



The NWO policy on sexual harassment, intimidation, workplace bullying, aggression, violence, discrimination and workload

This brochure sets out the NWO policy regarding the following forms of psychosocial work stress:

- (Sexual) harassment;
- Aggression;
- Violence;
- Workplace bullying;
- Discrimination;
- Workload.

The first five of the above points will be examined first, after which workload will be tackled. Sexual harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and discrimination may not always be visible, but they do exist. They may even be an issue at your place of work. NWO feels that people should respect one another's personal boundaries. Moreover, it strives to establish a work environment in which employees feel safe. NWO will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment, aggression, violence, bullying or discrimination during or in connection with work. Not only employees may be victims of undesirable behaviour; third parties, such as visitors or staff from hired companies, may also be targeted. To prevent or eliminate these forms of psychosocial work stress (PWS), NWO maintains a concrete policy consisting of the following five points:

- 1 Ensuring that everyone is sufficiently familiar with the policy regarding PWS;
- 2 Assessing the presence of undesirable behaviour and the associated risks;
- 3 Preventing the undesirable behaviour;
- 4 Removing barriers to reporting undesirable behaviour;
- 5 Making undesirable behaviour a subject of discussion.

Sexual harassment: undesirable behaviour

When someone is confronted with behaviour or comments of a sexual nature in the workplace that he/she feels are undesired or threatening, then this is considered to constitute sexual harassment.

The following are examples of sexual harassment: looks and double entendres, distributing or posting nude images (electronically or otherwise), physical liberties, rape. Sexual bribery, such as promising a promotion in exchange for sexual acts, also belongs on this list. In every case, it is how the victim emotionally experiences the behaviour that is important and not how the perpetrator intended it.

Aggression, violence and bullying

Physical and psychological

When someone is physically or psychologically harassed or threatened in the workplace, then this is considered to constitute aggression, violence and/or bullying. The following are examples of aggression, violence and/or bullying: teasing, cursing, humiliating, throwing objects, issuing threats, striking others. Constant jokes at the expense of the victim, damaging personal property, making offensive gestures and issuing threats towards family and friends all fall under aggression, violence and/or bullying.

Discrimination

When someone is unjustly and unfairly treated due to, for example, their gender, skin colour, religious beliefs, age, sexual/gender orientation or nationality, then this is considered to constitute discrimination. Discrimination is undesirable behaviour, but unfortunately, it is sometimes encountered in the workplace. Here, too, it is whether the victim feels discriminated that is important and not how the perpetrator intended their behaviour.

What can you do about it?

Sexual harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and discrimination

Sexual harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and discrimination will influence the mood throughout the department. As such, even if you are not a victim, you must show that such behaviour is unacceptable. To do so, you can:

- 1 immediately make it clear that you will have none of it;
- 2 call in the help of a colleague, supervisor or confidential advisor, if talking does not help.

Often, simply being called to order by a third party is enough to bring an end to the behaviour of the perpetrator.

In the event that a supervisor or confidential advisor is engaged, it is important for the victim and/or the reporting party to be kept informed of the actions taken.

Approaching a confidential advisor

In order to afford employees the opportunity to discuss their problems anonymously, NWO, the NWO-I office and the institutes have appointed independent confidential advisors. They act as a point of contact and, together with the affected party, will work towards finding a solution.

Mediation is the first step towards finding a solution. This is often sufficient. The names of confidential advisors can be found on JOOST, the intranet of NWO, the NWO-I website and the intranet of the institute you are working at.

Submitting a complaint

Should mediation not lead to a solution, the employee may decide to initiate the complaints procedure. If desired, the confidential advisor can provide support in doing so. There are two complaints procedures in place: one for employees of NWO-D and one for employees of NWO-I (office, institutes and university staff).

Both complaints procedures are explained in the Implementing Regulation (IR). See Implementing Regulation 13 – Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment, Aggression, Violence, Bullying and Discrimination – for more information on the complaints procedures.

Workload

Workload is another form of PWS that may lead to stress and absenteeism. However, the (undesirable) behaviour of a colleague is not usually the primary underlying cause. As such, tackling the issue of workload and making it a subject of discussion is described separately in this brochure.

Workload affects professional performance. A workload that is either excessive or insufficient can cause stress and may result in sickness absence. NWO strives to achieve an optimum work situation in this area, too.

Work tension, deadlines, challenges and responsibilities influence professional performance. If you frequently have too little time to complete your work or if you often have to push yourself to the limit to achieve the required level of quality, then this will eventually give rise to friction and, as a result, stress. This will lower your enjoyment in your work and impair the effectiveness of your work. This creates a vicious circle and the risk of absenteeism.

An insufficient workload is not good, either. If you have too little to do, or if your work isn't challenging enough, then the days become long and your desire to complete the work that you do have disappears. NWO feels that this should be avoided.

The following factors can influence the perception of an excessive or an insufficient workload:

- 1 Changes in the organisation (e.g. a reorganisation or merger);
- 2 Unclear or limited communication regarding changes, for example;

- 3 Insufficient appreciation for work performed;
- 4 Working above or below one's abilities;
- 5 (Too) few opportunities to organise one's work oneself.

What can you do about it?

The first step in addressing an excessive or insufficient workload is to speak with a supervisor. The earlier this happens, the better. Remember that you can also indicate that your workload is too heavy or not challenging enough during your annual review. If that fails to deliver (sufficient) results, a meeting with the personnel advisor or company doctor would be a good second step.

In conclusion

Any expression of harmful behaviour surrounding the work within NWO is unacceptable.

Should you be confronted with such behaviour in the workplace, attempt to resolve the situation yourself first, if necessary together with a colleague or supervisor. Should this fail to produce a solution, contact the confidential advisor, who will act as a mediator. The confidential advisor will also provide support in the event that a complaints procedure is initiated.

Employees of the NWO-I office and institutes may turn to the confidential advisor appointed by the institute.

Employees of the universities may turn to their local confidential advisor, or in any case the NWO-I HR advisor.

If your workload is excessive or if you are not being sufficiently challenged by your work, please try to discuss the issue as soon as possible with your supervisor. In many cases, this will provide a solution to the problem. Do not wait for your annual review or until you fall ill to discuss the matter.

Should this fail to deliver (sufficient) results, you can always turn to the personnel advisor (HR-advisor) or company doctor (occupational health physician).

More information

The phone numbers for NWO and NWO-I office employees of the confidential advisors are listed on JOOST, the NWO intranet and the NWO-I website. For other information about this subject, please contact the advisors of the HR-departments of NWO or NWO-I.

If you are working at an institute please contact the institute's HR-department or visit the intranet of the institute. Everything you discuss will be treated confidentially.

For the full text of the policy and its implementation, please consult chapters 11 and 13 of the IR.