

RAISING AWARENESS TO PREVENT WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AGAINST HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Introduction

Workplace violence against healthcare professionals is an increasingly critical occupational risk within the EU, with important consequences in terms of work accidents and workers' wellbeing. This case study identifies and presents several awareness campaigns already implemented within various EU Member States and analyses the implementation of these campaigns as well as the main results achieved in fostering greater societal respect and understanding towards healthcare personnel and creating safer working environments for them. The case study also identifies success factors and challenges associated with these campaigns and considers their transferability to other EU Member States or economic sectors.

This case study is part of a research project¹ carried out with the aim to provide an overview of research on accidents at work in the health and social care (HeSCare) sector.

Description of the case

Background information: violence as a major occupational risk in the HeSCare sector

Violence against healthcare workers is a pervasive issue across the different EU Member States, with negative consequences not only for the worker affected but also for the health system in terms of higher occupational stress and risks for healthcare professionals, lower quality of patient care, lower job satisfaction and motivation among professionals, and, finally, staff retention problems due to professionals leaving the profession or reducing their working hours (de Raeye et al., 2023).²

Several studies confirm the high prevalence of the risk of violence for healthcare workers in many Member States, where women appear to be especially vulnerable (with twice the risk of being victims of violence, including verbal and physical attacks as well as sexual harassment) (EU-OSHA, 2024; European Federation of Nurses Associations, 2024). Some experts warn about the risk of under-reporting violent incidents due to fear of victimisation and overall employer discouragement, as some health professionals may not perceive that reporting would make any difference (de Raeye et al., 2023).³

At national level, several Member States have recently experienced particularly serious incidents that have attracted media attention. An illustrative example of this is an incident in Italy, where in September 2024 medical staff were compelled to barricade themselves to escape attacks from the relatives of a deceased patient at the Riuniti Hospital in Foggia, and similar aggressions were reported in Pescara, Turin and other regions (The Guardian, 2024). According to estimates by the Italian Ministry of Health,

¹ The full report is available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/accidents-work-health-and-social-care-sector>

² This study shows that nurses reduce their working hours or opt for part-time work as a consequence of violence, with reported estimates of increasing up to 70% the likelihood of leaving the profession (e.g. Ireland and Switzerland).

³ Some Spanish authors even argue that verbal violence is perceived by many health professionals as almost inherent to the job, which contributes to a significant portion of these verbal assaults going unreported (Martín Moreno et al., 2007).

18,000 cases of aggressions were recorded in 2024 (16,000 cases in 2023),⁴ where approximately 68% of these cases involved verbal violence (Ministero della Salute, 2023, 2024).

In Spain, the data published by the Observatory Against Aggressions of the Spanish Medical Association for 2024 showed that there were 847 violent actions (threats, aggressions, etc.) reported to the association, or one action every 10 hours. The same data show that up to 62.4% of victims were women and in 14% of cases these attacks resulted in sick leave (OMC, 2024). Also in Spain, and according to data for 2023 from another source, there were 979 accidents at work during working hours that resulted in sick leave due to violence/aggressive situations. Services that were particularly affected include primary care, emergencies and psychiatry (Martínez Gandolfi & Rodríguez Mir, 2024).

In order to respond to this escalating problem, various EU Member States have implemented different strategies to deal with this issue, including the development of different awareness campaigns (both governmental and non-governmental).

Aims

Awareness campaigns, implemented across several EU Member States to address workplace violence against healthcare professionals, aim to reduce aggression and violence towards healthcare staff by fostering a culture of respect and understanding among patients, their relatives and the broader public. Specifically, these awareness campaigns foresee the following goals:

- Inform the general public about the existence and extent of the phenomenon of violence against health personnel, and make the population aware of the physical, psychological and professional consequences of these acts of violence.
- Promote a positive sentiment towards healthcare workers, and highlight the work of health professionals and the importance of this work for the community.
- Increase societal awareness of the pressures healthcare professionals face, often employing personal testimonials and real-life experiences to foster empathy.
- Promote behavioural change, also emphasising the legal and criminal repercussions of such acts, reinforcing the message that aggression towards health personnel is unacceptable and punishable by law.
- Encourage health professionals to report incidents of violence, ensuring that cases are not overlooked.
- Contribute to a broader institutional and cultural shift, reinforcing the need for policy reforms and structural interventions that create safer and more supportive working environments for health personnel.

