

PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HOSPITALITY: LESSONS FROM A SECTOR-WIDE SOCIAL PARTNER INITIATIVE

1 Overview

Country: Austria

Name of the programme: No Respect -- No Service

Organisations in charge: Vienna Chamber of Commerce (gastronomy section), in cooperation with vda (the trade union for transport and services) and the Vienna Chamber of Labour.

Year of implementation: 2023

Type of programme: Sectoral social partners' programme.

Reach: Hospitality businesses in Vienna -- including restaurants, restaurant chains, bars, nightclubs and catering services on trains -- covering approximately 6,000 establishments. In the first stage of the project, 881 workers and 71 employers took part in the No Respect -- No Service survey.

Target groups: Workers in hospitality establishments.

Interviewees: Five interviews were conducted with representatives of the organisation responsible for the programme, as well as with representatives of the company presented here as a case example. A sixth brief follow-up interview was held with a representative from the Labour Inspectorate.

2 Context

Sexual harassment in the workplace is explicitly prohibited in Austria under Section 6 of the Equal Treatment Act (Gleichbehandlungsgesetz) and Section 218 of the Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch). Despite this clear legal framework, sexual harassment remains a daily reality for many workers in the hospitality industry, particularly women.

According to a 2022 survey conducted by Statistics Austria ¹ on gender-based violence against women, one in four female workers reported experiencing sexual harassment at work. Among the respondents, 44 % indicated harassment by a colleague, 43 % by a customer and 28 % by a superior. The most common forms of harassment included inappropriate staring or lewd looks (20 %), sexual jokes or offensive comments about the victim's body or private life (16 %) and unwanted physical contact (14 %). It is important to note that the survey focused exclusively on female workers and did not include data on male workers or specify the sectors or occupational groups affected.

The persistence of sexual harassment in the hospitality sector is shaped by a complex interplay of organisational and environmental factors. The OSH Wiki article 'Sexual harassment and victimisation: what happens in the workplace' ² identifies several organisational factors that can heighten the risk of sexual harassment. These include power imbalances, tolerance of harassment, gender representation,

¹ Statistik Austria (2022). Geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt gegen Frauen in Österreich [Gender-based violence against women in Austria]. Bundesanstalt Statistik Österreich. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: https://www.statistik.at/fileadmin/publications/Geschlechtsspezifische-Gewalt-gegen-Frauen_2021_barrierefrei.pdf

² Gervais, R. (2023). Sexual harassment and victimisation: what happens in the workplace. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://oshwiki.osha.europa.eu/en/themes/sexual-harassment-and-victimisation-what-happens-workplace>

incivility³ or unfavourable work climate and job insecurity. Moreover, as highlighted by Stadler and Adam (2023),⁴ the working environment in the hospitality industry is particularly problematic, with many workers reporting experiences of inappropriate behaviour, discrimination and sexual harassment. Furthermore, according to Nielsen (2022),⁵ precarious employment conditions, cramped working environments and the use of alcohol to cope with stress or exhaustion are additional contributing factors in this sector.

Institutional actors recognise this challenge. As noted during the interviews with representatives of the trade union vida and the Vienna Chamber of Labour, there has been a marked increase in recent years in sexual harassment cases reported through the Austrian Chamber of Labour's legal advisory services. This growing trend highlighted the urgent need for targeted intervention. In response, the Vienna Chamber of Labour, the gastronomy section of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce and vida jointly launched a sector-specific campaign in 2023 to tackle sexual harassment in Vienna's hospitality sector. The campaign was titled No Respect -- No Service, inspired by a remark from a female survey participant who succinctly captured the campaign's core message: if there is no respect for workers then no service should be provided. This slogan underscores the non-negotiable importance of respect in the workplace.

The campaign aimed to address sexual harassment in Vienna's hospitality sector by raising awareness, providing practical guidance for employers and workers, and promoting concrete measures to prevent and address sexual harassment at work.

3 Description of the activities implemented at sectoral level

3.1 Actors, roles and implemented activities

When setting up the No Respect -- No Service campaign, each partner organisation contributed its expertise and outreach capacity to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach. The Vienna Chamber of Labour provided legal expertise and ensured that workers' rights remained a core focus by drafting legally sound guidelines and advising on enforcement mechanisms. Vida helped workplace representatives to take action by delivering targeted training sessions and ongoing support, helping them to recognise, address and prevent workplace harassment. The gastronomy section of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce secured the involvement of businesses by co-developing guidelines with employers and holding information sessions. The guidelines were disseminated via newsletters. These efforts also included clear communication on the legal and reputational consequences of harassment, which motivated businesses to commit to safer work environments.

