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ETF

PSR RAIL

A GUIDE TO IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS AT WORK IN THE RAILWAY SECTOR

ENGLISH

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SECAFI

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EVA European Academy for Environmentally Friendly Transport
Boyenstraße 46
10115 Berlin
Deutschland
Tel. +49 30 3087526
E-mail: info@eva-akademie.de
www.eva-akademie.de

Compiled by SECAFI
20-24 rue Martin Bernard, 75013 Paris (France)

This guide targets all stakeholders involved in the prevention of psychosocial risks in the rail sector: employer representatives, HR departments, occupational safety and health (OSH) departments, prevention departments, employee representatives at all levels.

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1) The members of the Steering Committee: Andrea Albertazzi (ETF, Belgium), Michael Bartl (EWC DB AG/ EVG, Germany), Gianluca Ceccarelli (FS- RFI, Italy), Pierre Delanoue (SNCF, France), David Gobé (CGT, France), Dr Christian Gravert (DB AG, Germany), Martin Lengauer (Vida, Austria), Anders Olofsson (Almega, Sweden), Gennaro Palma (FS-RFI, Italy), Helga Petersen (EVG, Germany), Serge Piteljon (CGSP railway workers, Belgium), Michel Praillet (CGSP railway workers, Belgium), Jean-Paul Preumont (CER, Belgium), Annett Schlesier (DB AG, Germany), Sabine Trier (ETF, Belgium) and Daniela Zlatkova (FTTUB, Bulgaria);

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3) The speakers (Carole Froucht, Group Orange / France Telecom - France; Xabier Irastorza, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work - Bilbao; Mag. Michael Kiss, Wiener Linien - Austria; Alain Piette, Federal Public Service Employment, Work & Social dialogue - Belgium) and participants at the workshops in Sofia (19-20 February 2013), Berlin (23-24 April 2013) and Vienna (18-19 June 2013).

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Where to find the company practices examples in this guide?

Throughout the guide, railway practices examples are also identified by the following image 

1. Foreword

Sabine Trier
Deputy General Secretary ETF

Jean-Paul Preumont
Head of Social Affairs, Industrial Relations & Human Resources CER

The European Social partners in the railway sector CER and ETF share the opinion that a healthy work environment taking both physical and mental aspects into account is important for ensuring good quality of work and thus high-quality services. Well-being at work is a condition for both productivity and service quality.

Having this in mind, awareness is raising also in our sector about the potential dangerous and damaging effects of unidentified and not tackled psychosocial risks (PSR) in the working environment. It can be damaging for the safety and health of the workers concerned, it can be damaging for a motivating and supportive work environment and it can produce high and often hidden costs for the companies. Psychosocial risks include work related stress, company internal harassment and violence as well as violence and aggressions against workers by third parties, customers and passengers.

For these reasons CER and ETF decided in 2012 to carry out a joint project with the title “PSR-RAIL – Identify and Prevent Psychosocial Risks within the Railway Sector“. Our approach followed the objective to find concrete solutions that are beneficial for both railway companies and railway workers. From a company perspective, reducing PSR means reducing the costs linked to psychosocial risks and increase productivity. For the workers, reducing psychosocial risks means improving the quality of working life and helping to prevent serious health problems.

According to EU and national law, the obligation to protect the health and safety of employees while at work lies clearly with employers. But preventing PSR needs a broad approach. The European social partners share the opinion, that tackling psychosocial risks should not only be part of the company health and safety policy but has to be addressed in all relevant fields of company policy, such as work organisation, internal communication and work/life balance.

Our project produced a Guide that shall serve as an instrument for management, trade unions and workers’ representatives in the railway sector to increase the awareness and understanding of work-related psychosocial risks, to draw their attention to signs indicative of risk and it makes suggestions for developing policies. The added value of this guide is to concentrate on the railway sector and to translate general topics related to PSR to specific situations and some specific professions in our sector. Our Joint CER/ETF Recommendations directly address our affiliated companies and trade unions and constitute a commitment to tackle the problem of psychosocial risks for the benefit of all.

The social partners have the ambition to see more strategies and actions initiated in their affiliated unions and companies with an aim to preventing and managing work-related psychosocial risks, with the firm belief that it is in the common interest.

2. Introduction

1. The PSR Rail project, a sectorial approach

Social dialogue at the heart of the project

In the context of their 2012/2013 social dialogue programme, the European social partners, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), initiated a joint project on psychosocial risks (PSR) in their sector: "PSR-Rail - identify and prevent psychosocial risks within the railway sector". In the view of the CER and ETF, taking PSR into account is a necessary and meaningful aspect of the overall objective of improving occupational safety and health. The social partners see a benefit in dealing with the subject of psychosocial risks, for both the sector's companies and their workers. The aim of the project is on the one hand to find ways of improving working conditions in the sector via the management of psychosocial risks, and on the other hand to identify specific sector-related measures helping all involved gaining a better understanding and control of the subject. This guide is the result. Its aim is not to be a comprehensive scientific study, but instead to act as a practical methodology supporting the identification, evaluation and prevention of psychosocial risks. To accomplish this, it offers a range of methodological tools, augmented by practical examples from the rail sector. It targets all actors involved in the prevention of psychosocial risks in the rail sector: employer representatives, HR departments, occupational safety and health (OSH) departments, OSH officers and employee representatives at all levels.

Financed by the European Commission and managed by the EVA Academy, the PSR Rail project commissioned SECAFI as an external expert to provide scientific support, organize a series of workshops, conduct company visits and compile this guide.

Methodology

From December 2012 to June 2013, the dedicated project team focused on supporting the social partners in the context of the PSR Rail project. Following validation by the Steering Committee[1], the methodology selected for PSR Rail focused on responding to two major objectives:

> **Facilitating an understanding of psychosocial risks and identifying the specific features associated with the rail sector.**

The evaluation of the current situation within the sector in terms of psychosocial risks was done via desk research, discussions in the context of thematic workshops and interviews in various European countries. This exercise in sharing ideas and experiences focused attention on the wide variety of occupations found in the sector, where skilled workers are to be found in such different fields as infrastructure, maintenance, freight, traffic management, safety management or passenger transport. Given the project objectives and resources available, the Steering Committee selected five occupations within the project's scope. This saw us identifying the specific features of the rail sector in the following occupational categories: traffic management, infrastructure maintenance, on-board staff (in

[1] See annex for the composition of the committee and the contact data of its members.

direct contact with rail users), station staff (in direct contact with rail users) and local management.

> **Identifying methods useful in raising awareness for, preventing and taking action with regard to psychosocial risks.**

The project's scope of action and the questioning of rail sector practices were determined by the resources described above, meaning that it was not possible to comprehensively cover the whole range of different rail occupations and different national situations. Identification work was thus based mainly on the series of workshops and interviews conducted in five rail companies (BDZ Passengers in Bulgaria, Deutsche Bahn AG in Germany, FS Group in Italy, SJ AB in Sweden, and SNCF in France). Practices from other sectors, based on the experience of project members and desk research, provided further food for thought.

Focus: the series of workshops – a great way of sharing experience

The three workshops were designed first and foremost as an occasion for sharing and exchanging experiences. But they were also seen as an opportunity to verify and deepen existing knowledge with a view to facilitating a shared understanding transcending geographical and occupational frontiers. They saw participants coming from different EU Member States and representing both employers and rail company staff. The topics covered were defined by consensus of the social partners.

The workshop programme

☞ 19 - 20 February 2012 in Sofia (Bulgaria): "How to identify and define psychosocial risks in line with the specific features of the rail sector. Descriptions and consequences for staff and employers "

With speeches by Xabier Irastorza (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work), Brigitte Mouret & Christophe Bourdeleau (SECAFI)

☞ 23 - 24 April in Berlin (Germany): "Occupational stress in the rail sector, state of the art and prevention methods"

With speeches by Alain Piette (Public Federal Service Employment, Work and Social dialogue - Belgium), François Cochet & Christophe Bourdeleau (SECAFI)

☞ 18 - 19 June in Vienna (Austria): "Harassment and violence at work & the consequences of restructuring measures for workers' health"

With speeches by Mag. Michaël Kiss (Wiener Linien - Austria), Carole Froucht (Groupe Orange / France Telecom – France), Brigitte Mouret, François Cochet & Christophe Bourdeleau (SECAFI)

Focus: interviews in the partner companies, verification of the reality on the ground

From May to June 2013, the SECAFI team conducted a series of interviews in five European rail companies with interviewees selected jointly by the social partners. Interviewees represented management, employee representatives, medical staff and workers (from the five occupational categories selected by the Steering Committee[2]). The aim of these group and/or individual interviews was to discuss the practices used in the individual companies for ensuring a sustainable working environment, as well as to discuss work activities. SECAFI professional ethics guaranteed absolute confidentiality with respect to the information collected.

Interview guidelines were developed with a view to introducing common focuses and facilitating the pooling of information and discussion outcomes. We can classify the interviews and their respective guidelines in three types:

- *One for management and employee representatives in the field of occupational safety and health and working conditions (OSH). The questions aimed at identifying understanding for psychosocial risks and labour relations with regard to occupational safety and health; practices and tools used in this respect; and possibilities for further developing prevention.*

- *One for the group interviews with groups of workers and local management. The aim of the focus on situations at work was to verbalise and substantiate the main psychosocial factors in the working environment.*

- *A last one for medical staff.*

[2] As a reminder, the five occupational groups are traffic management, infrastructure maintenance, on-board staff (in direct contact with rail users), station staff (in direct contact with rail users) and local management.

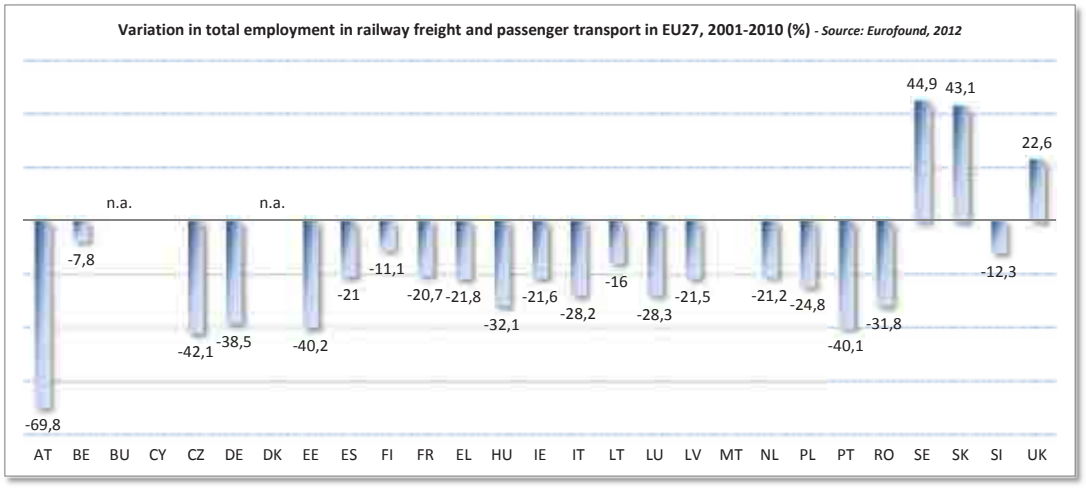
The interviews in the project's partner companies

Italy **FS Group (RFI & Trenitalia)**	Interviews with the HR and OSH directorate, specific OSH departments, employee representatives and occupational support groups	30-31 May 2013, Rome
France **SNCF**	Interviews with the HR and OSH directorate, employees grouped by occupation, employee representatives and trade unions	5-6 June 2013, Lille and Paris
Bulgaria **BDZ Passengers transport**	Interviews with the HR and OSH directorate, internal OSH departments, workers (grouped by occupation), employee and trade union representatives.	5-6 June 2013, Sofia
Germany **Deutsche Bahn AG**	Interviews with workers' occupational panels, the HR and OSH directorate, internal OSH departments and external OSH services.	6-7 June 2013, Berlin
Sweden **SJ AB**	Interviews with the HR directorate, OSH officers, occupational support groups, employee and trade union representatives.	25 June 2013, Stockholm

2. The European rail sector: specific features and heterogeneous contexts

The rail sector, due in part to its geographical and structural development over the last few decades, is a deeply-rooted business sector in Europe. The diversity of its activities sees it interacting at all levels: local, regional, national and international.

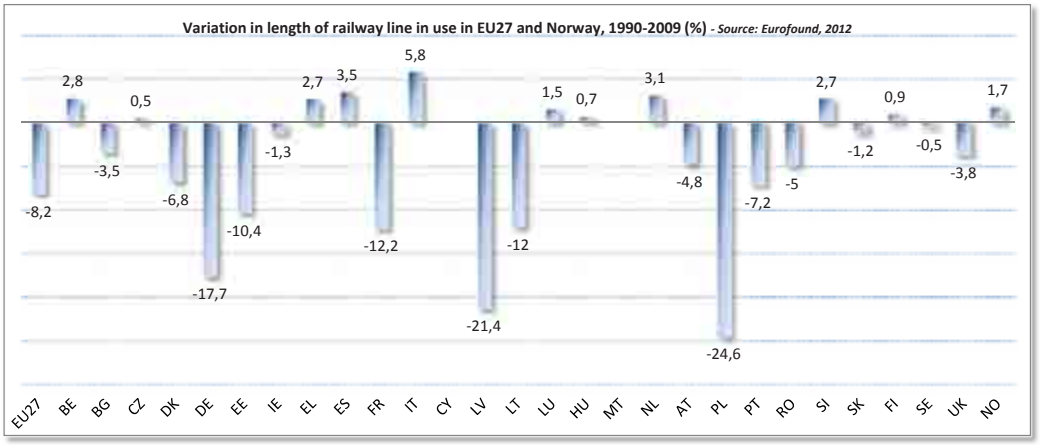
At present the whole sector is in the grips of major change, going through a period of major restructuring driven by EU legislation aimed at promoting competition. Although major reforms have been implemented, the sector has basically maintained its traditional structure, with a single operator (often state-owned) in the majority of countries. Employment is thus dominated by the traditional operator, with social dialogue often taking place at company level (Bour, Paris & co, 2012). Due to the interaction and diversity of activities, the rail sector is one of the most important sectors in terms of employment. Nevertheless, despite continuing high rates of employment in the majority of countries, prospects in terms of jobs have changed considerably over the last few years. This is evidenced by the latest employment figures, putting the number of rail workers employed in the 27 Member States in 2012 at 712,500 (European Commission, 2012), considerably less than the 1995 figure (1,021,500) for just 15 Member States (European Commission, 2000). This negative trend is still continuing, as borne out by the fact that in 2008 the number of workers in the European rail sector (27 Member States) was still 790,000 (European Commission, 2011). Though this trend is common to all EU countries, nevertheless its intensity varies from one country to the next, as seen in the graph below.



At the same time, the number of rail operators has grown exponentially. Whereas in 1995 the number of companies operating in the rail sector in the 15 EU Member States was put at 464 (European Commission, 2000), by 2009 this figure had risen to 800 for the 27 Member States (European Commission, 2012). Here as well, trends can vary from one country to the next. For example, although the number of companies operating in the rail sector has risen in Germany (109 companies in 2000, 245 in 2009), the Netherlands (2 companies in 1995, 16 in 2009) and Sweden (27 companies in 2000, 41 in 2009), the trend is not replicated in Greece and Ireland

(just one company between 2006 and 2009), and is even reversed in France (30 companies in 2000, 25 in 2009) and Italy (139 companies in 2000, 22 in 2009)[3].

Moreover, rail network use has dropped over the last few decades, both in terms of infrastructure availability and transport capacity. Between 1990 and 2009, the total length of railway line in use dropped 8.2% (Eurofound, 2013). Again, this trend is not common to all Member States:



Apart from these change factors, European rail actors have to face up to innovations transforming operating models and putting a question-mark over the social status of rail employees. Innovation, vocational training and infrastructure investment have become major factors in replying to environmental concerns, increasingly dense traffic rates or an ageing population.

In response to the various competition issues associated with new EU competition requirements, deregulation and customer expectations, rail companies are becoming increasingly flexible organisations. A number of countries are planning to renew or upgrade their infrastructure and rolling stock, though the economic crisis has considerably reduced the amount of expected investment. Several electrification and rolling stock replacement projects remain entangled in cost reduction and funding discussions. As a consequence, rail operators are being forced to maintain their rolling stock instead of investing in its renewal. Temporary employment contracts and a whole series of restructuring measures similarly reflect sector reality (Bour, Paris & co, 2012).

In conclusion, it is important to note that, while all employees in the sector are railway workers, the national contexts in which they work are extremely varied. The rail sector is first and foremost characterised by a wide diversity of occupations and by a large workforce, especially in

[3] Sources : Eurofound and the European Commission

infrastructure management. The scope of action and questions studied in the context of PSR Rail (the first joint sectorial project to concentrate on psychosocial risks) thus remain limited by the project's methodological and practical constraints.

3. Work-related health

Responsibilities in the field of occupational safety and health

In the field of occupational safety and health, European employers are all subject to the same requirements on account of European level standards (in particular EU Framework Directive 89/391/CEE[4]), and, except for specific provisions, to their respective transpositions into national legislation. The aims of the EU Framework Directive are: to introduce prevention approaches in terms of objectives and methods, with a view to adapting work to humans rather than vice-versa; to give priority to primary prevention; to develop risk assessment as a basis for prevention plans; to discuss such subjects within employee representation bodies (Rouilleault & Rochefort, 2005).

The legislation and European regulations are thus there to protect workers against occupational risks associated with occupational safety and health and working conditions. What differentiates the national situations is the more or less detailed and restrictive character of the legislation and the room left for collective agreements[5].

Most EU Member States these days, an employer is nevertheless under the obligation to provide his/her staff with a healthy and safe environment and corresponding working conditions. Although the majority of legislative frameworks provide for a certain amount of cooperation to be expected from workers in this respect, legal responsibility lies clearly with the employer.

In the case of management not meeting their assessment and prevention obligations with regard to occupational risks, administrative and criminal charges can be pressed. Considering the EU's history and extent, this is very varied and results in differing national situations with regard to social dialogue, trade union traditions, sectors and types of activity.

Working conditions in the European rail sector

In a report published in 2012, Eurofound (the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) came to the conclusion that working conditions in the rail sector had, in line with the changes in employment rates, undergone considerable change, induced especially by deregulation and the outsourcing and subcontracting of activities. These developments are not without consequence for such aspects as working hours, the place and content of work, training, wages, social benefits, etc.

[4] For the full text of the Directive and its amendments, see the European legislation website on: www.eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:01989L0391-20081211:EN:NOT

[5] For a complete overview of the differences between the Member States, see the study "*Safety Reps*. Health, safety and risk prevention: towards better information, consultation and participation of workers within companies" (ETUC/SECAFI, 2013)

Companies, as are the social partners, are aware of these problems and have introduced schemes aimed at improving working conditions. As an example of such a scheme, the prevention department of the Belgian SNCB/NMBS now conducts an assessment of occupational risks once every five years. In Germany, the Deutsche Bahn has implemented its '*DB Health World*' programme for HR managers and management in general with a view to helping them to better manage demographic change. In Luxembourg, the SNCFL has set up a psychological support unit for employees suffering under their work situation. In 2009, the French SNCF implemented a joint pluridisciplinary Observatory on the quality of working life. This body has contributed to the drafting of an action plan to improve the quality of working life and to prevent work-related stress implemented as from March 2010. At a European level, the social partners spent 2012 working on measures to prevent violence against railway employees in the course of their work.

Psychosocial risks

Psychosocial risks are not only detrimental to the health of workers, an aspect which in itself would be more than sufficient to look for ways of preventing them, but also have an economic impact on employers and civil society: "*In 2002, the annual cost of work-related stress in Europe was estimated at EUR 20 billion"*[6].

The finding covers the whole range: work-related stress, violence, harassment, addiction, etc. Psychosocial risks pose a serious threat to employees' health and consequently to company performance. The growth of these risks over the last few years makes it urgent to introduce prevention schemes, the present status of which is at most patchy.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA) is responsible for the following statement on the subject: "*Work-related stress is one of the biggest occupational safety and health challenges that we face in Europe. Nearly one in four workers is affected by it, and studies suggest that between 50% and 60% of all lost working days are related to it. This represents a huge cost in terms of both human distress and impaired economic performance."* The International Labour Office similarly reckons that the overall cost of stress in industrialised countries amounts to 3 - 4% of GDP: "*Studies carried out in European and other developed countries show that stress is behind 50 - 60% of all lost working days*". "*Changes in employment patterns*" have led to new risks with regard to work-related health: precarious employment, subcontracting, higher workloads, or "*work intensification due to headcount reductions*" have "*inevitably had repercussions on working conditions*", causing for instance musculoskeletal disorders (MSD) or such psychosocial risks (PSR) as work-related stress, says the International Labour Office.