What was done and how

As already mentioned, several campaigns have been developed within different Member States to tackle the problem of violence and aggression at work against health professionals. Several examples are presented below.

⁴ The 2024 report suggests that this increase might not be necessarily due to an actual rise in aggressions, but rather to greater awareness of reporting and improved monitoring systems.



Source: www.hauts-de-france.ars.sante.fr

In **France**, the French Ministry of Health launched in December 2023 an awareness campaign addressing violence against healthcare professionals.⁵ The initiative aimed to change the behaviour of violent patients (including a reminder of the legal consequences of committing such acts) and encourage healthcare workers who are victims of aggression to systematically report incidents of violence and file complaints. Specifically, this awareness campaign included posters (to be displayed in hospitals, private medical practices and pharmacies) as well as social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn). In this regard, four posters targeting the general public illustrated common situations of violence faced by healthcare workers, where the campaign slogan read 'Il faut être malade pour s'en prendre à un professionnel de santé' ('You must be sick to attack a healthcare professional'), followed by a key statistic ('Each day, on average, 65 healthcare professionals fall victim to physical or verbal assault'). Posters also included a QR code that directed patients to testimonials from healthcare workers who have experienced violence.⁶ In addition, three posters specifically targeting healthcare professionals were developed, to be placed in staff rest areas, with the message 'In the face of violence, let's not remain silent' (a QR code also encouraged victims to report incidents and file complaints). A dedicated support page was also made available⁷ providing guidance on how to report incidents and take legal action.

In **Italy**, the Italian Ministry of Health launched in March 2023 the nationwide communication campaign '#laviolenzanoncura' ('Violence does not heal'), aimed at raising awareness among the public about the severity of violence against HeSCare professionals, while promoting a culture of respect towards those who work in the sector.⁸ This campaign featured the slogan 'La violenza non ti farà stare meglio. Loro sì' ('Violence will not make you feel better. They [health and social carers] will'), to remind the public that attacking caregivers is counterproductive. The campaign was supported by visual materials, including posters, leaflets, and digital and social media.



Source: sanidad.castillalamancha.es



Source: www.sanitaebenessere.it

In **Spain**, several regional governments (e.g. Cantabria, Balearic Islands, Castile and Leon, Castile-La Manche, Galicia, Murcia and Valencia) have developed institutional awareness campaigns in order to continue raising awareness and educating the general public to prevent aggressive behaviours against healthcare professionals. Several examples can be mentioned in this respect.⁹ In some cases, these campaigns stress the importance of valuing and respecting the work of health professionals and avoiding conflictive behaviours (see, for instance, the examples of Castile-La Manche¹⁰ and Galicia¹¹).

⁵ See: <https://sante.gouv.fr/grands-dossiers/stop-aux-violences-contre-les-professionnels-de-sante>

⁶ See: www.sante.gouv.fr/soignonsnotrecomportement

⁷ See: www.sante.gouv.fr/tolerancezero

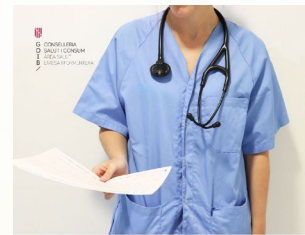
⁸ See: <https://www.sanitaebenessere.it/la-violenza-non-ti-fara-stare-meglio-loro-si/>

⁹ Since 2017, an ad hoc Working Group between Autonomous Communities and Central Government has been set up to study and analyse the existing aggressions to the health professionals of the National Health System ('Grupo de trabajo de estudio y análisis de las agresiones a los profesionales del SNS' in Spanish). This Working Group elaborates several activities, including one yearly report on the state of the art on the topic (see: <https://www.sanidad.gob.es/areas/profesionessanitarias/agresiones/home.htm>).

