



Not on the menu!

Sexism and sexual harassment in the Nordic tourism industry



**Nordic conference
on sexism and sexual harassment
in the service and tourism sector**
Hotel Natura, Reykjavik | 8 June 2015





NORDISK UNION
HOTEL, RESTAURATION, CATERING OG TURISME

Publisher:

Nordic Union - HRCT
Kampmannsgade 4
DK 1790

June 2015

Telefon: +45 88 921 354
E-mail: nordisk.union@3f.dk
Website: www.nu-hrct.dk
Facebook: /NU HRCT
Twitter: @NUHRCT

#NotOnTheMenu

#NeverOK

#Aldrigokej

#AldreiOK

#AldriOK

#KoskaanOK

#AldrigOK



Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important industries in the Nordic Countries, employing around half a million workers and the industry needs to recruit large number of new workers to meet the future growth. At the same time the industry is experiencing poor reputation and facing major problems retaining current workforce due to low wages, precarious work and tough working conditions. Surveys amongst tourist workers show that sexual harassment is an issue that needs to be addressed.

There is a growing awareness among **Nordic trade unions in the hotel, restaurant, catering, and tourism** sector on the issue of sexual harassment at the workplace, as it is a serious health and safety problem. The aim of the **Nordic conference on sexism and sexual harassment in the service and tourism sector** is to provide information and strategies on how to raise awareness and combat sexism and sexual harassment at the workplace. It is important to increase information and design strategies how to address the problem. This conference aims to highlight the problem of sexual harassment in the industry and is hopefully the start of a closer collaboration between social partners and governments on improving the occupational health and safety.

"Some guy grabbed me and he pulled me across the bar and tried to kiss me."

What is sexism and sexual harassment?

There is different understanding on what constitutes as sexism and sexual harassment at the workplace because of individual, institutional and regional differences in definitions and perceptions of the concepts. A common feature of these definitions is that they are recognised as a gender-based discrimination and violence. In its most simple form sexism and sexual harassment can be explained as:

SEXISM is defined as an attitude of a person of one sex that he or she is superior to a person of the other sex.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT is defined as unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature, creating a discriminatory and hostile environment, and therefore constituting a health and safety problem.



Prevalence of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a common problem as a recent study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on violence against women in the member states conducted among 40.000 women clearly shows. More than 55% of all women in the EU have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their lifetime, not only at the workplace. Various comments and jokes are the most common form of sexual harassment.

The study also illustrated regional differences with women in Northern Europe reporting much higher incidence of sexual harassment at the workplace than women in Southern Europe. Does this mean that sexual harassment is a bigger problem in the Nordic Countries compared to Southern Europe? Probably not, it is more likely that women in the Nordic countries are more aware and have lower tolerance towards the issue, while some of the behaviour related to sexual harassment is more acceptable or still a taboo in other societies.

