



# Tackling psychosocial risks in central government: background study

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Lionel Fulton

Labour Research Department



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# What are psychosocial risks?

- Changes in the pattern of work – fewer people employed in agriculture and industry and more in services mean that the pattern of risks to health has changed
  - Fewer exposed to physical risks (falls, noise, work with dangerous substances etc)
  - More exposed to psychosocial risks (stress, bullying, harassment, violence)
- Definition:
  - “Risks for mental, physical and social health caused by working conditions and organisational and relationship factors likely to interact with mental function” French Ministry of Labour 2011



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# The cost of psychosocial risks

- For individuals:
  - “anxiety, depression, suicide attempts, sleep problems, back pain, chronic fatigue, digestive problems, autoimmune disease, poor immune function, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and peptic ulcers” – EU-OSHA
- For organisations:
  - “increased absenteeism and staff turnover rates, along with decreased productivity and performance” – EU-OSHA
  - Can also cause reputational damage
- For the whole economy
  - Across EU: €25.4 billion in 2013 EU-OSHA
  - In UK: stress, depression & anxiety 11.7 m days lost (38%) of total (largest)
  - In Germany: 15% of days lost (second largest)



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# What are the risk factors?

- Growing awareness that certain key factors are likely to increase the risk to health
  - 1984 Joint report from the ILO and the WHO identified 6 factors
- Since then countries have come forward with their own lists of factors
  - France (6), Germany (5), Spain (9), Belgium (5), UK (6), Italy (6), Poland (8)
- Sometimes called psychological risk factors sometimes stress factors or stressors



## Germany: a checklist of 5 areas

- Work content and work tasks
  - Variation, responsibility, emotional involvement
- Work organisation
  - Working time, working process, communications
- Social relationships
  - With colleagues (conflicts), with superiors (recognition)
- Working environment
  - Physical factors and resources
- New forms of work
  - Geographical mobility, fewer boundaries between private life and work



## France: 6 risk factors

- Intensity of work and working time
  - Includes targets and contradictory instructions
- Emotional demands
  - Includes difficult members of the public & external violence & threats
- Lack of autonomy
- Poor working relations
  - Includes bullying and harassment & feelings of appreciation
- Value conflicts
  - where work seems pointless
- Job insecurity



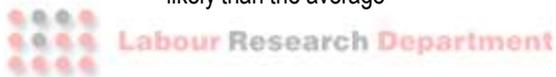
## EU-OSHA/Eurofound

- 5 factors examined
  - Job content;
  - Work intensity and job autonomy;
  - Working time arrangements and work–life balance;
  - Social environment and;
  - Job insecurity and career development
- In all cases problems in these areas linked with poor health outcomes



# EU-OSHA/Eurofound: examples

- Job content
  - Need training to cope with duties
    - Associated with greater likelihood of reporting a negative effect of work on health, sleeping disorders, poor mental well-being, work related stress and dissatisfaction with working conditions
- Work intensity and job autonomy
  - High work intensity
    - More likely to report a negative effect of work on health, sleeping problems, musculo-skeletal disorders, poor mental well-being, inability to do the job at 60 and dissatisfaction with working conditions. They are particularly likely to report work-related stress, almost three time more likely than the average



## Presence in central government 1

- Job content:
  - Big changes through restructuring
    - Ireland: "Civil Service Renewal Plan (2014) "a fundamental new vision and direction for the Civil Service"
    - E-government across EU: Lithuanian tax authority 10% cut in employment and regional offices halved
  - Dealing with angry clients
    - Spain: 461 cases of abuse and 78 cases of assault in 2015 almost all in employment service (SEPE)
    - UK 33,115 cases of abuse and 637 cases of assault in 2013/14 in DWP (unemployment service)
- Work intensity and autonomy
  - Some areas where intensity very high (UK Border Force – only 43% think have acceptable workload)



## Presence in central government 2

- Working time/ work/life balance:
  - Less of a problem than in other areas
- Social environment
  - Support from colleagues above average (75% compared with 72%) EWCS 2015
- Jobs insecurity and career development
  - Job losses clearly big problem in some countries: UK, 20% job jobs loss in 7 years
  - Career development damaged by recruitment freeze



<b>Psychosocial risk factors present in the establishment (% establishments, EU-28) – ESENER 2 2014</b>		
	<b>Public administration</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Having to deal with difficult customers, patients, pupils, etc.</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Time pressure</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Poor communication or cooperation within the organisation</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Employees' lack of influence on their work pace or work processes</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Job insecurity</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Long or irregular working hours</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Discrimination, for example due to gender, age or ethnicity</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Source: EU-OSHA ESENER-2 (2014)</b>		