¹⁰ See: <https://sanidad.castillalamancha.es/ciudadanos/campana-de-prevencion-de-agresiones-profesionales-sanitarios-tu-respeto-facilita-mi-labor>

¹¹ See: https://www.sanidad.gob.es/areas/profesionessanitarias/agresiones/docs/Mesa3.5.NURIA_DE_CASTRO-ACUNA_Plan_Prevencion_VOE_Galicia.pdf

By way of contrast, other campaigns emphasise the legal and criminal consequences derived from aggression against healthcare professionals engaged in the regional health system. This is the case of Balearic Islands, Castile and León¹² and Valencia, where all these campaigns stress that any physical or verbal aggression against a health professional is punished by law.¹³ For instance, the Ibiza and Formentera Health Area has launched a communication campaign against attacks on healthcare personnel. The campaign, titled 'Tiene delito...' ('It's a crime...'), consists of posters and screensavers, to be displayed on all computers within the health area, and includes key messages such as 'It's a crime to assault me', 'It's a crime to insult me' and 'It's a crime to threaten me'. The campaign aims to raise awareness by reinforcing that any form of aggression towards healthcare professionals, whether verbal or physical, is punishable by law.



**TIENE DELITO
QUE ME
AMENACEN.**

LAS AGRESIONES FÍSICAS, VERBALES
O MATERIALES A PERSONAL SANITARIO
SON DELITO.

Source: <https://diarioenfermero.es>

In addition to institutional campaigns developed by public authorities, there are other actors actively involved in sustaining awareness campaigns against aggressions towards health personnel. In some cases, these actors refer to **health-related professional organisations**. In **Germany**, for example, the Marburger Bund¹⁴ has developed, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health, several preventive actions against workplace violence, including the distribution of informational materials that outline the legal consequences of assaulting medical personnel.

In **Italy**, the National Federation of Medical Orders (FNOMCeO) has launched two awareness campaigns aimed at the general public, with the goal of preventing acts of violence in emergency departments.¹⁵ The first campaign 'Mentre aspetti' ('While you Wait') encourages patients to reflect on what happens beyond the closed doors of hospital departments and aims to foster patience and understanding among patients. The second campaign focuses on raising awareness of the legal consequences of assaulting healthcare professionals, reminding individuals that such actions can result in serious penalties, while also highlighting the universal, fair and solidarity-based nature of Italy's National Health Service (SSN) and the importance of respect and cooperation within the healthcare system. Key messages of this campaign include 'Qui curiamo tutti, senza distinzioni' ('Here, we treat everyone, without distinctions') and 'In tanti Paesi l'assistenza sanitaria è solo per ricchi' ('In many countries, healthcare is only for the wealthy'). The campaign features images of doctors looking directly at the viewer, attempting to establish a direct and empathetic connection to explain the realities of their profession and the reasons behind patient wait times. Some of the messages conveyed include 'We work countless overtime hours' or 'We know you've been waiting for hours. It's because we have to prioritise the most severe cases first'.



**Qui curiamo tutti,
senza distinzioni.**

Facciamo ore e ore
di straordinari, per questo.

NON C'È RAZIONE
DI AGGRESSIONE UN MEDICO
E IN PIÙ È REATO PENALE.



Source: <https://portale.fnomceo.it>

In **Spain**, the Nursing Council of Almería (a province in Andalusia) unveiled a campaign in February 2025 titled 'No más agresiones, protege a quien te cuida' ('No More Aggressions, Protect Those Who Care for You').¹⁶ This is a purely digital initiative, consisting of the periodic publication of videos on the

¹² See: <https://www.saludcastillayleon.es/profesionales/es/prevencion-riesgos-laborales/plan-integral-frente-agresiones/campanas-sensibilizacion-frente-agresiones-ambito-sanitario>

¹³ Since the reform introduced by Organic Law 1/2015, of 30 March, assaults on public healthcare professionals in the course of their duties are legally treated as offences of assault against a public authority, with their corresponding penalties. This amendment grants public healthcare professionals the status of public authority in cases of aggression, thereby classifying such acts as crimes of assault against public officials. The penalties for such offences include imprisonment (offenders may face a prison sentence ranging from one to four years) as well as fines.

