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Health and Safety at Work is Everybody's Business
A Practical guidance for employers

Accompanying the document

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and
Health Legislation and Policy

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Health and Safety at Work is

Everybody's Business

Practical guidance for employers[1]

This guidance document complements the European Commission's Communication "Safer and Healthier Work for All – Modernisation of EU Occupational Safety and Health legislation and policy".

It is a practical guide for employers, to be adapted to national circumstances, providing an overview of the main obligations and existing tools and resources which can help to put those obligations in practice. Its objective is to assist effective and efficient implementation of the occupational safety and health framework.

A brief word on the law: at the EU level, the legislation sets *minimum* requirements throughout the EU and comprises the Framework Directive 89/391/EEC and more than 25 related Directives on various subjects. **EU Directives have to be transposed into national law and implemented by the Member States. Employers will therefore first of all need to look at the national legislation**; firstly, it contains the relevant (transposed) EU provisions, and secondly, it may contain important additional requirements that employers may need to comply with. Member States are indeed allowed to adopt more stringent protective measures than those foreseen in the EU Directives. It is also the national competent authorities, usually the labour inspections, who are primarily responsible for enforcing the national provisions transposing the Directives.

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[1] The document refers to the EU OSH "Framework Directive" (89/391/EEC) and does not take account of the transposition acts of the Framework Directive made in the Member States. Therefore, it will remain for those who read this document to decide how it best can be used with respect to the national legislation.
The document draws mainly on articles, guides and tools produced by EU-OSHA (including OSH Wiki).

1. Good health and safety is good for your business

As an employer you surely know that you have a legal responsibility to protect your workers from occupational health and safety (OSH) risks. You probably also know that you are supposed to make a risk assessment that would underpin your health and safety actions.

But OSH is not just about compliance with law and it is much more than an administrative duty. It is simply a vital part of good business management.

The success of your company is foremost the success of the people you employ: their combined skills, talents, commitment and hard work. This is why you try to attract and recruit the best people, you invest in their training, develop their careers and make sure they earn

Figure 1. Source: EU-OSHA

enough to stay with you. You want them to remain motivated. Occupational health and safety is part of the same investment. Through good OSH you are reducing the chances that your best-qualified mechanic will get badly injured in an accident, that your promising designer will be out of work for weeks because of a burn-out, that your experienced accountant will start making mistakes as he is suffering from constant back pain.

Experience shows that for every euro you as an employer invest in OSH you can expect a return of more than two[2]. Avoided production losses and disturbances, sick leaves, damages to equipment and to the company image as well as avoided administrative and legal costs are only some of the potential benefits deriving for enterprises from lower rates of accidents at work and decreases in work-related ill-health.

Good OSH is important in big companies, but it is vital for small ones. In fact, serious OSH incidents can be particularly catastrophic for a small enterprise:

- It is far more difficult for micro and small enterprises to recover from any OSH incident.

- Key workers cannot be easily or quickly replaced.

- Short-term interruptions of business can lead to loss of clients and important contracts.

- A serious incident can lead to the closure of a business due to the direct costs of dealing with the incident or the loss of contracts and/or customers.

- Even small incidents and cases of ill health can double the level of sickness absence.

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[2] Calculating the international return on prevention for companies: costs and benefits of investments in occupational safety and health, International Social Security Association; 2013.

As an owner or manager of a small company you might feel you do not have the time, the money or the capacity to deal with OSH or you might assume that it is up to your workers to take care of their health and avoid accidents at work.

But there are many examples of how health and safety can be effectively managed in a small company, for the benefit of the workers and the business itself. Companies which achieve this often draw on the unique assets related to their small size: the fact that communication lines are short and personal and that simple solutions can be implemented at short notice. What can make it easier to achieve good OSH in small companies is also the fact that you have personal, daily direct contact with your staff and that your workers are often more autonomous and personally-engaged in designing working methods and the workplace itself.

Whatever the company size, it makes sense to have good OSH and managing OSH does not have to be complex. Simple improvements can often substantially improve health and safety at work and in most sectors you do not need any special expertise to be able to identify potential risks and decide how to address them. Most of the time, just looking around your workplace, thinking about past incidents and talking to your staff will give you a good idea of what could be dangerous or make people ill and what could be improved.

There are plenty of guides and tools that can help you in the process. Your national authority for health and safety and the EU agency (EU-OSHA) are good places to start finding relevant material. This guidance document also provides some practical examples and references.

Useful tools and references:

- **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)** has developed so far a number of guidance documents and practical tools for day –to-day OSH risk management: https://osha.europa.eu/en

- **National Focal Points**. EU-OSHA is a network organization, with a "focal point" in each Member State. The focal points in each Member State are typically the competent authority for safety and health at work and can provide more detailed information and guidance, anchored in the national context: https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/national-focal-points/focal-points-index

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2. The legal obligations

The law obliges you as an employer to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work. To fulfil this obligation, you are supposed to take actions such as evaluating the risks to the safety and health of your workers, ensuring that each worker receives adequate safety and health training, involving workers and their representatives in discussions on health and safety and keeping a record of occupational accidents. Depending

on your national legislation or the sector or nature of your activity, there might exist some more specific obligations.

Workers also have some legal obligations in relation to health and safety. They are supposed to make correct use of equipment, inform you of any serious and immediate danger and of any shortcomings in the safety arrangements. They should also cooperate with you in ensuring that the working environment and working conditions are safe.

You can manage health and safety issues internally with some workers or through a service in your company (e.g. the human resources department) or, if this is not possible, with the assistance of competent external services or persons, which however will not discharge you from your legal responsibilities in this area. You can also do it on your own if your national legislation so authorises.

Since health and safety is an indispensable aspect of business management, it makes sense to fully integrate OSH considerations in the overall functioning of your company. Make it part of your normal operations rather than seeing it as an external obligation and yet another administrative box to tick. Most of the OSH obligations you would probably implement even if they were not required by law as they are quite simply logical measures to prevent accidents and health problems at work.

3. Risk assessment in practice

One of the key legal obligations for employers in OSH is to "be in possession of an assessment of the risks to safety and health at work, including those facing groups of workers exposed to particular risks" and to "decide on the protective measures to be taken (…)".

Risk assessment is however NOT just an obligation – it is the real basis of any approach to safety and health management and is essential in the establishment of a safe and healthy workplace. It will help you to identify the right measures to prevent risks at work and provide the right information and training for workers.

- **Key steps and sources of information**

The law does not prescribe exactly how to conduct the risk assessment although for some specific high-risk sectors or activities coverage of certain elements/risks can be required. National legislation may also include more detailed requirements concerning the content and form of risk assessments.

There are different methods to conduct a risk assessment but essentially, you need to think about what might cause harm to your employees and decide how to prevent that

STEP 1 Collecting information

STEP 2 Identifying hazards

STEP 3 Assessing risk arising from hazards (estimating probability and severity of consequences and deciding whether risk is tolerable)

STEP 4 Planning actions to eliminate or reduce risk Reviewing assessment

STEP 5 Documenting risk assessment

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Figure 2. Source: EU-OSHA

harm. The process involves five steps as shown in Figure 2.

