

An Opportunity to Create Change

 Discussion questions



The discussion questions were compiled by
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Sexual Harassment in the Performing Arts.

Introduction

The report “An Opportunity to Create Change” can be used as part of the change process in a workplace or an organisation. This study material has been produced in order to facilitate the discussion of the report and the topic of sexual harassment. Consider how this material can be used in your workplace, based on the conditions in your business. Should it be one moment or more? Who should participate? Who should lead the discussion? Below are some tips to think about:

- **Adapt the work to your business**

The questions and the report can be used as a whole or in parts. Select the sections of the report and the questions that are relevant to you.

- **Consider the target group**

The report and questions are designed to be used by different groups in the workplace, such as leadership teams, union committees, or employee groups.

- **Create a safe discussion climate**

A prerequisite for a successful conversation is to create a secure climate so that those who participate feel comfortable to speak openly about the issues being addressed. Think about who should be assigned to facilitate the meeting and who should be responsible for ensuring that the conversation is respectful and that everyone can be heard. The discussion leader should be a person who has the confidence of the participants. It can be an internal or external person.

Svensk Scenkonst
www.svenskscenkonst.se

Teaterförbundet för scen och film
www.teaterforbundet.se

Section 2. Background with purpose and starting point for the Commission's work

Question 2.1: The report describes what happened in the US but also in Sweden during the autumn of 2017 and which led to appeals that drew attention to instances of sexual harassment in working life. Initially, the appeals comprised the cultural realm and first to appear, on November 8, 2017, was the appeal #tystnadtagnig. The Commission notes in the report that this is not the first time that work environment problems within the performing arts domain have been highlighted, but it is the first time it has been done to such a large extent and brought together so many unified voices.

How did you first encounter #metoo? Why do you think the question was raised right then? What determined the power of the petition in Sweden? Why do you think no appeals have been made in certain parts of the labor market?

Purpose: To put the performing arts in a larger context in society and in time.

Section 3. Earlier attention on the issue of gender equality in the performing arts realm

Question 3.1: The report explains that the issue of gender equality is in no way new to the performing arts domain. What do you think that work has meant to the performing arts? What has been most important? When reading the passage, what aspects, if any, of gender equality do you think are missing in what has been done before? What aspects would be important to highlight today?

Purpose: To discuss what had been missing and what had emerged previously and reflect on whether or why certain issues were not discussed earlier.

Section 4. Sexual harassment in the performing arts domain - starting points for the Commission's analysis and proposals

The following questions pertain to p. 13-16 in the report (Sexual Harassment Is an Expression of Inequality)

Question 4.1: The report states that sexual harassment is an expression of inequality and that it becomes comprehensible through understanding how inequality is expressed. When you read the first section of this part of the report (page 13-16), do you recognize what is stated? Is there anything in this perspective that is new to you?

Question 4.2a: The report describes how important it is that management at a workplace is able to talk about why one should work with gender equality. What argument do you think could support a project to create zero tolerance with regard to sexual harassment within the performing arts?

Question 4.2b: The report's answer to question 4:2a is that arguments for such work can touch on concepts such as free creation and free art. How relevant does it feel for your workplace and for you personally?

Question 4.3: In the report, the normalization process is highlighted as pivotal for the occurrence of sexual harassment. Have you been in any situation wherein it has become clear that the boundaries seem different in different workplaces within the performing arts, either as the victim, the witness, or if you heard of something that has happened? What happened? How can it be like this, do you think?

Question 4.4: Reflect on master suppression techniques. Have you ever been affected or witnessed someone else affected? Give an example. How did you and others react? If it happens, when does it happen? Have you yourself ever used master suppression techniques? Describe what happened!

Question 4.5: The section contains reasoning about cultures of silence. It is stated that there are various reasons for being silent. What is it like at your workplace?

Question 4.6: The report describes homosociality, e.g. when men fortify other men in situations where there are many men who have power. Do you recognize this as something that you have experienced or have been told about? Discuss how it can become a problem in a workplace or in a production.

Question 4.7: The Commission notes that there is significant focus on power and distribution of power when explaining the existence of sexual harassment. The Commission notes that structural changes are needed to address the problem. What are your thoughts on this?

| *Purpose: To reflect on inequality as a cause of sexual harassment.*

**The following questions pertain to pages 16-24 of the report
(Legislation and other regulations regarding harassment)**

Question 4.8: As stated in the report, the employer has far-reaching responsibility when it comes to both investigating and taking action in cases of sexual harassment. Do you think that the employers at the workplaces where you have been employed handled these issues in the way that they were obliged to do as employers? Is there anything that should be handled differently?

Question 4.9: In the Discrimination Act there is a ban on retaliation. In other words, an employer may not subject an employee to retaliation if the employee reports or protests that the employer has acted in contravention of the law, participated in an investigation according to the law, or rejected or joined in the employer's harassment or sexual harassment. Is this prohibition clear in your workplace? What are your reflections?