¹⁴ The Marburger Bund is the largest professional association and trade union for doctors in Germany. It represents the interests of employed and civil servant doctors, particularly those working in hospitals, municipal health services, and other public or private healthcare institutions. For further information, see: <https://www.marburger-bund.de/>

¹⁵ See: <https://portale.fnomceo.it/giornata-per-eliminazione-violenza-donne-la-fnomceo-lancia-due-campagne-contro-le-aggressioni-nei-pronto-soccorso/>

¹⁶ The campaign is available at: www.stopagresiones.com

social media profiles of the Official College of Nursing of Almería, as well as on its YouTube channel. The videos feature real testimonies from nurses, offering insights on prevention, management and actions to take in the event of an assault, along with advice for the general public on how to prevent such incidents. The videos are promoted on social media and platforms such as Google and Spotify, and the target audience includes both the Andalusian healthcare community and the general public.

Outside of government and professional organisations, there are examples of other actors that have developed awareness campaigns against workplace violence towards health personnel. For instance, in **Belgium**, a coalition of 26 hospitals in Flanders and Brussels jointly launched in February 2025 the #SeeEachOther campaign under the slogan 'Your smile does good'.¹⁷ This campaign urges patients, visitors and staff alike to adopt a zero-tolerance stance towards aggression in hospitals, where the approach is based on positive behaviour reinforcement rather than the use of penalties. In this sense, promotional materials (banners, posters, video screen ads in hospital lobbies) show relatable scenarios and encourage everyone (caregivers, patients and their relatives/friends) to 'look out for each other', foster mutual respect and maintain civility during stressful moments.



Source: www.chu-bordeaux.fr

In **France**, and before the launch of the French Ministry of Health's 2023 campaign already presented above, some French **hospital groups** did run their own awareness campaigns. A good example of this is the Bordeaux University Hospital's campaign 'Bienvenue en zone zéro violence' ('Welcome to a zero-violence zone'),¹⁸ which encouraged a culture of respect towards health professionals, particularly in certain high-risk units including paediatric and adult

emergency services or admissions. Faced by an acute increase in violent events against personnel, the campaign, developed completely in-house and launched in 2022, was initiated by the 'Violence Working Group', comprising representatives from human resources management, legal affairs, trade unions and communications management. Specifically, the campaign portrays photos of hospital professionals who, with arms crossed, symbolically stand against various forms of incivility and violence. The campaign includes posters, badges and welcome desk displays, and it has been widely disseminated across different channels, including articles in newspapers, publications and social media or appearances on local television channels, among others. This campaign was awarded with the 'Hospital Communication' prize by the French Hospital Federation in 2023, and it has been relaunched for the coming years.

Similarly, in **Portugal**, the Hospital Garcia de Orta (HGO) launched in August 2023 a violence prevention campaign against healthcare professionals, titled 'Respeite quem cuida de si' ('Respect Those Who Care for You'), aiming to raise awareness among patients about this issue in order to create safe and healthy environments where healthcare professionals feel comfortable and protected.¹⁹

In **Italy**, the consumer association CODACONS launched in 2017 a campaign under the slogan 'Basta violenza negli ospedali' ('No more violence in hospitals').²⁰ CODACONS distributed stickers with the message 'La violenza non ti cura. Oggi mi picchi e domani potrei doverti curare... pensaci' ('Violence doesn't heal you. Today you hit me, and tomorrow I might have to treat you think about it') to be posted on hospital doors. This grassroots campaign not only raised public



Source: www.sanitapress.com

¹⁷ The campaign was motivated by survey data showing 85% of hospital staff had experienced aggression and 79% felt incidents were becoming more frequent — making it clear that violence was being normalised. For additional information on this campaign, see: <https://www.brusselstimes.com/belgium/1461592/your-smile-does-good-new-campaign-to-combat-aggression-in-hospitals#:~:text=Under%20the%20slogan%20,show%20zero%20tolerance%20towards%20aggression>