Remember to involve workers and their representatives in the process – they will help you understand the existing risks. They should also get to know what conclusions you draw from the assessment and what measures you will implement as a consequence.

Other sources of information include analysis of past incidents, health statistics, advice from your national OSH authorities and sectoral associations. It is particularly useful to look into "near-misses" - events that had the potential to result in injury, illness or damage – but fortunately it did not. In workplaces, near miss situations are common occurrences, though they are often ignored. However, near misses can be looked at as free lessons on how to prevent accidents from occurring. Therefore, gathering information about near misses and analysing the information to initiate the appropriate corrective actions is a good way to promote safety in the workplace.

> **Near misses - *"Iceberg theory"***
>
> For every reported major injury, there are 300 near misses.
>
> *Source: OSH Wiki*

- **Do you need an external consultant?**

If you do not have the necessary competences within your company, you shall ask an external health and safety specialist to take care of the health and safety activities for your company, and to carry out a risk assessment for you. But in most cases this should not be necessary. A straightforward process based on judgment and requiring no specialist skills or complicated techniques is sufficient for most businesses. Doing the risk assessment yourself, for example with a free online tool, will not only save you money but also give you a reassurance that you have taken all important issues into account.

In some situations, however, external expertise is necessary. This could be for example if:

- you need to assess less obvious risks, e.g. in highly complex technical systems;

- examine finer details of particular risks;

- devise a novel technical measure for risk reduction.

If you have to call in external expertise:

 make sure that you choose somebody with the right qualifications and competencies – and check if your national legislation has regulated this;

- involve your workers or their representatives in the final decision on who should conduct the risk assessment, what it should cover and how it will be followed up.

- **Work situations and activities which may involve risks**

When preparing your risk assessment you may want to look at the following different aspects of work situations and activities. Bear in mind: this is not an exhaustive list.

- use of work equipment, such as tools and machines;
- work practices and layout of premises;
- use of electricity;
- hazardous substances, such as fumes, dusts, chemicals;
- physical agents, such as noise, vibration, radiation;
- biological agents, such as moulds, bacteria, viruses;
- environmental factors, such as inadequate light, temperature, humidity, ventilation;
- human factors, such as design of the equipment and workplace;
- psychological factors that can lead to stress, violence, bullying;
- work organisation and 'housekeeping' measures;
- repetitive, forceful or heavy work or awkward postures which can lead to musculoskeletal disorders;
- other factors, such as dangers related to other people, work with animals, weather conditions etc.

Figure 3. Napo in... shocking situations – Napo Consortium

For each of these hazards, more detailed guidance exists, developed either at European level (European Commission, EU-OSHA) or by the competent national authorities. Those are useful sources for more detailed information on how to identify, but also manage these risks.

Please see, as an example, the guidance developed so far for chemical risks management:

Useful tools and references:

- *Practical guidelines of a non-binding nature on the protection of the health and safety of workers from risks related to chemical agents at work,* European Commission, 2005: https://osha.europa.eu/en/legislation/guidelines/practical-guidelines-of-a-non-binding-nature-on-the-protection-of-the-health-and-safety-of-workers-from-the-risks-related-to-chemical-agents-at-work
- *Minimising chemical risk to workers' health and safety through substitution,* European Commission 2012: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7320&type=2&furtherPubs=yes
- *Chemical labels are changing – How will this affect you?,* European Commission, 2013:http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7639&type=2

&furtherPubs=yes
- *Chemicals at work- a new labelling system – Guidance to help employers and workers to manage the transition to the new classification, labelling and packaging system,* European Commission, 2013: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=7634&type=2&furtherPubs=yes
- Guidance and interactive risk-assessment tools, including on chemical risks management accessible from the websites of National Focal Points of EU-OSHA: https://osha.europa.eu/en/about-eu-osha/national-focal-points/focal-points-index

Vulnerable workers and other people

When making a risk assessment, also pay attention to workers who might be especially vulnerable (see Figure 4) and also to other people who are at your premises: contractors, visitors, members of the public. Often measures to reduce risks to vulnerable workers will in any case benefit the whole workforce.
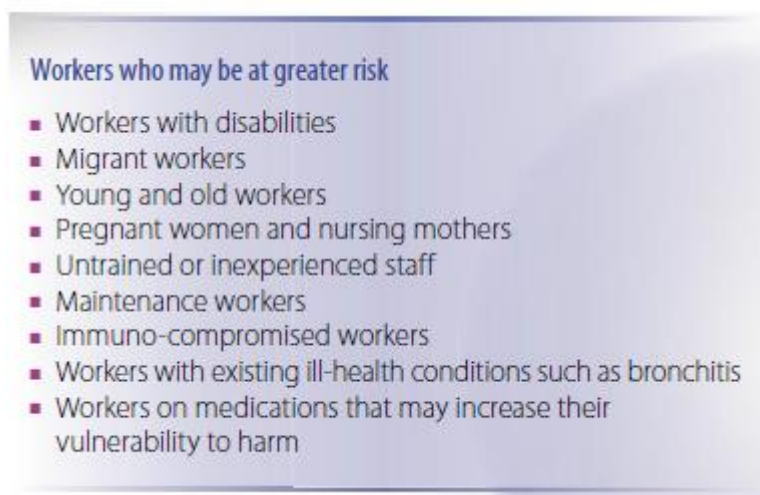
Figure 4. Source: EU-OSHA

- **Risk prioritisation and follow-up actions**

Once you have identified the hazards and know whom they affect, you will need to evaluate and prioritise risks. You need to also verify whether there are any specific legal obligations - for instance regarding specificities of risk assessment, information or training of workers etc. related to a given risk, sector of activity or category of worker.

In implementing the measures necessary for the safety and health of your workers you need to take into account the following general principles of prevention:

➢ avoiding risks;

➢ evaluating the risks which cannot be avoided;

➢ combating risks at source;

➢ adapting the work to the individual, especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods, with a view, in particular to alleviating monotonous work;

➢ adapting to technical progress;

➢ substituting the dangerous by the non-dangerous or the less dangerous;

➢ developing a coherent overall prevention policy, covering technology, organisation of work, working conditions, social relationships and the influence of factors related to the working environment;

➢ giving collective protective measures priority over individual protective measures (e.g. control exposure to fumes by local exhaust ventilation rather than personal respirators);

➢ seeking to improve the level of protection.

Risk assessment and the resulting preventive and protective measures are not done once-and-for-all. Monitor effectiveness of your actions, adapt your plan if necessary and look out for new risks as your activities/workplace changes.

- **Documenting your risk assessment**

The law requires that you write down the results of your risk assessment and protective measures and keep a written record for reference, and indeed it makes sense. You can use it to demonstrate to your workers, to trade unions and labour inspectors that you have made informed decisions about the risks and ways to tackle them. It will also be a useful tool for you to monitor implementation of the actions you planned. There are no specific requirements as to the content of the written record, but it would be reasonable to include elements such as:

✓ name and function of the person(s) carrying out the examination;

✓ the hazards and risks identified;

✓ groups of workers facing particular risks;

✓ the necessary protection measures – when you would plan to introduce them, who would be responsible for them and how you would monitor progress;

✓ information about the involvement of workers and their representatives in the risk assessment process.