A crucial component of the campaign was the launch of a comprehensive online survey, designed to include all genders and to acknowledge that men, too, are victims of sexual harassment. This survey was the first quantitative study in a German-speaking country to systematically examine sexual harassment of workers in the hospitality industry, regardless of gender.⁶ Conducted between November and December 2023, the survey aimed to provide a clear evidence base for action, and to inform the development of practical measures and targeted awareness-raising efforts. It was disseminated with the support of the gastronomy section of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, which distributed the link across its employer networks. In total, 881 workers and 71 employers participated in the survey, offering valuable insights that shaped the subsequent activities of the campaign.

³ Workplace incivility has been defined as low-intensity deviant behaviour violating workplace norms of mutual respect, which manifests in various forms, such as angry outbursts, spreading rumours and interrupting others. See Andersson, L.M. & Pearson, C.M., 'Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility at the workplace.' *Academic Management Review* 24(3), 1999, pp. 452-471. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259136>

⁴ Stadler, B. and Adam, G. (2023). Arbeitsbedingungen und Arbeitsrechtskonflikte im Hotel- und Gastgewerbe [Working conditions and labour law disputes in the hotel and catering industry]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: https://www.forba.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Forba_Bericht_Hotel_Gastgewerbe_2023.pdf

⁵ Nielsen, M.T., 'Die Servicekraft -- sexuelle Autonomie im Spannungsfeld von heteronormativen Geschlechternormen, Lust und Gefahr' [The service worker -- sexual autonomy in the tension between heteronormative gender norms, pleasure and danger]. U:thesen no. 65391. [University dissertation, University of Vienna]. <http://doi.org/10.25365/thesis.72936>

⁶ Danzer, L., Sorger, C. & Bergmann, N. (2024). Sexuelle Belästigung am Arbeitsplatz in der Wiener Gastronomie [Sexual harassment in the workplace in Vienna's gastronomy sector]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.lrsocialresearch.at/unterstuetzung-der-befragung-zum-thema-sexuelle-belaestigung-am-arbeitsplatz-in-der-wiener-gastronomie>

The results of this survey, summarised below (see Box 1), provide a comprehensive overview of the individuals most affected by harassment, the common ways in which such harassment occurs, and the areas where gaps still exist in prevention and employer response. These findings underscore the ongoing need for collective efforts to ensure that respect and safety are established as the standard in all workplaces within the sector.

Box 1: The main findings of the No Respect -- No Service online survey

Prevalence and demographics of sexual harassment.

The survey revealed that sexual harassment is a widespread, recurring issue in Vienna's hospitality sector. A total of 72 % of workers reported experiencing or witnessing harassment in the past 2 years, with 62 % of these incidents described as 'repeated'. Women, particularly those working as bartenders or waiters, reported the highest rates of exposure, with 79 % indicating they had experienced sexual harassment. Notably, 54 % of male respondents also reported such experiences, highlighting that harassment affects workers across genders. Younger workers were disproportionately affected: 86 % of those aged 24 or younger reported experiencing harassment, compared with 36 % among those aged 55 and older.

Sources and nature of harassment

The survey findings revealed that guests were most frequently identified as the source of sexual harassment, with 78 % of respondents reporting incidents involving customers. Harassment by colleagues was reported by 48 % of participants, while 35 % experienced harassment by employers or their representatives. The nature of these incidents ranged from sexist remarks and invasive staring to unwanted physical proximity or touching, and, in more severe cases, physical assault. Such behaviours were predominantly reported as happening in venues with direct customer interaction, particularly bars and restaurants.

Notably, 19 % of respondents who experienced sexual harassment indicated that the incidents involved offers of professional benefits in exchange for sexual favours, while 15 % reported facing adverse repercussions after rejecting such advances. These cases were significantly more frequent in high-end restaurant venues, suggesting that certain workplace settings may present heightened risks.

Employer perceptions and reporting gaps

The survey highlighted a significant divergence in perceptions between workers and employers. Only 30 % of employers acknowledged that sexual harassment had occurred in their establishments, and just 18 % of those reported repeated incidents. Furthermore, 28 % of harassment cases were not reported at all, primarily owing to a lack of trust in the employer's response. Among those who did report incidents, 60 % stated that no action was taken. When action was taken, only 21 % of workers said that the harassing guest was asked to leave, while another 21 % confirmed that conversations were held with the perpetrator, and just 11 % reported that the individual was banned from the premises.

Preventive measures and support needs

The survey also explored what workers and employers believe would be helpful in preventing and addressing sexual harassment. Among workers, 81 % wanted a clear company policy rejecting sexual harassment, while 53 % requested access to external support options and 48 % called for training for supervisors. On the employer side, 54 % wanted practical on-site materials, while 34 % expressed interest in receiving more information, training and external support.

In response to the survey findings, the partner organisations produced a practical guide called *Put an End to Sexual Harassment in the Catering Business -- Preventing Sexual Harassment*,⁷ with the aim of providing clear, actionable information for both employers and workers in the hospitality industry on how to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace.