# Central government in France and Sweden

- Specific figures for central government in these two countries support ESENER information on public administration
- Dealing with difficult users and violence/abuse is biggest problem compared with private sector
  - France: tense relations with the public:
    - Private: 26.9%
    - Justice 75.7% , security and defence 53.4% , public finances 42.8%
  - Sweden: violence or threat of violence
    - Private sector 8%
    - Central government 22%



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## Legal position on psychosocial risks

- European level
  - Framework Directive (89/391/EEC) imposes a general duty on employers (Articles 5 (1) and 6 (1)) but no explicit reference to psychosocial risks
- National level
  - All EU members states have introduced legislation to implement Framework Directive
  - But majority have gone further (19 out of 28)
  - Also other helpful legislation
    - Equality and anti-discrimination
    - Criminal law (violence)



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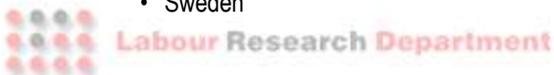
# Institutional support

- Employee representation
  - Present in all countries, although form varies
- Health and safety experts
  - Present in all countries, but big differences in extent
    - Works doctors: used in 98% of establishments in France – but 16% in Denmark
    - Health and safety generalists: used by 96% in Slovenia but 28% in Malta
- Labour inspectors
  - Present in all countries but level of inspection varies
    - 86% in last 3 years in Romania but 8% in Luxembourg (Public administration)
- Persons of confidence
  - Not present everywhere
    - Netherlands and Belgium



# Collective agreements

- European level
  - Framework Agreement on Work-related Stress (2004)
  - Framework Agreement on Violence and Harassment at Work (2007)
- National level
  - Examples of collective agreements in
    - Belgium
    - Denmark
    - France
    - Spain
    - Sweden



# Progress in tackling psychosocial risks

(ESENER data for public administration)

- Carrying out risks assessments (generally)
  - EU average 73%
  - Latvia, Sweden, UK at top: more than 95%
  - Greece at bottom: 14%
- 47% carried out internally and 40% externally
  - But big differences
  - Internal: Denmark and Sweden: 83%, UK: 75%, France 74%
  - External: Slovenia: 87%, Croatia and Spain: 78%
- Risk assessment look at psychosocial issues
  - Most likely: Finland, Netherlands, Bulgaria, UK
  - EU average: 61% organisational issues, 55% relationships
  - Least likely: Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia



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## Proportion with:

- Action plan on stress
  - 28% overall
  - Highest in UK: 85%, Denmark: 80%, Sweden: 74%
  - Lowest in Lithuania and Croatia: 0%
- Procedure to deal with violence and threats
  - 51% overall (where threat exists)
  - Highest in Netherlands: 100%, UK: 99%, Sweden: 96%
  - Lowest: Romania: 14%, Hungary: 15%, Portugal: 21%



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## Proportion who have:

- Reorganised work to reduce job demands and work pressure
  - 34% overall
  - Highest in Ireland: 73%, Malta: 68%, Denmark: 66%
  - Lowest in Lithuania: 14%, Slovakia: 15% and Poland: 16%
- Action where long or irregular hours worked
  - 21% overall
  - Highest in Ireland: 54%, Malta: 50%, Denmark: 49%
  - Lowest in Slovenia: 4%, Croatia: 5%, Estonia: 6%



## Internal conflicts – proportion with:

- Bullying and harassment policy
  - 47% overall
  - Highest in Ireland and UK: 100%, Finland: 97%
  - Lowest in Romania: 4%, Estonia: 5%, Hungary: 6%
- Conflict resolution procedure
  - 31% overall
  - Highest in Ireland: 67%, Finland and Belgium: 58%
  - Lowest in Lithuania: 6%, Portugal: 8%, Estonia: 15%



## Training and counselling – proportion with:

- Training to prevent psychosocial risks
  - 41% overall
  - Highest in UK: 73%, Ireland: 63%, Sweden: 57%
  - Lowest in Croatia: 8%, Greece: 13%, Austria: 20%
- Confidential counselling
  - 40% overall
  - Highest in Finland: 78%, Ireland: 77%, Sweden: 75%
  - Lowest in Czech Republic, Poland, Italy (14%)



Indication that there is still some way to  
go!

- Thank you for your attention!
  - Questions and comments ...