There are plenty of tools which can help you conduct and record your risk assessment. These include guides, checklists and templates. See the box at the end of this section for some ideas and check the website of the EU-OSHA and your national health and safety authority for further material.

- **Risk assessment e-tools**

What can be particularly helpful for small and medium enterprises are electronic, internet-based risk assessment tools, such as the **OiRA tool (Online interactive Risk Assessment)**. OiRA tools are easy-to-use and cost-free. With these tools you can conduct all steps of the risk assessment: starting with the identification and evaluation of workplace risks, through to the decision-making and implementation of preventative actions, to monitoring and reporting. There already exist some 120 OiRA tools, in different languages and adapted to different sectors. Similar tools also exist in several Member States[3].

In many cases, having a risk assessment report generated through OiRA or equivalent tools may be considered as compliance with the risk assessment obligation – remember to check your national legislation or with your national labour inspectorate if in doubt.

Figure 5. Source: EU-OSHA. Examples of some sectors covered by specific OiRA tools

4. Prevention as a key principle

Once an accident has occurred and somebody has been badly hurt or even killed, or once someone has been exposed to a dangerous substance that will cause
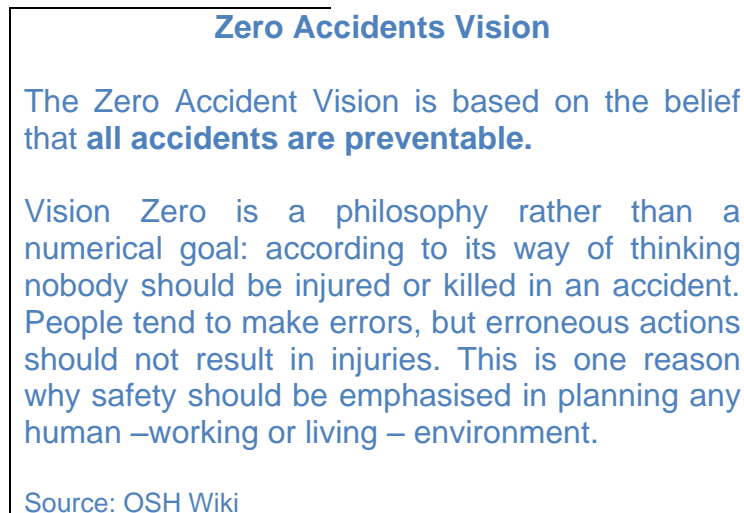

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[3] https://oira.osha.europa.eu/en/irat-network

them cancer, it is too late. The damage has been done.

It is much better for workers and also for your company to act before something bad happens, to anticipate the risk and prevent it. This is why prevention is a key concept and the main objective of OSH.

Zero Accidents Vision

The Zero Accident Vision is based on the belief that **all accidents are preventable.**

Vision Zero is a philosophy rather than a numerical goal: according to its way of thinking nobody should be injured or killed in an accident. People tend to make errors, but erroneous actions should not result in injuries. This is one reason why safety should be emphasised in planning any human –working or living – environment.

Source: OSH Wiki

- **Preventive measures**

Preventive measures aim to reduce the likelihood of occurrence of a work accident or an occupational disease. Preventive measures can be of two types:

1. **engineering or technical measures** - designed to act directly on the risk source, in order to remove, reduce or replace it;

   One example of such technical measure could be water-assisted dust suppression to prevent exposure to silica dust.

2. **organisational or administrative measures** – meant to change behaviours and attitudes and promote a positive safety culture.

   Harmful factors are to a great extent related to the nature of the processes, technologies, products and equipment in the workplace, but may also be influenced by the way in which the work is organised.

Preventive measures need to be complemented with protection and mitigation measures.

- **Protection measures**

Protection measures should be primarily collective. Individual measures can be considered as an alternative if collective solutions are not feasible or effective.

Figure 7. Source: OSH Wiki

1. *collective measures* – designed to enclose or isolate the risk, for instance through the use of physical barriers, organisational or administrative measures to diminish the exposure duration (job rotation, timing of the job, safety signs) and then,

2. *individual measures* - any adequate Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) designed to protect the worker.
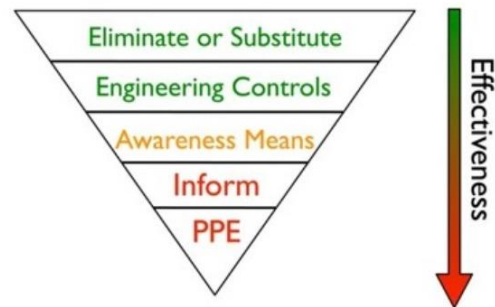
- **Mitigation measures**

Finally, you should look into possible mitigation measures with the aim of reducing the severity of any damage to facilities and harm to employees and the public. Examples include:

➢ emergency plan;
➢ evacuation planning;
➢ warning systems (alarms, flashing lights);
➢ test of emergency procedures, exercises and drills, fire-extinguishing system;
➢ return-to-work plan.

5. OSH training

- **Legal obligations and the importance of OSH training**

Any preventive measure will pose a practical challenge for workers: they will need to change the way they work, adapt to new equipment or new procedures. Therefore it is important that already when deciding on a new OSH measure you ask yourself how you are going to make sure that workers learn and start applying the measure as quickly and as well as possible. Without this, your risk management plan will simply not work. Indeed, recent studies looking into the profitability of health and safety interventions show that those interventions which involve training and organizational change are more profitable than those based on technical changes exclusively[4].

This is also why the health and safety law envisages that employers should provide adequate OSH training to their workers and give them information and instructions relevant to their workstation and tasks.

Useful tools and references:

- "Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion in the European Union" sets out several principles, which aim at preventing ill-health at work (including work-related diseases, accidents, injuries, occupational diseases and stress) and enhancing health-promoting potentials and well-being in the workforce - http://www.enwhp.org/fileadmin/rs-dokumente/dateien/Luxembourg_Declaration.pdf

Figure 8. Source: OSH Wiki

- OSH Wiki: Prevention and control strategies - https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Prevention_and_control_strategies#cite_note-Machinesafety-20

- OSH Wiki: Organisational measures of accident prevention: https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Organisational_measures_of_accident_prevention#cite_note-EU-OSHA.2C_2011a-2

- OSH Wiki: Zero accident vision: https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Zero_accident_vision

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It is particularly important to make sure that your workers get relevant OSH information in situations such as:

- on recruitment;

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[4] https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/reports/the-business-case-for-safety-and-health-cost-benefit-analyses-of-interventions-in-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises

- when they are transferred or change jobs;

- when you introduce new technology or new equipment;

- when the workplace risks change.

Workers with particular OSH responsibilities are also entitled to appropriate training. Training is also especially important for young workers or those with little professional experience. Don't forget that team leaders, managers and supervisors also need OSH training.

