development of practical tools within the BEYOND FEAR project, including:

- guidelines and resources for employers
- training materials
- a digital self-assessment tool to help organisations identify risks and improve their internal practices

Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used only for research and project purposes.

9.3 Annex 3 – Focus Group Guidelines

The purpose of the mixed focus group is to collect qualitative, interaction-based insights from both women workers and employers. The session explores workplace culture, recognition of violence and harassment, barriers to reporting, existing support systems, training needs, and recommendations for improvement. These data complement the survey findings and feed directly into PR1 and the design of PR2–PR5.

The mixed format ensures that both target groups can reflect on similarities and differences in their experiences and expectations.

Purpose: Identify obstacles and barriers to preventing & managing workplace violence against women (ILO C190 framework).

Format: Semi-structured (themes + prompts; interviewer chooses order & depth).

Duration: Approx 90 minutes.

Ethics: Informed consent, anonymity, GDPR-compliant, no pressure to disclose personal trauma, voluntary participation.

Participants

- One focus group per partner country.
- Minimum **8 participants**, including:
 - women workers (24–55)
 - employers or managers (SMEs or relevant representatives)
- Diverse representation (sector, contract type, background) is encouraged.
- Participants should not be pressured to disclose personal traumatic experiences.

Format & Duration

- Approx. **90 minutes**.
- Semi-structured discussion covering core WP2 themes.
- Flexibility to adapt prompts based on group dynamics.
- Facilitated by trained staff from the partner organisation.

Ethics & Safeguarding

- Participation is voluntary.
- Confidentiality must be ensured; no identifying details recorded.
- Participants may skip any question.
- Emphasise that personal traumatic disclosure is not required.
- Provide information on support services at the end of the session.

Session Structure

1. Welcome & Ground Rules (5–10 min)

The facilitator introduces:

- the purpose of the focus group,
- confidentiality and voluntary participation,
- respectful communication,
- equal speaking time,
- anonymity in reporting.

Warm-up question:

“Could you briefly describe your role and the type of workplace you are in?”

2. Thematic Discussion (core section)

All themes directly correspond to the WP2 topics

Theme 1 – Workplace Atmosphere & Organisational Culture

- *“How would you describe the general atmosphere and culture in your workplace?”*
- *“What behaviours or practices make the workplace feel respectful – or disrespectful?”*
- *Mixed prompt: “Do women and employers view the workplace culture in the same way, or differently?”*

Theme 2 – Awareness and Recognition of Violence or Harassment

- *“How do you recognise when a behaviour crosses a line?”*
- *“Are there grey areas that people tend to minimise or normalise?”*
- *Mixed prompt: “Are there differences between how women and employers define harassment?”*

Theme 3 – Experiences, Observations and Blind Spots

- *“Without sharing personal details, what kinds of concerning behaviour do you see or hear about in workplaces?”*
- *Employer prompt: “Which situations are most difficult for employers to detect or address?”*
- *Worker prompt: “What do you wish employers understood better about these issues?”*

Theme 4 – Barriers to Reporting or Responding

- *“What makes it difficult for women to report incidents or concerns?”*
- *“What makes it difficult for employers to respond or intervene effectively?”*
- *Mixed prompt: “Where do employee and employer perspectives differ?”*

Theme 5 – Support Systems & Unmet Needs

- *“What support options exist in your workplace? Are they trusted?”*
- *“What is missing or insufficient in terms of support?”*
- *Mixed prompt: “What would make support more accessible or effective for both workers and employers?”*

Theme 6 – Training Needs (Women) & Support Needs (Employers)

- *Women prompt: “What would you find most useful in a training about safer workplaces?”*
- *Employer prompt: “What do employers need to prevent or respond to harassment more effectively?”*
- *Mixed prompt: “Which types of training or tools would help improve safety and communication in organisations?”*

Theme 7 – Recommendations for Improvement

- *“If you could change one thing in organisations to prevent harassment or violence, what would it be?”*
- *“What should the BEYOND FEAR project provide to make a real difference?”*

3. Prioritisation Exercise (optional, 5 minutes)

Participants identify and prioritise:

- the **top 3 workplace improvements**,
- the **top 2 training or support needs**.

4. Closing (5 minutes)

- *“Is there anything important we haven’t discussed?”*
- Thank participants and provide contacts for support services.

Documentation & Reporting

Partners should:

- take structured notes using the Mixed Focus Group Summary Template (Annex 4),
- avoid recording identifiable personal information,
- provide 1–3 anonymised illustrative quotes per theme (optional),

- upload the summary in the WP2 shared folder.
- Collect Attendance lists and pictures

9.4 Annex 4 – Focus Group Template

Focus Group held			
	Initials of the person	Date of the Focus group	Profile short description (e.g. Sector, role type, job status)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
<i>Analysis of focus group.</i> <i>For each topic, partners summarise the main collective themes, patterns, differences, and 1–3 anonymised illustrative quotes. If a topic was not discussed, note “Not discussed”.</i>			
Introduction			
1. Workplace Atmosphere & Organisational Culture			
Key quotes:			
2. Awareness and Recognition of Violence or Harassment			
Key quotes:			
3. Experiences, Observations and Blind Spots			
Key quotes:			

4. Barriers to Reporting or Responding
Key quotes:
5. Support Systems & Unmet Needs
Key quotes:
6. Training Needs (Women) & Support Needs (Employers)
Key quotes:
7. Training Needs & Preferences
Key quotes:
8. Recommendations for Improvement
Key quotes:
Prioritisation Exercise & Final Thought
What were the top 3 workplace improvements and top 2 training or support needs?
Where there any other additional remarks?

Key quotes:

9.5 Annex 5 – Transnational data overview

This annex provides an overview of the sample composition and selected quantitative indicators derived from the surveys and focus group activities conducted in Work Package 2.

The data presented below summarise key characteristics of the research sample across the participating countries, including the number of respondents for the women's survey, the employer survey, and participation in mixed focus groups.

Full national reports and datasets remain available upon request and are stored by project partners in line with data management and GDPR requirements.

The following quantitative indicators were defined and monitored:

- At least 120 women surveyed (approximately 20 per partner country) through T2.4.1 – Women's Survey.
- At least 60 employers surveyed (approximately 10 per partner country) through T2.5 – Employer Survey.
- At least 6 mixed focus groups conducted (one per partner country), each with a minimum of 8 participants, as part of T2.4.2.
- 6 national legal framework analyses completed, covering 100% of participating partner countries, within T2.3.

	<i>Women Surveyed</i>	<i>Employers Surveyed</i>	<i>Focus groups participants</i>	<i>Legal frameworks</i>
<i>Italy</i>	22	11	8	1
<i>Spain</i>	30	10	30	1
<i>Netherlands</i>	22	10	8	1
<i>Germany</i>	21	13	8	1
<i>Cyprus</i>	20	24	14	1
<i>Malta</i>	20	10	11	1

<i>Total</i>	135	78	79	6
<i>Indicators</i>	120	60	48	6



Project Partners:



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