The guide begins by establishing what constitutes sexual harassment, ensuring that readers understand the various forms it can take. It also outlines the legal obligations under the Equal Treatment Act, helping employers and workers to recognise their rights and responsibilities in preventing sexual

⁷ Wirtschaftskammer Wien (2024). Leitfaden für Gastronom:innen. Schluss mit sexueller Belästigung in der Gastronomie. Sexueller Belästigung präventiv entgegenwirken [Guidelines for restaurant owners. Ending sexual harassment in the restaurant industry. Preventing sexual harassment]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.wko.at/wien/tourismus-freizeitwirtschaft/gastronomie/leitfaden-praevention-sexuelle-belaestigung-gastro.pdf>

harassment. Furthermore, the guide presents a range of preventive measures, offering practical advice on how to create a safer and more respectful work environment. Additionally, it provides guidance on how to respond effectively to incidents of harassment, including contact information for reporting sexual harassment and a self-assessment tool to help businesses evaluate their existing practices and identify areas for improvement.

While developing the guide, the project partners consulted with experts on sexual harassment to ensure that all relevant issues were addressed. Legal expertise was also incorporated, with contributions from the Ombudsman for Equal Treatment, so that the guide adhered to legal standards and offered accurate legal advice.

To ensure the guide reached a wide audience and was practically useful, the partner organisations implemented a targeted distribution strategy. The guide was sent directly via email to approximately 6,000 hospitality establishments in Vienna. It was also made available on the Chamber of Commerce's online platform and promoted through a dedicated newsletter.

To further raise public awareness, the project partners held a joint press conference and engaged in media outreach so that the guide and its message reached as many stakeholders as possible, encouraging businesses to adopt its recommendations and create a safer working environment for all workers.

3.2 Results and outcomes

The survey findings were presented to the public at a press conference in April 2024. The media response was strong, with coverage including a report by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation. Aiming to raise awareness through widespread media coverage, the partner organisations actively promoted the findings^{8 9 10 11 12 13} and published supporting articles across their communication channels, including *Gesunde Arbeit*¹⁴, an information platform run by trade union entities.

Building on the survey findings, vida used the campaign to promote its support services, including information sheets, contact points and tailored materials for workplaces. It also expanded training opportunities for works council members and workers' representatives to strengthen their in-house capacity to prevent and address sexual harassment. According to the vida representative, the uptake of this training was higher than in previous periods. Additional support and outreach by the Chamber of Labour further raised awareness and encouraged participation.

The Chamber of Labour also increased its offering of training courses and workshops for companies, works council members and apprentices under the campaign ACT4RESPECT, in cooperation with the association Sprungbrett¹⁵. Furthermore, it revised and broadened its informational brochure 'Sexual Harassment -- Assistance and Important Information for Those Affected and the Works Council'.¹⁶ It

⁸ ÖGB (2024). Sexuelle Belästigung – Arbeitgeber in der Pflicht [Sexual harassment: employers have a responsibility]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.oegb.at/themen/gleichstellung/antidiskriminierung/sexuelle-belaestigung-arbeitgeber-in-der-pflicht>

⁹ Die Presse (2024). Gastronomie: Sexuelle Belästigung ist Alltag [Restaurant industry: Sexual harassment is commonplace]. <https://www.diepresse.com/18338351/gastronomie-sexuelle-belaestigung-ist-alltag>

¹⁰ ORF Wien (2024, April 4). Umfrage: Belästigung in Gastronomie häufig [Survey: Harassment in restaurants is common]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://wien.orf.at/stories/3251869>

¹¹ Zeitung der Arbeit (2024). Frauen in der Gastronomie häufiger belästigt [Women in the restaurant industry are more frequently harassed]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://zeitungderarbeit.at/klassenkampf/frauen/frauen-in-der-gastronomie-haeufiger-belaestigt/>

¹² Heute (2024). 79 % der Frauen in der Gastro werden sexuell belästigt [79 % of women in the restaurant industry are sexually harassed]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.heute.at/s/79-der-frauen-in-der-gastro-werden-sexuell-belaestigt-120029229>

¹³ WK Wien (2024). Gemeinsames Vorgehen gegen sexuelle Übergriffe in der Gastro. [Joint action against sexual assault in the catering industry]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at/unser-angebot/Presse/Pressemeldungen/gemeinsames-vorgehen-gegen-sexuelle-uebergriffe-in-der-gastronomie0.html>

¹⁴ Gesunde Arbeit (2024). Schutzkonzept gegen sexuelle Belästigung in der Wiener Gastronomie [Protection against sexual harassment in the Viennese gastronomy sector]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.gesundearbeit.at/gesundheit/gewalt/sexuelle-belaestigung/schutzkonzept-gegen-sexuelle-belaestigung-in-der-wiener-gastrono>

¹⁵ Sprungbrett (2024). Campaign für gewaltfreie Arbeitsumfelder [Campaign for violence-free work environments]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://sprungbrett.or.at>

¹⁶ Arbeiterkammer Wien (2025). Sexuelle Belästigung – Rechtliche Broschür [Sexual harassment – legal brochure]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: https://wien.arbeiterkammer.at/service/broschueren/Arbeitsrecht/SexuelleBelaestigung_rq_bf.pdf

also published new online guidance for companies on how to address sexual harassment through psychosocial risk assessments, which serve as a structured tool for identifying and mitigating workplace harassment risks.