Sexual harassment comes in many forms

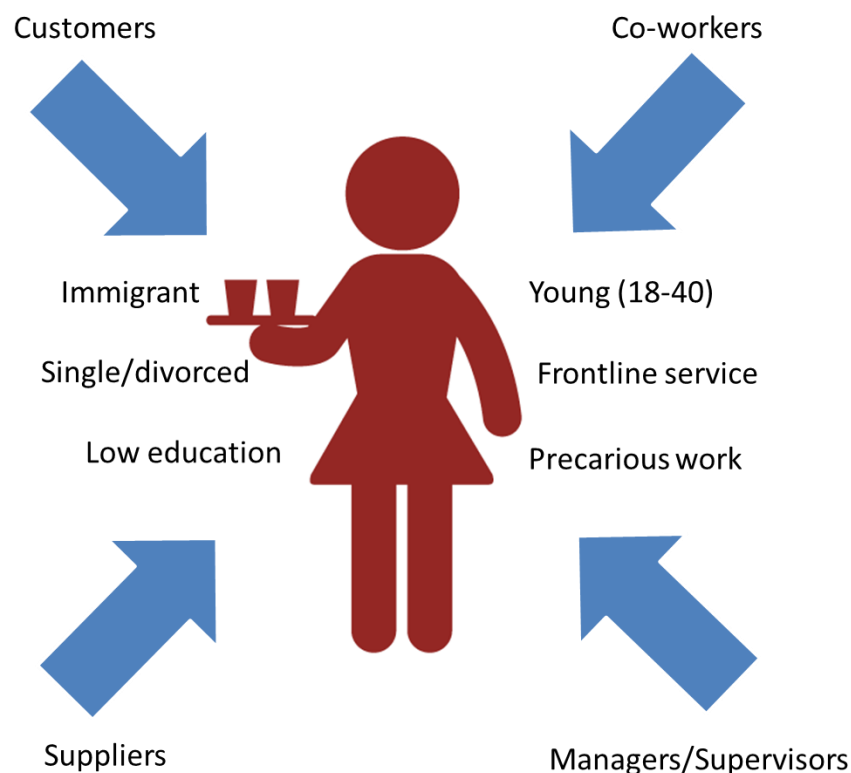
Sexual harassment can take a variety of forms. It includes both physical violence and more subtle forms of violence such as coercion or the creation of a hostile or unpleasant environment.

Verbal form	Non-Verbal form	Physical form
Unwanted pressure for sexual favours	Unwanted sexual looks or gestures	Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault
Unwanted sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions	Whistling at someone	Unwanted deliberate touching, grabbing, or pinching
Personal questions about social or sexual life	Making sexual gestures	Unwelcome hugging, kissing, patting, or stroking
Sexual comments about a person's clothing or looks	Hanging up posters/calendars with sexual content	Unwanted leaning over or cornering
Inappropriate invitations to go out on dates	Sexually explicit material via SMS, Emails or Social media	



Who are the victims and harassers?

Sexual harassment is common across the tourism industry, and is experienced by both women and men; still women are disproportionately impacted by sexism and sexual harassment. Most complaints about sexual harassment in the tourism industry are made by staff employed in frontline positions, where the harasser is frequently the customer. The victims often have characteristics that make them vulnerable in the labour market and therefore unlikely to report sexual harassment out of fear for losing their job.



What are the consequences and costs?

Sexual harassment at the workplace can have serious consequences and costs, which can be divided into societal, organizational and individual ones. Still there are great individual and cultural differences how workers perceive and experience various forms of sexual harassment. That can explain why many workers in the tourism industry seem to cope with unwanted sexual behavior while others always see it as offensive.



Societal	Organizational	Individual
Gender inequality	Absenteeism & sickness	Poor physical & mental health
Wage gap	High rate of staff turnover	Stress & depressions
Benefits & welfare cost	Low productivity	Low self-esteem
Healthcare & medication cost	Low morale & motivation	Embarrassment & shame
Lower GDP	Compensations & legal cost	Annoyance & anger
	Loss of goodwill & reputation	Low work satisfaction
		Family issues
		Income losses

What are the risk factors in the tourism sector?

There have been identified various causes and risk factors for the high incidence of sexual harassment in the tourism industry including:

- Long and irregular working hours, involving evenings, nights & holidays.
- Unsecure working conditions and financial power impacts customer-employee relations in an industry where customers are paying for service, and may therefore believe they have the right to treat employees as inferior.
- Tipping, especially where workers rely on their customers for their income.
- High degree of social contact attracts sociable, energetic, and outgoing personal to the industry. General hospitality is frequently misjudged and perceived as invitation of sexual advances.
- "The guest is always right" mentality.
- Employees may be encouraged to flirt or use their sexuality to generate income and customer satisfaction, i.e. through revealing uniforms.
- Alcohol and drugs creates a hostile environment and intoxicated customers that may lead to misbehaviour and unpleasant language.
- Sexualised environment can encourage customers to treat employees in certain service occupations as sex objects rather than workers.



Sexual harassment in the Nordic tourism sector

There are various statistics available on sexual harassment in the Nordic countries, such as reported cases, European based health and safety studies, and studies on violence against women. It is problematic to compare the results as it is unclear if they all measure the same thing and unfortunately only few of available studies focus on specific sectors, such as tourism.