¹⁸ See: <https://www.chu-bordeaux.fr/Espace-m%C3%A9dia/Campagne-%22Bienvenue-en-zone-z%C3%A9ro-violence%22-saison-2/#:~:text=Campagne%20,Pour>

¹⁹ See: <https://www.hgo.min-saude.pt/2023/08/08/hgo-lanca-campanha-de-prevencao-da-violencia-na-saude>

²⁰ See: <https://www.quotidianobenessere.it/codacons-basta-violenza-negli-ospedali>

awareness but also demanded action from authorities. This campaign was relaunched in 2024 due to the recent violent events in Italian hospitals.

Last but not least, it is important to highlight the so-called **European Awareness Day on Violence Against Doctors and Other Health Professionals**, observed annually on 12 March and officially established in 2019 by a coalition of European Medical Organisations to address the escalating violence faced by healthcare professionals in Europe. This day serves as a platform to raise awareness, advocate for policy changes, and promote a culture of respect and safety within healthcare settings across Europe.²¹

As can be seen, these awareness campaigns addressing violence against health professionals use a wide range of media channels, including posters and signage in hospitals and public spaces, press coverage and radio broadcasts as well as dedicated social media campaigns in different media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, QR codes), including the use of attractive and self-explaining slogans. In some cases, these campaigns also share personal stories or testimonials from health professionals who have endured aggression and violence. Interestingly also, most of these campaigns are aimed at the general public, often educating patients on addressing frustration that can lead to violence and fostering understanding and patience, although in some cases these campaigns include explicit communication of the legal consequences of assaulting healthcare staff and associated penalties. In some other cases, these campaigns may also enclose specific messages for health personnel on how to manage conflict situations and/or what to do if attacked, particularly in terms of reporting every instance of violence.

What was achieved?

Evaluating the achievements of these awareness campaigns aimed at reducing violence against healthcare workers is a complex task due to the very limited availability of measurable quantitative and qualitative outcomes.

In this regard, some international studies show positive results stemming from these awareness campaigns on facilitating cultural and behavioural changes. A comprehensive review published in the Journal of the American Medical Association concludes that mass media campaigns can produce positive changes or prevent negative changes in health-related behaviours across large populations (Wakefield et al., 2010). Meanwhile, a study examining the use of social media to improve public perception of medical workplace violence in China suggests that social media campaigns can effectively enhance public awareness and potentially shift attitudes (Lian & Xuefan, 2021). By way of contrast, a systematic literature review assessing interventions targeted at preventing workplace violence against health professionals concludes that there is a lack of robust data demonstrating the effectiveness of such measures in reducing or minimising violence (Okubo et al., 2022). In Europe, a study conducted by the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN) highlights the critical role of awareness campaigns in mitigating workplace violence against nurses from a dual perspective. First, these public awareness campaigns inform the general public about the challenges faced by nurses, helping raise the profile of and respect for nursing. Second, these campaigns can influence the creation and implementation of policies aimed at protecting health workers from violence (de Raeve et al., 2023).

According to information collected from several qualitative interviews conducted with practitioners, awareness campaigns positively contribute to increasing both the visibility of the problem as well as a cultural shift among citizens and health professionals. Violence against health professionals is not only nowadays more regularly covered in mainstream media, it is also increasingly perceived by society in general as a problem that should be deemed completely unacceptable and better confronted rather than tolerated. This cultural shift, in turn, also empowers health professionals to report violent behaviour and not keep silent about the topic and has prompted institutional response to actively deal with the issue.

²¹ See: <https://www.ceom-ecmo.eu/en/actualites/first-time-ever-european-medical-organisations-join-together-raise-awareness-violence>

Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence linking media campaigns to a significant quantitative reduction in violent incidents against healthcare professionals. Contrarily, some Member States have experienced a rise in incident statistics. For instance in Spain, the Spanish General Nursing Council's Observatory data showed an increase from 1,629 reported aggressions in 2021 to 2,840 in 2023.²² Similarly, Italy's National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work recognised nearly 6,000 work-related accidents²³ due to episodes of violence, aggression, threats and similar against HeSCare personnel in the period 2020-2022, with a significant increase in recent years.²⁴ According to the same interviewees, this rise should be understood as a positive sign (at least in the short run), since it reflects, among other elements, a reduced stigma among health professionals in reporting these incidents (and not just a worsening of behaviour), likely as a result of the awareness campaigns.