One key indicator of the project's impact was its role in bringing the issue to the forefront of the national policy agenda. Experts from social partner organisations leveraged the insights and momentum generated by the No Respect -- No Service campaign to add the topic to the agendas of the working groups established during the Austrian government's coalition negotiations. This contributed to the inclusion of a commitment in the new government's programme¹⁷ to develop national guidelines based on the legal framework for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment in the hotel and catering industries. Although concrete steps at national level are still being set out, this demonstrates how targeted local action, supported by credible data and a united front, can shape broader policy.

Organisational practices have also evolved. The interviewed representative of the Labour Inspectorate noted a marked shift in employer attitudes toward sexual harassment and linked this shift in part to the campaign. In 2011, when the Labour Inspectorate addressed the issue during inspections in the gastronomy sector, many employers were unsettled by its inclusion. By 2024, however, inspectors observed that companies had become more familiar with the topic, and overall awareness and openness had increased considerably. Following inspections, both workers and employers actively sought further information.

Further reflecting this shift, the Central Labour Inspectorate published a guide in 2024 titled *Good Practice -- Protection Against Violence in Service Areas*¹⁸, which outlines practical organisational and technical measures to prevent workplace violence, including harassment. To encourage uptake, Labour Inspectorate experts promoted the guidance at industry-specific events. In spring 2025, the Labour Inspectorate also updated its guidance on integrating issues of discrimination and violence into psychosocial risk assessments.¹⁹ While these updates were not developed solely in response to the campaign, they reflect a broader societal shift in awareness and dialogue -- an area to which the project contributed significantly.

To build on this momentum, a follow-up survey aimed at assessing changes in attitudes and workplace practices is currently under discussion by the parties involved. However, funding has not yet been secured and no timeline has been confirmed.

While evidence of the campaign's impact remains largely anecdotal, available feedback suggests a growing awareness of workplace sexual harassment across the sector. Despite the absence of hard data, interviewees reported that the No Respect -- No Service campaign has clearly catalysed a meaningful dialogue, institutional change and policy engagement, laying a strong foundation for future action and more comprehensive assessment.

4 Success factors and barriers

The strength of the No Respect -- No Service campaign lies in the strong collaboration between key institutional partners and their coordinated efforts to reach both employers and workers. The project brought together the expertise and resources of the Vienna Chamber of Labour, the gastronomy section of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce and the vida trade union.

Another important contributing factor was the preparation of a comprehensive survey that produced clear data on the scale and nature of sexual harassment. These findings helped to raise awareness and contributed to the call for political action. They also shaped the practical guidance provided in the

¹⁷ Bundeskanzleramt (2025). Jetzt das Richtige tun. Für Österreich. Regierungsprogramm [Do the right thing now. For Austria. Government programme]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/bundeskanzleramt/die-bundesregierung/regierungsdokumente.html>

¹⁸ Arbeitsinspektion (2024). Gewaltschutz in Servicebereichen (z.B. Gastronomie): Ampelsystem (Gelb-Orange-Rot) [Protection against violence in service areas (e.g., restaurants): traffic light system (yellow-orange-red)]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: https://www.arbeitsinspektion.gv.at/Zentrale_Dokumente/Uebergreifende_Themen/Good-Best_Practice/Gewaltschutz-in-Servicebereichen_Ampelsystem.pdf

¹⁹ Arbeitsinspektion (2024). Psychische Belastungen am Arbeitsplatz – Gewalt am Arbeitsplatz [Psychological stress in the workplace – violence in the workplace]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: https://www.arbeitsinspektion.gv.at/Gesundheit_im_Betrieb/psychische_Belastungen/Gewalt_am_Arbeitsplatz.html

publication *Put an End to Sexual Harassment in the Gastronomy Business -- Preventing Sexual Harassment*.

The widespread dissemination of information played a key role in raising awareness and encouraging engagement. The stakeholders made effective use of established communication networks to ensure that relevant materials, such as the practical guide, were readily accessible to businesses and the public. Alongside these efforts, consistent media coverage, including a well-attended press conference and articles published by *Gesunde Arbeit* and partner organisations, helped to raise the visibility of the issue and stimulate a broader public dialogue.

However, despite these positive outcomes, several barriers continue to limit the campaign's overall reach. Interviewees highlighted the **challenge of engaging the full range of establishments**, such as restaurants, cafés, bars and takeaway venues, because of the sector's diverse and fragmented structure. Many businesses are small, family-run or micro-enterprises with only one or two workers. Interviewees explained that these workplaces often lack formal structures such as human resources departments or work councils, making it more difficult to disseminate information effectively and provide adequate support to victims.