To examine the incidence of unwanted sexual behaviour and sexual harassment in the tourism industry we have gathered information and research from member organizations. The findings from the Nordic countries indicate that sexual harassment is widespread and is experienced by all types of tourist workers.

“the food was pretty good, but I prefer you”

Denmark

In the beginning of 2015 **Fagligt Fælles Forbund (3F)** conducted a survey on sexual harassment among 1650 members within the hospitality industry in Denmark. They managed to gather 500 answers from frontline workers that have customer contact, such as waiters, receptionists and hotel cleaners. The study showed that 24% of all the workers had experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months, 27% of the women and 19% of the men. Certain professions such as waiters were more vulnerable, with 37% of them having experienced sexual harassment from customers.

Finland

In April 2015 **PAM** conducted a survey on sexual harassment among its members in the tourism industry in Finland. The main findings showed that 38% of the members had experienced sexual harassment from customers, 45% of women and 16% of the men. Certain professions such as bartenders, waiters, and hotel cleaners were extremely vulnerable to sexual harassment and also those workers that didn't have fixed employment contracts.



Iceland

In March 2015 **SGS** in association with the Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference at the University of Iceland conducted a study on the frequency and consequences of sexual harassment within the service- and tourism industry in Iceland. The main findings showed that more than 50% of women and 26% of men had been subjected to sexual harassment at some point. Employers younger than 25 years of age were especially vulnerable. Women were more likely than men to suffer from sexual harassment on behalf of a manager/supervisor and experience threat as a consequence.

“puts his hand gently on my ass and asked if he could take me *to go*.”

Norway

In January 2014 the research institute **FAFO** published a study on the working conditions in the bar and restaurant sector in Norway. In this study around 800 workers answered questions about sexual harassment at the workplace. The main findings showed that 20% of the female workers in the industry had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the last 12 months, mainly from customers. Out of those 5% had been absent from work due to sexual harassment.

Sweden

According to official health and safety statistics in Sweden 11% of workers in the hotel and restaurant industry had experienced sexual harassment from customers in the last 12 months and 6% from colleagues or managers. Young women employed on short term contracts in blue collar professions were more likely to experience sexual harassment than other workers. Another study conducted by **Svenska Dagbladet** in 2013 among 317 women aged 17-56 years working in bars and restaurants in Stockholm and Gothenburg showed that more than 65% of the women working in the industry had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their work-life and majority more than once. Most of the employees had been harassed by customers.



How to stop sexism and sexual harassment at the workplace?

Sexual harassment is a widespread problem within the tourism industry. A systemic change is necessary for the industry to realize its full potential and making it an attractive industry to work in.

The main responsibility for preventing sexism and sexual harassment lies with employers, who according to legislation are responsible for providing their employees with safe working environment. However, cooperation with the trade unions and legislators is necessary.

The social partners within the tourism industry at the Nordic level need to join forces in an effort to address the problem, raise awareness, and create safe working environments. The first step is to work towards a common understanding about the issue and develop joint guidelines, recommendations and strategies how to prevent sexism and sexual harassment in the industry.

“I’ll buy you a pair of breasts if you sleep with me!”

Employers

There are several measures that all employers should follow in order to stop sexism and sexual harassment at the workplace. This would contribute to making the working environment safe, increase job satisfaction and reduce employee turnover:

- **Zero-tolerance policies:** Employers must show strong support for their employees through written policies clearly advising their rights and zero-tolerance of sexism and sexual harassment in the establishment.
- **Communication:** Managers must make sure that all workers know which policies are in place regarding zero-tolerance towards sexism and sexual harassment. Good communication is crucial and this information should be part of the introduction of new workers.
- **Response and action plan:** Every workplace should have clear guidelines how to manage sexual harassment cases. It is important that complaints are acted upon immediately as they are received by employers.
- **Education and training:** There is a need for training of all staff including management, in the knowledge of sexual harassment and strategies how



to address it. Training empowers workers and provides them with necessary tools to address the issue, while maintaining sense of control and confidence.