The detrimental effects of work-related stress – and more generally of psychosocial risks – on workers' health is a widely shared concern throughout the European Union. Two agreements between the European social partners have been concluded and are to be transposed in EU Member States: one of work-related stress (October 2004), and the other of harassment and violence at work (April 2007).

[6] EU OSHA website (August 2013)

In the same vein, a large number of studies have been conducted on the problem of psychosocial risks at work at a European level[7]. These have transnational and trans-professional scopes. Similarly, a number of branches are initiating – with EU funding – research in this direction.

The assessment and prevention of work-related risks is a statutory obligation and needs to be seen in combination with an approach preventing the psychosocial risks to which employees are exposed. Reducing psychosocial risks is thus not just a moral and/or financial, but also a legal imperative. In this context, attacking psychosocial risks would seem to be the order of the day for improving working conditions in the sector. In a report on occupational safety and health in the European transport sector (2009), the European Commission noted for example that violence and work-related stress were sources of occupational risks and had increased over the last few years. In the same year, the EU OSHA pointed to other factors favouring occupational stress in the transport sector, such as isolated work, irregular working hours, constraints due to strict regulations, and post-traumatic syndromes following incidents.

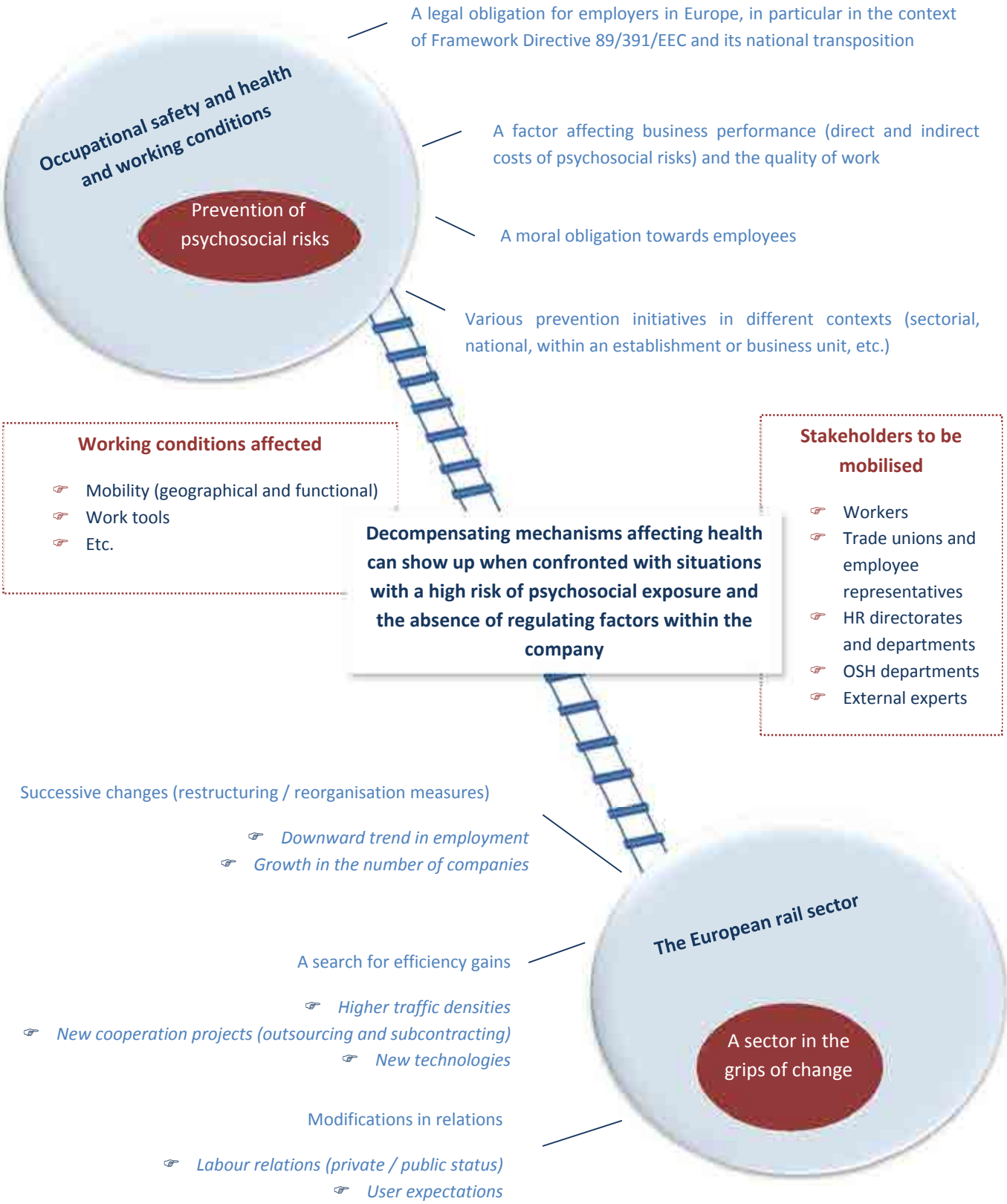
Despite the growing existence of initiatives introduced to manage psychosocial risks in companies, a recent study of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA) concludes that "*A lack of technical support and guidance, followed by a lack of resources are universally identified as the most important barriers to managing psychosocial risks. There is some evidence that barriers such as the sensitivity of the issue or a lack of resources become particularly important to an enterprise only once it has 'engaged' in psychosocial risks management*"[8].

Experience shows that each work-related situation is unique, allowing no generalisation even within the same occupation (Clot, 2010). Moreover, this multiplicity and diversity already inherent in the European rail sector is now being subjected to major structural developments associated with transitions taking place in the different national settings within the EU. This makes our study in the context of the PSR Rail project more complicated, with regard both to the assessment part and to the recommendations applicable in such different contexts. Though a consolidated approach covering a whole country, or even a sector, is complex, coming up against classic definition and methodological difficulties, it is by contrast quite possible to take stock of a phenomenon on the scale of a work unit or department. In this context, it is important to carry on developing a specific approach for the sector, involving employees and employers and looking at different scenarios. This will make it easier not only to better identify the psychosocial risks, but also to raise the awareness of different stakeholders, formulate prevention measures and exchange experience. This guide is one of the building's foundation stones.

[7] For example, the ESENER study published by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (Bilbao, 2012); the reports of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin), the HIRES *Health in Restructuring* study (May, 2009), etc.

[8] EU OSHA, *Understanding workplace management of occupational safety and health, psychosocial risks and worker participation through ESENER. A summary of four secondary analysis reports*, page 2 (2013).

4. DATASHEET No. 1: Psychosocial risks - what is at stake?



3. Understanding work-related psychosocial risks

1. The importance of a shared definition

The aim of this section is to set the cornerstones related to the concept of psychosocial risks and the main associated ideas.

Psychosocial risks

The majority of guides or texts presenting psychosocial risks define them via their consequences (work-related stress, violence at work, work-related exhaustion, suicide in connection with work, etc.). The definitions of these aspects are to be found in a glossary in the annex.

The reference definition of PSR used here is that from the report of the French College of experts on the monitoring of psychosocial risks at work chaired by Michel Gollac[9]:

> *"What makes a work-related health risk into a psychosocial risk is not its manifestation, but its origin: psychosocial risks will be defined as risks for mental, physical and social health, caused by conditions of employment and organisational and relational factors likely to interact with mental functioning".*

This definition puts the accent on **the conditions of employment, as well as organisational and relational factors, looking at them in relation to their possible effects on health**. The term 'psychosocial risk' thus does not relate to symptoms, disorders or diseases.

In other words, we speak of a psychosocial risk when referring to work situations characterised by an organisation, relational practices and conditions of employment with a pathogenic potential for the workforce. The issue is no longer to know which share stems from the person's personal circumstances, but instead to become aware of the potential consequences of existing or planned work-related constellations for a person's mental, physical and social health.

The notion of **psychological and organisational constraints** is sometimes preferred to that of psychosocial risks, as it puts a more explicit focus on the causal factors, underlining the importance of organisational aspects.

In terms of prevention, addressing psychosocial risks therefore involves identifying risk factors stemming from work organisation, work-related social relations and the conditions of employment, and to which workers are exposed, with a view to coming up with alternatives reducing or even suppressing exposure, rather than waiting for the first symptoms or diseases to appear.

[9] This College of experts was established by the National French Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) and is coordonnated by Michel Gollac, Director of Quantitative Sociology at the Centre for Economic and Statistical Research (CREST). On request of the French Ministry of Work and Health, this panel of experts drafted a report on the monitoring of psychosocial risks at work. Published in April 2011, the report provides guidelines on the mental health risks caused by certain employment and organisational conditions & relations at work. The conclusions of the report have been presented to the social partners and are a reference in France (voir *http://www.travailler-mieux.gouv.fr*).

Other useful definitions are to be found in appendix.

A variety of terms used

As in other sectors in Europe, a variety of terms are used to refer to psychosocial risks at work The term “stress” is the most common, and generally used as an all-encompassing concept.

2. Identification

Risk factors

The first step in any assessment involves identifying the risk factors. The rail sector traditionally focuses attention on passenger and freight safety issues, i.e. on existing risks. This management of rail-related risks is thus well-anchored in the DNA of the sector and the companies operating within it. The sector's transition towards a more dynamic industry, with greater innovation, more operators and more complex cooperation arrangements means that regulating safety has gained in importance (European Commission, 2009). While the question of traffic safety is addressed by structural measures with a strong operational focus (e.g. signalling, the design of rolling stock and infrastructure, etc.) the question of staff safety remains more difficult to manage. By way of example, the table below lists the main work-related risks in the rail sector.

Type of activity	Hazardous conditions
Administration and train operations	- Exhaust emissions; - Noise; Whole-body vibration; - Electromagnetic fields; - Radio-frequency fields; - Shift work; - Musculoskeletal injury; - Rundown accidents
Maintenance of rolling stock and track equipment	- Skin contamination with waste oils and lubricants; - Exhaust emissions; - Welding emissions; - Brazing emissions; - Thermal decomposition products from coatings; - Cargo residues; - Abrasive blasting dust; - Solvent vapours; - Paint aerosols; - Confined spaces; - Noise; - Hand-arm vibration; - Electromagnetic fields; - Musculoskeletal injury; - Rundown accidents
Maintenance of track and right of way	- Exhaust emissions; - Ballast dust /spilled cargo; - Welding, cutting and grinding emissions; - Abrasive blasting dust; - Solvent vapours; - Paint aerosols; - Confined spaces; - Noise; Whole-body vibration; - Hand-arm vibration; - Electromagnetic fields; - Radio-frequency fields; - Shift work; - Musculoskeletal injury; - Rundown accidents

Source: ILO, Safe work Bookshelf, 2007

The majority of risks listed are associated with the physical and technical work environment (e.g. noise, temperature variations, workplace design, movement and posture, etc.). When identifying psychosocial risks, though such elements obviously need to be taken into account, it is also necessary to widen the perspective, looking also at other factors. This involves studying

factors associated with the content of the work done (e.g. its meaningfulness, its requirements in terms of vigilance and performance); with work organisation (e.g. how work is distributed, the balance between work and private life, the consistency of work demands); with labour relations (e.g. supportive colleagues and managers, recognition); and with the socio-economic context (e.g. business prospects, changes). The interlinking of all these factors enables the psychosocial risk factors to be identified. The risks identified by the EU OSHA's Risk Observatory for rail workers thus include such physical and technical elements as climatic conditions, ergonomics and workplace design, but also other factors such as work-related organisational changes and outsourcing leading to increased workload, solitary work, working time issues (shift work and weekend work), and growth in long-distance transport (Schneider & co, 2011).

As a way of providing a clear-cut picture of the different factors influencing the occurrence of work-related psychosocial risks, we are using a **6-dimensional framework** (Gollac, 2011) adapted to the rail sector:

> **Work demands**

Work demands refer to four main dimensions:

- The *quantity of work* is assessed in terms of the volume of work to be done and working time needed. High volumes of overtime (e.g. as a result of traffic incidents), or untaken leave or time-off are alarm bells.
- *Work-related pressure* is all about atypical working hours, the feeling of not having enough time to do one's work and everything associated with a sense of urgency. This term may refer to the work-related situations themselves (e.g. for medical staff, safety departments) or to the conditions under which work is organised and performed (e.g. non-transparent planning, target achievement pressure, defective equipment, resource constraints).
- *Work complexity* can refer to the tasks performed, to legislation and regulations, but also to work organisation (e.g. versatility, complex procedures, slipped tasks, a lack of information).
- *Difficulties reconciling work and family life* refer not just to work schedules themselves but also to their predictability, the distance between home and work, high travel requirements on account of the mobility requirements inherent to certain occupations (e.g. on-board staff, maintenance staff).

> **Emotional demands**

These concern all employees with direct contact to the public, frequently the case in passenger transport, even if this aspect of their work is often a source of satisfaction. The work involves employees keeping their own emotions under control and always having to make a good impression – “keep on smiling”. Contact with the public is thus a potential source of tension, more or less frequents and at varying degrees of intensity.

One specific and very important aspect for rail workers is their contact with difficult crisis situations, including fatalities and mourning (e.g. rail accidents, suicides).

Last but not least, the risk of verbal or physical aggression and the feeling of fear at work are also factors causing tension in a large number of work-related situations, whether in stations or on board trains (e.g. passengers without tickets, hold-ups).

(See also "Promoting Security and the Feeling of Security vis à vis third-party-violence in the European Railway Sector. A good practice guide. CER, ETF, EVA 2012).

> **Autonomy and margins of manoeuvre**

A centralistic tradition, procedures under pressure as a result of frequent organisational changes, the lack of information, and the subdivision of tasks on account of outsourcing are all factors liable to lead to low levels of autonomy even though the level of experience is, on average, high enough in the sector, and training for certain technical occupations very specialised.

Finally, the possibility of speaking up, expressing expectations about one's work and being listened to are all aspects with a positive influence on maintaining health.

> **Social relations and recognition at work**

The first aspect is about *working together with colleagues*, a crucial aspect where notions of teamwork or service have been preserved, and conversely a serious risk factor in situations where individuals have to work by themselves or out of touch with their colleagues.

The second factor is all about the *sense of purpose/meaningfulness of the work done*, an aspect with an added dimension in a sector with a history of being "at the service of the public", but which can be undermined when positions or functions are subject to upheavals or even suppressed.

The notion of social support refers on the one hand to the ability and willingness of a worker's *next-level management* to support employees in their work and to help them cope with difficulties; and on the other hand – and more generally – to signs of recognition. It also in some cases echoes signs of denigration or aggression possibly addressed at employees by different actors within the company.

> **Conflicts of values**

This dimension has a particular relevance when rail operators move from the public sector to the private sector. The whole concept of "public service" is built on such values as equal access, safety protection, user services, etc.

Moreover, it needs to be emphasised that the evolution towards a more commercial culture, tension between keeping to timetables and safety, resources and a work organisation out of line with user expectations are also elements potentially causing ethical qualms among employees. Many employees feel a major contradiction between what they experience in their daily work routines and what they deem necessary to do a job conforming to their convictions, something that one might term as "prevented quality".

> **Socio-economic insecurity**

Job security is also subject to evolution, e.g. in the case of restructuring, and needs to be observed carefully. Cost pressure, the lack of investment, the search for performance improvements in a context of increased competition and the observation of the measures applied to colleagues in other European countries can also lead employees to consider this factor with greater concern. Felt insecurity can also be generated by developments in an employee's working environment, in the variety of employment status within a company, in the modification of the work tasks and of the geographical location of their activity.

Factsheet No. 3 provides an overview of the basic concepts of each of these six dimensions.

And what about each individual? What about society?

As shown by the six dimensions above, the determinants of psychosocial risks are multi-facetted – they can be both work-related and have nothing to do with work; linked to work organisation but also to conditions of life (Rouilleault & Rochefort, 2005). The constraints of family or social life can aggravate work-related constraints. Conversely, family and social life can provide technical or emotional support or even elements of recognition, protecting workers from work-related constraints (Gollac, 2011). In this context, the Belgian government department responsible for well-being at work initiated a public campaign in 2012 for raising awareness towards psychosocial risks. This campaign revolved mainly around two spots showing the possible interconnection between work and private life.[10]

Developments within society (e.g. demographic evolution, the state of the economy, etc.) and their repercussions can also be a factor influencing the work environment. For example, the ageing of European populations and the need to work longer put a focus on maintaining employability, life-long learning and anticipatory skill management. Rail operations, especially where passengers are involved, similarly lead to frequent contact with the public – a public coming from all layers of society and travelling by train in a variety of contexts (e.g. business travel, holidays, etc.). In this context, rail staff are expected to respond to a wide range of expectations and needs (e.g. in terms of service, speed, etc.) and to often difficult situations (e.g. drunken and/or aggressive passengers, disturbed passengers, etc.).

On account of the multi-causality of psychosocial risks, these individual and societal factors can also influence the determinants of our working lives. Nevertheless, although a company is anchored in society, although the way work situations are appreciated differ from one person to the next, and although the symptoms of psychosocial risks are similarly very individual, their determinants and effects remain – at least in part – collective (Rouilleault & Rochefort, 2005).

[10] See the campaign website and videos: www.sesentirbienautravail.be

Guaranteeing a balance between work and private life, or providing training on how to deal with violence can also be part of a prevention approach. Nevertheless, it is important not to solely focus on individual aspects and not to look solely at external sources. The main levers for action in terms of psychosocial risks are to be found within a company: in how work is done and in labour relations. In this guide, we have chosen to focus specifically on these internal levers.

Focus: the overall assessment including general and local knowledge

An overall description of the main risk factors present in the rail sector does not mean that there is no need for a local-level assessment for the purpose of going beyond general knowledge and focusing on the work on the ground and the question of the conditions under which it is performed - in all its complexity.

Dependent on the country, the service provided, the occupation, the same general contextual elements can generate different risk factors. These need to be revealed before any appropriate action plan can be conceived. In doing so, a jointly accepted appraisal of the starting situation, achieved via a prior assessment, is nearly always a necessity.

Examples of destabilising work situations according to the six PSR dimensions

- Impact of new technologies and growing digitalisation
- Faulty equipment
- Impacts of traffic disruptions on working hours
- Restricted resources
- Shift-work, unsocial hours, with many changes of plans and a lack of visibility
- Etc.

- Fear of dismissal or reclassification
- Distance from one's place of work (home - work journey, night work, etc.)
- Instability of policy decisions
- Lack of understanding for changes (loss of sense / direction)
- Fear of medical unfitness
- Investment problems and job cuts
- Etc.

- Passenger aggression and violence
- Commercial constraints
- Managing difficult situations (crises, suicides, etc.)
- Varying responsibilities and scopes (passenger safety, criminal responsibility, handling money, etc.)
- Etc.

- Tensions between commercial requirements and personal beliefs
- A rail culture not upholding the right to make a mistake
- Tension with regard to safety and quality rules
- Tension between traffic management and safety management
- Etc.

- Tensions between the decision-making level and the operating level (no interlinkage)
- Lack of resources (information, interdependencies, training)
- Process complexity
- Lack of organisational transparency
- Etc.

- The deteriorating image of the company / staff in the eyes of the public
- Growing number of people having a say in how the business is managed
- Solitary work situations
- Remote management (no local management)
- Etc.

Compiling a map of psychosocial risks: the initial assessment (diagnosis)

Generally speaking, we see that the initiation of a PSR assessment and subsequent compilation of a prevention plan can take place in a wide variety of contexts. These can however be linked to one of three base situations:

> **A "from scratch" approach**

With a view to promoting prevention and gaining compliance with legal requirements, or as a result of a managerial impulse, a unit initiates an assessment "from scratch", identifying its main risks, including representative bodies in its discussions and coming up with a prevention plan. This is the best situation from a prevention point of view, though it sometimes comes up against a lack of dynamism, with the result that its principles are formally respected without stakeholders being sufficiently mobilised. The commitment of the whole management hierarchy, the tenacity and skills of the project leader, as well as the vigilance of employee representatives are needed to avoid these pitfalls.