A further barrier to accessibility was **the decision to carry out the campaign exclusively in German**. While *vida* does offer some counselling and training in multiple languages, the survey and main guide for the No Respect -- No Service campaign were available only in German. As highlighted by interviewees, the issue of language accessibility is particularly relevant in the context of migrant workers, who make up a significant portion of the hospitality workforce in Austria. The decision to provide core materials only in German may have inadvertently excluded many workers who are less proficient in the language. A key recommendation from a study on this subject²⁰ was to introduce multilingual reporting channels and resources among employers, unions and support services. Making campaign materials available in multiple languages could significantly enhance outreach, ensure equitable access to support and strengthen the overall effectiveness of preventive efforts across a linguistically diverse workforce.

Finally, while the campaign has reportedly raised awareness (according to the interviews conducted for the case study), its **impact has not yet been measured systematically**. There is currently no formal monitoring in place to track how well the materials and training are used or whether workplace practices have changed. As already mentioned, the possibility of a second survey to evaluate progress is being discussed among the partners.

5 Lessons learned

Several lessons learned from this project can serve as useful examples for future activities.

Above all, the **excellent collaboration of the social partner organisations** must be emphasised, as they jointly secured the necessary funding and brought together complementary expertise from different perspectives. This collaborative exchange proved particularly valuable in the development of both the survey and the practical guidelines.

Another important lesson is that **incorporating professional support significantly enhances the quality of a campaign**. The project partners sought expert guidance on sexual harassment, bringing in specialists in the field, as well as consulting with the Ombud for Equal Treatment.²¹ This external expertise played a critical role in ensuring that both the study and the guidelines were not only comprehensive and well informed but also legally sound and aligned with best practices. By drawing on this professional knowledge, the project partners were able to create a more robust and credible resource, ultimately improving the campaign's effectiveness and impact.

Another key lesson is the importance of **having solid, reliable data as a foundation for any campaign**. The comprehensive analysis provided by the initial survey produced valuable insights into

²⁰ Unions NSW (2024). *Disrespected, Disregarded, and Discarded: Workplace exploitation, sexual harassment, and the experience of migrant women living in Australia on temporary visas*. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.unionsnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/REPORT-NICSHR.pdf>

²¹ Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft (n.d.). *Tasks and areas of action*. Ombud for Equal Treatment. <https://www.gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft.gv.at/english/Ombud-for-equal-treatment.html>

the prevalence of sexual harassment, and existing measures and gaps in preventing it. This data was instrumental in identifying the most critical issues to address in the guidelines and media campaign. The survey findings, particularly the clear evidence of employers not complying with legal obligations, underscored the urgent need to inform employers about their responsibilities. It also highlighted the potential consequences of failing to take appropriate action, further emphasising the necessity of proactive involvement and adherence to legal requirements when addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

The data further helped to raise awareness at the press conference and through other activities, and contributed to the call for political support on the matter. The possibility of **pursuing the findings at a higher level was a crucial aspect in this campaign** and the social partner organisations were successful in getting the results put on the agenda of the negotiations for the governmental programme. As a result, the topic will now be addressed at national level within the hospitality and tourism sector.

The **dissemination of information** was another positive aspect. The organisations shared their findings widely, which encouraged other occupational safety and health stakeholders to strengthen their own services or produce further information.

The main identified shortcoming was the lack of a planned evaluation. It is important to **include systematic monitoring and evaluation of outcomes and impacts** from the beginning of future projects and programmes, in order to ensure that the effectiveness of measures can be properly assessed and improved over time.

The materials and training concepts that have been developed can be easily adapted to other sectors facing similar challenges. The core principles, such as defining sexual harassment and outlining preventive measures, are widely applicable. This adaptability makes the resources valuable for broader implementation across different industries, allowing them to address sector-specific needs efficiently.

In summary, this project demonstrates how strong partnerships, professional expertise, reliable data and proactive dissemination, supported by media, can combine to focus attention on an important topic and tackle workplace harassment effectively. At the same time, it underlines the need to plan evaluations alongside implementation in order to understand and maximise the real impact of such campaigns.

6 Implementation of the measures at company level

6.1 Company involved

One of the companies actively implementing measures to prevent sexual harassment is NORDSEE Austria GmbH, a well-known hospitality business and restaurant chain which was founded in 1896²² and operates primarily in Germany and Austria. In Austria, NORDSEE employs approximately 268 workers across 21 establishments, with the majority working in the 14 Viennese locations and the company's headquarters in Vienna. The workforce is 62 % women. Additionally, 16 % of workers do not hold Austrian citizenship and a high proportion of workers are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The experience of NORDSEE Austria offers a concrete example of how measures inspired by No Respect -- No Service are being adapted and integrated into the daily operations of a bigger restaurant chain. While NORDSEE Austria has implemented these actions across the country, the interview focused specifically on the company's experiences in Vienna, as the No Respect -- No Service campaign was carried out in this region.