Make sure that your workers have opportunities to gain sufficient knowledge and refresh it from time to time. Remind them also that they have the responsibility to protect their own and their colleagues' health and safety by following instructions given in the OSH training.

As with other OSH measures, it is important that you involve workers and their representatives in the design of training actions. This will make the training more relevant - as workers know best how the work is performed in practice - and also more successful as workers will be more committed to following the training if they actively participated in its design.

- **How to set up OSH training**

Your national legislation or sector-specific regulation might specify some particular obligations on the content of the training, but in general what is important is that workers are well aware of what they must and mustn't do in order to avoid accidents and ill-health.

In general, it is up to you to decide how you want to achieve this goal.

Once again, try to approach this obligation using common sense. It is in your interest that workers know what they are doing: you do not need to organise training just for the sake of it, but you do need to provide sufficient support to your workers to prevent accidents and health problems.

The same content can be delivered through very diverse methods - each with different strengths and limitations. As a general rule, the more active the participation, the better the learning effect. Also think about your target audience: you need to consider factors such as the age, experience, position and educational levels of the workers when selecting the content of the training, but also when deciding on the best method and form for the training.

Think about the timing of your training, for example, so that part-time workers or those working different hours are not left out.

Big companies might run comprehensive training programmes with external consultants, as might companies dealing with particularly hazardous substances or using very specialised equipment.

For small companies with common hazards, simple awareness raising or information sessions might be sufficient and you may prefer simple methods such as leaflets, posters, communication through supervisors and mentors, discussions in teams.

Check out the websites of your national health and safety authorities and the EU-OSHA for ready-to-use training material. A good example is the Napo animation series produced by several European OSH actors in the NAPO Consortium.
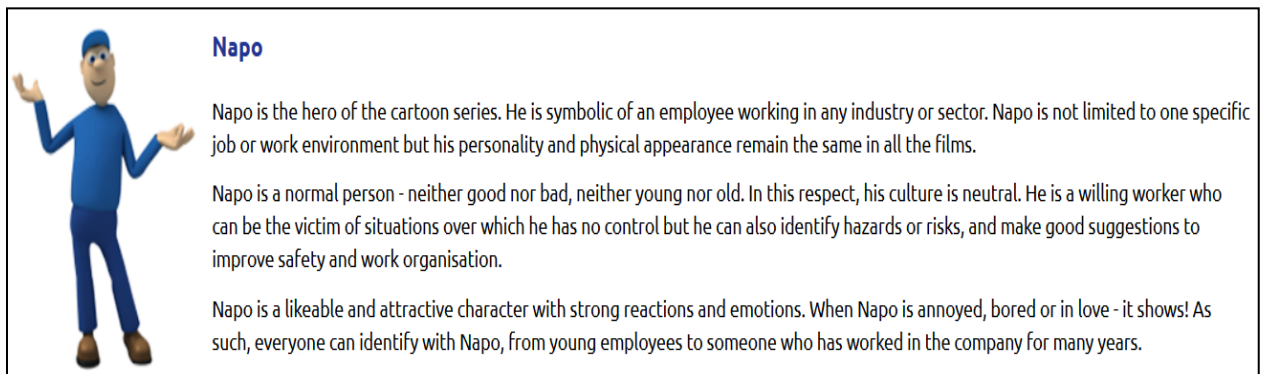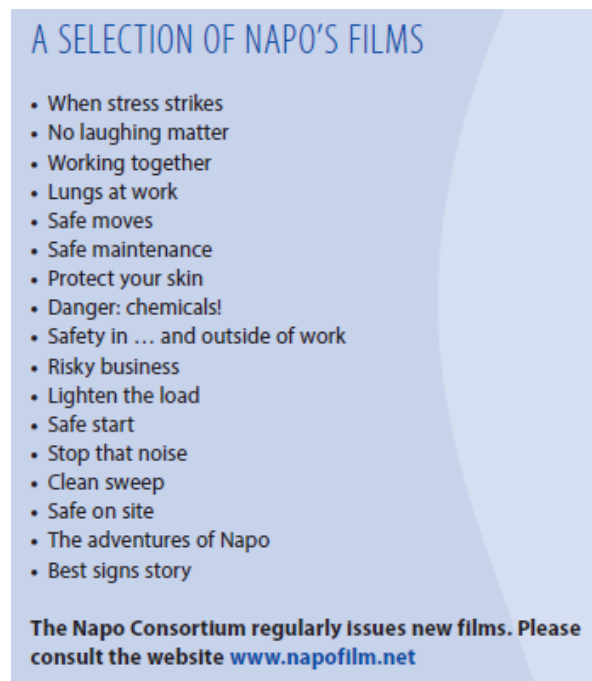

Napo

Napo is the hero of the cartoon series. He is symbolic of an employee working in any industry or sector. Napo is not limited to one specific job or work environment but his personality and physical appearance remain the same in all the films.

Napo is a normal person - neither good nor bad, neither young nor old. In this respect, his culture is neutral. He is a willing worker who can be the victim of situations over which he has no control but he can also identify hazards or risks, and make good suggestions to improve safety and work organisation.

Napo is a likeable and attractive character with strong reactions and emotions. When Napo is annoyed, bored or in love - it shows! As such, everyone can identify with Napo, from young employees to someone who has worked in the company for many years.

Figure 9. Source: NAPO Consortium

A SELECTION OF NAPO'S FILMS

- When stress strikes
- No laughing matter
- Working together
- Lungs at work
- Safe moves
- Safe maintenance
- Protect your skin
- Danger: chemicals!
- Safety in … and outside of work
- Risky business
- Lighten the load
- Safe start
- Stop that noise
- Clean sweep
- Safe on site
- The adventures of Napo
- Best signs story

The Napo Consortium regularly issues new films. Please consult the website www.napofilm.net

- **Making OSH training a success**

EU-OSHA has identified several factors which can contribute to the success of your OSH training:

➢ Motivation and commitment of senior staff and management to OSH, which can include their presence at training sessions;

➢ Providing training in the context of an effective overall safety management system to prevent workplace risks. Training alone is not effective in reducing risks;

- Using peers, including more experienced young workers, and older, experienced workers as mentors. This provides a positive experience for new and more senior colleagues alike;

- Using active, participatory learning methods, e.g. where people learn to recognise hazards and solve real work problems, in real workplaces;

- Feeding the results of such studies back into the real workplace risk assessment and prevention process. This makes the exercise meaningful for young workers and is of value to employers;

- Training supervisors, mentors and trainers in their role and in OSH;

- Making OSH training an integral part of lifelong training and development. By law, OSH should not only be a 'one-off' training at the start of work.