> **Support for a major organisational change or restructuring measure**

In the majority of European countries, these situations are subject to an information & consultation procedure with employee representatives with regard to occupational safety and health. Such contexts can also bring with them specific psychosocial risks[11]: difficulties in anticipating what a new situation holds in store due to a lack of sufficient information on future work situations, employee anxieties with regard to their working conditions, their management, how their work, functions, responsibilities and status will evolve, etc.

In carrying out such projects, it is vital to initiate specific prevention actions: a transparent review of the start and end situations (advantages/disadvantages for each employee), a dialogue with workers, listening to their proposals, taking any objections into account, project enhancements, and appropriate social support measures.

> **Coping with a crisis situation**

Departments can be confronted with serious crises as a result of various events engendering psychosocial disorders: rail accidents, (attempted) suicides, aggression against an employee, a serious conflict within a department, harassment, etc. In such situations, and often before any diagnosis/assessment has been started, urgent measures need to be taken by managers. In many cases, they themselves are personally affected by the event's shock-wave, leading to the risk of useless or even counterproductive action. Though the conditions under which the assessment is to take

[11] See for instance: *Health in Restructuring (HIRES) report. Innovative approaches and policy recommendations*, 2008

place are seriously impacted and demand to stand back; such situations do have the positive effect of getting all stakeholders into the boat, enabling a deeper analysis of the problems encountered. This can in turn lead to more effective action plans targeting the fundamental causes of the difficulties observed.

Step 1: Preparations for the joint assessment, together with the establishment of indicators

Implementation conditions

Preparing for the assessment is a vital step of the whole process, as it establishes the foundations. In this respect, three essential conditions need to be met:

1. Formalising the process

To be effective, the assessment and subsequent prevention processes need to be planned as a project. This starts with:

- The appointment of a project manager in charge of coordination; the person is chosen for his/her communication and leadership skills, he/she has a good knowledge of the work in question, its organisation and PSR prevention; it is very much recommended that the person in question benefits from specific training in PSR prevention;
- The identification of an employer representative. It is his/her job to take decisions or make sure that decisions are taken; the choice of such a person is dependent on the scope involved and the organisation;
- The constitution of a project team, led by the project manager and including top management, employee representatives, OSH professionals (doctors specialised in occupational health / prevention, prevention officers or counsellors), possibly also employees from the areas to be assessed.

☞ *the project team is not the decision-maker of last resort; it conducts the assessment and has the job of making proposals, based on the assessment results, to the employer;*

☞ *The project team is not intended to become a permanent structure.*

2. Defining objectives and resources to be mobilised

One of the first tasks of the project team is to define the precise objectives of the overall process and those of the assessment: the organisational scope, the information to be sought, the timetable for carrying out the assessment, its subsequent use, decision-making, human (skills, availability) and financial resources.

All this information is necessary in particular for choosing the right investigation methods and for assessing the opportuneness of engaging an external expert.

3. Communicating the start of the process

Communicating the start is all the more important as employee support for the process is a necessity, a fortiori in the phase of carrying out the assessment. Though they obviously have to be informed of the actual way the process will be conducted (pursued objectives, steps, etc.), a further aspect involves building up a climate of trust, in particular with regard to the confidential nature of the information gathered.

Dependent on the organisation, this communication can be done via different means (intranet, e-mail, internal memo, departmental meetings, etc.). Generally speaking, a written communication, which can obviously be passed on orally by employee representatives or line managers, is preferable in a process of this kind. A formal agreement between the employer and employee representatives on the contents of this written communication can guarantee its effectiveness.

Generally speaking, such a communication can play a symbolic role, counteracting any denial of psychosocial risk. With regard to the nature of psychosocial risks, such denial is very frequent in a number of organisations. In many cases, the employer, but also the employee affected, is no longer in a position to distinguish between work-related and personal factors.

The choice of indicators

Indicators constitute an essential element in setting up an assessment and a warning system. **Their choice is never neutral**. For more clarity, we need to distinguish between three overall types of indicator:

1. Indicators reflecting perceptions or what has actually been experienced

These provide an indispensable subjective dimension when looking at any work situation. The main indicators in this category are identified in the sections of the guide dealing with the questionnaire-based approach.

2. Indicators reflecting how a company is functioning (function indicators)

These can directly or indirectly constitute warning signals. The main function indicators for a PSR assessment belong to the categories listed below. For each category, a few examples are provided.

- Absenteeism is a crucial risk indicator, provided that the boundaries are clearly defined within the context of preventing PSR (kind of absence, duration, frequency, etc.). An increase in short periods off sick on the one hand, and of long periods off sick for diseases linked to mental health on the other hand, are two forms of absence often indicative of PSR;

- Indicators related to working time can often shed light on workloads (actual hours worked, untaken leave, amount of time given over to training, atypical working hours, etc.) ;
- Staff movements (requests for changes, frequency of job changes, headcount development, vacancies, etc.);
- Labour relations (the functioning of consultation bodies, social movements, disciplinary sanctions, internal communication, etc.) ;
- Work organisation (face to face contact with users, number of procedures to be followed, number of positions working alone, discontinuity of tasks, number of departmental meetings, existence of job descriptions, etc.);
- Operational management (productivity indicators, service quality indicators, number of complaints or claims, etc.).

3. *Indicators reflecting occupational health*

- Work-related accidents (number, frequency rate, severity rate, etc.) and occupational diseases;
- Worsening situations (internal and external acts of verbal abuse and physical violence, harassment, suicide or attempted suicide, etc.);
- Symptoms or diseases linked to PSR (cardiovascular disorders, MSD, anxiety, depression, risky behaviour, etc.);
- OSH department activities (medical examinations, including ones at an employee's request, requests for workplace adjustments, etc.).

Methodology precautions to be kept in mind

- Though defining indicators is a very useful way of identifying phenomena and measuring trends over time, it is important to approach their use pragmatically and not to overdo things. Numerous studies have shown that collecting too many indicators, often without meaning for employees but soaking up an increasing share of the energy and time of those responsible for them, can in itself be a cause of psychosocial risks! A few simple principles need to be heeded to avoid overdoing things:
  - *Only make use of indicators that are simple, stable over time, understood and accepted by everyone, and wherever possible produced automatically;*
  - *The indicators must be made available to those providing the input;*
  - *If an indicator is not / no longer being used, get rid of it;*
  - *Before adding an indicator to a performance dashboard, check whether it can replace another less important indicator, thereby preventing the number of indicators building up;*
  - *Indicators should relate to the scope of the relevant business units.*

- A number of indicators often do not manage to take account of the actual work and the conditions under which it is performed, as they mix up “work results” (e.g. train punctuality, number of tickets sold, etc.) with “the work itself” (e.g. inspecting a passenger's ticket, answering questions at a station's information desk, repairing faulty equipment, etc.). From this point of

view, mean indicators are often not very relevant: for example, any measurement of absenteeism not distinguishing between the types of absenteeism or which would mask the heterogeneity between departments (work units), age categories or genders.
Reaching agreement on the most relevant indicators reflecting work reality is therefore an indispensable step prior to a concerted effort to measure and prevent PSR.

- Their operational application is similarly essential as an indicator alone is not enough to gain any appreciation of a situation. They need to be put in relation to each other, thereby creating a sufficiently solid set of presumptions on which to build hypotheses. The indicators used must therefore relate to a comparable basis. A company's absenteeism rate or average turnover are of little use for analysing the situation of an individual department, meaning that in certain cases specific data needs to be extracted, referring to a particular situation or department.

Step 2: Carrying out the investigations

Once the indicators have been established, the next step involves identifying the risk factors. This can be done in different ways, as there are several investigation and analysis methods available. This section will attempt to present the advantages and disadvantages of each of them.

Urgency or a lack of resources can result in one or more working groups being established straight away, with the task of analysing **available material or easily "producible" material**. Material used comes in all shapes and sizes: labour data (absenteeism rate by department, number of work-related accidents, number of untaken days of leave, number of ad hoc medical examinations, etc.), employee complaints to prevention actors (OSH departments, welfare departments, employee representatives, OSH records, etc.), results of a "social barometer" (where such exists), any knowledge which prevention actors may have with regard to existing constraints able to generate psychosocial risks (headcount cuts, introduction of new technologies, modifications to work processes, etc.).

Whenever possible in terms of time and resources, it is however preferable to enhance the assessment by extending and deepening the information, thereby allowing a greater and more in-depth analysis of the identifiable risk factors and their intensity. Carrying out such an assessment can be achieved via **"traditional" investigation methods**: interviews, direct observations at work, questionnaire-based surveys.

Interviews

Several types of interviews exist: structured, semi-structured, open, comprehensive, individual, collective, etc. (there are many works available on the different interview techniques and they will not be expounded here).

☺ *The advantages of interviews*

- ☞ To gain access to workers' reality in all its complexity: the aim of the interview is to address the actual work both in an analytical manner (the different tasks, operational constraints, relations with colleagues, etc.) and in a more general manner (focusing in particular on the question of professional identity).
- ☞ Reveal mechanisms by which risk factors can cause difficulties to workers. This is done by establishing links between work organisation, individual careers, the history of the department/team/unit, identity construction, etc.

Dependent on the type of interview:

Individual interviews are good for allowing employees to express their views: they are generally appreciated, as employees are able to better express their views on what they go through, imparting details that are sometimes personal or private.

Collective interviews are good for studying group dynamics. They also promote discussions on the different ways of performing work.

☹ *Limits of the interview method*

- ☞ The availability of sizeable resources for carrying out the interviews - individual interviews generally last 1- 2 hours.
- ☞ Recourse to specific skills and knowledge: great value is attached to being well prepared for this type of interview, thereby limiting the risk of exposure for both the interviewer and the interviewee. In contexts with an emotional dimension (for example following a suicide), it is vital that the interviews be conducted by skilled and experienced interviewers, preferably not coming from within the company concerned.

! Methodological precautions and tips

- Guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality: interviews need to be conducted in a place ensuring the confidentiality of the statements made. It is important to start the interview by presenting how it will be conducted and guaranteeing anonymity. Participants must also have guarantees that the subsequent analysis will be carried out in an independent manner. In this respect, having an external body conduct the survey is likely to inspire confidence.
- The construction of the sample cohort: as the approach is qualitative, it is preferable to construct the sample with a focus more on diversity than on representativity, with the

objective being to take account of the different types of work situations and to identify all problems.

- Limiting bias: to limit any bias, the selection of interviewees must be done randomly, using objective criteria (occupational group, level of qualification, length of service, etc.) Any bias can also be limited through giving priority to an external interviewer (no hierarchical links, etc.), thereby facilitating free expression and limiting any “resistance”.
- Organising interviews during working hours: interviews must not be mandatory and need to be conducted during working hours.
- Giving priority to semi-structured comprehensive interviews, as these are particularly well suited for studying psychosocial risks.

Observations

Work observation has above all been developed via ergonomics. It is an investigative technique putting the focus on work as it is actually performed and not limited to employer specifications. As such, it is an investigative method complementing interviews insofar as the workers do not always put into words what they are doing or how they are doing it.

An example of an observation checklist is to be found in **Factsheet No. 6**.

☺ *The advantages of observations*

- ☞ To provide further input to the analysis of the gap between the work actually done and the work as required by the employer.
- ☞ To understand why there are discrepancies between what workers say about their work and what they actually do.
- ☞ To identify aspects not mentioned by employees, either because they do not deem them to be sufficiently interesting or because they have become too routine.
- ☞ To take better stock of the working environment (layout of work areas, materials used, etc.), but also of the physical constraints at work (noise, etc.) and of the relations (direct / indirect)

☹ *Limits of the observation method*

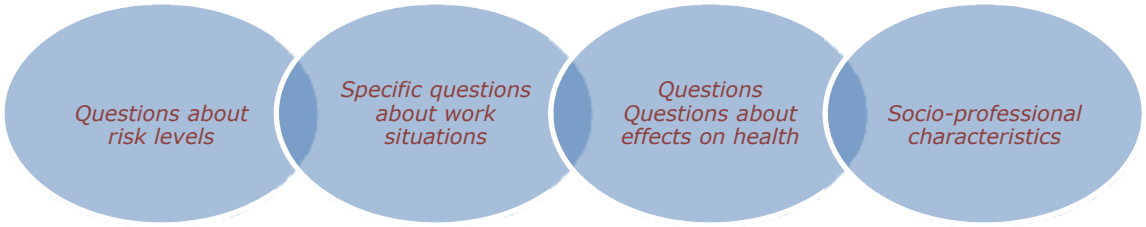
- ☞ Observation requires time in order to cover the diversity of work situations.
- ☞ The activities lend themselves more or less to direct observation. When the risk factors relate more to representations than to actual practices or the work environment, the contribution of the observation technique will be limited. For example, when the problems associated with psychosocial risks refer more to socio-economic insecurity and to the meaningfulness of the work, it is much better to use interviews to get to the heart of them.

! Methodological precautions and tips

- Give priority to observations in the wake of the interviews and in a very specific manner, using them to deepen, verify or fill in certain aspects.
- Compile an observation checklist beforehand.
- Give priority to direct observation, a technique often well suited to PSR prevention initiatives: practices are observed at the moment they take place, workers' consent to the presence of the observer is required, and data is gathered in accordance with the observation checklist compiled beforehand.

Questionnaires

A questionnaire must be able on the one hand to take stock of a situation or the way it is perceived based on scientifically validated measurement scales, and on the other hand to reveal risk factors occurring in specific departments or establishments. As a result, it will be made up of standard questions and questions specific to the unit concerned. Generally speaking, it will contain a maximum of 150 questions grouped thematically into 4 clusters:



When drafting a questionnaire, it is important to refer oneself to scientifically validated models. The use of such validated questionnaires permits an evaluation of the answers beyond the simple logging of opinions and individual perceptions of the respondents. A good analysis of the answers is necessary in order to surpass the individual level and reach the collective one.

To facilitate the drafting, some references of scientific models of questionnaires are to be found in **Factsheet No. 5**. An example of a generic questionnaire constructed on the six dimensions of PSRs is also provided.

A word of warning: *Though the questionnaire approach may seem relatively easy to implement, experience shows that non-respect of the methodological precautions listed below can lead to deceptive or unusable results. A questionnaire is not a miraculous tool permitting to respond to everything. It only makes true sense if it's integrated into a global approach, based on working hypotheses that can be validated or invalidated.*

☺ *Advantages of questionnaire-based surveys*

- ☞ Given the importance of the subjective dimension with regard to PSR, to produce data reflecting workers' points of view and not just objective data on the activity and its environment.
- ☞ To show that account is being taken of PSR: the presentation of an assessment via figures and charts is generally seen as a sign of thoroughness and objectification. In situations where the very existence of PSR is the subject of controversy, statistical data can help provide an answer.
- ☞ Have all employees take part: especially in tense situations, proposing a questionnaire to all workers can act as a reassurance that account is being taken of the problem; being able to state one's point of view is also greatly appreciated.

- ☞ Objectivity: a questionnaire-based survey is one possible way of producing data on work. It enables account to be taken of what employees are saying, thereby gaining an insight into work reality. Objectivity is established via the statistical method.
- ☞ Process replies as quickly as possible: a questionnaire consisting mainly of closed questions allows statistical processing at reasonable cost and within a reasonable timeframe (in the case of online surveys, first results can be produced within two weeks of closing the survey).
- ☞ Ranking PSR factors more easily: for example, among factors limiting decision-making latitude, the ones with greatest weight can be identified: having little freedom to organise one's work, not having any opportunities to develop one's skills, being required to do overly repetitive tasks, being subjected to too frequent changes, etc.

☹ *Limits of a questionnaire-based survey*

- ☞ A questionnaire is not the right way when structures or cohorts are too small for assuring confidentiality and statistical reliability. When there are too few replies, it becomes difficult to guarantee participants' anonymity. When there are less than 50 respondents, any statistically relevant processing is seldom possible.
- ☞ The level of analysis remains very general: the questions need to be formulated in such a way that every respondent is addressed, whatever his or her occupation, work, status, work environment, etc.
- ☞ There is no focus on explanatory mechanisms: quantitative data enable links to be established between variables, but not to take stock of processes or mechanisms. A questionnaire-based survey is not always able to cover all existing problems related to psychosocial risks. The presence of open questions in a questionnaire can contribute to partially overcoming this limitation, though not as much as a combination of quantitative and qualitative surveys.
- ☞ Evaluating the responses through statistical processing implies specific competences in order to avoid interpretational errors (e.g.: even if 70% of a population indicates to get sun-burnt on a beach, this does not mean that the beach is responsible for sunburn…)

! Methodological precautions and tips

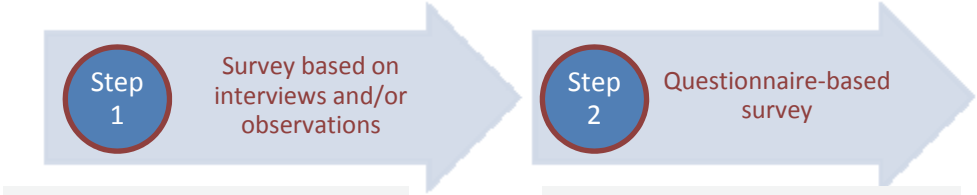
- Carry out a qualitative pre-assessment as a way of preparing questions specific to a department;
- Involve stakeholders in compiling the questionnaire and create the conditions for a formal joint validation prior to use;

- Make sure that the questions are precise (clear, unambiguous, each question relating to just one subject, the right vocabulary, etc.);
- Take care to make alternate use of positive (“my boss has time to respond to my requests”) and negative (“My workload is too high”) items;
- Adapt the way the questionnaire is disseminated to each particular situation (paper or digital form, Internet, intranet, etc.). Where necessary, introduce support and help procedures for participants;
- Tell staff in advance about the survey. When sending out the questionnaire, remind them of the ethical aspects (confidentiality, anonymity);
- Rely on proven competences: implementing a questionnaire-based survey (compiling the questions, guaranteeing independence, defining problem areas, handling returns) requires skills acquired through training and experience. Giving the task to people without sufficient qualifications can be a risk: causing them difficulties, producing data that is not sufficiently reliable, carrying out erroneous analyses, etc.
- Providing guarantees of anonymity and analytic independence. In this respect, having the survey conducted by an external partner is a way of inspiring staff confidence.

Complementary investigation methods

These different tools will enable you to identify the various tensions associated with the work and possibly generating psychosocial disorders. The strengths and weaknesses of each method often lead to them being combined in a complementary manner. We will present below three frequently used combinations.

Option A

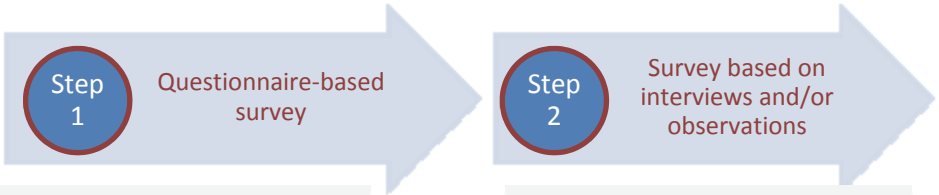


☺ Allows a detailed analysis of the work, enabling risk factors to be identified and their mechanisms understood

☺ Identifies key issues

☺ On the basis of the issues identified in Step 1, a custom-built questionnaire is compiled, enabling the initial findings to be validated, ascertaining the size of risks (levels, cohorts involved, nature of the disorders, etc.). Where necessary, complementary material is also produced.