For this case study, insights were gathered through interviews with the Chair of the Works Council, the managing director of NORDSEE Austria and the district manager responsible for the Vienna outlets. The case study reflects the efforts the company is making to address harassment, sexual harassment and workplace violence.

²² NORDSEE (2024). Unsere Unternehmens-geschichte [Company history]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.nordsee.com/at/unternehmensgeschichte>

6.2 Actors involved

The successful implementation of anti-harassment measures at NORDSEE Austria relies on the active contribution and clear roles of various internal and external actors.

Internal actors

- The **lead representative of the works council** has been a key driving force and played a crucial role in planning and launching workshops, organising meetings, distributing information to workers and drafting the new works agreement on protection from discrimination, violence and sexual harassment. Her broader role and contacts have also provided her with valuable connections and kept her well informed about the No Respect -- No Service campaign and its relevance for NORDSEE from the outset. She has been a chamber councillor at the Chamber of Labour since 2019 and, since November 2024, she has also served as Chair of vida's Tourism Division as well as being a member of vida's Executive Committee.
- **Management at all levels**, including the managing director and district managers, play a critical role in supporting and committing to the works council's campaigns. They actively communicate the company's zero-tolerance stance towards harassment and sexual harassment and take immediate action when necessary.
- **The human resources manager** provides support by disseminating information such as letters to all workers and the 'Feel Good at Work' presentations, and also collaborated closely with the works council on the drafting of the works agreement.
- **Site managers** at each restaurant are specifically trained to respond promptly to any reports or signs of harassment and sexual harassment.
- **Safety representatives and occupational health teams** play an active role by incorporating the topics of harassment and violence into psychosocial risk assessments and workplace health campaigns.
- **Restaurant teams** are directly engaged through their participation in training sessions organised by the works council. These on-site group sessions include moderated discussions that help workers recognise what constitutes harassment and sexual harassment, how to prevent it, and how to support one another, fostering a shared culture of respect and mutual accountability.

External actors

Support from trusted external partners has also enhanced NORDSEE's efforts:

- the **trade union vida** and the **Chamber of Labour** provide up-to-date information, guidance and practical materials that complement the company's resources;
- as a member of Quick-Service Restaurant Platform, an initiative that emphasises the importance of ensuring that workers, guests and suppliers feel welcome, safe and respected, NORDSEE also draws on sector-wide tools and statements to promote a workplace culture rooted in equality, diversity and inclusion;
- the company maintains clear communication channels with contact persons in delivery services, ensuring that any incidents involving couriers or delivery workers are addressed quickly and properly, in collaboration with site managers;
- in addition, **ZARA** (Zivilcourage & Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit), an external association²³ specialising in civil courage and anti-racism work, delivers customised training sessions for NORDSEE workers, further strengthening the company's approach to preventing discrimination and violence.

6.3 Actions implemented at company level

Before joining the No Respect -- No Service campaign, NORDSEE Austria had already demonstrated a sustained commitment to promoting a respectful and safe work environment through its involvement in multiple initiatives. Concrete actions to prevent and address sexual harassment have been

²³ ZARA is an association that is 60 % financed by public money with the rest financed by membership fees and sponsorship. Counselling individuals is free of charge. For in-company training, ZARA charges minor fees.

progressively integrated into company practices over several years, driven by close cooperation between the works council and management:

Key actions over the years

- NORDSEE Austria has implemented a comprehensive **Code of Conduct** that explicitly prohibits all forms of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment. This document, accompanied by a dedicated presentation, clearly sets out unacceptable behaviours, ranging from offensive language and unwanted touching to sexually suggestive images and inappropriate jokes, and outlines the consequences for misconduct. These standards are not merely formalities; they are embedded in the company's daily operations, communicated during recruitment, reinforced during onboarding and continuously addressed through training and dialogue at all levels. Importantly, the Code of Conduct extends beyond internal workers to include business partners and customers, who are expected to uphold principles of respect and equality and are informed about the approach via various channels.
- The company also **actively incorporates materials from the national Tatort Arbeitsplatz** (Crime Scene Workplace)²⁴ campaign, developed by vida and the Chamber of Labour, as part of its strategy to combat workplace violence, harassment and sexual harassment. These resources, such as practical leaflets, guidelines, posters and training tools, are readily accessible across all company sites, thanks to the efforts of the works council. This structured and visible approach reinforces NORDSEE Austria's commitment to creating a safe and informed workplace environment.
- Regular **awareness training sessions on violence and harassment**, including sexual harassment, are organised for both workers and management. These sessions are embedded into broader training formats, such as sales meetings and store management gatherings, and are held on site during paid working hours to ensure accessibility. To address language barriers, particularly among workers who do not speak German as a first language, visual materials are used and the content is adapted to the diverse needs of the workforce.
- **Interactive workshops** have been held during works council meetings, in collaboration with restaurant management teams, to identify the types of support workers need the most to address issues such as sexual harassment. These sessions encourage an open discussion through a range of questions such as: 'What types of violence and harassment are you aware of?', 'What has been your experience in your restaurant?', etc. In addition to facilitating dialogue, the workshops provide practical information about how to respond to incidents of harassment and violence, as well as details on available support within NORDSEE Austria, such as psychological support and external consultation services. This ensures that workers are aware of all the resources available to them for assistance and guidance.
- In 2024, NORDSEE Human Resources Austria developed a PowerPoint presentation called 'Feel Good at Work', which has been used in several internal meetings to reinforce the company's core principles of workplace culture. The presentation outlines key values that underpin NORDSEE Austria's approach to creating a respectful and inclusive environment.
- NORDSEE Austria actively participates in the international annual campaign '16 Days Against Violence', held from 25 November to 10 December, which aims to raise awareness of gender-based violence through a variety of events and activities. As part of its contribution, the company produces awareness videos targeting both workers and customers, and members of the works council distribute flyers directly to customers in restaurants to promote the campaign's message. In November 2024, during the 16 Days Against Violence at Work campaign, the works council released a multilingual awareness video addressing violence against women. The video encouraged workers to speak up and seek support, reinforcing NORDSEE Austria's commitment to developing a safer and more inclusive workplace culture.

