

Code of Conduct



Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH



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Why have a code of conduct?

Every day, people suffer from violence and bullying - including at work. In most cases, these painful experiences remain silent until the victims' suffering becomes too great or witnesses intervene. It is therefore important to break the silence and to carry out prevention work by informing people about these topics and raising their awareness.

Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH strictly rejects any form of violence and takes disciplinary action against it or, if necessary, also files charges against the attackers. Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH takes its duty of care as an employer very seriously in this sense. In Austria, 3.1 % of men and 3.3 % of women (approximately 127,900 people) are affected by harassment or bullying at work. About 1.2 % of the workforce suffer from physical violence or threats of violence.¹

At the EU level, a survey on experiences of violence in the workplace revealed the following results²:

4 % of respondents experienced physical violence (6 million). 2 % of respondents (3 million) reported having experienced sexual harassment. Intimidation and bullying have been experienced by as many as 8 % of respondents (12 million).

In Austria (as well as Finland and the Czech Republic), the number of people (21.6 %) who report having experienced violence at work is particularly high compared to the other EU countries. Austria is well above the EU average in this respect.³

It should be noted that these figures only reflect the crime rate. In the case of acts of violence, the dark field is particularly large (compared to other punishable/reprehensible acts). Nevertheless, these figures show that the issues of violence and bullying in the workplace are significant and must be addressed in this context. The importance of these experiences of violence can be explained primarily by their consequences. In most cases, experiences of violence trigger psychological and/or physical consequences in those affected and thus a pressure to suffer.

¹ *Ihle/ Klimont/Leitner*, Arbeitsunfälle und arbeitsbezogene Gesundheitsprobleme. Modul der Arbeitskräfteerhebung 2007. Wien: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich (2009).

² *Paoli*, Working conditions in the European Union (Summary). <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/1997/21/en/1/ef9721en.pdf>. (2005).

³ *European Agency for Safety and Health at Work*, Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture (2010) 17.

Discrimination and stigmatization of victims violate their human rights. The occurrence of violence also affects the economic situation of the company. Productivity in the company decreases due to the dissatisfaction of the workforce, through increased sick leave and ultimately through personnel search costs, and also causes social costs.

This Code of Conduct contains information on the topics of violence and bullying in the workplace as well as relevant suggestions for action and is aimed primarily at the employees of Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH (hereinafter also referred to as "PCCL") as well as external partners.

The Code of Conduct is thus intended to serve as support for non-violent and equal cooperation in the course of collaboration.

The Code of Conduct does not claim to be a comprehensive presentation of the topics covered, but is primarily intended to raise the reader's awareness of them.

If you have any questions regarding the topics of violence or mobbing, please contact the Representative for Equality & Diversity of Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH, e.g. via e-mail (gender_diversity@pccl.at). She will treat your questions and concerns absolutely confidentially.

What is violence at the workplace?

"Violence at work" is defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as "an act, occurrence, or behavior deviating from appropriate behavior whereby a person is seriously insulted, threatened, injured, or wounded in the course of or as a direct result of his or her work." Violence can also take the form of recurring acts that are "minor" individually, but in aggregate are just as massively incriminating.

Violence in the workplace is further subdivided into "internal violence" committed by colleagues, superiors or management and "external violence" perpetrated by customers, patients and clients.⁴

⁴ *Bundesarbeitskammer, Industriellenvereinigung, Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, Verband der Öffentlichen Wirtschaft und Gemeinwirtschaft Österreichs, Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Belästigung und Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz Instrumente zur Prävention (2011) 5; sowie: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Workplace Violence and Harassment: a European Picture (2010) 18.*

Examples of violence in the workplace⁵ are concerning **mental violence**:

- ! Verbal abuse, insults, pressuring, blackmailing, harassing, threatening, intimidating, humiliating and degrading, social isolation, deliberately ignoring;

Examples of violence at the workplace are concerning **physical violence**:

- ! Hitting, throwing objects, pushing, biting, physical harassment, restriction of movement, choking, use of armed force;

Examples of violence at the workplace are concerning **sexualized violence**:

- ! Discriminatory comments, including those of a sexual nature, suggestive jokes or unwanted gifts, advances involving promises of benefits or threats of disadvantage, exhibitionist acts, sexual acts (e.g., unwanted physical touching) and solicitations of such, posters of pin-ups in the workplace, stares and judgmental looks, and comments;

What is bullying at the workplace?

The International Labor Organization (ILO) distinguishes between two forms of bullying, namely bullying of a victim by another person and bullying of a victim by a group of people.

"Bullying" refers to actions (e.g., constant negative remarks or criticism, isolation, spreading gossip, or ridiculing the person involved) by which someone is treated poorly by other person(s). Bullying at work is therefore offensive behavior through vindictive, cruel, malicious, or humiliating attempts to undermine a person or group of employees. Bullying at work can take many forms and is classified as psychological violence.

The following acts of bullying at the workplace occur frequently⁶:

- **Attacks on the ability to communicate:** the bullied person cannot express him/herself, is constantly interrupted or receives threats.

⁵ *Bundesarbeitskammer, Industriellenvereinigung, Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, Verband der Öffentlichen Wirtschaft und Gemeinwirtschaft Österreichs, Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Belästigung und Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz Instrumente zur Prävention (2011) 5.*

⁶ <https://www.anwaltfinden.at/ratgeber/arbeitsrecht/mobbing-am-arbeitsplatz/> (abgefragt am 20.10.2022).

