

Psychosocial risks, stress and mental health at work

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The European Parliament adopted by 413 votes to 210, with 29 abstentions, a resolution with recommendations to the Commission on psychosocial risk, stress and mental health at work.

According to the ILO report on “The psychosocial working environment: Global developments and pathways for actions”, more than 840 000 people die every year from health conditions linked to psychosocial risks. In particular, harassment, bullying and violence, and discriminatory behaviour in the workplace should be addressed.

The European Parliament requests the Commission to carry out an impact assessment including an assessment of existing legislation complemented by a competitiveness and SME test and to submit, depending on the result of the aforementioned steps, a **proposal** on work-related psychosocial risks, stress and mental health at work.

The aim of the proposal should be to lay down **minimum requirements to prevent, eliminate or, where this is not possible, reduce work-related psychosocial risks** and their potential outcomes which may include, *inter alia*, work-related stress, burnout, including cyber violence and harassment, bullying, mental disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder, moral distress and trauma-related conditions, addiction or suicidal behaviour, cardiovascular diseases and musculoskeletal disorders, in full respect of the competences of the Member States and of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

It should establish **organisational, structural and participatory obligations for employers** in order to protect workers’ mental and physical health and to ensure safe and dignified working conditions.

The requested proposal should incorporate the following **recommendations**:

General prevention obligation

Employers should ensure the prevention of work-related psychosocial risks. They should: (i) ensure that organisational resources that support primary prevention are made effectively available and accessible to all workers; (ii) provide regular, targeted, and adequate training to workers, managers and supervisors on work-related psychosocial risks; (iii) implement policies defining and prohibiting violence, harassment, bullying and discriminatory behaviour that undermines workers’ dignity, physical and/or mental health or well-being; (iv) implement appropriate secondary prevention measures, including early detection mechanisms and risk-based prevention protocols for third-party violence, access to occupational health services, and timely support for workers exposed to psychosocial risks.

Psychosocial risk assessment and action plan

Employers should carry out regular psychosocial risk assessments and **whenever significant changes** to the organisation of work and organisational restructuring occur. This assessments should evaluate psychosocial risk factors such as excessive workload, high work intensity, lack of autonomy or support, harassment, violence and discrimination, emotional demands, poor relationships or insufficient recognition, job insecurity, work-life conflict, and risks related to digitalisation (connection outside of working hours, excessive monitoring or automated decision-making). It should also consider the lack of role clarity and ineffective communication, or unrealistic targets.

Any **significant restructuring, reorganisation of work**, including teleworking arrangements, shifts in workforce levels or introduction of automated decision-making and automated monitoring systems, where significant impact on workers is expected, should be subject to a prior psychosocial risk assessment by employers in cooperation with workers and their representatives.

In addition, workers should have:

- the right to a **psychologically safe working environment** and relevant support services, including in the area of mental health;
- the right to a **sustainable return to work** when they have been absent from work for a prolonged or repeated period due to health problems related to work-related psychosocial risks. To this end, the employer should implement a comprehensive return-to-work policies that support employees;
- the right to **report**, including anonymously, through effective channels, work-related psychosocial risks they have identified or faced, without having to suffer reprisals;
- the possibility of exercising their **right to disconnect**, which employers should respect, except in exceptional circumstances.

Workers and their representatives should be **informed, consulted and involved** at all relevant stages of the assessment, prevention and management of psychosocial risks.

Furthermore, Member States should:

- ensure that **labour inspection** authorities are provided with adequate powers, as well as the necessary training, expertise, tools and resources to address work-related psychosocial risks;
- develop **education and training programmes** related to psychosocial risks at work.

The Commission, in cooperation with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) and the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), should monitor trends in work-related psychosocial risks across Member States, in order to assess the effectiveness of the Commission's proposal.