Useful tools and references:

- European Network Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health, ENETOSH - standards for selecting suitable trainers, developing harmonised high level training content, and setting up a certification system. The standard consists of the following four parts: i. Training the trainer, ii. Basics of safety and health, iii. Workplace health promotion, iv. OSH management. It has been translated into 10 languages and can be obtained from the ENETOSH website at http://www.enetosh.net/webcom/show_page.php/_c-134/_nr-5/_lkm-140/i.html

- Napo instruction animations - https://www.napofilm.net/en/about-napo/the-napo-story

  Napo is the hero in a series of animated films that introduce important workplace safety and health topics in a memorable, light-hearted way. The likeable character symbolises an employee who could be working in any industry or sector. The Napo films are produced with the involvement of several European health and safety organisationsauthorities: AUVA (Austria); DGUV (Germany); HSE (UK); INAIL (Italy); INRS (France); SUVA (Switzerland); and as well as the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA). **They are free to use in OSH awareness-raising, training, education and communication activities.**

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6. Leadership and OSH culture

No matter how exact your risk assessment is and how good your risk management measures are, to make it work on the ground, you and other managers in your company need to "walk the talk". You need to show your workers that you really believe in the importance of health and safety and that you are truly committed to following through your action plans.

- **Health and safety culture**

Health and safety culture is one of the key factors when it comes to determining the effectiveness of a safety system. It means seeing health and safety principles and objectives as core company values and integrating them into every day actions and decisions.

Positive safety culture implies that you give a credible example for behaviours and values you are promoting. Daily pro-active supervision is as important as visible commitment to the high priority of safety within the organisation. It goes without saying that you yourself need to respect the rules. Your workers will see your actions and on this basis judge what behaviours are acceptable and which are not.

Your personal impact might be particularly strong in a small company: if you are an owner/manager of a workshop, and sometimes working alongside workers, your decision whether to wear protective equipment, for example, will have a strong influence on your workers' attitudes.

Similarly, you have great opportunities to lead by example and reinforce the right behaviours as a middle manager or team leader with close personal contact with workers and an involvement in their daily work.

However, the role of chief executive officers and board members is crucial as well. The priority a company and senior managers give to health and safety at work and the extent to which managers use their authority to promote compliance with occupational health and safety policy and rules motivates workers to follow the standards set by management.

The United Kingdom's HSE[5] proposes some examples on how managers can easily and visibly show their commitment to occupational health and safety within their company:

➢ Visit the shop-floor to praise good occupational health and safety approaches and to address unsafe behaviour by encouraging changes and looking at the causes for failure to follow the occupational health and safety rules. These visits can also be useful in providing opportunities for employees to raise any health and safety issues.

➢ Regularly attend health and safety committee meetings.

➢ Introduce the topic of occupational health and safety during team meetings.

➢ Be actively involved in the investigation of accidents, near misses, incidents and ill health.

➢ Mention health and safety to a wide range of audiences whenever possible.

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[5] http://www.hse.gov.uk/leadership/

➢ Concentrate in an equal measure on good and bad health and safety news, praising good behaviour and news and taking bad news as an opportunity to improve the situation.

➢ Encourage employees to be proactively involved in the setting up of strategies, policies and measures on OSH.

➢ Set long-term OSH goals and measure the OSH performance of your company.

➢ Hold managers, supervisors and line management staff accountable for OSH.

You can make OSH leadership more visible through internal codes of conduct or management charters, developed in cooperation with your workers, such as in the example below.

Ten Platinum Rules for better Management[6]

1. Remember you are working with people

    • Do not exhaust them
    • People are not machines
    • Treat them with dignity and respect

2. Listen to and talk with your people

    • Be inclusive
    • Do it frequently
    • Value and develop people skills in supervisors and managers

3. Fix things promptly

    • Do not let issues fester
    • Keep people informed of progress

4. Make sure your paper work is worth having

    • Keep it current
    • Make sure it is meaningful

5. Improve competency in OSH

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[6] The Ten Platinum Rules from the mining sector in Australia contain general rules that they could be valid in any sector - https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/The_importance_of_good_leadership_in_occupational_safety_and_health

- **Worker participation**

Building and implementing an effective OSH culture involves not only managers, but also workers. As a manager you do not have all the solutions to all health and safety problems. Workers and their representatives have the detailed knowledge and experience of how the job is done and how it affects them. For this reason, workplaces in which workers actively contribute to health and safety often have a lower occupational risk level and accident rates. A recent study has also demonstrated that those occupational health and interventions that closely involve workers are most profitable[7].

Worker participation on health and safety is a simple two-way process where employers and their workers/worker representatives:

- talk to one another;
- listen to each other's concerns;
- look for and share views and information;
- discuss issues in good time;
- consider what everyone has to say;
- make decisions together;
- trust and respect each other.

You know that the law requires that workers participate, be informed, instructed, trained and consulted on health and safety. Full participation goes however beyond consultation - workers and their representatives are also involved in making decisions.

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[7] https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/reports/the-business-case-for-safety-and-health-cost-benefit-analyses-of-interventions-in-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises

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Useful tools and references:

- EU-OSHA: Management Leadership in OSH – a practical guide - https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/documents/en/publications/reports/management-leadership-in-OSH_guide/hwc2012-13_prac_guide_leadership.pdf

- EU-OSHA: Worker participation in OSH – a practical guide - https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/reports/workers-participation-in-OSH_guide

- EU-OSHA: Worker participation practices – a review of case studies: https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/documents/en/publications/literature_reviews/worker-participation-practices-a-review-of-eu-osha-case-studies/worker-participation-case-studies.pdf

Figure 10. Source: EU OSHA

- Good practices at EU-OSHA website: https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/documents/en/publications/reports/european-good-practice-awards-2012-2013/HWC_Good_Practice_Award_Booklet_2013.pdf

- Guide developed by the HSE: http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg417.pdf

- OSH Wiki – The importance of good leadership in OSH: https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/The_importance_of_good_leadership_in_occupational_safety_and_health
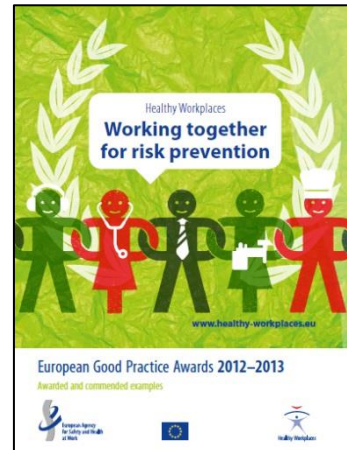
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7. Three examples of risk management in practice

Workplace hazards are numerous and diverse. For some, the nature of the risks and the measures that can be taken to reduce them are well understood, others are more complex and challenging for an employer to manage. Changes in the labour market and work organization mean that new risks emerge or some risks become more prevalent. In this section we will give you three examples of risk factors that occur in any workplace and that can be challenging to address. You will find here some tips and tools on how to manage them in practice.

7.1. Work-related stress

What it means at the workplace?

Stress at work may be related to:

- job content, including type of tasks, contact with people through work (such as clients), changes in processes, restructuring and use of skills;

- work intensity and job autonomy, including aspects of workload, work pace and control;

- working time arrangements and work–life balance;

- social environment, including interpersonal relationships at work and social support;

- job insecurity and career development.

Stress is experienced by a person when they feel that there is an imbalance between the demands made of them and their capacity to cope with those demands. Clearly, a worker under stress is not as productive and creative as he or she could be and working under prolonged stress may result in concentration problems, mistakes and negative behaviours.

