



JOINT DECLARATION

OF THE INLAND WATERWAY TRANSPORT SOCIAL PARTNERS ON PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE (2026)

The European Social Partners in the Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) Sector – the European Barge Union (EBU), the European Skippers Organisation (ESO), and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF):

- **Whereas** respect for human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination are core values of the European Union;
- **Whereas** the International Labour Organization Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work and Recommendation No. 206 establish a global framework for prevention, protection, and remedy;
- **Whereas** violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence, constitute a violation of human rights and a serious threat to workers' safety, health, and well-being;
- **Whereas** the ETF 2026 survey on violence against women transport workers demonstrates that violence and harassment remain widespread, systemic, and often normalised across the transport sector, with 71.1% of respondents reporting having experienced violence or harassment in their current job, and a significant proportion of workers exposed on a frequent basis and many considering leaving the sector as a result; while recognizing that these findings are not necessarily representative of the Inland Waterway Transport sector.
- **Whereas** violence and harassment are strongly gendered and disproportionately affect women workers in a male-dominated sector, requiring gender-responsive and inclusive approaches;
- **Whereas** the Inland Waterway Transport sector presents specific risks, as vessels constitute both workplace and living environment for extended periods, often with small crews, hierarchical structures, and limited access to external support; and where reporting systems often do not lead to effective investigation, accountability, or improved workplace safety, undermining trust and contributing to under-reporting;
- **Whereas** violence and harassment must be addressed as an occupational safety and health (OSH) risk and as a structural labour market issue affecting recruitment, retention, and sustainability of the sector.



The social partners hereby declare their commitment to:

1. Zero Tolerance and Fundamental Principles

- Ensure a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment;
- Promote a workplace culture based on respect, dignity, equality, and inclusion for all workers;
- Recognise that violence and harassment are not a part of the job and must not be tolerated under any circumstances.

2. Recognition of Violence and Harassment as an OSH Risk

- Integrate violence and harassment into occupational safety and health (OSH) risk assessments and prevention systems;
- Address psychosocial risks arising from violence and harassment as part of employers' duty of care.

3. Prevention and Risk Reduction

- Implement preventive measures including training (de-escalation, awareness, and gender-sensitive approaches) and clear procedures and communication;
- Address structural factors contributing to violence, including work organisation, isolation, and lack of support mechanisms.

4. Effective Reporting, Investigation and Enforcement

- Ensure accessible, transparent, and trusted reporting systems, including options for confidential or anonymous reporting;
- Ensure that all reported incidents are taken seriously, investigated without delay, and followed by appropriate action;
- Establish clear responsibilities and timelines for handling complaints;
- Ensure that reporting leads to tangible improvements in workplace safety and preventive measures.

5. Protection Against Retaliation

- Guarantee that workers who report violence or harassment are protected from retaliation, victimisation, or any adverse consequences;
- Ensure that reporting does not negatively affect employment conditions, career progression, or workplace relations.

6. Support for Victims

- Provide accessible, appropriate and timely support for victims, including:
 - psychological support;
 - medical and legal assistance;
 - appropriate leave arrangements where needed;
- Ensure a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach.



7. Awareness, Training and Culture Change

- Promote awareness-raising initiatives to challenge the normalisation of violence and harassment and reinforce a culture of respect;
- Ensure regular training for workers, management, and representatives, including on prevention, reporting, and response;
- Address gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes within the sector.

8. Policy and Regulatory Framework

- Call on EU Member States that have not yet ratified ILO Convention No. 190 to do so without delay;
- Call on EU institutions and Member States to strengthen legislation, enforcement, and guidance on violence and harassment at work;
- Encourage alignment of national frameworks with occupational safety and health (OSH), equality, and labour law standards;

9. Implementation, Monitoring and Follow-Up

- Work towards the development of sector-specific frameworks and standards for the Inland Waterway Transport sector;
- Promote the inclusion of provisions on violence and harassment in collective agreements, including prevention, reporting, protection, and support measures;
- Review and update joint actions in light of evolving risks and evidence.

The Social Partners will promote this Declaration across the Inland Waterway Transport sector.

This Declaration reflects the shared commitment of the Social Partners to ensure safe, inclusive, and sustainable working environments for all workers in the sector.

Brussels, 21 October 2026

Maira VAN HELVOIRT
Vice-President

European Barge Union
(EBU)

Marjan BEELEN
Co-President

European Skippers
Organisation (ESO)

Livia SPERA
General Secretary

European Transport
Workers' Federation (ETF)