²⁴ vida (2024). Tatort Arbeitsplatz [Crime scene workplace]. Retrieved 19 February 2026, from: <https://www.vida.at/de/wir-helfen/tatort-arbeitsplatz>

Actions following the No Respect -- No Service campaign

Building on the No Respect -- No Service campaign, NORDSEE Austria has implemented and reinforced a series of targeted actions in response to the findings of the sector-wide survey conducted in Vienna. These measures were further guided by the practical recommendations outlined in the publication *Put an End to Sexual Harassment in the Gastronomy Business -- Preventing Sexual Harassment*, developed by Vienna's social partners.

- NORDSEE Austria's human resources department, in collaboration with the works council and safety representatives, issued an internal letter to all workers outlining the company's policies and procedures for preventing and addressing sexual harassment. The letter included a clear definition of sexual harassment, explained the steps workers can take if there is an incident and provided information on available support services. Crucially, it reaffirmed the company's commitment to protecting its workforce, stating: 'Our commitment is to you -- we do not tolerate any form of sexual harassment in the workplace. We are here to support and protect you when you feel harassed. We will take every report of sexual harassment seriously and investigate thoroughly.'
- To ensure that all workers were fully informed about the company's reinforced policies and procedures on sexual harassment, the works council conducted on-site visits across NORDSEE Austria locations. During these visits, workers received detailed information about the company's approach to prevention and response, including clearly defined contact points, access to counselling services and multiple confidential reporting channels. These channels are designed to provide immediate and supportive responses to workers' concerns, reinforcing the company's commitment to a safe and respectful workplace.
- A new agreement is currently being jointly developed by the works council and the management team. Once adopted, this agreement will establish binding rules to protect workers from discrimination, violence and sexual harassment. It will also set out the consequences for violations and outline clear procedures for reporting and handling complaints, to ensure a structured and accountable approach to addressing such issues within the workplace.
- The company's 2025 psychosocial risk assessment survey was extended to all workers, with a 70 % participation rate. The results were presented in September 2025 and, according to the district manager and works council, no instances of sexual harassment were reported among the company's workforce (i.e. from worker to worker).
- To further strengthen reporting mechanisms, an external, service-based reporting channel has been established, allowing workers to report cases of (sexual) harassment confidentially and securely.
- When cases of sexual harassment are identified, tailored measures are implemented to address them effectively, ensuring a prompt and appropriate response.
- Restaurant managers have clear rules for handling incidents of sexual harassment or other forms of violence from guests in restaurants. If workers report inappropriate behaviour from guests, such as sexual remarks or unwanted physical contact, the site manager will politely but firmly inform the guest that such behaviour is unacceptable and must cease immediately. If the behaviour does not cease, the guest is asked to leave the restaurant. As a further escalation step, police may be involved (a criminal complaint may also be filed), which may lead to a restaurant banning the guest as a last consequence. The works council representative emphasised that any incidents of sexual harassment by guests are reported directly to the on-site management and dealt with without delay.
- Finally, to keep the company's commitment visible in everyday work life for workers and guests, the works council is planning branded materials, such as T-shirts, badges and hats, featuring slogans such as 'No Respect -- No Service'. Funded partly by the management and partly by the trade union, these items are intended to be used at company events and in daily operations to reinforce the message that sexual harassment has no place at NORDSEE Austria.

These actions demonstrate how NORDSEE Austria combines its long-standing commitment with new campaigns, inspired by the No Respect -- No Service programme, to enhance prevention and protection, and establish a culture of respect across its operations.

6.4 Results and outcomes at company level

The results of long-term efforts to address harassment, sexual harassment and workplace violence reflect clear progress in prevention, response and organisational learning. These achievements are the result of years of collaboration between the works council, management and external partners, further strengthened by insights from the No Respect -- No Service campaign.