Stress at work may have negative psychological, physical and social impacts and result in burnout, depression and in extreme cases even suicide.

In addition to mental health problems, workers suffering from prolonged stress can go on to develop serious physical health problems such as cardiovascular disease or musculoskeletal problems.

Figure 11. Source: EU-OSHA. Healthy Workplace Campaign 2014-2015

What do you need to do as an employer?

You need to reflect on psychosocial risks and measures to address them in your health and safety risk assessment (see above for general information on conducting risk assessments).

Look out for signs of work-related stress. These may be quite diverse: Figure 12 gives some examples of organisational and individual indicators of work-related stress.

Here are some ideas of what questions you might ask yourself in your risk assessment and what you could do to address some of the problems you might identify:

→ *"Culture"*

Is there good open communication, support and mutual respect? Are views from workers and their representatives valued?

→ *Demands*

Are staff overloaded or underloaded, do they have the capabilities and capacities for their tasks? What about the physical (noise, vibration, ventilation, lighting etc.) and psychosocial (violence, bullying etc.) environments?

→ *Control*

Do individuals have sufficient say in the way their work is carried out?

→ *Relationships*

How are relationships between colleagues and between colleagues and managers? What about relationships between managers and senior managers? Is there evidence of any bullying or harassment?

→ *Change*

Are workers anxious about their employment status? Are they confused by workplace changes and what it means for them and their colleagues?

→ *Role*

Do people suffer role conflict (conflicting demands) or role ambiguity

Organisation

Participation
- Absenteeism, high staff turnover, poor time-keeping, disciplinary problems, bullying, aggressive communication, isolation.

Performance
- Reduced output or quality of product or service, accidents, poor decision-making, errors.

Costs
- Increased costs from compensation or increased health care costs, referrals to health services.

Individual

Behaviour
- Tobacco, alcohol or drug abuse, violence, bullying or harassment.

Psychological
- Sleep problems, anxiety disorders, depression, inability to concentrate, irritability, family relationship problems, burnout.

Health
- Back problems, heart problems, peptic ulcers, hypertension, depressed immune system.
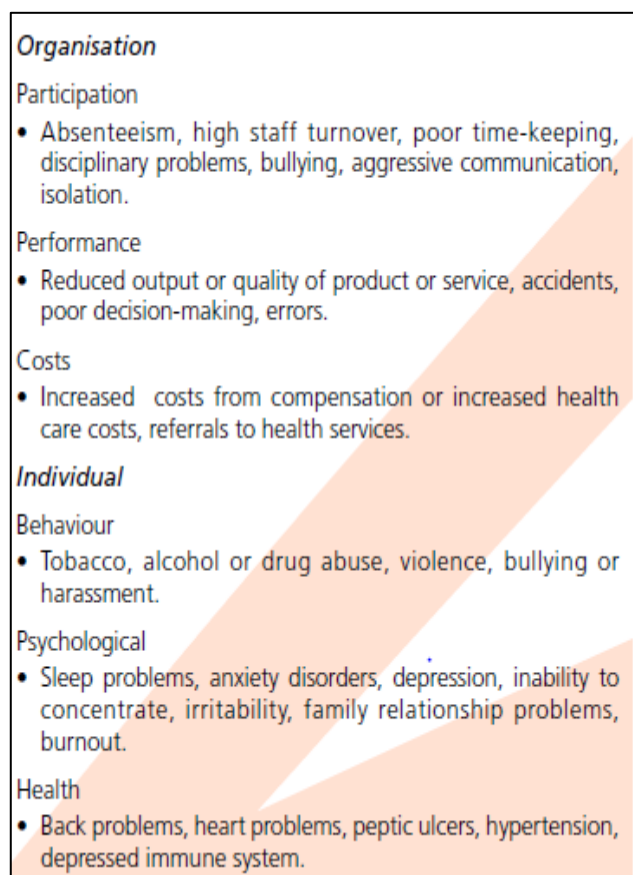
Figure 12. Source: EU-OSHA

(lack of clarity)?

→ *Support, training and individual factors*

Is there adequate induction for new recruits and staff whose jobs have changed? Are staff given social support? Is account taken of individual differences?

There is clearly a business case for learning more about psychosocial factors, how they impact workers and what can be done to prevent or reduce the negative effects. Check the references box at the end of this section, in particular the e-guide developed by the EU-OSHA, which has a specific version for your country. Your national health and safety authority will have other useful guides, checklists or tools.

Useful tools and references:

• European Commission, Promoting mental health in the workplace: Guidance to implementing a comprehensive approach. It introduces and provides guidance for employers, employees and other stakeholders on the management of mental health issues in the workplace.

http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=716&langId=en

• EU-OSHA, Psychosocial risks and stress at work. This website includes good practice resources on this topic.

https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress

• EU-OSHA, A practical e-Guide to managing psychosocial risks. This multi-lingual e-guide helps employers and people working in small and micro enterprises to deal with psychosocial risks. It has 30 national versions, each including references to the national legislation and information on national resources and practical tools.

http://hw2014.healthy-workplaces.eu/en/tools-and-resources/a-guide-to-psychosocial-risks

EU-OSHA, OSHwiki: Psychosocial issues. This website provides information on psychosocial risks, in particular, in the context of changing work patterns, as well as from the sectoral perspective.
https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Psychosocial_issues

Good practices at EU-OSHA website:
https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/documents/healthy-workplaces-good-practice-awards2014-2015booklet.pdf

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7.2. Risks related to musculoskeletal disorders

What it means at the workplace

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most common work-related problem in Europe and cost employers and Member States billions of euros.

The two main groups of MSDs are back pain/injuries and work-related upper limb disorders (sometimes referred to as 'repetitive strain injuries'). Lower limbs can also be affected. MSDs cover any damage or disorder of the joints or other tissues. Health problems range from minor aches and pains to more serious medical conditions requiring time off or medical treatment. In more chronic cases, they can even lead to disability and the need to give up work.

MSDs can be caused, or made worse, by physical (ergonomic, biomechanical) factors, but also psychosocial factors such as work intensity, high demands, low variability, lack of control over the work, mental workload, and carrying high levels of responsibility, in particular when associated with physical factors.

In addition, the characteristics of the working environment, including the work equipment and workstation layout, and the characteristic of the object handled, have an influence on the development of these conditions.

What do you need to do as an employer?

Ergonomic risks occur virtually in every workplace. They affect factory workers, drivers or farmers but also people working in services and office workers. You cannot completely eliminate the risks but the good news is that you can take cost-effective action to prevent or at least minimise some MSDs[8]. This makes sense, as recent studies show that certain investments to improve ergonomics/tackle MSDs at the workplace can trigger a high return on investment[9].

For workers who already have MSDs, the challenge is to maintain their employability, keep them working and, if necessary, reintegrate them into the workplace.

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[8] For the activities implying the manual handling of load, the work with display screen equipment and the use of vibrating tools or equipments you should specifically refer to the provisions laid down in the Directives which cover these areas of activity.