Success factors and challenges

According to qualitative information collected from interviewed experts, awareness campaigns targeted at reducing workplace violence against healthcare professionals may play a key and necessary role in fostering a behavioural and cultural shift within society, particularly when these campaigns are backed up by key stakeholders (public authorities, professional associations, social partners, civil society, etc.) that contribute to their credibility, ensure consistent funding and sustain stakeholder engagement. The use of an array of different channels (including digital social media, traditional broadcasting and print materials) ensures an extensive reach.

Notwithstanding this, these campaigns achieve their maximum potential when integrated into comprehensive, long-term strategies and interventions that combine behaviour change with structural interventions and policy reforms (e.g. legislative protections for healthcare staff, development of effective channels for healthcare professionals to report violent incidents, enhanced security within healthcare facilities, psychological support mechanisms for affected personnel, etc.) (de Raeve et al., 2023; Wakefield et al., 2010).

There are several relevant examples of these comprehensive approaches, where awareness campaigns are part of a larger set of policy interventions. For instance, Italian Law No 113 on 'Provisions on safety for health and social care professionals in the exercise of their functions',²⁵ approved in 2020, introduces a comprehensive set of measures to combat workplace violence against health professionals.²⁶ These measures include, in addition to the promotion of institutional information initiatives and communication projects on the importance of respecting the work of HeSCare professionals (Article 3), other specific measures such as: i) the setting up of a 'National Observatory on the Safety of Health and Social Care Professionals'²⁷ (Article 2); ii) amendments to the Criminal Code (including the introduction of aggravated penalties and circumstances) for those who cause serious or very serious personal injuries to HeSCare personnel in the performance of or due to their functions or service (Articles 4 to 6); iii) administrative sanctions (in case the act does not constitute an offence) for anyone who engages in violent, insulting, offensive or harassing conduct towards these

²² See: <https://www.consejogeneralenfermeria.org/observatorio-nacional/observatorio-de-agresiones/estadistica-de-agresiones>

²³ The definition of an accident at work in Italy can be found at: https://www.inail.it/portale/assicurazione/it/Soggetti_tutelati/Lavoratore-Dipendente-Industria-Artigianato-Terziario-Altre-Attivita/infortunio-sul-lavoro/riconoscimento-dell-infortunio-lavoratore-dipendente.html

²⁴ See: <https://www.inail.it/portale/it/inail-comunica/news/notizia.2024.03.violenza-nei-confronti-degli-operatori-sanitari-gli-ultimi-dati-dell-inail-presentati-al-ministero-della-salute.html?all=true>

²⁵ Legge 14 agosto 2020, n. 113. Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza per gli esercenti le professioni sanitarie e socio-sanitarie nell'esercizio delle loro funzioni. <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:legge:2020;113>

²⁶ This law has been complemented recently in November 2024 with another law, 'Legge 18 Novembre 2024, n. 171', that reinforces the existing penalties and criminal offences against those who attack health and social care professionals and damage public or private health or social care facilities.

²⁷ This 'National Observatory on the Safety of Health and Social Care Professionals' (Osservatorio nazionale sulla sicurezza degli esercenti le professioni sanitarie e socio-sanitarie (ONSEPS)) includes representatives from trade unions, regions, professional orders, sector organisations and associations, patient associations and different ministries, among others. The objectives of this observatory include the monitoring of incidents of violence, the promotion of studies and analyses for the formulation of proposals and measures to reduce risk factors, and the monitoring of such measures or the promotion of best practices and training courses for the health professionals.

workers (Article 9); and, finally, iv) the introduction of specific operational protocols with the police, to ensure their timely intervention (Article 7).