- **Alcohol and drug policies:** Companies in the tourism industry need to have clear policies on alcohols and drugs and how to deal with intoxicated customers.

Trade unions

Sexual harassment at the workplace is an issue which trade unions should actively engage in. Trade unions have a great responsibility for their members and must put sexism and sexual harassment on the agenda as it is a serious health and safety and gender equality issue, especially within the tourism sector. This can be done through various measures:

- **Pushing governments to improve legislation:** Trade unions must actively lobby governments to review existing sexual harassment legislation, exposing inconsistencies and gaps in implementation.
- **Take up cases:** Trade unions need to take sexual harassment cases to court in order to demonstrate the consequences to the harasser and to establish a clear employer liability.
- **Raising awareness and train trade unions representatives:** Trade Unions need to actively raise awareness among their representatives and provide them with training, enabling them to handle and prevent sexual harassment at the workplace.
- **Negotiating with employers on the issues:** It is important to include articles on how to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace in collective bargaining agreements.
- **Encourage more research on the issue within the sector:** Currently there is a lack of research at Nordic level on sexism and sexual harassment in the tourism sector inhibiting concrete conclusions.

“Started by making sexual comments ... then attempted to grab my genitals”



Further readings and references

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, Belgium

FAFO (2014) Arbeidsforhold i utelivsbransjen, Norway

Fagligt Fælles Forbund (2015) Seksuel chikane inden for Private Service, Hotel og Restauration, Denmark

Fagligt Fælles Forbund (2015) Når alting bliver til sex på arbejdspladsen, Denmark.

International Trade Union Confederation (2008) Stopping sexual harassment at work: A trade union guide, Belgium.

Landsorganisationen i Sverige (2015) Sveriges jämställhetsbarometer 2015: Tid, makt och pengar, Sweden

PAM (2015) Sexual harassment in private service sector, Finland.

SGS (2015) Kynferðisleg áreitni gagnvart starfsfólki í þjónustustörfum: Rannsókn á upplifun starfsfólks á kynferðislegri áreitni á vinnustað, Iceland.

Svenska Dagbladet (2013) <http://www.svd.se/sju-av-tio-kvinnor-i-krogbranschen-sextrakasserade-pa-jobbet>, Sweden

TCO (2013) Bryt tystnaden, Sweden.

The Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (2014) The Glass floor: Sexual harassment in the restaurant industry, USA.





Who are we?

The Nordic Union for Workers in the Hotel, Restaurant, Catering and Tourism Sector (NU HRCT) is a federation of trade unions in Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. All the member unions represent workers in the HRCT sector and have signed collective agreements with employers in the sector.

MEMBER UNIONS

NU HRCT comprises seven unions in the five Nordic countries with a total membership in excess of 100,000. The member unions are:

Palvelualojen ammattiliitto (PAM). With 230,000 members working in the service sector, of which 34,500 in the HRCT area, PAM is one of the largest trade unions in Finland.

www.pam.fi

Hotell och Restaurang Facket (HRF). HRF represents 30,000 members working in the HRCT industry in Sweden. www.hrf.net

Fagligt Fælles Forbund (3F) is one of the largest trade unions in Denmark, representing 310,000 members working in several different sectors. Membership in the HRCT sector totals 12,300. www.3f.dk

Fellesforbundet is the largest private-sector union in Norway, representing 150,000 members, of whom 7,700 work in the HRCT sector. www.fellesforbundet.no

Unionen is the largest trade union in Sweden, representing more than 570,000 white-collar staff, of whom 6,700 work in the HRCT sector. www.unionen.se

Starfsgreinasamband Islands (SGS) is the largest trade union in Iceland, representing 50,000 workers in several sectors, of whom 4,000 work in the HRCT sector. www.sgs.is

Matvælasamband Islands (MATVIS) represents 1,600 skilled workers in the HRCT and food sector in Iceland, of whom 1,200 work in the HRCT sector. www.matvis.is