Question 4.10: There are fairly new provisions in the Discrimination Act that the employer must take active measures to combat discrimination. This means, among other things, that the employer must investigate whether there are risks of discrimination or retaliation and any detected risks must be analyzed so that preventive and corrective measures can be taken. In your opinion, how should such a preventive work look? What must be considered in the performing arts?

Question 4.11: There is often a desire for a whistleblower function to be set up as a function to turn to when information about harassment occurs. The Commission notes that an advantage of such a function is that mistreatment is brought to light. One drawback is found to be that the employer's responsibility does not become clear when the information that comes to the employer is incomplete, and it becomes

difficult for the employer to take full responsibility. Based on what a whistleblower function entails according to the law as described in the report, in what way would such a function be beneficial? When might it be a problem?

Purpose: To reflect on how the legislation looks and how it should or can be used in practical examples.

The following question pertains to pages 25-28 of the report (Who can one turn to in cases of sexual harassment?)

Question 4.12: The text clarifies where you can turn if you are subjected to sexual harassment. Did you learn something new when reading the text? Was it something you didn't know? How do you think employers and trade unions could work to improve the spreading of this information?

Purpose: To reflect on the knowledge you have today about what you can do if you are in some way exposed to sexual harassment.

The following questions pertain to pages 28-31 of the report (An ethical and psychotherapeutic perspective on sexual harassment)

Question 4.13: The report shows that the organization's values, and the way in which the manager and the leader shape these, play a very important role for the working climate. Also important are the conditions you work under, i.e. available resources, board support, and staff loyalty. As applied to your experience of the working environment in the performing arts area, how important would you say that values, financial conditions, the board's support, and staff loyalty are for successful work to promote a good working environment (please rank)? Motivate.

Question 4.14: The report describes how the culture of silence creates feelings of shame. Encouraging a victim to not care about what has happened means that the debt is put on the victim. Is this something you recognize? If you are thinking of a scenario where someone has been subjected to sexual harassment, what does the culture of silence mean for victims, witnesses, and perpetrators?

Question 4.15: The report highlights the importance of being able to talk about what has happened in the workplace. What experiences of such conversations do you have? What was good and what was bad? What do you think a good conversation entails?

Question 4.16: A conversation focused on change and reconciliation is described in the report. It includes both victims and perpetrators, and in short, the goal is to be able to move on despite a difficult experience. Do you think such conversations, if used more systematically, can provide a way forward? When is it important that such conversations take place?

Purpose: To reflect on the role of leaders and employees and how to work with conversations as possible tools for development.

**The following question relates to page 33 of the report
(Guidelines and action plans)**

Question 4.17 Do you have experience in the use of the gender equality check? How was it? Could it be developed in any way?

Purpose: To consider development opportunities for tools available today.

**The following questions pertain to pages 33-38 of the report
(Survey on sexual harassment in the performing arts industry)**

Question 4.18: The report shows how common sexual harassment is in the performing arts field according to a survey done by Kantar/SIFO. Consider the results based on the following:

- Performers in the performing arts area are more vulnerable than professionals in general. Does it surprise you? Why/why not?
- The results show that young women are the most vulnerable. What are your thoughts about this?
- Still, employment seems to have a certain protective effect. Do you have any reflections on how the form of employment influences the culture of silence?
- What thoughts do you get when you read that most people have chosen not to tell anyone that they have been subjected to sexual harassment?
- Of those who dared to report, a large proportion pointed out that they were not satisfied with the way it was handled. What are your thoughts on this?

Question 4.19: The survey found that a high proportion of employers say they use plans and policies. In what ways do you think this is manifested in your workplace?

Question 4.20: In the surveys, opportunities were given to leave open answers. There, a number of measures were requested from both employees and employers. What actions do you think are important? What do you think the needs that you point to say about how the situation is today?

Purpose: To reflect on the results of the survey in relation to personal experiences.

**The following questions pertain to pages 38-40 of the report
(A systematic analysis of the testimonies in the manifestations)**

Question 4.21: Do you recognize what emerges from the analysis with regard to risks of sexual harassment taking place?

Question 4.22: On p. 36, “The Sexual Harassment Staircase (Sextrakasseritrappan)” is presented. This model is produced by Ninni Hagman and is structured in the following way:

Step 1. Compliments that are given instead of professional treatment. For example, harmless compliments contribute to the feeling that one is not taken seriously in a work situation.

Step 2. Groping without touching. For example, the feeling of “being undressed with the eyes” or of someone staring at your genitals. Sexual references, gestures, dirty words, or pornographic pictures.

Step 3. The friendly pat. For example, direct and unwelcome touching that may seem innocent but which is perceived as offensive.

Step 4. Borderline groping. For example, taking opportunities to commit sexual harassment by, for example, stroking someone, removing a hair from someone’s chest, or pressing up against someone in an elevator. It is explained away as a mistake.