Another relevant example refers to the so-called Comprehensive Plan Against Aggressions,²⁸ approved in 2008 and developed since then by the Regional Health Department of Castile and Leon (Spain) with the implementation of a wide range of strategic and complementary activities aimed at preventing workplace violence against health professionals in the regional health system (SACyL), in addition to ad hoc campaigns developed since 2009 to make patients and their families aware of the importance of creating a culture of respect and zero tolerance towards aggression within health settings. Specifically, the implemented activities within the Comprehensive Plan, and those developed in different years, are described in Box 1.

Box 1: Comprehensive Plan Against Aggressions towards Health Personnel of Castille and Leon

- **A computer-based registry of aggressions**, set up in July 2008, where any assaulted healthcare worker can report any instance of violence — whether verbal or physical — in detail, specifying the type of attack suffered and its consequences.
- **Specific security tools** in high-risk areas, including panic buttons, increased security personnel and surveillance systems within health facilities. Since 2017, also available is the so-called Police Liaison Officer for Healthcare ('Interlocutor Policial Sanitario' in Spanish).²⁹
- **Professional psychological and legal support** for healthcare staff, to assist those who have been affected by workplace violence.
- **Development of awareness campaigns** to make patients and their families aware of the importance of creating a culture of respect and zero tolerance towards aggression within health settings. These campaigns have shifted the emphasis in recent years towards stressing the legal and criminal consequences derived from any aggressive behaviour.
- **Legal and institutional reinforcement mechanisms**, reinforced by legal protection for health workers.³⁰ This legal backing, introduced in 2010, is supported by a strong collaboration with the Public Prosecutor's Office of Castile and León.
- **Training activities and workshops** for health workers, basically intended at helping medical staff to recognise early warning signs of aggression and manage (potentially) violent situations in an effective way.
- **Protocols of action against aggressions** for health personnel and for health managers of SACyL.
- **Observatory of Aggressions**, a dedicated body responsible for collecting, analysing and reporting data on workplace violence against health professionals in order to identify trends, risk factors, and the effectiveness of intervention strategies to adjust and improve them. The observatory, set up in 2009, is comprised of various stakeholders, including trade unions, medical associations, regional government representatives, and representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Castile and Leon, among others.

Source: <https://www.saludcastillayleon.es/profesionales/es/prevencion-riesgos-laborales/plan-integral-frente-agresiones>

Transferability to other EU Member States

According to the interviewed practitioners, the transferability of awareness campaigns addressing workplace violence towards healthcare professionals to other EU Member States is subject to several critical considerations. Thus, and to start with, successful transferability relies on a cultural adaption of the core materials and messages to fit specific local conditions and healthcare environments, ensuring effective communication and appropriate response to distinct national challenges. Second, interviewed practitioners stress the importance of developing awareness campaigns that are not standalone efforts but part of comprehensive violence prevention strategies to maximise the outcomes. Finally, this case

²⁸ See: <https://www.saludcastillayleon.es/profesionales/es/prevencion-riesgos-laborales/plan-integral-frente-agresiones>

²⁹ The 'Interlocutor Policial Sanitario' is a specialised role within the Spanish Police created to address and prevent violence against healthcare professionals.

³⁰ See for instance, article 74 of Law 8/2010 of 30 August on Ordering of the Health System of Castille and Leon. This article establishes that 'Aggressions against professionals in healthcare institutions and centres under the authority of the Castilla y León Health Service are considered a very serious offence'. See also Law 11120213 of 23 December on 'Tax Measures and Restructuring of the Autonomous Public sector', whereby health professionals are regarded as public authority.

study shows the importance of ensuring the active engagement of different key stakeholders (e.g. public health authorities, healthcare providers, professional associations, unions, etc.) to ensure local relevance and facilitate effective dissemination and maximise impact, as well as the importance of using a wide array of different social media tools (traditional and new ones) for the effective dissemination of the campaigns.

Last but not least, it is also important to recognise that violence is also quite prevalent in residential care and home care settings, where workers in these sectors face similar challenges, including verbal and physical aggression. In this context, initiatives aimed at raising awareness and promoting safety and a culture of respect for long-term care and social care professionals are equally pertinent.

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