Option B

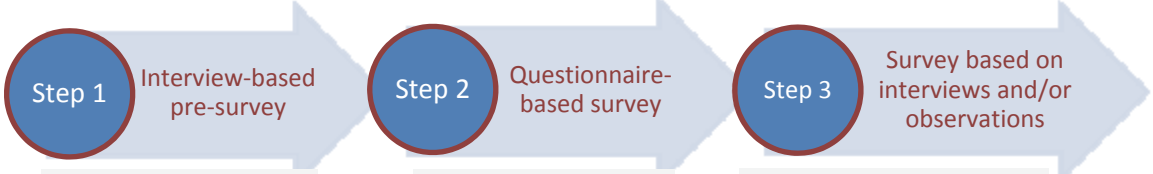


☺ Quickly identifies the main risk factors, risk levels and the associated effects

☹ Fairly high level of generality, thus reducing analysis capability

☺ Better targeting: for instance, conducting interviews and/or observation in the units most affected and in those the least affected as a way of gaining an understanding of exposure / protection mechanisms

Option C



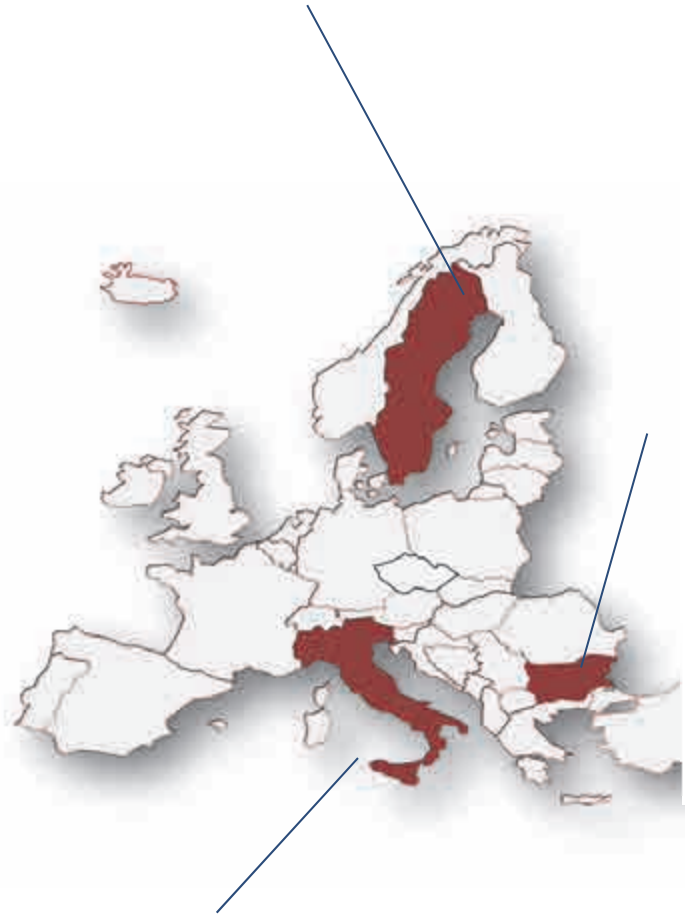
☺ Quickly identifies the initial qualitative elements of the assessment

☺ Quantitative validation of the pre-survey (adapted questionnaire)

☺ Enhances questionnaire results through a detailed understanding of the mechanisms at work

Practical examples: PSR factors and indicators

In Sweden, **SJ** has been measuring absenteeism trends for several years. It is thus able to state that absenteeism dropped by nearly 6% between 2002 and 2011. However, they have been seeing a recent increase, above all for on-board staff and in regional traffic. Similarly, employee satisfaction has been assessed since 2003.



In Bulgaria, **BDZ Passengers** defines psychosocial risk as "the interaction between mental and social factors". Using an assessment methodology based on established risks, these factors are assessed via the identification of the dangers of stress and neuro-emotional, mental, sensory and psycho-emotional pressures. The appreciation of the risk associated with this danger is done using indicators specifically established for each characterisation.

In Italy, the **FS Group** is rolling out the work-related stress assessment method developed by INAIL, the Workers Compensation Authority. Made up of 44 questions, this checklist includes sentinel data (number of absences, number of work stoppages, staff turnover, etc.), context data relating to rail operations and data inherent to each occupation.

3. Evaluation

Utilising the information gathered

Interviews and observations

The qualitative methods of gathering data involve as much rigour as the quantitative methods. To ensure that the most is made of the interviews and observations, it is necessary to have the output in written form. The quality of the assessment is greatly dependent on the quality of the observation and interview reports.

The analysis of the information gathered needs to be done systematically, to avoid only merely underlining the analyst's point of view. Analysis involves performing a set of operations, allowing the problems to be progressively formulated:

1. *Reading and re-reading* all data (transcripts of interviews, observation reports) with a view to identifying different themes, important information, etc.

2. *Thematic classification* of the data, using checklists coming from different theoretical approaches (Karasek, Siegrist, Gollac's 6 dimensions, etc.). When this has been done, the next step is to compare the different interviews and/or observations.

3. *Organisation of the data* belonging to the different themes in a manner allowing their interaction to be highlighted. This step is the most delicate, but also the most important for the assessment, as it is where the issues begin to take shape, facilitating an explication of how work organisation can lead to psychosocial risk factors and disorders.

Analysis of the interviews: reading them twice - once vertically, once horizontally

The interviews can be a goldmine for understanding the work situations of members of staff. To make the most of the material obtained, a twofold analysis can be done – vertically and horizontally.

Vertical analysis involves studying each interview as an entity. The aim here is to see how ideas are associated, the manner in which the issues are addressed, the information given, etc., while at the same time highlighting how these are interconnected. For example, a problem involving a loss of meaning of the work can be understood from a career perspective.

Horizontal analysis involves cross-analysing a set of interviews, looking for instance at how different employees address the same theme or identifying recurrent elements of a problem.

Observations: taking account of the effects the observer has on the observed person

Bias induced by the investigation process itself is a concern common to all methods, including interviews and questionnaires. In the case of direct observation, it is important to take account of this, as this method can give the illusion that reality is to be seen in an unadulterated form, without intermediaries or bias. *Two important forms of bias need however to be pointed to*.

The *first* relates to the fact that the persons observed may change the way they do things just because they are being observed. For example, a team leader might be seen listening more and not so much telling people what to do. An operator may tend to work more to the rules of his/her job or to the operating standards of the organisation he/she works for.

The *second* bias refers to the representations of the observer, who may tend to only see things the way he thinks or understands. This is one of the main reasons why the compilation of an observation checklist can be useful, even if excessive use of such a tool can also lead to critical data being overseen. These two forms of bias need to be taken into account when analysing observation results.

The questionnaire

Strict analysis of questionnaire results calls for a large amount of caution and possible recourse to specialised skills. In fact, there is a real risk of misinterpretation. It can be a great help to discuss the statistical results obtained with representatives of the employees concerned.

Questionnaire replies need to be entered into a database. Data entry and processing software exists. Where respondents have filled out the questionnaire with the help of an IT workstation, this saves having to enter the responses. This form of answering a questionnaire also has the advantage of limiting the risk of errors (for example selecting two response boxes where only one is allowed). However, the use of software to process the questionnaires does not avoid having to rely on strong statistical skills and solid expertise in work analysis to get the most out of the data and interpret it correctly.

- Filling out a questionnaire creates expectations on the part of the person filling it out. It is thus important to provide quick feedback to staff on the results: the questionnaire gives birth to expectations, with participants wanting to know the results (comparing their own position with others) and any actions introduced as a consequence. In the same vein, prevention measures in line with the issues revealed by the questionnaire need to be announced quickly, together with a precise schedule for their implementation.
- Obtaining average risk levels judged to be reassuring must not lead to inaction.

Summary indicators

We suggest that the questionnaire includes validated scales[12] allowing summary scores to be calculated for dimensions of crucial importance to occupational health:

- ☞ Decision-making latitude
- ☞ Psychological demands
- ☞ Social support
- ☞ Recognition
- ☞ Meaningfulness of the work

The interpretation of the results and gaps necessitates **points of vigilance**, a fortiori when the study reveals different levels of risk between two cohorts subject to the same objective constraints. Too quick an approach can also lead to the conclusion that it is the people who are under consideration, with some supporting the work to be done, and others not. Objectification is a way of overcoming prejudice and providing a different explanation related for example to the combination of operational constraints (type of work, methods of supervision, targets assigned , etc.) and the professional identity of a section of the staff (for example, in a call centre, former technicians reassigned to areas with sales targets).

The interpretation of the results must therefore take into account:

- > Different levels of exposure to the risk factors, in association with the characteristics of the cohorts making up the units: gender, age, length of service, etc. One speaks of a “structural effect”;
- > The differences in external environmental characteristics (geographic location, the population served, a deteriorated local situation, etc.);
- > The differences in the problems (professional identity, work meaningfulness, types of professional careers, work evolution, labour relations, etc.).

Assessment result feedback

This is an indispensable step: it involves providing feedback to the employees and above all to those participating in the assessment. It is a delicate task, as it can lead to difficulties hitherto denied being communicated or to questioning starting assumptions. In other words, the assessment can end up highlighting a denied malfunction within an institution or a sizeable gap between the vision company officials had and reality (or at least what is perceived as such).

In all cases, all stakeholders (employer and employee representatives, occupational health professionals, workers) need to appropriate the results in their search for and implementation of solutions. This is why such feedback needs to be prepared with great care; with the way this is to be done decided at the start.

12 Scales whose psychometric qualities have been scientifically tested

Logically, it is the project team which in this step will be the first to debate the assessment results. Their presentation will occasion a discussion enabling an initial interpretation of the results to be put forward. The project team will then go on to present the assessment to stakeholders within the company. Where external experts have been mobilised, it is a good idea for them to assist the project team in this step.

The feedback of the results to staff needs to fulfil at least **three objectives**:

- It must *provide information* on how the project is progressing;
- It must *report* on the main results such as levels of PSR exposure and the main risk factors;
- It must *encourage* staff to become active in the next steps through making commitments helping the assessment to end up as an action plan.

This feedback must be done carefully to avoid any stigmatisation of certain staff categories; for instance it is advisable not to present comparisons between functions or departments where these could cause tension. When reporting on the assessment, the project team should foresee providing a written communication, possibly in the form of a summary of the results, in a context-dependent manner (posting on bulletin boards, e-mails, intranet, etc.) and a written report. The latter will gain from being backed up by oral presentations.

Practical examples: Questionnaire use

In the Netherlands, a psychosocial workload survey, prompted by the sectoral committee of the *FNV Bondgenoten* trade union, was conducted among management staff (line managers and team managers) within **NS *Reizigers***, the Dutch rail operator. A-questionnaire was built based on the scientific Karasek model measuring work constraints, control possibilities and social support. The aim of the project was to check managers' complaints about constraining factors negatively influencing their work. The results of the questionnaire corroborated the need for prevention measures to be taken.

In Belgium, the **SNCB / NMBS** conducted a survey of its support staff in the context of a psychosocial work analysis (2012). This was done via a quantitative questionnaire issued to all support personnel. It was complemented by discussion groups composed of a representative panel of people. As a result of the survey, improvements have been initiated.

In France, the **SNCF** has several tools at its disposal for evaluating psychosocial risks at work. Team diagnoses are proposed in the different branches. They can be asked for by the management or by the workers' representatives. Generally, they are conducted following deterioration in the different indicators monitored. The results are used to design preventive actions included in the risk evaluation document. Surveys, such as *Tempo*, offer an annual measurement of the level of engagement and satisfaction of the employees. The results also give rise to an action plan. Finally, since 2006, the occupational health services conduct the *Flash Stress* survey three times a year; measuring the stress level of railway workers on a scale from 1 to 12.

4. DATASHEET No. 2: Understanding psychosocial risks

Multiple causes

There are many different causes of psychosocial risks. Interlinked, they built up over time, creating vicious circles and starting to impair employees' health. Employees' exposure to psychosocial risks can be attributed to events deriving from the **work organisation and the economic and social environment found within the company**. There are many factors attributable to work organisation: workload, working alone, skill utilisation, internal cooperation, performance recognition systems, etc.
Moreover, **individual characteristics** may also play a role in generating imbalances and health-related decompensating mechanisms (e.g. social paths, personality traits). In a company psychosocial risk prevention context, the field of action of greatest importance and with the greatest likelihood of reducing risk factors is to be found in work organisation.

The psychosocial risks present in a company are to be found at the intersection of several spheres of work. They appear when there is an imbalance in the 'ecosystem' made up of the individual and his or her working environment.

Effects on health

People react physically and mentally. Following an alarm signal, the body initially tries to resist, but ends up becoming exhausted.

Symptoms of physical, emotional and behavioural stress	Diagnosed diseases/disorders possibly linked to psychosocial risks
- Aches and pains (in muscles or joints, headaches) - Feelings of discomfort or suffering - Attacks of nerves or tears at work - Sleep disorders - Gastrointestinal symptoms (colic, stomach ache) - Discomfort at the workplace - Use of psychoactive drugs - Addictive conduct - Thoughts of suicide - …	- Hypertension - Coronary heart disease - Diabetes - Lipid disorders - Musculoskeletal disorders - Mental illness - Depression - Mental exhaustion (burn-out) - Recurring infections - Dermatitis - State of post-traumatic stress - …

Building a PSR map

Goal?

- To analyse work situations and objectivise risk factors
- To identify the characteristics of the most exposed cohorts (age, gender, function, department, length of service, etc.) and work situations at risk
- To identify the most relevant levers for action (taking account of the economic and social potential of the company) and to introduce appropriate prevention measures.

Main categories of indicators?

- Indicators reflecting perceptions or what has actually been experienced
- Indicators reflecting how a company is functioning (function indicators)
- Indicators reflecting occupational health
- Summary indicators

Methods?

- Group and/or individual interviews
- Observations of work situations,
- Questionnaire-based surveys,
- Presentations at meetings, etc.

!! Great attention must be paid to **communicating with stakeholders**, and in particular with the employees concerned.

4. Preventing psychosocial risks at work

1. Three complementary levels of prevention

The assessment (diagnosis) is only a first step, and needs to be followed by corrective action and prevention measures. The absence of a prevention policy can lead to high human and financial costs.

With regard to prevention policies, a distinction is traditionally made between three different levels:

- the purpose of **primary protection** is to eliminate risks at source (for example reducing the risk of aggressiveness through improving how dealing with customers is organised) ;
- the aim of **secondary prevention** is to protect employees by helping them to cope with risk exposure (for instance, training in conflict management);
- **tertiary prevention** (where the focus is more on containment) focuses on reducing disabilities attributable to risks which individuals were unable / did not know how to avoid. This involves individual or collective care of employees suffering from work-related disorders (for instance psychological support schemes).

Primary prevention: fighting risks at source

This is absolutely essential and must be given top priority from a perspective of prevention principles. The range of primary prevention measures can be broken down into the following four work-related categories:

- work organisation and processes;
- HR management;
- line management;
- change management.

The category **work organisation and processes** covers actions relating to:

- work context: workplace organisation, conditions under which work is performed (pressure from passengers, from urgent situations, etc.);
- work content: whether the work is interesting, the ability to perform high-quality work, the ability to respect values, support arrangements;
- the overall organisational consistency of a department or operating unit: matching customer expectations and headcount availability, work peaks, ability to take responsibility in various situations.

The category **HR management** covers actions relating to:

- medium- or long-term HR policy: recruitment, skill development, job development, career development, training policy, wages;
- shorter-term HR management: appraisals, bonuses, etc.

The category **management** covers what the operating unit demands from all its managers and the resources it provides for supporting them:

- working with the management tools of an operating unit or business unit, for example tools for balancing the management of "how much" and the management of "how";
- strengthening feedback processes within a team;
- organising ways of exchanging and sharing best practices between managers.

The category **change management** refers to all studies and anticipatory measures planned in the run-up to a major change:

- analysing strengths and weaknesses;
- making adjustments to workplaces (stations, trains, etc.);
- preparing for restructuring measures or mergers, closures of departments or operating units;
- anticipating technological breakthroughs.

Secondary prevention: helping people to cope

This involves anything that can be done to help employees cope with risk factors.

Quite frequently, the insufficiency of primary prevention measures can lead to the existence of risks which employees have to cope with. But there are still numerous situations where risk cannot be avoided. In such situations, measures can be adopted to help workers cope with their difficulties: a ticket collector having to deal with difficult passengers, traffic management departments having to deal with a natural disaster, dealing with passengers needing information/solutions, IT problems, etc.

Secondary prevention refers for example to back-up plans, to time given over to discussing and analysing difficult situations to learn lessons from them and improve working practices and overall behaviour. This often also covers training measures tailored to the identified risk factors. For instance, with regard to employees in direct contact with the public, this can involve training in how to prevent / deal with disorderly behaviour or aggression. It can also involve actions strengthening social links and fostering a team spirit at both the operating level and at management level.

Certain occupations (e.g. conductors, infrastructure maintenance staff, etc.) are faced with suffering, whether physical, psychological or moral, and even with death. Support actions in the form of psychological debriefing or supervision sessions, discussion groups also fall within this category.

Tertiary prevention: the remedial side

Tertiary prevention refers more to remedial action than to actual prevention. Two main types of measures are involved:

> Psychological care for employees who have been confronted with a serious or even traumatic event (verbal or physical aggression, a dispute between colleagues, an attempted suicide on the track, etc.),

> Professional help and support for individuals.

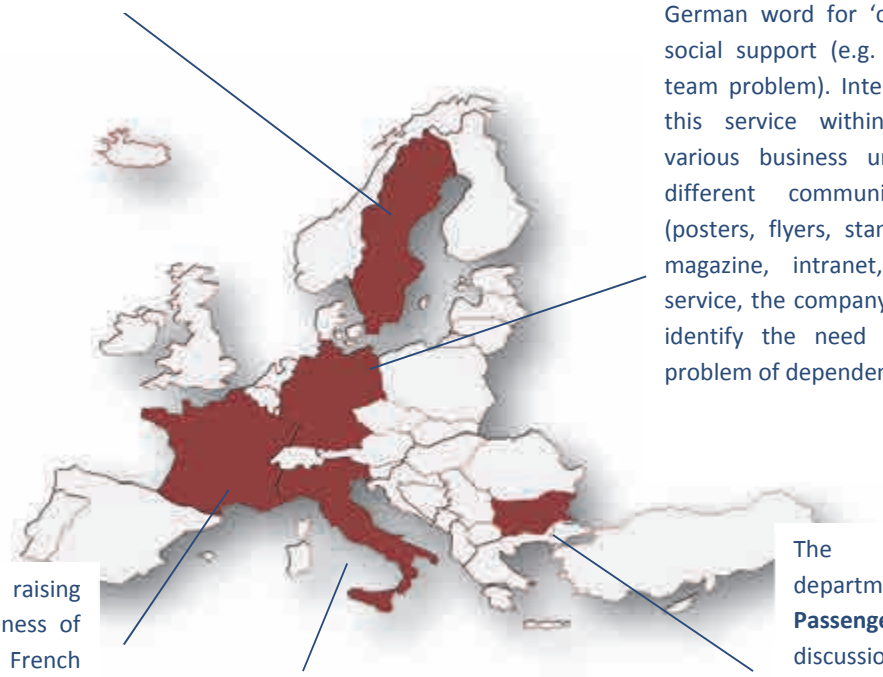
Remarks

- Observation shows that primary prevention is often the poor relation of action plans, although the two other forms only have a limited reach. A true PSR prevention policy must therefore aim at balancing the three forms of prevention through upgrading primary prevention.
- Though certain primary prevention actions need to be initiated at the highest level in a company, this does not mean that other initiatives cannot be taken at lower levels, including at departmental level. Each level of an organisation (within the operating unit) always has a certain amount of organisational leeway. Though there are obviously resource limitations, no department is fully dependent on them.
- Generally speaking, experience also shows that the effectiveness of prevention schemes is dependent on the logical and consistent interaction of the three forms of prevention.

Practical examples: prevention measures

Organised by the company's OSH department, **SJ** employees take part in workshops raising awareness to a healthy lifestyle (relaxation, sleep, food, etc.). These subjects are also discussed at team meetings. In addition, an 80-point plan exists for improving punctuality, service, information, disruption management and the state of rolling stock. Although not seen as such, this plan can have positive effects on working conditions.

Introduced in April 2012, an external platform made up of psychologists and social workers provides answers to employee questions at the **Deutsche Bahn** in Germany. This support team, going under the name of MUT, (*officially the abbreviation for* Mitarbeiter Unterstützungs Team / Employee Support Team, but also the German word for 'courage') provides social support (e.g. in the case of a team problem). Internal promotion of this service within the company's various business units is done via different communication channels (posters, flyers, stands, the company magazine, intranet, etc.). Via this service, the company has been able to identify the need to work on the problem of dependence.



With the objective of raising local managers' awareness of psychosocial risks, the French **SNCF** has introduced a programme called "Comprendre pour agir" (Understand and act) in its different branches. By involving the whole hierarchy, it is expected that a series of primary prevention measures will be initiated. Sessions are held in the presence of a company doctor and a member of the CHSCT, the statutory committee responsible for OSH issues and working conditions. Films are used as support material.