Linked to these efforts, both the works council and management highlighted the **long-term retention of workers at NORDSEE Austria**: many workers have been with the company for several years. Additionally, it was noted that the company has a 60 % rate of representation of women in management positions. Interviewees consider that this high proportion of women in leadership has helped to raise awareness of sexual harassment and violence against women in the company.

A significant outcome of NORDSEE Austria's ongoing efforts to address harassment is the **development of a comprehensive agreement** between the works council and management, which is currently in progress. This agreement reflects a shared commitment to tackling harassment, sexual harassment and workplace violence, and builds on years of joint experience in promoting a respectful work environment. Once finalised, the agreement will establish binding rules on preventing, reporting and handling incidents, providing workers with clear procedures and reinforcing accountability at every level of the organisation.

The interviewed site manager stated that there are **clearly set out expectations and rules for managers** when addressing incidents of violence, discrimination or sexual harassment. Every incident must be addressed promptly, with clear boundaries set.

Support systems and visibility have been significantly strengthened across all NORDSEE Austria sites. Workers now have access to clear policies, training sessions and visible informational materials -- including emergency contact cards, posters and flyers -- ensuring they know their rights and how to respond to incidents. Resources such as intranet videos, an anonymous external reporting channel and regular workers' surveys further reinforce a culture of safety, accountability and continuous improvement.

Improved support and consistency in addressing harassment, sexual harassment and workplace violence have been achieved through strong communication and coordinated collaboration. Regular workshops and meetings between the works council, the HR department and site managers ensure that key personnel remain aligned and informed. By discussing real cases, these sessions share learning and equip managers to respond swiftly and consistently, thereby reinforcing a unified and proactive approach across all sites.

One practical example that illustrates how NORDSEE Austria's procedures are applied in everyday operations involves a case of sexual harassment reported in 2024. A courier driver harassed a worker at one of the company's establishments. The worker immediately informed the site manager, who took swift action: the courier was banned from the restaurant, the incident was thoroughly documented and the delivery service was notified to ensure the driver would no longer serve any NORDSEE locations. This case is now used as a reference in site manager meetings to share lessons learned and reinforce the company's zero-tolerance policy across all branches.

Overall, these outcomes demonstrate that NORDSEE Austria has translated its policy commitments into everyday practice, creating a work environment in which prevention, prompt response and continuous improvement are firmly embedded.

6.5 Success factors and barriers at company level

The experience of NORDSEE Austria demonstrates that successfully tackling harassment, sexual harassment and workplace violence relies on a combination of high worker engagement, the wide-reaching dissemination of information and coordinated action by multiple stakeholders both inside and outside the company.

A critical success factor is the **comprehensive and holistic approach** that NORDSEE Austria has adopted. Rather than simply reacting to individual incidents, the company has developed a system that integrates preventive, organisational, psychosocial and cultural measures. This approach not only helps

to identify cases of harassment and sexual harassment early, and to minimise risks, but also promotes a healthy and safe working environment for all workers.

Several elements underpin this system:

- An agreement, currently being developed, will outline clear steps for reporting and handling such issues, to ensure a safe and respectful work environment for all workers.
- NORDSEE Austria's commitment to addressing violence, harassment and sexual harassment is firmly embedded in the Code of Conduct and **will be further elaborated in the agreement between the works council and management**. The close **cooperation between management and the works council** reflects a strong, embedded culture of social partnership at company level, which fosters trust and ensures that campaigns are jointly planned and effectively implemented.
- Practical measures, such as regular **training sessions and workshops** at all levels, help workers and managers to understand what constitutes violence, harassment and sexual harassment, how to prevent it and how to respond appropriately.
- **Collaboration with external** partners, such as ZARA, enables the company to tap into professional expertise and customised training that complement internal resources.
- Clear, accessible **contact points** and support services ensure that workers know where to seek advice and can report concerns confidentially.

Together, these factors create a robust framework that supports prevention and nurtures continuous improvement, so that policies lead to real, tangible change on the ground.

However, some **barriers** persist and require ongoing attention. One notable challenge, as highlighted by the works council representative, is the **differing understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment** or violence. This often stems from diverse cultural backgrounds. Despite regular training and awareness-raising efforts, some workers do not recognise non-physical forms of harassment, such as derogatory gestures or dismissive comments, as unacceptable workplace behaviour. To address this, the works council is continuing to invest in empowering workers to identify and understand all forms of harassment through training and facilitated team discussions that create space for reflection and learning. Hearing colleagues' real-life examples and experiences plays a particularly important role in raising workers' awareness and helping to normalise the act of speaking up.

In short, NORDSEE's success is built on an integrated, proactive system underpinned by clear standards, practical tools and strong cooperation across people and departments. At the same time, persistent cultural barriers serve as a reminder that prevention is an ongoing process, requiring consistent dialogue, education and support to ensure that every worker, regardless of their background, feels informed, protected and empowered to take action.

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