[9] A cost-benefit ratio of up-to 6.2 was observed from case-studies in a recent publication:
https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/reports/the-business-case-for-safety-and-health-cost-benefit-analyses-of-interventions-in-small-and-medium-sized-enterprises

Figure 13. Scenes from Napo in Lighten the Load - Napo Consortium

In your risk assessment, look out for different types of risks, taking into account that often they work in combination and that there are other factors, not work-related, that contribute to MSDs (e.g. individual physical activity patterns, obesity, stress in private life).

Factors at work may include:

- **Physical factors, such as:**

→ Use of force or localised pressure;

→ Repetitive or forceful movements;

→ Awkward or static working postures;

When assessing such physical factors it is also important to look at their duration, as insufficient recovery time increases the risk of injury.

- **Work environment factors, such as:**

→ vibration;

→ poor lighting, low temperature or humidity;

→ space constraints (insufficient room to carry out the activity or to carry it out safely);

→ characteristics of work surface and seating;

→ characteristics of the objects handled (size and shape (e.g. too large, bulky, unwieldy);

→ weight and weight distribution (e.g. too heavy, unstable, unpredictable);

→ nature of container, tool and equipment handles (e.g. difficult to grasp, intrinsically harmful – e.g. sharp/hot).

- **Psychosocial factors, e.g.:**

→ work intensity (working at high speed or working to tight deadlines);

→ lacking control over tasks of workload;

→ mental workload.

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Once you have identified the principal risks, think about how to address them. Often, simple changes such as encouraging breaks, alternating tasks, or some simple physical exercise for those whose work is mainly sedentary can make a big difference. Make sure that you think about ergonomics upfront – e.g. when purchasing new equipment or redesigning your work spaces.

There are many practical ways to prevent or minimise MSDs:

- **Workplace layout:**

- adapt the position, height and layout to improve working postures

- provide adjustable chairs, use platforms etc.

- ensure good lighting, avoid reflections on screens.

Figure 14. Example of a preventive action - Source: National Safety Council, Illinois, USA

- **Equipment:**

- make sure it is ergonomically designed and suitable for the task

- favour lightweight tools, reduce the weight of items.

- **Workers:**

- improve risk awareness

- provide training in good work methods

- consider health monitoring, health promotion and actions towards reintegration of workers already suffering from MSDs.

- **Work organisation:**

- plan work to avoid repetitive work or prolonged work in poor postures.

- introduce short frequent breaks in the more risky activities (not necessarily a rest)
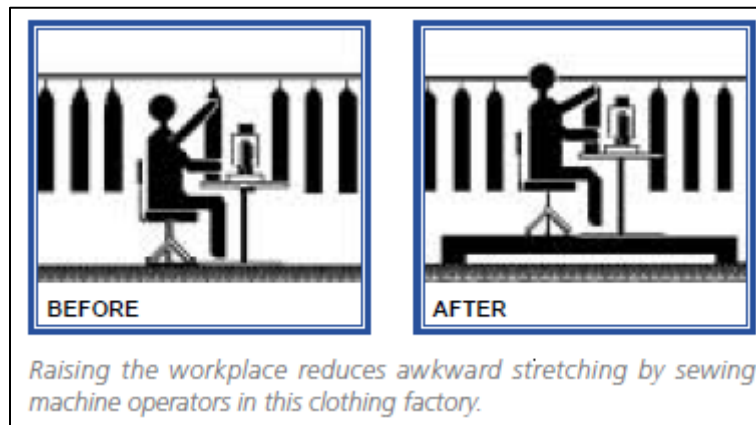
- rotate jobs or reallocate work.

Further references

General information on MSDs is available on the EU-OSHA web page:
https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/musculoskeletal-disorders

Information and results from the EU-OSHA 2000 Campaign "Turn your back on musculoskeletal disorders" :
https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/musculoskeletal-disorders

Information and results from the EU-OSHA 2007 Campaign "Lighten the load" :
https://osha.europa.eu/en/healthy-workplaces-campaigns/previous-healthy-workplaces-campaigns and https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/factsheets/78/view

See also relevant OSH Wiki articles:
https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Category:Musculoskeletal_disorders

7.3. Diversity-sensitive risk assessment

7.3.1 Age-sensitive risk assessment

What it means at the workplace

Many attributes, such as interpersonal skills, work experience and expertise accumulate with age. Older workers might be among of your most knowledgeable and most committed employees, therefore it is in your interest to make sure that they can fully and actively contribute to your company's activity. Inter-generational diversity will boost the creativity and innovative capacity of your company and as the

> Biological ageing is only loosely associated with person age in years. Some 80 year-olds have physical and mental capacities similar to many 20 year-olds.

Figure 15. Source: World Health Organisation - 10 Facts on ageing and the life course.

population gets older, being able to attract, retain and make the most of the talents of older workers will become increasingly important.

Generally, key cognitive skills are barely affected before retirement – whereas intelligence, knowledge, language and complex problem-solving skills are likely to increase until the age of 60. There can be some decline in physical and sensory capacities and where accidents occur it may take older people longer to recover, but these changes don't affect everyone in the same way.
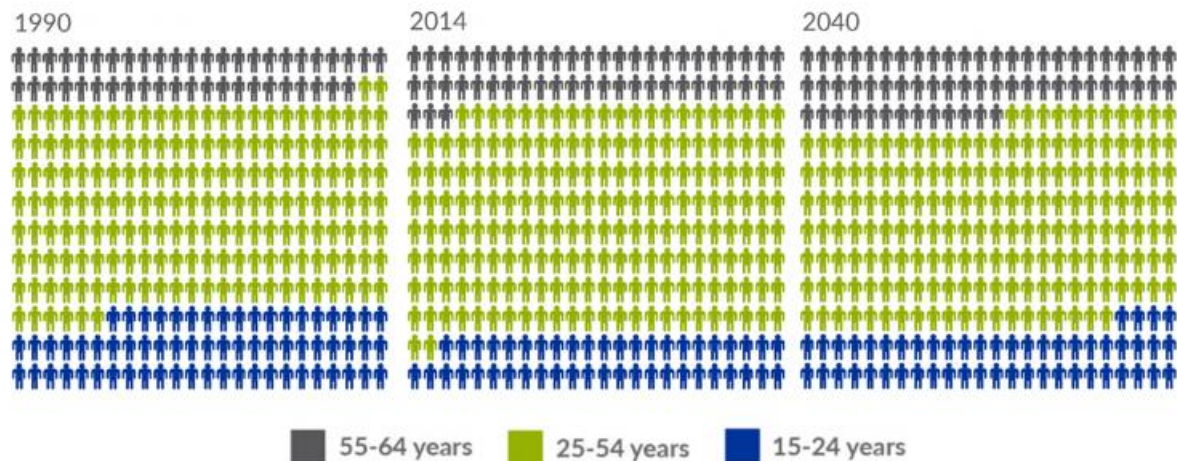
Age composition of the working population (1990-2060)

Figure 16. Source: EU-OSHA - The Healthy Workplaces for All Ages E-guide

What do you need to do as an employer?