In addition to the prevention programme covering all the group's business units, the **RFI Ancona** (Italy) unit has been conducting a work and research programme in cooperation with the University of Rome since late 2008. This aims to go beyond just evaluating occupational stress and to look closer at the topic of "organisational well-being". This work recently led to the introduction of a "safety desk". This desk, available to all workers by e-mail and telephone, establishes contact with a third-party psychologist with a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality. Complemented by other prevention tools, the landmark results include a 30% drop in work-related accidents and absenteeism.

The internal medical department at **BDZ Passengers** (Bulgaria) holds discussion sessions with transport staff on "the acquisition of customer relation skills". These sessions includes rules on verbal and non-verbal interaction, on means of influence (visual contact, self-confidence, politeness, the right tone), and on the attitude to adopt in a conflict situation.

2. Compiling an action plan

The need for a social construction

Initiating an assessment means mobilising people, uncovering problems, and generating expectations. Not investing in action plans after an assessment can itself generate problems. This means that a PSR assessment needs to have the objective of identifying all risk factors, but it is also important that at the same time a PSR action plan must set forth the conditions for achieving operational feasibility at local level.

For example, a certain risk factor may be identified in the assessment as having a particular influence on causing stress (e.g. the outsourcing of a certain activity), without the local level being able to do anything about it. There is thus a need for a social construction between the assessment and the operational prevention plan able to **build an action plan tailored to local possibilities and accepted by all stakeholders**.

Our understanding of the term 'social construction' involves an approach during which:

- a distinction is made between what is and is not covered by local responsibility or the scope of action of the department or business unit;
- a social debate takes place on the analysis, priorities and concrete features of the actions planned;
- a prioritisation of the various measures contained in the action plans is done using such criteria as: the number of workers affected, the action's degree of urgency, the importance of the action in relation to the risk factor, how easily the action can be implemented, etc.);
- a deployment schedule is discussed and a person in charge named;
- finally, a progress-tracking indicator is attached to each planned action.

Getting things going

Though it is legitimate to want to deal with all risk factors identified within a specific unit, priorities need to be set and agreement reached on what to do first. It is therefore seen as a good idea to see the approach **as a project and as a continuous improvement process**.

As regards the form, there are no stereotype models for action plans. The form will depend on the know-how and experience of the prevention actors in the unit concerned. Precedence should be given to a simple tool which can be easily taken up and which allows regular progress tracking (especially in the joint bodies).

To be operational, the action plan must specify **at a minimum the following items**:

- *The person in charge of the action*. The person in charge of implementing the project at an operational level needs to be specified (though this does not relieve the employer of his legal responsibility). It is also a good idea to specify such a person

for the whole duration of the project, to guard against unequal attention possibly being accorded to two successive leaders, as has been seen in the field.

- *The coordination structure* with regard to the person in charge.
- *The resources needing to be mobilised*: this refers to both qualitative (skills, dotted lines) and quantitative elements (time allocation for the employees involved, budgets for the fees of external experts, other material resources).
- *The provisional implementation schedule*: making a distinction between short-, medium- and long-term measures, but also tying in with other schedules (that of a master project, the possible seasonality of an activity, etc.).
- *Indicators allowing the progress of each action or prevention mention to be tracked*: number of department meetings, number of employees trained, number of cases of unsocial behaviour observed, etc.

3. Prioritising the actions

The transition from the assessment to the action plan involves selectivity, with a view to establishing the credibility and effectiveness of the approach. To achieve this, all stakeholders need to come together and prioritise the planned actions. This requires an appropriate method.

As and when the risk factors associated with a specific unit or department are identified during the assessment, the various stakeholders put forward ideas for actions likely to improve the situation from their point of view. These need to be listed carefully. This work can be rounded off in working groups, either by occupation or by topic. Based on the feedback from the assessment, these groups will look for any possible complementary actions.

This process often leads to quite a long list of actions deemed able to improve PSR prevention. However, this list must not be confused with an action plan. **Several questions need to be posed with regard to each measure proposed**:

- ☞ Is it urgent?
- ☞ Is it important?
- ☞ Is it easy to implement?
- ☞ Do we have the means available to implement it?

Obviously, the various stakeholders will not always come up with the same answers to these questions. This means that a certain amount of discussion is indispensable for reaching agreement on priorities. **The joint employer-employee bodies** (e.g. the *Arbeitschutzausschuss* (ASA) in Germany, the *Comité d'hygiène, de sécurité et des conditions de travail* (CHSCT) in France or the *Comité de prévention et de protection au travail* (CPPT) in Belgium) responsible for occupational safety and health and for working conditions are the ideal place for holding such discussions. This process generally enables the following to be clarified:

- Measures on which there is general agreement that they are important or urgent, even if the degree of how easy they are to implement can vary.

- Measures which are desirable, but for which the implementation conditions are not fully available: lack of resources, unsuitable schedule, lack of skills, feasibility study needed.
- Aspects outside the decision-making scope of the unit considered but for which the information or requests can be channelled to the decision-making level.
- Aspects for which further investigations or studies or a deepening of the assessment are necessary before any decision can be taken.

4. The importance of regular and transparent communication

Providing information on the action plan after the start-up phase is often a weak point of the process, inasmuch as the energy invested at the start tends to fade: disappointment arising from the difficulty to achieve objectives in the short term, less dramatic than hoped results, difficulties in measuring results, other issues putting PSR on the back burner, etc. It is nevertheless vital to communicate regular information throughout the process, thereby underlining the constancy and consistency of prevention policy.

The aim of the communication will be to provide information on the priorities, the objective, the methodology, the results and upcoming actions. With specific regard to PSR prevention, the communication will gain from being discussed with employee representatives before being sent out. This is an effective way of ensuring that there is no gap between the messages communicated and the way the situation is perceived by the employees.

To achieve greater impact and effectiveness, the communication should be di-directional. i.e. top-down AND bottom-up.

5. Evaluation of actions implemented

The overall prevention process must include an evaluation of the action plan, allowing the effectiveness of implemented measures to be measured and possibly making adjustments.

The evaluation can be done on several levels:

- Evaluating the action plan from the perspective of the objectives assigned to each measure;
- Evaluating the impact of the action plan on risk levels;
- Evaluating perceptions of how effective the action plan is;
- Introducing an indicator-based tracking system to monitor progress.

Evaluating the action plan from the perspective of the objectives assigned to each measure

Part of the evaluation can consist of tracking the implementation of the various measures belonging to the action plan from the perspective of the objectives defined in terms of content and timeframes. For example, if one of the measures involves reducing the workload of certain departments or certain functions, it is important to define quantitative (x % decrease) and timeframe targets (y months).

Evaluating the impact of the action plan on risk levels

Evaluating the impact of the action plan on risk levels can be approached by re-conducting the questionnaire-based survey used in the original assessment. Obviously, any developments registered will not be solely attributable to the action plan. Other circumstances such as a reorganisation, the introduction of new work tools, etc. can also have an effect. Nevertheless, as the purpose of the prevention process is to lessen workers' exposure to psychosocial risks, this can provide an insight into whether the action plan remains sufficient, or whether it needs upgrading.

Evaluating perceptions of how effective the action plan is

Evaluating perceptions of how effective the action plan is can be done in several ways. One way is to include in the questionnaire used in the original assessment new questions specifically referring to the various measures listed in the action plan, for the purpose of seeing how workers view the impact of these measures on their work situation. Another way is to carry out a further questionnaire-based survey only made up of questions relating to the various measures belonging to the action plan and their impact on work organisation, labour relations and conditions of employment.

Introducing an indicator-based tracking system to monitor progress

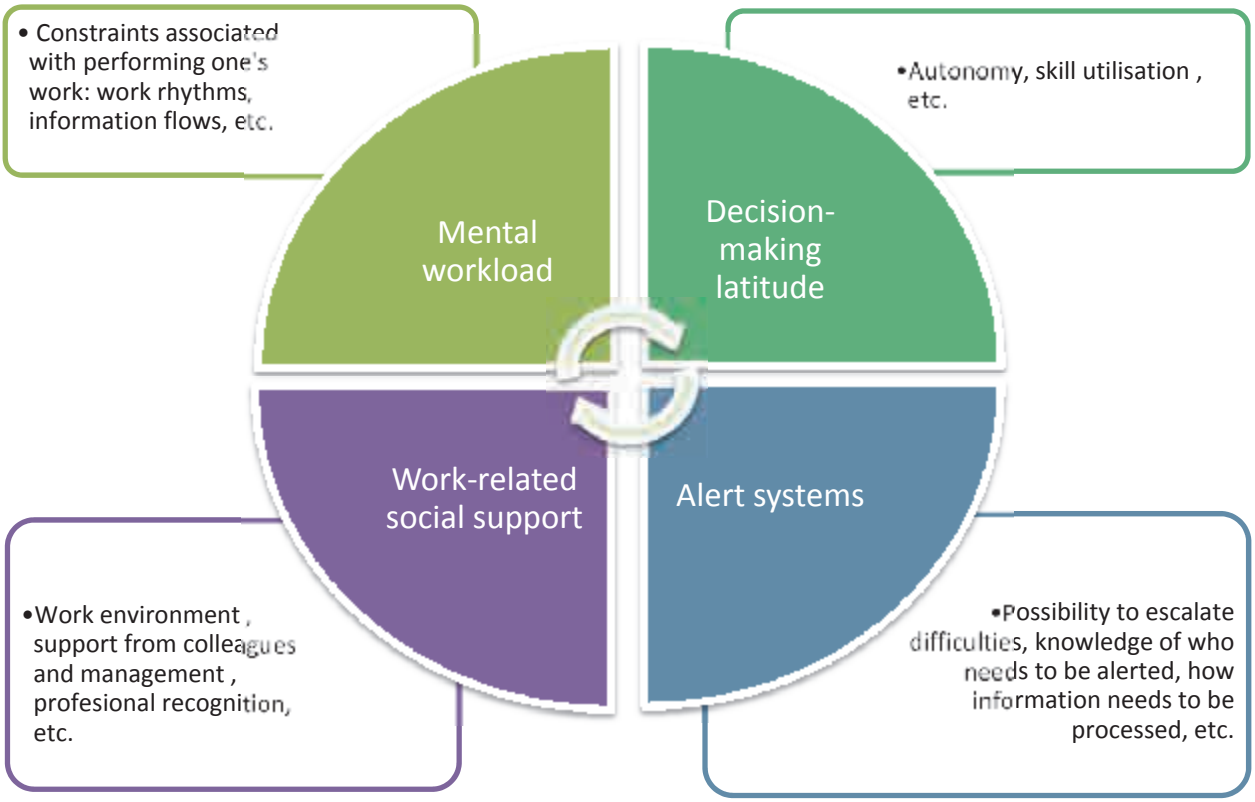
Last but not least, evaluating the action plan can be done by monitoring a set of indicators considered as indicative of the presence and importance of psychosocial risks. Should this monitoring system lead to new risks being identified or the evaluation of their severity being modified, the risk assessment can be revised.

When an external expert has been used to conduct the initial assessment and identify the PSR levels, attention needs to be paid to the ability of internal actors to appropriate the tools used in such a way that they can take charge of the monitoring and evaluate the action plan. The installation of a specific committee responsible for monitoring the whole prevention process is a way of promoting such appropriation. This committee can for instance be a joint body responsible for occupational safety and health issues or a specific committee made up of prevention actors, or the project team established in the original assessment phase.

6. DATASHEET No 3: Prevention of psychosocial risks

The **main steps** of any prevention process are as follows:

The diagram below provides a **simple analysis framework** based on scientific models on the emergence of work-related stress. Exposure to psychosocial risks is seen as being conditioned by the balance existing with an organisation between the following four dimensions:



Source: Montreuil (2011)

! *The most unfavourable situation for psychosocial risks is that combining a high level of mental workload and low levels of decision-making latitude, social support and alert capabilities.*

Regulative factors (individual and collective) can help cope with the imbalance, e.g.:

- work experience,
- freedom of speech within the organisation,
- employees' level of training,
- collective support (colleagues and local management),
- etc.

5. Factsheets

1. FACTSHEET - the place of social dialogue

There are a number of initiatives currently existing at European level aimed at promoting improvements in occupational safety and health, as well as worker participation and representation in this field. For instance, Framework Directive 89/381/EEC on safety and health contains "*general principles concerning the prevention of occupational risks, the protection of safety and health, the elimination of risk and accident factors, the informing, consultation, balanced participation in accordance with national laws and/or practices and training of workers and their representatives, as well as general guidelines for the implementation of the said principles*".

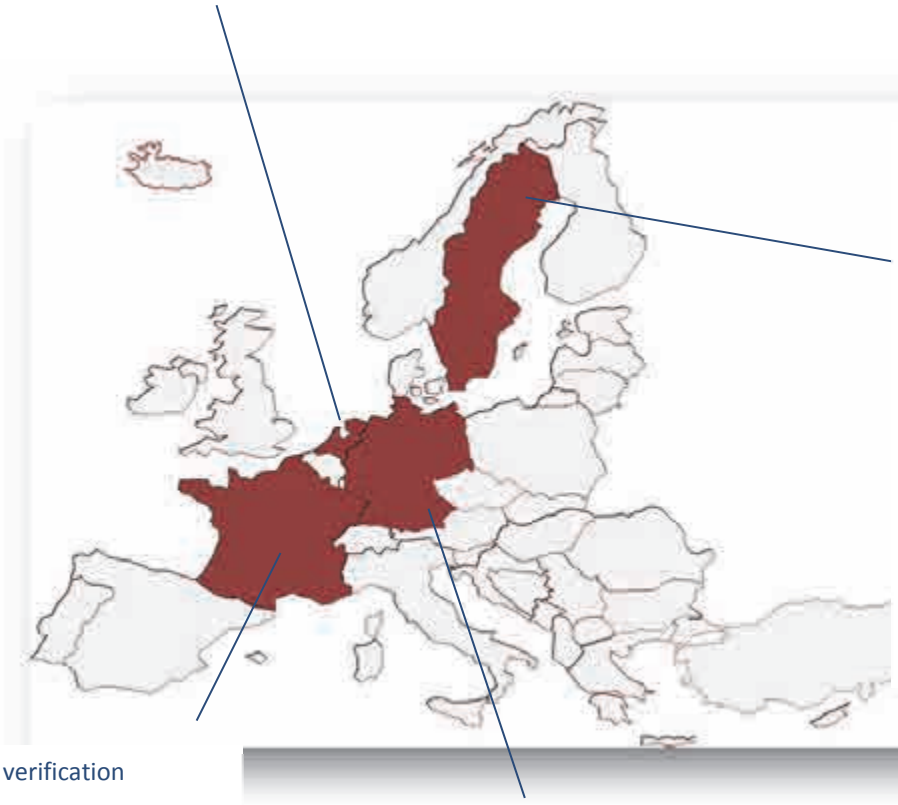
In most EU Member States these days, an employer is under the obligation to provide his staff with a healthy and safe environment and corresponding working conditions. The recent ESENER study published by the Bilbao-based EU-OSHA shows that this **legal obligation**, induced by the Framework Directive and its national transposition, remains one of the major drivers (if not the main one) for corporate managers to introduce prevention policies.

This same study concludes that employee representation bodies in the field of occupational safety and health appear to be a key driver in addressing OSH issues. In fact the vigilance of workers and/or their representatives in the face of OSH issues is, whatever the size of the company, an important factor promoting action. The importance of addressing OSH issues via social dialogue is therefore not to be underestimated.

Two framework agreements signed by the social partners relate to psychosocial risks: one on work-related stress (2004) and the other on harassment and violence at work (2007). Although a good prevention policy goes beyond legal obligations, these texts can be a help for **introducing joint initiatives** at a national level (e.g. the cross-industry agreement reached in France on work-related stress concluded in 2008; followed by an agreement on harassment and violence in 2010), at a sectorial level (e.g. the publication of joint recommendations on occupational stress by the trade union UNI Europe and the Confederation of European Security Services - CoESS - in 2008 following a questionnaire-based survey among their members), or at company level (e.g. at the financial group Allianz, at Danone, at France Telecom, etc.)

Negotiation

In the 2010-2013 collective agreement concluded by the social partners at **NS** (Netherlands), a specific paragraph referred to the occupational health of staff, acknowledging the need to take more prevention measures. The agreement provided for the creation of a joint monitoring taskforce focused on working conditions. The new agreement covering the period 2013 - 2015 has prolonged this scheme, but in a different form - it is now the tripartite "Working conditions platform".



Cooperation

So-called "safety delegates" within **SJ** (Sweden) represent staff in occupational safety and health issues. These staff delegates are in permanent dialogue with the responsible manager of the business unit in question, with the aim of improving prevention and dealing with all work-related risks.

External verification

In France, the Health & Safety Committee of the **SNCF** Nord-Pas-de-Calais region made use of its right to engage an external expert to carry out a check on the PSR prevention programmes introduced by the management

Co-determination

The German social model accords the **Deutsche Bahn** works council co-determination rights reaching from the right to information to a right of veto. In this context, the body participates in the risk assessment and runs working groups with employees with a view to escalating problems.

2. FACTSHEET – Key prevention players

The prevention of psychosocial risks not only involves different players but also the coordination of their action.

INTERNAL

Employees

They are the primary players in prevention, both for themselves and for their colleagues. They know the realities of their work and the potential sources of risks stemming from it. In their daily interaction with their colleagues, they are the first ones to see where difficulties are arising. The quality of work-teams constitutes in itself an indispensable resource for overcoming difficult phases. Cooperation within the team is a major form of primary prevention.

For these reasons, employees are at the centre of any prevention scheme, both as actors and as subjects. They are a source of knowledge with regard to concrete realities and actors in individual and collective prevention. They are the recipients of the necessary information and training.

The various schemes promoting and benefiting from employees directly expressing their views and concerns about the realities of their work and possible solutions are to be fostered. Involvement of these employees in increasing PSR awareness and the implementation of actions improves the effectiveness of prevention.

Corporate management

Corporate management is responsible for prevention policy. They know how the company is structured and have at their disposal the means to act. Corporate management involvement therefore plays a determining role. It is the task of the decision-makers with the means, competence and authority at their disposal to make sure that the decisions to invest in prevention are applied.

PSR prevention requires consistent action over time. This implies particular vigilance to protect the schemes from the problems associated with mobility, reorganisation, etc.

Line management

At each level of management, line managers have a vital role to play in prevention. The way things are organised, decided and managed can in itself be a risk factor, or conversely a valuable asset for employees coming under their responsibility.

Psychosocial risks are risks that can be passed down through a hierarchy when different levels of line management do nothing else than pass on the pressure they are receiving from the level above them. Conversely, the management hierarchy has the responsibility for prevention through detecting risk situations, taking part in setting up schemes tailored to the work realities they are managing and integrating them in the way they act.

Employee representatives

Within the framework of representation bodies or in non-institutionalised social discussions, employee representatives have a major role to play in alerting, putting forward proposals and coordinating the development of solutions. Their role as an interface between the shop floor and the whole range of actors involved in prevention allows them to take part in detecting problems and coordinating responses.

Social dialogue bodies with a specific OSH

As set forth in Factsheet No. 1, social dialogue is the right institutional forum for working on the prevention of work-related risks. The composition of joint employer-employee bodies makes them the statutory meeting and discussion forum for all stakeholders involved in PSR prevention. They play a pivotal role in discussing and assessing situations, working out solutions and monitoring their implementation.

Company doctors and OSH departments

Company doctors can operate either alone or in a multidisciplinary team and can be available on a permanent or more ad hoc basis. Dependent on the constellation, different patterns for consulting them will exist. But whatever the case, the involvement of the company doctor plays a vital role. He is able to alert others to medical disorders he gains knowledge of through treating individual employees and can provide scientific and human support in analysing problems and working out solutions.