- **Attacks on social relationships:** The bullied person is isolated and ignored, does not receive information or responses, is not spoken to, cannot speak to others, and is moved to distant spaces.
- **Attack on social reputation:** Rumors are spread about the bullied person, colleagues make fun of them and suspect them of having a mental illness.
- **Attack on life/professional situation:** the bullied person is given meaningless tasks or no tasks at all or constantly new tasks.
- **Attack on health:** The bullied person is forced to perform activities that are harmful to health, is threatened with physical violence or their home/workplace is damaged.

Attention: not every conflict is bullying. Conflicts are normal where people work together.

Often the boundaries between a "normal" conflict and bullying are not clear. For these cases, there is a checklist from the Austrian Chamber of Labor (available here:

<https://www.arbeiterkammer.at/beratung/arbeitundrecht/Arbeitsklima/Mobbing.html>) that you can use to check indications of whether you are a victim of bullying.

Violence and bullying - who can help!

The following regional, external institutions and thus experts can be contacted, for example, in cases of violence and/or bullying.⁷

Help in case of any form of violence:

- *Gewaltschutzzentrum Graz*
Web: <https://www.gewaltschutzzentrum-steiermark.at/>
Tel: 0316 77 41 99
- „HelpCh@t“- Online support for women and girls in all forms of violence
Web: <https://www.haltdergewalt.at/>

Help with sexualized violence & prevention of sexualized violence:

- *Gewaltschutzzentrum Graz (Support for all genders)*
Web: <https://www.gewaltschutzzentrum-steiermark.at/>
Tel: 0316 77 41 99

⁷ Sie können sich auch jederzeit an die Beauftragte für Gleichstellung & Diversität der Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH, Frau Mag.^a Greta Pomberger via gender_diversity@pccl.at wenden. Die Beauftragte verfügt über das notwendige fachliche Know How und verpflichtet sich zur Verschwiegenheit bezüglich Ihrer Anliegen, sofern Sie nicht davon entbunden wird.

- *Beratungsstelle „Tara“ bei sexualisierter Gewalt gegen Frauen*
 Web: <https://www.taraweb.at/>
 Tel: 0316 31 80 77

- *Verein „Hazissa“-Beratung zur Prävention von sexueller Gewalt*
 Web: <https://www.hazissa.at/>
 Tel: 0316 90 370 160

Help with bullying and discrimination in the workplace:

- *Arbeiterkammer Steiermark - Counseling for bullying at work*
 Web: <https://stmk.arbeiterkammer.at/beratung/bildung/mobbing/Mobbing.html>
 Tel: 05 7799 2595

- *Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark*
 Web: <https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.steiermark.at/>
 Tel: 0316 714 137

- *Work & People- Das Zentrum für Konflikt- und Mobbingberatung*
 Web: <http://www.workandpeople.eu/inhalt.html>
 Tel: 0676 707 606 2 sowie: 0699 101 28 625

Measures of the Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH

a. Preventive measures against violence in the workplace

According to the Labor Inspectorate⁸, the following preventive measures should be taken to prevent violence in the workplace:

- adequate lighting in the company premises
- possibly bullet-proof windows, doors
- alarm system
- access controls, checkpoints
- doors with access code
- Automatic doors
- Lockable doors
- Sufficient staff

⁸ Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Familie und Jugend (BMAFJ), Sektion IV Arbeitsrecht und Zentral-Arbeitsinspektorat, Informationssheet zu Belästigung und Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz (2020).

- Sufficient seating
- Avoid stressful situations as far as possible
- Information about delays, changes
- Avoid (visible) handling of large sums of cash and valuables
- Avoid working alone
- Emergency plan
- Emergency call chain
- Posting of posters rejecting violence and consequences
- Posting of information about violence etc. in the workplace
- Training for early detection
- Anti-discrimination training
- Repeated communication on rejection of violence etc. by managers
- Competent managers
- Responsible contact person or person of trust in the company
- Solution-oriented error culture
- Regular, anonymous surveys of employees
- Instruction on how to behave in the event of incidents of violence
- Clear consequences and sanctions in the event of incidents
- Risk assessments

b. In the event of violence at the workplace

If the management of Polymer Competence Center Leoben GmbH becomes aware of incidents of harassment, bullying or violence, it fulfills its duty of care and takes appropriate measures to protect the health and safety of those affected.

These measures⁹ are to be designed as follows:

- First signs must be observed (e.g. changes in behavior, frequent sick leave, complaints of sleep disturbances, nervousness).

⁹ Vgl. *Bundesarbeitskammer, Industriellenvereinigung, Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, Verband der Öffentlichen Wirtschaft und Gemeinwirtschaft Österreichs, Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Belästigung und Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz Instrumente zur Prävention* (2011) 16.

- Every case of harassment or violence must be taken seriously.
- Expertise from relevant experts or counseling centers must be obtained.
- Joint and respectful processing of the case in order to prevent rumors and to create awareness is essential. In the event of conflict, confidentiality about incidents is particularly important in order to protect the dignity of all those involved and especially those affected.
- Enabling professional aftercare for the affected person (e.g. legal counsel, medical, therapeutic or psychological help) is essential to limit the damage.
- Sanctions (admonishment, transfer or termination, banning from the premises) for harmful behavior must be implemented.
- A risk assessment (What factors triggered or facilitated the incident?) must be conducted and factors that pose a risk must be eliminated.
- Those affected must be informed of the outcome of the incident.
- The company should document the case in the form of a case study (anonymized) and learn from it preventively for the future.



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