Step 5. Groping and other abuses. For example, words and actions that are obviously offensive and threatening; kisses. No one would hesitate to call this sexual harassment, and therefore it is done when nobody is around to see it. This includes unwelcome proposals or demands for sexual services.

Step 6. The ultimate threat. For example, if a person does not get what he wants, the victim will not receive a higher salary or

promotion. The threat could be lower grades, lack of promotion, rumour spreading, or isolation. Rape.

Talk about your own experiences. Discuss the staircase and how it could be useful in preventive work.

Purpose: To reflect on situations when sexual harassment takes place. To discuss in which way the sexual harassment staircase can be a support function in the work against sexual harassment.

**The following questions pertain to p. 40-43 of the report
(Structured interviews)**

Question 4.23: Read all three parts of the presentation of the interviews—ie. the importance of #metoo, challenges related to sexual harassment, ideas for change—aloud in the group. Discuss the following points:

- What do you recognize and what do you not recognize?
- Do you recognize anything from what someone else has told you?
- Is there anything you think was particularly apt?
- If you become a witness to sexual harassment, what do you do then? How do you think it should be?

Purpose: To comment on what colleagues have highlighted as obstacles and opportunities and supplement with their own experiences.

Section 5. Commission's analysis and conclusions

Question 5.1 In the report, the Commission ascertains that the initiatives previously taken in this area have been significant; the raising of the issue on several occasions in the past has contributed to the strong reaction and the outcry in the performing arts that #metoo started. Do you agree? What do you think the discussions were like earlier in the performing arts with regard to sexual harassment? What are your experiences?

Question 5.2: One of the Commission's observations is that there are clear hierarchies but that informal power structures seem to be dominant. This makes the leadership unclear. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Question 5.3: The Commission believes that stardom provides a basis for exercising power. Do you agree with that picture? Is there anything that can or should be changed? If so, how?

Question 5.4: "I have diminished myself for so long," a female performer said in one of the interviews conducted by the Commission. The Commission points out that artistic freedom is used as an argument to take liberties at someone else's expense, sometimes to excuse sexual harassment. Discuss what different interpretations of artistic freedom mean.

Question 5.5: The Commission ascertains that the performing arts are characterized by temporary work communities, and that this affects the ability to work actively on health and safety issues. How can one work to change the working environment when people often work together only temporarily?

Question 5.6: The Commission believes that the culture of silence is strong and contributes to a normalization process. What causes the culture of silence that you see? Try to list as many factors as you can think of and discuss them together.

Question 5.7: The Commission notes that the management in performing arts institutions sometimes has difficulty managing sexual harassment. How can managers be given the opportunity to start a change process? How can they work preventively? How can managers change their routines for handling sexual harassment? Can you see any positive change in the workplaces where you have been active since the manifestation started?

Question 5.8: The work environment is something that is created jointly. What can you as an employee do to counteract sexual harassment? What can you as an employee do when a colleague is subjected to sexual harassment?

| *Purpose: To be able to comment and supplement the Commission's analysis and description.*

Section 6. Commission proposal

Question 6.1: The Commission believes that after #metoo and the calls that followed, there is an opportunity to take advantage of creating change. Do you agree? If so, what is required for the opportunity not to be lost. What can each do?

Question 6.2: One of the Commission's proposals is to increase knowledge and implement change projects. In order to do that, a common picture is needed in the industry of which the problems are. A common value base can be a platform to start with in order for the work to move forward. Do you think there are prerequisites for such work? How could it go? What is important?

Question 6.3: The Commission report shows that legislation is in place. Routines and guidelines exist, but this must be brought to life in the organization. How could that happen to you? Why is it important? In what way can it make a difference?

Question 6.4: The Commission points out that there must be conditions to exercise good leadership. What conditions do you think are needed? Is there anything missing in the Commission's proposal in this part?

Question 6.5: The Commission notes that there are reasons to consider whether collective bargaining solutions can be a viable way of achieving a better functioning regime to prevent harassment and sexual harassment. Do you think that collective agreements, based on the Commission's proposal on page 51-52, are a good tool for getting a joint responsibility in this area?

Question 6.6: The Commission believes that the call is important for a road ahead. Who or what do you think should be responsible for such conversations taking place? When should calls take place? Who should participate in the conversation?

Question 6.7: The Commission proposes that the Joint Council should be a hub to drive the change process forward. In what way do you think the Council could work to reach out as broadly as possible? What recordings would you like to make?

Question 6.8: The Commission worked for 3 months. It notes that it does not look at all parts and that further need for transparency is available. when it comes to the prevailing silence culture and how the issues are integrated into the artistic education. What more do you think would need to be investigated?

Purpose: To reflect on the Commission's proposal and make suggestions for the continued work.

Notes

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 **Discussion questions**