OSH officers

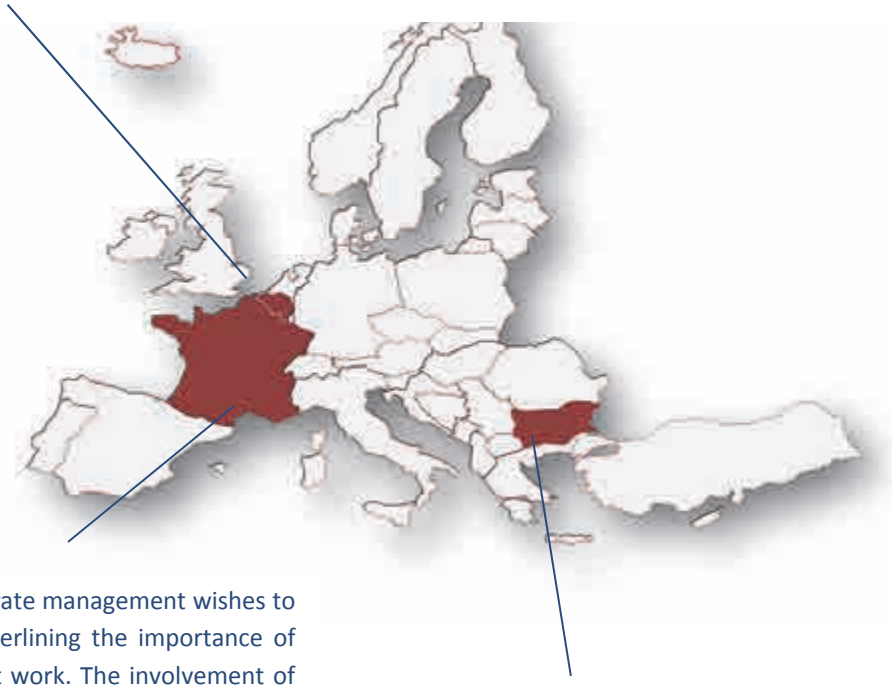
The involvement of OSH officers, acting in close contact with the field and supported by counsellors, is essential, given their responsibilities for participating in drawing up prevention policy and their roles in raising staff awareness to risk prevention and in informing and training staff in this field.

EXTERNAL

Though actors are for the most part internal (i.e. come from within the company), situations exist where recourse to external experts is necessary (e.g. labour inspectors, consultants, external prevention services, etc.). The relevance of such actors derives from their ability to make a specific contribution to the prevention edifice.

A few examples in the rail sector

In Belgium, the Royal Decree of 27 March 1998 on workers' welfare policy introduced a dynamic risk management system. This system is utilised in the context of an employer's general obligations to manage work-related risks. The SNCB / NMBS have been making use of an external prevention service *Corporate Prevention Services* (CPS) for many years now. CPS offers a range of training courses covering 8 welfare fields listed in the risk management system (including psychosocial stress). The CPS team will also intervene in the field, for example in conducting surveys or supporting workers in the case of any incident.



In France, **SNCF** corporate management wishes to show its support, underlining the importance of quality-of-life issues at work. The involvement of the CEO is clearly visible in a support film "*Comprendre pour agir*" for awareness-raising sessions. Apart from the CEO's part, the film also shows shots of how local managers go about dealing with difficulties at work.

With a global and sustainable performance in mind, the CEO made the improvement of working life quality a high stake priority for management.

Given the specific features of the rail sector, **BDZ Passengers** (Bulgaria) has opted to set up its own medical department. In existence since 2009, this department is made up of 7 experts, including a psychologist. One of its main tasks is to set up and monitor a performance dashboard on health risks (e.g. absenteeism rates, symptoms, medical analyses of specific occupations). Their analysis of this data is presented each year to the Minister of Public Health.

3. FACTSHEET – The main focuses of the 6 PSR dimensions

Dimension	Main focuses	Identified work situation
1 - Work demands	1.1 Quantity of work	*I'm being asked to do too much work*
	1.2 Time pressure	*I am given enough time to do my work properly*
		Do you frequently have to interrupt what you are doing to ad hoc do something else, and is this a negative aspect of your work?
		Do you have to hurry to get your work done?
	1.3 Complexity	*I need to think of too many things at once*
	1.4 Work-life balance	*I have a problem reconciling my work with my family obligations*
2 - Emotional demands	2.1 Empathy, contact with suffering	*In the course of your work, ...*
		a) are you in contact with distressed people?
		b) do you have to calm people down?
	2.2 Having to hide one's emotions	*In my work, I have to hide my feelings or put on a brave face*
	2.3 Fear at work	*I find myself experiencing fear during my work*
	2.4 Customer contacts / relationships	*Are you in direct contact with the public (users, service providers, customers, suppliers, etc.)?*
		If yes, in face-to-face contact?
		By telephone?
		I experience tensions with certain cohorts: (users, service providers, customers, suppliers, etc.)
3 - Autonomy, margins of manoeuvre	3.1. Procedural autonomy	*In the work I do, I have very little scope for deciding how to do my work*
		Can you interrupt your work at any time you want to?
	3.2 Participation, representation	*Was company staff consulted at the time organisational or technological changes were made (in the last 3 years)?*
	3.3 Use of skills, skill development	*I have the opportunity to develop my occupational skills*
		My work allows me to learn new things
		I can make full use of my skills

		Does your work involve repeatedly using the same movements or operations?
4 - Social relationships, work relations	4.2 Cooperation, support	*The colleagues with whom I work are friendly*
		The colleagues with whom I work help me do my work properly
		My boss pays attention to what I say
		My boss helps me do my work properly
	4.2 Conflicts, harassment	*In the course of your work, are you exposed to verbal aggression, swearing, threatening behaviour?*
		In the course of your work, are you exposed to physical aggression?
		Subject to contemptuous behaviour in the course of one's work
		Subject to a denial of quality of work
		Subject to degrading behaviour
	4.3 Recognition	*Do you see your work as being of use to others?*
		My work is recognised at its fair value
	4.4 Leadership (clarity, change management)	*Generally speaking, are you given clear instructions about what you have to do in your work?*
		Do you receive contradictory orders or instructions?
5 - Conflicts of values	5.1 Ethical conflicts	*In my work, I have to do things I disapprove of (power selling, having to dismiss employees, etc.)*
	5.2 'Prevented quality'	*I am given the means to perform high-quality work*
6 - Socio-economic insecurity	6.1 Job, wage and career security	*I am afraid of losing my job*
		In the years to come, do you think you will have to change your qualification or occupation?
	6.2 Sustainability	*Do you feel you will be able to carry on doing what you are currently doing until the age of 60?*

4. FACTSHEET – Examples of "out-of-balance" work situations by occupation and dimension collected through the seminars and interviews

Earlier in this guide, we presented you with some examples of identified work situations in the railway sector that are perceived by railway workers to be unsteady and classified them according to the six dimensions of psychosocial risks.

To complement this sector overview, the following tables provide you with elements and working situations collected through the project seminars and company interviews with workers representing the five professions retained in the scope of the PSR Rail project.

Work demands

Track maintenance	Traffic management	On-board staff in direct contact with passengers	Station staff in direct contact with passengers	Local management
-Time pressure to finish railworks before the scheduled resumption of traffic; *-Pressure on the time limits to complete railworks under pressing conditions (at night, restricted period of time) due to the densification of traffic;* *-Lack of visibility on the schedule of night and shift work due to late communication or modification;* *-Carrying out railworks whilst trains are passing on the adjacent tracks causing a high railway;* *-Insufficient or ageing railworks equipment (tools, machinery, light, maintenance…) ;* *-Workers with an increasing average age despite the high hardness of these activities*	*-Time pressure due to disruptions or traffic accidents, with an increasing number of interlocutors to manage or/and to inform (railway companies, separate services, clients);* *-Pressure on time limit due to the restricted time of intervention on the track to limit train delays;* *-Night work and shift work, with a lack of visibility on the schedule due to increasing last minute changes;* *-Digitalisation and centralisation of shunting posts but with coexisting old and new technologies to manage jointly*	*-Time pressure and limits during traffic disturbances to manage incidents and/or inform clients;* *-Lack of visibility on work schedule, with increasing modifications;* *-Lack of useful information on new technologies;* *-Faulty equipment (rolling stock, cleaning, …) causing more tensed relations with clients;* *-Handling of values (money) with risk of aggression.*	*-Digitalisation and automatisation of sales and information tools, but with coexisting old and new technologies ;* *-Increased workload during peak hours and/or perturbations; increasing the waiting time and aggressivity of clients;* *- Handling of values (money) with risk of aggression;* *-Increasing pressure on sales targets, impacting the workload and quality of work.*	*-Multiplicity of tasks with frequent interruptions;* *-Increasing size of teams under his/her responsibility, sometimes geographically dispersed and/or mobile;* *-Night shift immediately following a day shift often used to prepare the night shift work;* *-New communication tools (no disconnection from work);* *-Overtime (work-life balance)*

Emotional demands

Track maintenance	Traffic management	On-board staff in direct contact with passengers	Station staff in direct contact with passengers	Local management
-Implications of and responsibilities for railway security during maintenance activities on the network; *-Interventions on the railway track following serious accidents, suicides, …*	*-Enlarged responsibility over a growing geographical perimeter, sometimes less well known or mastered;* *-Frustration due to a lack of visibility on the total perimeter;* *-Responsibility and decision taking that can be full of consequences on security;* *-Fear for individual criminal responsibility in case of an accident;* *-Engagement in crisis management ;* *-Team debriefings following crisis(e.g. accidents)*	*-Aggressions and physical/verbal violence, sometimes when alone on train;* *-Implication in crisis management or handling in case of serious events on board;* *-Implications in sometimes delicate security tasks (persons and trains);* *-Exposure to serious railway accidents, to suicides on tracks, …*	*-Aggressions and violence in or around railway stations, be it before, during or after work;* *-Fear for hold-up at ticket boot.*	*-Double pressure coming from hierarchy and managed teams;* *-Operational management of redundancies of staff and restructuring decided on a higher level;* *-Feeling of being useless when not intervening directly in the production and/or not being able to reply to his/her team's expectations and needs;* *-Feeling of not providing quality at work due to a lack of time and/or resources*

Autonomy and margins of manoeuvre

Track maintenance	Traffic management	On-board staff in direct contact with passengers	Station staff in direct contact with passengers	Local management
-Interdependencies and lack of autonomy within a complex organisation of railworks with a long chain of distinct responsibilities from scheduling to operational management; *-Lack of suitable staff training in line with professions and railway specific environment;* *-Lack of investment in equipment (brake down, modernisation, improving working conditions, …) ;* *-Tensions on staff availabilities (insufficient recruitment, ageing of workforce, absenteeism, …)*	*-Limited visibility on increasing large and complex perimeters to manage;* *-Limited resources and room for manoeuvring in finding solutions when facing problems;* *-Dependent on IT technologies and external information to ensure centralized tasks away from field realities.*	*-Subjected to decisions made by others (traffic management, driver, station staff, …) and need to follow them without always approving or understanding;* *-Lack of necessary information to face problems and explaining them to clients;* *-Increasing number of procedures to master and apply;* *-Decline of internal social support from station staff and/or hierarchy when facing difficult situations*	*-Digitalized work activity giving rise to possible permanent surveillance and control;*	*-Lack of authority to decide and adapted means to take necessary actions;* *-Unawareness of tasks performed by his/her teams;* *-Number and complexity of procedures to know and apply or get applied;* *-Lack of staff and means to deliver expected return or reach set targets.*

Social relations and recognition at work

Track maintenance	Traffic management	On-board staff in direct contact with passengers	Station staff in direct contact with passengers	Local management
-Responsibility for railworks staff's security via announcement of trains; *-Lack of staff to ensure trains' announcements and railworks staff's security.*	*-Increasing number of railway operators to inform and supervise;* *-Difficulties in collecting useful information for traffic management over vast perimeters and many operators.*	*-Isolated work on some trains;* *-Sometimes difficult relations with drivers;* *-Less possibilities of support due to station staff reduction;* *-Loss of authority, legitimacy towards passengers (abusive behaviour);* *-Difficult tasks in representing the company towards passengers due to a declined image and reputation.*	*-Isolated work in some stations and/or at certain hours.*	*-Difficulties in meeting his/her team members due to the size of the teams, the geographical spread or mobility;* *-Difficulties in engaging an adapted management relation with each individual worker;* *-Presenteeism to face the workload and support his/her teams working all year round, day and night;* *-Important amount of emails to manage;* *-Important number of interlocutors or order providers with not always compatible targets (matrix organisation, other companies, subcontractors, …)*

Conflicts of values

Track maintenance	Traffic management	On-board staff in direct contact with passengers	Station staff in direct contact with passengers	Local management
-Tensions in applying security rules and quality norms to railworks with provided resources; *-Difficulties in reaching quality standards during railworks due to insufficient time caused by traffic pressure..*	*-Tensed choices between applying strict security rules and considering traffic regularity.*	*-Tensions between economic performance targets and quality of service provided to clients;* *-Loss of identification with company values.*	*-Conflicting situations between security (persons and/or trains) and the guarantee of traffic regularity.*	*-Tensions between the technical railway culture and the management culture;* *-Tensions between economic performance and quality of service;* *-Tensions on available time to resolve daily discrepancies and undertaking long term improvements;* *-Tensions between being available for a continuous railway service and personal need to rest.*

Socio-economic insecurity

Track maintenance	Traffic management	On-board staff in direct contact with passengers	Station staff in direct contact with passengers	Local management
-Continuous cost- and staff reducing policy; *-Competition from private companies impacting workload, means, professions, …* *-Fear of being declared unfit for work (strenuous work factors and railway security);* *-Incomprehension and/or lack of information on evolutions (company, work organisation, working conditions, …);* *-Reorganisations leading to longer journeys between the work and home place, sometimes without compensation.*	*-Separation of infrastructure management an railway operators in distinct entities;* *-Disappearance of certain professions due to IT/digitalisation;* *-Disappearance of local posts and prolonged home/workplace travel due to centralisation of traffic management centres.*	*-Lack of staff and uncertainties on long-lasting of activities and professions;* *-Fear of legal procedures in case of serious accidents;* *-Fear of being declared unfit for work (forced mobility, loss of profession or employment);* *-Increase in workplace/home journeys and /or nights away, sometimes without compensation.*	*- Lack of staff and uncertainties on long-lasting of activities and professions;* *-Fear of losing his/her employment following the automatisation of sales (booths in stations, internet).*	*-Incomprehension of the company's strategy and difficulties in representing it to his/her teams;* *-Loss of sense and stability to perform management tasks.*

5. FACTSHEET - The use of questionnaires

The questionnaire is **one of the diagnosis tools** within the framework of an occupational psychosocial risks approach. It permits to measure (e.g. the level of exposure, the proportion of workers concerned); to objectivize through a quantitative method, to analyse and explain (e.g. risk factors, health impacts); and to implicate the social partners (e.g. social dialogue on the questions and results).

However, the questionnaire should not be used systematically and is necessarily linked to other tools. For example, interviews and questionnaires do not cover the same elements and do not have the same goals; while being complementary (see chapter 3, part 2 of this guide).

Different models of questionnaires exist. It is recommended to use scientifically validated models to ensure a good understanding of the received responses and a correct interpretation of the links between the measured items. Below, you will find **some of the main available models**:

☞ The Karasek model: mental constraints at work and their effects on health

This model introduces the notion of job strain. It measures 3 conditions that -if coexisting- can give rise to pathogenic situations:

1. The psychological demand of the task is high (many constraints, important time pressure);
2. The decision latitude is low;
3. The social support (by hierarchy and colleagues) is low

The model and the questionnaire (JCQ – Job Content Questionnaire) have been validated in English. They have been translated in various languages.

See www.jcqcenter.org

☞ The Siegrist model: a balance between efforts and rewards

For Siegrist, the pathogenic situation is the result of an imbalance between the provided efforts (requested or voluntary) and the received rewards. According to a process of exchange, a reward is expected in return of provided efforts at work. If this expectation is not met, an imbalance which can be health damaging is setting in. Three dimensions are measured: two types of efforts -extrinsic (time constraints, interruptions, responsibilities, overtime, physical loads, increase of demand) and intrinsic (linked to personality, indicating a vulnerability of persons when facing situations at high costs and low gains); rewards (remuneration and esteem); and overinvestment at work.

The model and questionnaire (ERI – Effort Reward Imbalance) have been validated in German. Numerous translations exist.

See www.uniklinik-duesseldorf.de

Furthermore, it is also **possible to construct one's own questionnaire** by taking the existing scientific models as reference. This enables adapting the questions as close as possible to the work activity, but requires excellent mastering of the terms of analysis in order to evaluate the results and their links.

For illustrative purposes, you will find below an example of a generic questionnaire drafted by SECAFI, integrating mainstream scientific models (Siegrist, Karasek), and classified according to the six PSR dimensions (Gollac) presented throughout this guide. The provided questions are able to relate to any type of work situation in the railway sector.

Generic questionnaire (***in italics, the questions identified by the Gollac College of experts and without equivalents in the Karasek and Siegrist models***)				
Decision-making latitude	**Do not agree at all**	**Do not agree**	**Agree**	**Agree completely**
Q1. In my work, I am obliged to learn new things.				
Q2. My work involves repetitive tasks.				
Q3. My works calls on me to be creative.				
Q4. My work often allows me to take decisions myself.				
Q5. My work demands a high level of competence.				
Q6. In my job, I have little freedom to decide how I do my work.				
Q7. My work involves a variety of activities.				
Q8. I have the possibility to influence the way I do my work.				
Q9. I have the opportunity to develop my professional skills				
Q10. I can interrupt my work whenever I want.	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Most of the time**	**Always**
Q11. I am consulted in the case of changes (technological or organisational) affecting my work.	**Do not agree at all**	**Somewhat disagree**	**Somewhat agree**	**Agree completely**
Psychological demands	**Do not agree at all**	**Do not agree**	**Agree**	**Agree completely**
Q12. My work requires me to work very fast.				
Q13. My work requires me to work very intensely.				
Q14. I am required to do an excessive amount of work.				
Q15. I have the time necessary to do my work properly				
Q16. I receive orders contradicting those given by others.				
Q17. My work necessitates long periods of intense concentration.				

Q18. My work is often interrupted before being finished, meaning that I have to restart it later.				
Q19. My work is full of disruptions.				
Q20. Waiting for my colleagues or other departments to deliver work often slows down my work.				
Q21. I have difficulty reconciling work and family obligations.	Do not agree at all	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree completely
Q22. I have to cope with external demands (users, the public, etc.) requiring an immediate response.	Never	Rarely	Most of the time	Always
Q23. I do my work under permanent (daily) control from my line management.	Do not agree at all	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree completely
Q24. I have to think of too many things at once.	Never	Rarely	Most of the time	Always
Social support	Do not agree at all	Do not agree	Agree	Agree completely
Q25. My boss feels responsible for the well-being of his/her subordinates.				
Q26. My boss pays attention to what I say.				
Q27. My boss helps me do my work properly.				
Q28. My boss has no difficulty getting his/her subordinates to work together.				
Q29. The colleagues with whom I work are professionally competent.				
Q30. The colleagues with whom I work show interest in me.				
Q31. The colleagues with whom I work are friendly.				
Q32. The colleagues with whom I work help me do my work properly.				
Q33. In the course of your work, I am exposed to verbal aggression, swearing, threatening behaviour.	Never	Rarely	Most of the time	Always
Q34. In the course of your work, I am exposed to physical aggression.	Never	Rarely	Most of the time	Always

Recognition	0*	1*	2*	3*	4*
Q35. I receive the respect I deserve from my superiors.					
Q36. I receive the respect I deserve from my colleagues.					
Q37. At work, I receive sufficient support in difficult situations.					
Q38. I am treated unfairly in my work.					
Q39. I am currently experiencing or expect to experience an undesirable change in my work situation.					
Q40. My promotion prospects are not good at all.					
Q41. My job security is threatened.					
Q42. My current position corresponds to my training.					
Q43. Given all the effort I put in, I receive the respect and esteem I deserve for my work,					
Q44. Given all the effort I put in, my promotion prospects are satisfactory.					