You have the same responsibilities towards your older workers as towards other employees. There is no need to carry out a separate risk assessment for this group of employees and you should not make any assumptions purely based on age. Older workers are not a homogeneous group; there can be considerable differences between individuals of the same age because of differences in lifestyle, nutrition, fitness, genetic predispositions, educational level, etc.

Furthermore, many age-related changes are more relevant in some professional activities than in others. For example, changes in balance and strength have an implication for fire-fighters and rescue personnel who work in extreme conditions, wearing heavy equipment and lifting and carrying people; a decreased ability to judge distances and the speed of moving objects has an implication for night-driving but does not affect office workers.

In your **diversity- and age-sensitive risk assessment** it is important to:

- Take ageing issues seriously and have a positive commitment. Value the ageing workforce as an asset (and not as a problem).

- Adapt work and preventive measures to workers.

- Consider the needs of the ageing workforce at the design and planning stage.

- Provide adequate training to workers. Give training and information on ageing issues regarding safety and health risks to risk assessors, managers and supervisors, safety representatives, etc.

- Inclusive risk assessment should take a participatory approach, involving the workers concerned and be based on an examination of the real work situation.

- Good practice examples of inclusive risk assessment feature a mixture of preventive measures (adapting the work to the individual, adapting to technical progress, giving appropriate instructions to workers, providing specific training, etc.). The adoption of these interconnected measures is a key success factor.

- Whenever your company makes changes to the physical environment of the workplace, or buys new equipment, ensure that these are also suitable for the ageing workforce.

Following the risk assessment, you might want to make some adjustments to match the changing capacities and health status of workers. Measures should be based on objective risks and workers' capabilities, rather than on their age. These do not have to be complex or costly: changing shift patterns, automating routine tasks, rotating tasks, adjusting lighting or providing more adjustable workstations are some typical examples. Remember that **good risk management measures will benefit all workers** (regardless of age, gender or nationality).

Furthermore, you can take a **broader age-management** approach, benefiting both your staff and your organisation. This is a holistic approach which includes the following key elements:
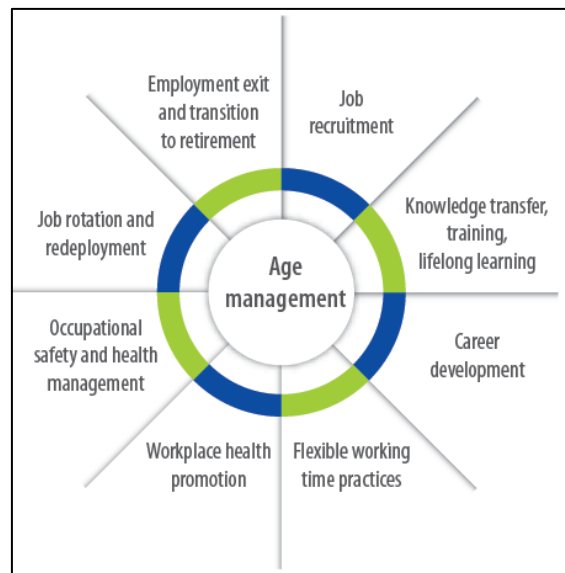

Figure 17. Key elements of successful age management -
Source: EU OSHA Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2016-2017

There are many good practice resources available. Check the references box at the end of this section, in particular the e-guide developed by the EU-OSHA, which has national versions

from all Member States. Your national health and safety authority might have other useful guides, checklists or tools.

Further references

- EU-OSHA, OSH management in the context of an ageing workforce: https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/osh-management-context-ageing-workforce. This website contains good practice resources on this topic, including the results of the European Parliament Pilot project (information on policies, programmes and practices at the EU and national level) https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/osh-management-context-ageing-workforce/ep-osh-project
- EU-OSHA, The Healthy Workplaces for All Ages E-guide. This is a practical tool to help employers and workers manage OSH in the context of an ageing workforce. The E-guide has 31 national versions and it offers simple explanations of the issues, along with practical examples of how to deal with risks relating to ageing and how to make sure that all workers stay safe and healthy in the long term, as well as links to further resources. https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en/healthy-workplaces-all-ages-e-guide

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7.3.2 Gender-sensitive risk assessment

What it means at the workplace

There are substantial differences in the working lives of women and men and this affects their occupational safety and health. Continuous efforts are needed to improve the working conditions of both women and men. However, taking a 'gender-neutral' approach to risk assessment and prevention can result in risks to female workers being underestimated or even ignored altogether.

When we think about hazards at work, we are more likely to think of men working in high accident risk areas such as a building site or a fishing vessel than of women working in health and social care or in new areas such as call centres. A careful examination of real work circumstances shows that both women and men can face significant risks at work. In addition, making jobs easier for women will make them easier for men too. So it is important to include gender issues in workplace risk assessments.

What do you need to do as an employer?

You have the same responsibilities irrespective of the gender of your workers. There is no need to carry out a separate risk assessment for a specific gender and it's important that you do not make any assumptions purely based on gender. However, you should be aware of the gender perspective, which is more relevant in some professional activities than in others.

Did you know that women tend to suffer more from pain in the upper back and upper limbs as a result of repetitive work in both manufacturing and office work, which is accentuated during pregnancy? They also often have jobs which require prolonged standing; while men tend to suffer more from lower-back pain from exerting high force at work. Men and women continue

to be exposed differently. For example, 42% of men workers and only 24% of women workers, carry heavy loads. In contrast, 13% of women, but only 5% of men, lift or move people as part of their work.

In your diversity- and gender-sensitive risk assessment it is important to include gender by, for example:

- looking at the real jobs being done and the real work context;

- not making assumptions about exposure based purely on job description or title;

- being careful about gender bias in prioritising risks according to high, medium and low;

- involving female workers in risk assessment. Consider using health circles and risk mapping methods. Participative ergonomics and stress interventions can offer some methods;

- making sure those doing the assessments have sufficient information and training about gender issues in occupational safety and health;

- making sure instruments and tools used for assessment include issues relevant to both male and female workers. If they do not, adapt them;

- informing any external assessors that they should take a gender-sensitive approach, and checking that they are able to do this;

- paying attention to gender issues when the OSH implications of any changes planned in the workplace are looked at.

For example, for stress include:

- home–work interface, and both men's and women's work schedules;

- career development;

- harassment;

- emotional 'stressors';

- unplanned interruptions and doing several tasks at once.

Check the box below for some references and consult your national health and safety authority which might have other useful guides, checklists or tools.

Further references

- EU-OSHA, Report - Gender issues in safety and health at work. The report highlights the dual importance of considering gender in risk prevention and including occupational safety and health in gender equality employment activities. Cooperation between these two policy areas is crucial, from the European level, down to the workplace, to promote improved workplace risk prevention for both. https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/reports/209/view

- EU-OSHA, Factsheet 43 - Including gender issues in risk assessment. The factsheet stresses the need to continuously deploy efforts to improve the working conditions of both women and men. It contains a table giving indications on different work areas and risk factors useful for gender sensitive risk assessment. https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/factsheets/43