Q45. Given all the effort I put in, my pay is satisfactory.					
Q46. I know clearly what I have to do at work.	**Never**	**Rarely**	**Most of the time**	**Always**	

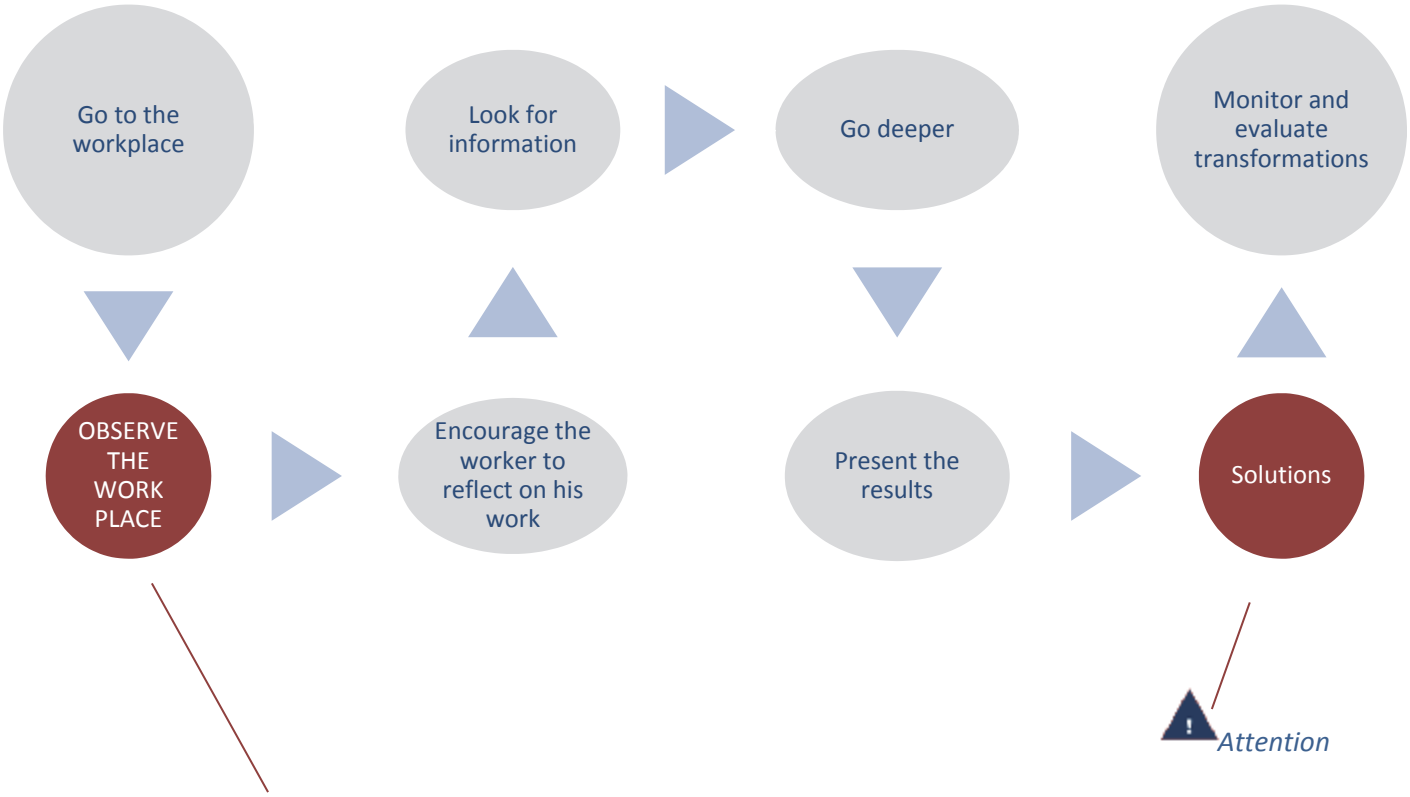
(* Response scale. 0 = Do not agree. 1 = I agree and am not in the least worried. 2: I agree and am slightly worried. 3. I agree and am worried. 4. I agree and am very worried

Socio-economic insecurity	**Do not agree at all**	**Somewhat disagree**	**Somewh at agree**	**Agree comple tely**
Q47. I feel able to carry on doing what I am currently doing until my retirement.				
Emotional demands	**never**	**rarely**	**most of the time**	**always**
Q48. I am in direct face-to-face contact with the public (users, patients, schoolchildren, passengers, customers, suppliers).				
Q49. I am in direct telephone contact with the public (users, patients, schoolchildren, passengers, customers, suppliers).				
Q50. I experience tensions with certain cohorts (users, patients, schoolchildren, passengers, customers, suppliers).				
Q51. In the context of my work, I am in contact with people suffering from distress.				
Q52. In the context of my work, I am in contact with people I need to calm down.				
Q53. In my work, I have to hide my feelings or put on a brave face.				
Q54. I sometimes feel afraid at work.				
Meaningfulness of the work	**Do not agree at all**	**Somewhat disagree**	**Somewh at agree**	**Agree comple tely**
Q55. The work I do is interesting.				
Q56. The work I do meets up to my expectations.				
Q57. My professional activity enables me to enjoy satisfactory social relations.				
Q58. In my work, I have the feeling of doing something that is of use to other people.				
Q59. Anyone could do the work I'm doing.				
Q60. I often get bored with my work.				
Q61. In my work, I feel I'm being exploited.				
Q62. My professional activity allows me to get a feeling of pride for a job well done.				
Q63. In the context of my current professional activity, I exercise my job the way I feel it should be done.				
Q64. I have the impression of working to satisfy the appraisal criteria of management, and not to respond to the demands of the occupation.				
Q65. The rules governing my professional activity seem fair to me.				
Q66. In my work, I have to do things that I cannot morally accept.				

Q67. In my work, I experience decisions and practices contrary to my personal values.				
Anxiety	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Q68. I feel tense or nervous.				
Q69. I get a sensation of fear if something horrible happens to me.				
Q70. I am worried.				
Q71. I can stay seated calmly, doing nothing and feeling relaxed.				
Q72. I experience sensations of fear and my stomach is in a knot.				
Q73. I am restless and can't keep still.				
Q74. I get sudden attacks of panic				
Depression	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
Q75. I enjoy the same things as before				
Q76. I can laugh and see bright side of things				
Q77. I am in a good mood				
Q78. I feel I am slowing down				
Q79. I no longer pay attention to what I look like				
Q80. I look forward to doing certain things				
Q81. I can enjoy a good book or a good TV programme				
Specific questions dependent on the context of individual departments for pinpointing risk factors				
<u>Examples</u>: questions about a recent merger, workplaces, IT systems, reorganizations, user relations, budget constraints, professional obligations, time for meetings, etc.				
It is very important that specific questions are devised for each particular situation and that this aspect is subject to a high response rate. *Aspects needing to be included:* > *Characteristics specific to certain occupations and the way they are exercised, for instance:* - *The isolation associated with certain workplaces (e.g. in a station or on board a train).* - *A traffic manager having to deal with emergencies.* - *Difficulties reconciling work and private life for jobs involving shift-work or where working hours are unpredictable.* > *The context of the department and its recent history:* - *Mergers, relocation* - *Crisis situations (where applicable)* - *Statutory developments* - *Dealing with slipped tasks* - *Technological or regulatory developments* - *The 'dematerialisation' of processes* - *Setting timetables* > *The assessment of available prevention means:* - *Training courses.* - *Specific schemes for providing psychological support.*				

Questions on the individual characteristics of the respondents			
Gender		*Age*	
Length of service		*Unit*	
Status		*Qualification*	
Function			
[Highest academic qualification]			
[Family status]			

6. FACTSHEET – Work observation



How do we go about observing the workplace?

Take the time to look at everything:

- ☞ What the worker is doing
  - > Work content
  - > Physical and mental demands
  - > Time organisation
  - > Links with other workplaces
- ☞ Material (technique) used
  - > Suitability for task, for workers
- ☞ The work zone
  - > Layout, exposure
- ☞ The physical environment
  - > Nuisance factors, facilities, …
- ☞ Incidents, malfunctions
  - > Sources, effects
  - > Solutions (individual and/or collective)

Attention

The introduction of solutions needs to be verified by observing staff at their workplaces. Such verification in an operational environment ensures that the selected measure has the required effect on preventing the occupational risks identified. For example, the allocation of unsuitable noise helmets to workers carrying out track maintenance or repair work can have a negative effect on features of the work (in this case, the need to hear an approaching train).

7. FACTSHEET – Discussion groups

Precautions to take and principles to respect

We have pointed out the incontestable use of discussion and management forums in preventing PSR. Nevertheless, attention needs to be drawn to several points

- The plethora of forums, bodies, groups, commissions, etc. can lead to a loss of consistency in executing the planned actions.
- This plethora soaks up human resources.
- The profusion of names (steering group, project group, monitoring unit observatory, working group, focus group, advisory group, etc.) is no help in facilitating an understanding of "who does what?"
- The low formal level of the respective missions can lead to duplication and a loss of efficiency.
- Staff can easily find themselves lost in over-complex schemes, leading to resignation.

Managing PSR prevention involves on the one hand a long-term commitment, with a high level of involvement on the part of actors and workers, and on the other hand a consistent approach. Experience shows that discussion structures that have not been well thought through rapidly sap the strength of participants, with a negative effect on their functioning.

This points to the need to respect certain common-sense principles:

- ☞ Keep things simple, in line with the size and complexity of the problems to be dealt with.
- ☞ Work efficiently, matching the number of different structures, their composition and their missions to actual availability.
- ☞ Be precise, defining exactly what groups have to do and how they interact with other bodies.
- ☞ Be fair, making each group up of the relevant actors for each specific mission.

The most common forms

The terms used below refer to four types of functions of use in PSR prevention: management, the attempt to involve staff, crisis intervention and monitoring. Projects are under no obligation to implement all these schemes - they need to match your realties and capabilities.

> The steering group or committee

Its function is to ensure overall consistency in discussions, assessments and the conduct of preventive action by getting all actors concerned around one table. It is a multi-disciplinary forum promoting the development of a common culture on PSR, discussing the different prevention steps, analysing the current situation, putting forward proposals and communicating information of the paths adopted.

It is not a substitute for management authority or for social dialogue bodies, instead providing them with discussions results and analyses. It moreover ensures a long-term spotlight on the issue at hand.

It is made up of corporate management, the project leader, employee representatives, the company doctor, internal prevention officers, and employee relations departments. Its size must allow it to function regularly and efficiently. It may delegate work to other programmes dedicated to specific aspects of the action, defining who takes part and what is to be done and coordinating the activity.

> The working group, focus group, advisory group

These different names cover arrangements the purpose of which is to involve the employees concerned in analysing the problem situations and working out solutions.

The group takes up a specific issue (a department, a “problem situation” concerning a specific staff category). Its scope and duration are limited to a specific action. Recourse to such groups is very useful in assessment phases.

This involvement of staff in analysing their situation is of vital importance, though also involves certain strict rules and imperatives, without which we advise against their use:

- The number of participants must remain limited (max. 10 people) to ensure availability and facilitate discussions.
- Its composition should reflect the different functions and categories concerned.
- Membership should be on a voluntary basis.
- Everyone shall be free to say what he/she thinks, without fear of being sanctioned or reprimanded.

> The monitoring unit

The monitoring unit has the permanent job of detecting crisis situations and providing first aid. Its composition is limited in number, with professionals coming from different disciplines. They are able to quickly interact with the key actor(s) of the problem posed: the company doctor, the psychologist, a member of the HR department. Employee representatives are not called on to participate in this unit.

The unit is invoked directly by workers or their colleagues, either directly or through recourse to a dedicated e-mail address. Employees are clearly informed of its existence, its functions, its rules of intervention and under what circumstances it can be invoked.

This unit works in compliance with the principles of anonymity and shared secrets. It discusses at different levels (HR, medical, psychological, social) ways of enabling the person or group concerned to overcome his/her/its difficulties. It records the number and characteristics (type of problem, category and work team concerned) of the problems encountered, though without recording any details of the situations encountered.

The monitoring unit does not intervene in any therapy. It may provide orientation to programmes possibly implemented in the context of tertiary prevention, but is no substitute for them.

The introduction of such a scheme is greatly dependent on the presence and commitment of the competent professionals in the business unit concerned. Ways of pooling approaches geographically can also be envisaged as a way of achieving effective responses.

> The observatory

Stress or PSR observatories are often set up in large companies in other sectors. Their function is to bring together at a higher level the employer, employee representatives, internal specialists and external experts to monitor PSR development and work on preventive action.

Their scope of action covers statistical monitoring, managing the assessment, and evaluating prevention policies implemented in the field. This type of programme is to be found at appropriate management levels with sufficient scope of action.

Setting up this type of instrument is only justifiable in cases where the official coordination body is not in a position to effectively execute this mission and when it agrees to its introduction. Its effectiveness is gained through the centralised collection of observations and indicators by actors in the field appointed within the scope of the observatory.

8. FACTSHEET – Prevention levers

Selective action targeting the main PSR factors for which margins of manoeuvre exist is a way of enhancing the effectiveness of a prevention policy and allows concrete results to be obtained. With regard to any imbalances detected within the work organisation, you will want to identify potential levers for taking action to counteract them. As psychosocial risks are dependent on many factors, it is often a good idea to focus on one or two specific factors in order to get things back in balance and break up the vicious circle. As regards PSR prevention, action can be envisaged in the **following fields**:

Examples of action for the 6 levers:

Levers	*Main determinants*	*Actions*
Work organisation	*Change management*	Providing feedback of experience gained at each stage of implementing a change project.
System of requirements	*Regulating workload*	Taking into account the impact management decisions have on work quality (e.g. time constraints, team composition, etc.).
Skill development	*Training*	Supporting redeployed members of staff (e.g. returning from a long absence, a new position, etc.)
Professional identity and recognition	*Meaningfulness of the work*	Sharing company objectives to (re-) gain one's bearings and direction (e.g. transition from a public service culture to private sector notions)
Regulative character of labour relations	*Support system*	Providing support and prevention measures in the face of abusive behaviour (between colleagues and/or with passengers)
Work resources and environment	*IT interface*	Reducing any apprehension towards new technologies by ensuring, on the basis of field observations, their suitability for specific work situations (e.g. between teams, departments, etc.).

Pay attention to the assumption that there should be a mechanical link between causes and effects. Psychosocial risks are a sign of a no longer existing "balance". At the same time it is necessary to take interest in what people are doing, thinking and feeling. In sum, one needs to know exactly what happens in any work situation

(cf. Factsheet No. 6)

9. FACTSHEET – Prevention in a restructuring context

A period of change with multiple organisational impacts

Whether a reorganisation, merger, relocation, outsourcing, with or without job cuts, restructuring measures are particular events often experienced in a brutal and unanticipated manner.

Numerous studies highlight the importance of anticipating the consequences of any restructuring measure. Indeed, when restructuring measures start meaning that employees lose their jobs, they constitute major risk factors for those remaining ("the survivors"). In this respect, the European Commission has been warning - via various studies such as that of the HIRES group (2008) - about the **impact of restructuring measures on workers' health**.

Such measures involve major and deep-going changes in the working environment and the employees affected have to adapt to these.

- Restructuring measures impact work totally and modify all factors at the source of psychosocial risks: workload changes, reorganisation of management and team structures, uncertainties regarding the company's future, etc.
- Restructuring measures also destabilise regulative factors in a company. Where employees previously found support and help in adjusting, new programmes and actions need to be established to regulate and reduce tension.

As an example, the whole issue of mobility, both geographical (where people work) and functional (positions and functions) is a significant destabilising factor. The negative effects of reorganisations and restructuring measures show that a deteriorated situation in terms of PSR results in frequent short-term absenteeism, but also in sometimes very long absences as are observed in cases of violence and harassment or when the working atmosphere in a department is particularly bad.

The European rail sector has been undergoing major changes for several years now, characterised by frequent restructuring measures and reorganisations.

Preventive action to be taken in the case of restructuring measures?

Throughout the restructuring process, specific action targeting psychosocial risks needs to be taken.

- **Before restructuring**, effective primary prevention needs to be ensured. This is a phase when programmes need to be set up for avoiding overly savage changes and helping organisational change to be conducted smoothly. The first measure to be taken involves carrying out a **systematic study of the project's human impact**, and of its consequences for physical and mental health.

    - *Here are some examples of questions to be posed in this phase:*

- Which occupations or cohorts are “at risk”, working under high stress?

- How large is the gap between a person’s former position (now lost) and the new position offered with regard to his/her aptitude, experience and training?

- For which functions has no training been specifically proposed?

- **During the restructuring phase**, secondary prevention measures need to be taken. This involves bringing the social partners together to define the new target organisation, teams and processes, and to work with all prevention actors (corporate HR, OSH departments, labour relations, employee representatives, consultants) on a **support programme** for the change process, specifically addressing the prevention of psychosocial risks. For example:

    - In the case of new mobility requirements (geographical, but also functional): provide those confronted with difficult choices with regard to their jobs with an adequate decision-making timeframe, thereby helping them psychologically. One could for instance give a guarantee that no new change of this type will be offered to a person accepting such a change before a guaranteed deadline. Such a measure has the effect of fostering acceptance of a change with a high psychological cost, as acceptance will be counterbalanced by a guarantee of stability helping the person concerned to cope with the personal consequences.

    - In the case of older workers, one could provide a guarantee that the new situation will last until retirement. This would similarly provide psychological security and help in taking the personal decisions associated with the mobility process.

- **After restructuring has been completed**: PSR indicators need to be monitored, effective regulative forms introduced and working groups set up to consolidate teams, provide information on company strategy, etc.

    - Examples: Compiling an occupation chart showing paths with a good chance of success and paths with very little such chance. Supporting line management, a cohort often sandwiched in between their function within the hierarchy and their empathetic desire to listen to the concerns of their employees.

The **quality of social dialogue** plays a major role in reducing the aggravating factors often noticed when restructuring measures are announced:

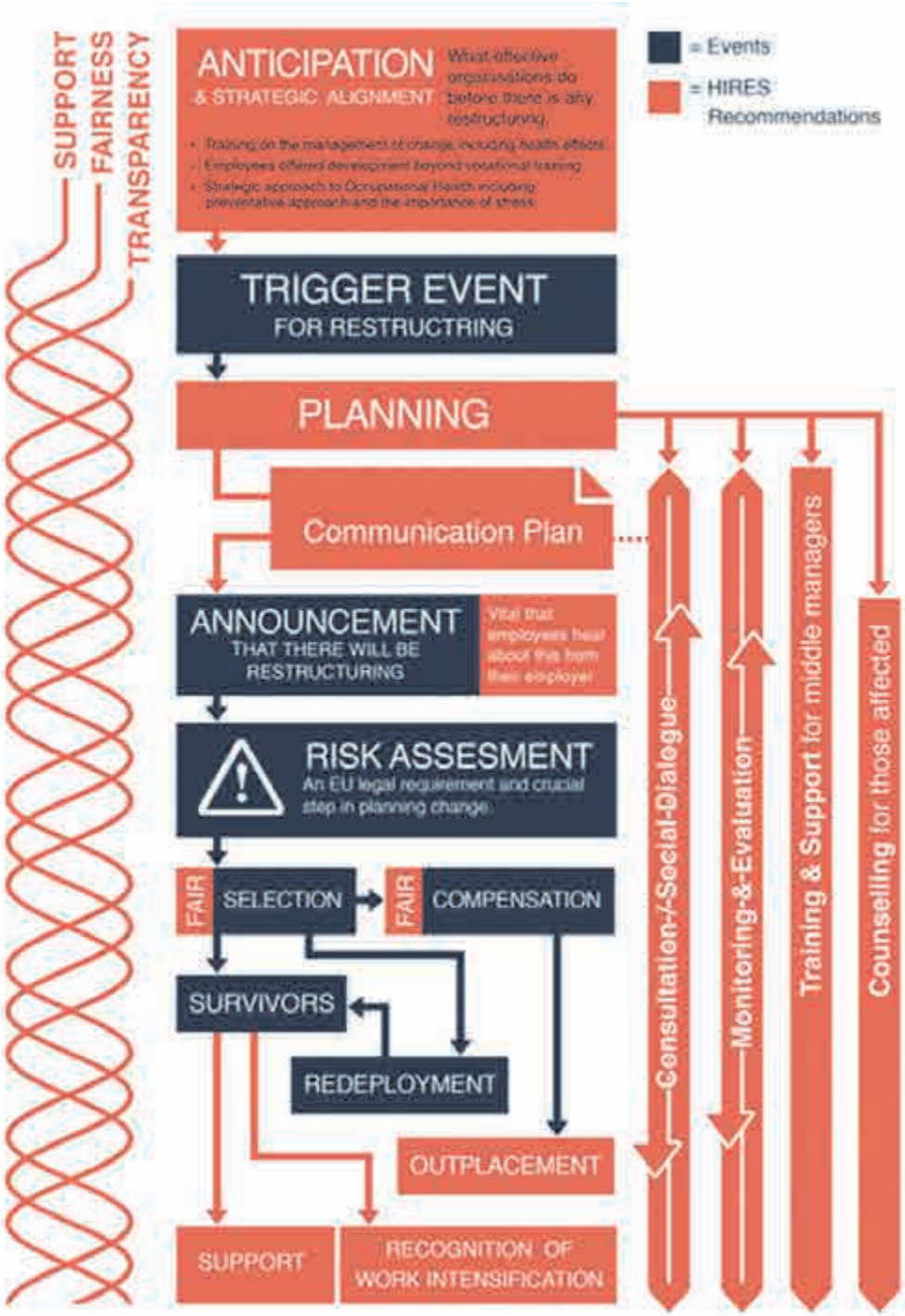
> *Lack of understanding* when economic fundamentals are not clear and give the feeling of an arbitrary decision having been taken;

> *Powerlessness* when no union proposal is taken into account;

> *Unfairness* when efforts are required from some but not from others;

> *Isolation* when a sense of personal failure is created.

Complementary, please find below a visual representation of the recommendations issued by the HIRES report:



10. FACTSHEET – Work-life balance

One major issue in the rail sector involves maintaining the balance between work and private life. Finding solutions suiting each family situation is no easy thing given the size of the majority of rail companies. For instance, the duration and frequency of work-related travel can be experienced differently. Nevertheless, in a PSR prevention approach what is at stake is to chart the possible consequences of **organisational constellations** on workers' health.

Diversity

The rail sector remains male-dominated, with a relatively low female employment rate (Eurofound, 2013). Several initiatives exist for supporting the employment of women in rail companies. In 2007, the social partners, CER and ETF, compiled recommendations on this subject. This initiative was backed up by the '*Woman in Rail'* (WIR) project, as a result of which a guide was published[13].

Apart from the gender issue, we have identified two further work organisation issues involving work-life balance: work scheduling and mobility

Work scheduling

Rail operations often involve shift work or unsocial working hours for certain functions. Such irregular work schedules can make it difficult to reconcile work with private life. Nevertheless, this difficulty can be considerably reduced by providing **scheduling transparency** with regard to each employee's working hours. In the same vein, everything should be done to **limit late modifications to schedules.**

A few practical examples:

☞ *In Sweden, SJ call centre employees choose their own work schedules for the coming month. The fact that the teams also work at the same place makes this approach easier. This is complemented by ergonomic measures (the layout of a workplace) and attention paid to a healthy life-style.*

[13] See the CER website (http://www.cer.be/index.php?eID=tx_nawsecuredl&u=0&file=uploads/media//070612_CER-ETF-Women.pdf&t=1376929943&hash=c7b8f709f14c10ff5f0175ea45c7d2577efea744) and that of the ETF (http://www.itfglobal.org/etf/etf-3556.cfm) for the full documents.

☞ *In Germany the **Deutsche Bahn's** "Work and Family" programme is aimed at better reconciling work and family life. Free services are available to employees - such as help in finding childcare, organising care for family members. In addition, members of the HR team can visit sites where there are disagreements between the employee and his employer with a view to finding concrete solutions reconciling personal wishes and company and department interests.*

Mobility

Although rail employees have facilities to travel by train, it is still advisable to take the necessary precautions when allocating jobs and workplaces. Unlimited **geographical mobility** is a factor contributing to fatigue, stress and disruptions in a person's work-life balance.

In the same vein, **functional mobility** (changing one's position, or even occupation) can similarly have negative effects when the required precautionary and support measures are not taken (cf. Factsheet No. 9).

A few practical examples:

☞ *In France, the **SNCF** has introduced a dedicated support structure for mobility - whether voluntary or mandatory - in the context of job unsuitability, reorganisations, choices of professional reorientation, etc.*

11. FACTSHEET - Coping with a crisis situation

A crisis situation is characterised by:

- the new and unknown situation this creates in the organisation, often heightened by the violent nature of the event;
- the shockwave it generates: a crisis situation involving PSR quickly spreads from its source to ripple out, sometimes even going beyond the boundaries of the department or the company;
- the risks it may pose to the foundations and stability of the social unit;
- the inability of such a social unit to come up with an immediate or rapid appropriate response in the sense that the situation in most cases constitutes a terrible and new ordeal for which nobody is prepared.

A PSR-related crisis does not occur out of the blue. With regard to psychosocial risks, a succession of warning indicators can be involved, though sufficiently frequent to call for a solution (employees in tears, distrust shown against a person's manager, abandoning one's workstation, short chronic absenteeism, open confrontation of clans within a team, etc.). These can extend to more serious cases, where there is suspected or actual harassment, thoughts of suicide, violence at the workplace, etc.

Moreover, it is not easy to characterise interventions in this context. Nevertheless, and especially in more serious cases, such interventions are governed by a number of **well-defined rules**:

- **Immediacy** of the response: a crisis management specialist must be at hand to intervene as soon as possible in any emerging crisis.
- **Organisation** of the response: The response must fit into a framework allowing no room for improvisation with regard to the competences mobilised and the crisis treatment process.
- **Segmentation** of the response: in the intervention phase, a distinction must be made between managing the “emotional phase” (the duration of which varies greatly and for which two months can be seen as a ‘rule of the thumb’) and managing the “understanding phase” (lasting longer). The resources allocated to these two phases are basically different as they are not working on the same issues.

Basic principles

The psychological support of employees in difficulties or of victims of a potentially traumatic incident must, to be effective, be seen in its entirety.

Indeed, the recognition of the damage to the "victim" and the necessary remedial work takes place at several levels: at a personal 'coping' level, at an administrative level (company recognition of the damage), and even possibly at a legal level (when criminal charges are pressed).

Psychological support is one of the elements in the overall care of the victims.

The implementation of an emergency psychological support process belongs to the scope of tertiary prevention. It nevertheless requires a framework agreement resulting from a systematic assessment of the company situation and the significant presence of risks highlighted in the context of the risk assessment. It is therefore a good idea to foresee this type of intervention in the prevention plan, complementing the primary and secondary dimensions. Internal guidelines (what needs to be done, who is responsible for what, etc.) dependent on the type of incident (aggression, suicide, etc.) can be compiled.

The design of psychological support following a painful, violent or even traumatic event

When an event stems from a work situation, the management of the OSH department contacts, in the context of its prevention responsibilities, the relevant specialists by telephone, requesting them to contact the department concerned. De facto, this means that the entity, through its head, identifies the potential disorder affecting the employee.

This initial contact allows the nature of the incident and the employee(s) affected to be identified and will help establish a link between the psychologist and the heads of the entity with a view to coordinating the overall support of the employee(s).

The employees affected will then be contacted by telephone within the next few hours. It is the job of the psychologist to carry out an initial assessment, not just of the impact of the event on the subject, but also of the subject's personal resources and expectations.

The intervention of the psychologist is part of an overall approach aimed at supporting the person from a psychological perspective. In this context, the psychologist will not wait for a hypothetical request for support from the victim to offer his support (a proactive instead of a reactive approach).

This initial intervention phase is of vital importance, allowing the identification of people particularly affected, but not necessarily leading to follow-up measures. Such initial intervention can be followed by a more specific approach when (and only when) so requested by the person affected.

When a whole group is affected, support can possibly take the form of **group therapy**. Setting up the latter is dependent on a number of criteria:

- it is important that the group participants have experienced the same event;

- the group must have existed prior to the event and there must not be any overdue tension between its members.
- Participation is naturally voluntary.

6. Annexes

1. Additional glossary

Definitions are taken from the EU-OSHA (www.osha.europa.eu), Eurofound (www.eurofound.europa.eu) and INRS (www.inrs.fr) websites.

Work-related stress

People experience stress when they perceive that there is an imbalance between the demands made of them and the resources they have available to cope with those demands. Although the experience of stress is psychological, stress also affects people's physical health. Stressful situations lasting for long periods always take their toll on the health of the individuals subject to it. They also have negative repercussions on the functioning of organisations (staff turnover, lost working days, loss of quality in production, a lack of motivation among teams, etc.).

According to widely held views, **good stress** enables employees to give their best, while **bad stress** makes them ill. However, from a scientific point of view, there is no such thing as good or bad stress. Stress is a phenomenon under which the body has to adjust to an environmental factor. Nevertheless a distinction needs to be made between "**acute stress**" and "**chronic stress**", as these have different effects on health.

- *Acute stress* is what we experience when our body reacts to a threat or an *ad hoc* situation (having to speak in front of an audience, changing jobs, an unexpected situation, etc.). When the situation comes to an end, the stress symptoms end soon afterwards.
- By contrast, *chronic stress* represents our body's response to a long-term stress situation: every day at work, we feel that what is being demanded of us exceeds our capabilities. Chronic stress always has harmful effects of health.

Reactions to the same circumstances vary between individuals. Some people can cope better with high demands than others. It is the individual's **subjective evaluation of their situation that is important**. It is not possible to determine from the situation alone the amount of stress it may cause.

Harassment and work-related violence

Offensive remarks, insinuations, humiliation or bullying, insults, sexual innuendo, acts of violence, unjustified criticism, side-lining, …. The list of acts of violence that can occur within a company is long. These acts can be exercised by a certain individual or a group, with or without a managerial role, against a single or several employees.

Harassment (also known as bullying, mobbing, or psychological violence) refers to **repeated, unreasonable behaviour** directed towards an employee, or group of employees, aimed at victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening the harassed person**.** Harassment can also take place on a more organised basis, as part of a company's management policy.

Internal conflicts, non-regulated disagreements at work are not to be equated with harassment.

Harassment can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, depression, apathy, irritability, memory disorders, sleep disorders and problems with digestion, and even suicide. Symptoms may persist for years after experiencing harassment. At the organisational level, harassment can result in increased absenteeism and staff turnover, and reduced effectiveness and productivity. Legal damages arising from harassment cases can also be high.

External violence

Exercised against a person at his place of work by individuals not belonging to the company, external acts of violence take different forms: abusive behaviour, verbal aggression, acts of violence (e.g. hold-ups). They endanger the health, safety and well-being of the workers concerned. A distinction is made between:

- **physical violence**, threats or insults that affect a wide range of occupations exposed to the aggressiveness of their customers, especially in the service sector,
- -called **predatory violence** (burglary, theft, extortion, homicide) that affects a number of well-defined occupations, especially in banking and retail sectors,
- **Acts of destruction** directed not at individuals but at property. Employees faced such acts of vandalism can feel themselves attacked in their work and professional identity.

Though certain acts of violence are unpredictable, situations likely to provoke them are not. **Risk factors** include working with the public, handling money, and working alone.

Burnout

Burnout, originally identified among the nursing and support staff, can affect all professions requiring intense personal commitment. Preventive measures must prevent a worsening of the health of people already threatened by exhaustion and, at the same time, prevent further cases occurring.

Burnout is a set of consecutive reactions to situations of **chronic work-related stress**. It is characterised by 3 dimensions:

- *emotional exhaustion*: a feeling of being emotionally overextended (“drained” or “gutted”),
- *depersonalisation or cynicism*: an anomaly of self-awareness. It consists of a feeling of watching oneself act, while having no control over a situation. Relations with users, customers, patients, etc. become depersonalised,
- *a feeling of non-accomplishment: a feeling of not being able to meet up to the expectations of those around us, withdrawal, a negative attitude to our work results, etc.*

A number of occupations require a high level of personal and emotional investment. Employees working in such occupations can be affected by the risk of a burnout when they start feeling **too large a gap** between their expectations, the picture they have of their work (painted in values and rules) and work reality. This situation, which exhausts them and "emotionally" drains them, leaves them questioning their initial investment.

Absenteeism at work

Absenteeism at work refers to workers being absent from work. It is defined by a temporary incapacity, enlarged or permanent, to work **due to an illness or disability**. Almost all EU countries insist on measures beign taken to reduce absenteeism at work. As such, companies often use the absenteeism rate as an indicator since it is impacting company performance. There exists **close links between absenteeism and the level of stress, burn-out and social relations** at work.

Presenteeism at work

Presenteeism is the opposite of absenteeism. It concerns problems raised by workers coming to work **in spite of a physicial or psychological health problem** which would require staying away from the work place. In this context, presenteeism is not linked to a lack of motivation or engagement of the worker; but is due to the fact that he/she can not do differently. The **improductivity is involuntary**. The term can also refer to the fact that an employer demands of his/her workers to be present at work whatever the amount of work available or accomplished.

Health

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the **absence of disease or infirmity**".

Staying with the WHO, mental health is defined as a "state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".

Looked at from this perspective, the **social dimension** plays an essential role. Implementing a risk prevention policy for mental health is all about a work organisation allowing every individual to be integrated and gain recognition.

Risk

The notion of risk refers to the link between **exposure** to risk factors and any **damage** that may occur sooner or later. This is why risk assessment cannot be done after the damage has been ascertained, but must consist of identifying risk factors and forms of exposure, with a specific focus on **intensity and frequency**.

As regards PSR, the **subjective dimension** plays an important role, articulating the link between a given constellation (work organisation, conditions of employment, etc.) and the psyche and allowing us to understand the manifestation of the risks. From this point of view, the same organisational constellation may have very different consequences, sometimes even completely opposite, dependent on who is facing it.

Psychosocial disorders

The psychological mechanisms activated when an individual is greatly exposed to psychosocial risks can have major consequences for employees' physical and mental health.

In terms of **symptoms**, a general distinction can be made between:

- *Emotional symptoms*: increased nervousness or sensitivity, attacks of crying or nerves, anxiety, excitement, sadness, a feeling of discomfort, etc.
- *Cognitive symptoms*: trouble concentrating, forgetfulness, errors, difficulties taking the initiative or decisions, etc.
- *Physical symptoms*: pain in muscles or joints, sleep disorders, colic, headaches, disturbed appetite or digestion, sensations of shortness or tightness of breath, unusual sweating, etc..

These symptoms have repercussions on a person's **behaviour**: aggressiveness, recourse to sedatives or stimulants (sleeping pills, anxiolytics, coffee, alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, etc.), but also on **social relations**, especially work-related ones, on the quality of **work**, on productivity, on employee safety, etc.

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	management. A resource for employers and worker representatives.	(Geneva)		
Vacas Soriano, Carlos; Kerckhofs, Peter; Curtarelli, Maurizio; and Gerogiannis, Elias	Employment and industrial relations in the railways sector	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin)	2012	www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/171/en/1/EF12171EN.pdf
Van Gyes, Guy and Szeker, Lise	Impact of the crisis on working conditions in Europe	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin)	2013	www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/studies/tn1212025s/tn1212025s_1.htm
Walters, David ; Wadsworth, Emma ; Marsh, Katie	Worker representation and consultation on health and safety: an analysis of the findings of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER)	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (Bilbao)	2012	

Further reading ….

EU-OSHA	https://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/stress
ILO	http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/lang--en/index.htm
Eurofound	http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/qualityofwork/index.htm
ETUI	http://www.etui.org/Topics/Health-Safety/Stress-harassment-and-violence

For more information on the company's practices

Italy **FS Group (RFI & Trenitalia)**	*Roberta TOMASSINI, Industrial Relations and Labour Legislation* *r.tomassini@fsitaliane.it*
France **SNCF**	*Pierre DELANOUE, Head of "Better livin at work" program* *pierre.delanoue@sncf.fr*
Bulgaria **BDZ Passengers transport**	*Galena MIRCHEVA, Human Resources* *mirchevag@bdz.bg*
Germany **Deutsche Bahn AG**	*Dr Christian GRAVERT, Head of health management, Senior physician, Hygiene expert* *Christian.Gravert@deutschebahn.com*
Sweden	*Anna JOHNSSON, Human Resources*

3. Contact data of steering committee members

CER affiliates	*ETF affiliates*
CER Jean-Paul Preumont - *jean-paul.preumont@cer.be* **Almega (Sweden)** Anders Olofsson - *anders.olofsson@almega.se* **Deutsche Bahn AG (Germany)** Dr Christian Gravert - *christian.gravert@deutschebahn.com* Annett Schlesier - *annett.schlesier@deutschebahn.com* **FS -Rete Ferroviaria Italiana / Trenitalia (Italy)** Gennaro Palma - *g.palma@rfi.it* Gianluca Ceccarelli - gi.ceccarelli@rfi.it **SNCF (France)** Pierre Delanoue - *pierre.delanoue@sncf.fr*	**ETF** Sabine Trier - *s.trier@etf-europe.org* Andrea Albertazzi - *a.albertazzi@etf-europe.org* **CGSP cheminots (Belgium)** Serge Piteljon – *serge.piteljon@cgsp.be* Michel Praillet - *michel.praillet@cgsp.be* **CGT (France)** David Gobé - *davidgobe@orange.fr* **EVG (Germany)** Michael Bartl - *michael.bartl@deutschebahn.com* Helga Petersen – helga.petersen@evg-online.org **FTTUB (Bulgaria)** Daniela Zlatkova - *d.zlatkova@stsb.bg* **VIDA (Austria)** Martin Lengauer – *martin.lengauer@vida.at*

External expert– SECAFI (France)

Project coordinator : Liesbeth Van Criekingen - *liesbeth.vancriekingen@secafi.com*

4. About the authors

Michel Agostini

michel.agostini@secafi.com

With a DESS (post-Master's degree) in adult education and change management (1995, Paris 1 Sorbonne), Michel has more than 15 years of experience in producing expert opinions in the field of occupational safety and health and working conditions, first as director of the CELIDE consultancy, then as director at SECAFI with responsibility for the field of occupational safety and health and working conditions within the European Community. Since 1995, Michel has conducted several training projects in various European countries on behalf of ETUI's Training Department. More recently, Michel recently co-edited a methodology guide for the prevention of psychosocial risks in the public sector commissioned by the French public sector agency, DGAFP (*Direction générale de l'administration et de la fonction publique*). He was also in charge of a transnational project on psychosocial risks for the European Works Council of France Telecom (Groupe Orange) and took part in compiling the HIRES Public Sector Report Michel is a member of ETUI's Advisory Group and Pedagogical Committee.

Brigitte Mouret

brigitte.mouret@secafi.com

An organisational sociologist and psycho-sociologist (University & IEP Paris), Brigitte joined SECAFI after working for almost 32 years in the fields of consultancy, training and research. She started her career at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS), before moving on to work in various consultancy and research agencies, where her focus was on modernisation and change management looked at from different angles (management, HR, training, etc.). Specialised in subjects associated with psychosocial risks, Brigitte has conducted several studies in this field, providing her with an in-depth knowledge on various aspects (stress, harassment, mental well-being at work, violence, suicide or attempted suicide) in a range of sectors (public and private).

Christophe Bourdeleau

christophe.bourdeleau@secafi.com

An engineer by training, Christophe works in the transport sectors, with a special focus on occupational safety and health and working conditions. Over the years, he has conducted a large number of projects in such fields as work organisation, project management, new technologies and process optimisation. Christophe is one of SECAFI's rail sector specialists, meaning that he has a good understanding of the specific features of this sector and of the professions involved.

Liesbeth Van Criekingen

liesbeth.vancriekingen@secafi.com

After finishing her studies in social and cultural anthropology at the K.U. Leuven (Belgium), Liesbeth started her professional career at Nike Inc. Working for this worldwide company, she developed an interest for sustainability issues within organisations. As a result of the experience gained at Vigeo, a European research, rating and consultancy agency, Liesbeth has a good knowledge of economic, environmental, social and governance issues in companies. With a degree in change management (IAE Bordeaux - France), she joined SECAFI in 2012. Her current field of work sees her taking part in expert opinion and organisational analysis projects, with a focus on the prevention of occupational risks (occupational safety and health and working conditions). Multi-lingual and with a wealth of transnational experience in project and team management, Liesbeth takes part in and coordinates several of our European projects..

A project of the European social partners

CER – Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies

Established in 1988, the CER is the most important rail association in Europe, counting more than 80 companies as its members.
www.cer.be

ETF – European Transport Workers' Federation

The ETF's rail transport section covers 83 affiliated trade unions from 37 European countries and representing 850 000 rail workers.
www.etf-europe.org

Project organisation and management

EVA – European Academy for Environmentally Friendly Transport

The aim of the EVA Academy is to sustainably strengthen environmentally-friendly forms of transport in Europe. Toc achieve this, we promote training, knowledge acquisition and the exchange of information between all organisations and companies involved. We intend to encourage collaboration and dialogue between employees, representatives of interested parties and managers working in the transport sector.
www.eva-akademie.de

Author and external expert

SECAFI

SECAFI *Changement Travail Santé* (CTS), is a member of the French Alpha group. It specializes in social dialogue, organizational reviews, occupational safety and health and working conditions. Established in 1983, the company provides expertise, assistance and advice to social partners. SECAFI has the goal of looking for new balances within companies by bringing all technical skills to bear to enrich social dialogue.
www.secafi.com

EVA – Europäische Akademie für umweltorientierten Verkehr gGmbH
Boyenstraße 46
10115 Berlin
Deutschland
Telefon:: +49 30 3087526
E-mail: info@eva-akademie.de
www.eva-akademie.de