



Peer Review on “Legislation and practical management of psychosocial risks at work”

Peer Country Comments Paper - Austria

How the challenge of psychosocial risks at work led to the adaption of OSH regulation laid down in the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act

Stockholm (Sweden), 3-4 October 2019

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared for the Peer Review on 'Legislation and practical management of psychosocial risks at work'. It provides a comparative assessment of the policy example of the Host Country (Sweden) and the situation in Austria. For information on the host country policy example, please refer to the Host Country Discussion Paper¹.

2 Scale and nature of psychosocial risks at work

As in all other European Member States, the Austrian workforce is facing increasing work-related stress and psychosocial risks due to changes in the nature of work, such as digitalisation, self-regulated work, remote work, flexible and atypical work hours, multitasking, high work pace and overtime, just to mention a few.

The Central Labour Inspectorate (Zentrales Arbeitsinspektorat) recognised that work conditions were changing, which eventually led to the amendment of the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act (ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz) in 2013. This will be described in more detail in Chapter 3.

The changes in work-related risks have produced new stressors which strongly affect mental health leading to sickness absence and even early retirement.

Sick leave rates (sickness absence measured in days off work) have remained stable at a moderate level over recent years. In 2018, the number of days off work averaged 12.5 days per employee, with women having more sick leave days than men - this has been the case since 2010. But the reasons for sick leave have changed over the years: injuries, accidents and intoxication have been decreasing, whereas psychological disorders have tripled over the last 20 years and are constantly increasing, especially among women. In 2017, four out of 100 women developed mental disorders compared with two out of 100 men, thus the percentage is twice as high among women².

The Pension Insurance Institution (Pensionsversicherungsanstalt, PVA) has also been facing steadily growing rates of early retirement caused by mental disorders over recent years. An analysis conducted by the Austrian Institute for Advanced Studies (Institut für höhere Studien, IHS), shows that in 2016, 46 % of all permanent ill-health early retirements among women and 26 % among men were due to mental problems³. Early retirement due to a diagnosed mental problem may not be exclusively associated with work but may be strongly influenced by it. Workers with diagnosed mental disorders do not only retire earlier but also show unemployment rates that are approximately 3.5 times higher than in workers with other health issues.

In a study on Austria's working environment conducted by the University of Graz in 2015⁴, the specific working conditions of Austrian workers of different sectors were

¹ Nilsson, B. (2019) How new legislation can change the approach to psychosocial risks at work, Host Country Discussion Paper – Sweden. Peer Review on "Legislation and practical management of psychosocial risks at work". Stockholm, Sweden, 3-4 October 2019. European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

² Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, Fehlzeitenreport 2018 – Krankheits- und unfallbedingte Fehlzeiten in Österreich – Präsentismus und Absentismus (Austrian Institute of Economic Research, Sick Leave Report 2018 – illness- and accident-related absences in Austria – presenteeism and absenteeism).

³ Cypionka Th. et al., 2016. Disability pensions caused by psychiatric diseases. Wien: Institut für höhere Studien. Available at: <https://www.ihs.ac.at> [1.9.2019].

⁴ Jiménez P., Schmon C., Höfer M., Lepold A., Diebschlag A. Dunkl A., 2016. AWÖ-2015. Arbeitswelt Österreich. Eine Studie zur Erfassung von psychischer Belastung, Beanspruchung, Erholung und Zufriedenheit am Arbeitsplatz. AWÖe 2015. Working

investigated. The study was representative of the entire Austrian working population with regard to age, sex, employment contract and sector. The focus lay on work-related mental stress and the evaluation of psychosocial risks at the workplaces⁵. The study investigated work-related tasks and the social and organisational environment; it showed that the main stress factors were tasks requiring high concentration levels and the lack of employee recognition.

According to this study, employees in people-focused services, especially healthcare, social and educational sector, are affected more by psychosocial risks at work than other sectors (in these sectors female employees dominate).

Psychosocial risks at work can lead to work-related illnesses including mental disorders and psychological symptoms such as exhaustion, depression and anxiety, insomnia, lack of concentration and many more. Here it must be pointed out that Austrian authorities distinguish between work-related ill health and officially recognised occupational diseases. Ill health is considered work-related when the work is the main factor causing or aggravating an illness (such as mental disorders or musculoskeletal disorders) or – in other words – where work has a high impact on health and disability. But these cases are not recorded or monitored by the Labour Inspection or Workers' Compensation Board (Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt, AUVA) in the same way as occupational diseases. Occupational diseases must be reported; the specific work conditions that have caused the occupational disease must be analysed, appropriate measures taken, and adaptations made. In Austria there are 53 officially recognised occupational diseases. Psychosocial strains on health such as exhaustion and burnout are not amongst the occupational diseases officially recognised in Austria. Consequently, over the last decades more information on work risks leading to officially recognised occupational diseases was gathered than on risks leading to work-related ill health.

Self-employed workers are exempt from the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act. The accident insurance provided by the Workers' Compensation Board covers them in cases of accidents. There are no recent studies on the nature of psychosocial risks for self-employed in Austria. In 2011 the 'Psychische Belastungen der Arbeit und ihre Folgen' study (Mental strains at work and their impacts)⁶ was published. It reports that 37 % of self-employed compared to 36 % of employed workers with non-manual work faced psychosocial strains at work. According to this study and quoting a micro census study of Statistics Austria (Statistik Austria) in 2007, 30 % of the workforce reported time-pressure, whereas only 1.3 % reported threats of violence and 3.5 % harassment at work or bullying.

So-called one-person companies (OPCs) are provided with information e.g. concerning work stress by the Austrian Economic Chambers⁷ in special events, but their work environment is not systematically assessed or focus of research. Since 315 900 people

World in Austria. A study for assessing mental stress, strain, recovery and satisfaction at the workplace. Graz: Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz in Kooperation mit research-team Jiménez-Schmon-Höfer GmbH.

⁵ 1 200 randomly selected Austrian workers of all nine Austrian provinces took part. The sample was representative for Austria's workforce in respect to age and gender as well as industries and working times.

⁶ Biffl G., Faustmann A., Gabriel D., Leoni Th., Mayrhuber Ch., Rückert Ev., 2012. Psychische Belastungen der Arbeit und ihre Folgen. Wien: Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (WIFO).

⁷ Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (WKÖ, Austrian Economic Chambers), an employers' association. It represents the interests of employers and advises when new regulations are developed, e.g. by providing guidelines for employers for the implementation of OSH strategies.

worked in OPCs in 2018⁸, it will be necessary to take a closer look at the work situation of self-employed in the future.

3 Legislation and practical management of psychosocial risks at work

3.1 The legal framework

The Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act of 1994 (effective as of 1995) provides the legal basis for occupational safety and health for the majority of the workforce. Legal provisions other than the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act (like various Federal Employee Protection Acts⁹) apply to those employed in federal and provincial government offices, local or municipal councils, agriculture, forestry and private households, and to homeworkers. But all these provisions closely follow the rules and regulations laid down in the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act. As mentioned in Chapter 2, self-employed workers are exempt from the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act.

The Health and Safety at Work Act incorporates the principles of worker protection. The employer has the responsibility to provide and design work in such a way that it does not harm the health of workers. Employers must take all necessary measures to prevent workplace risks. The law lists the general obligations for employers (§ 3), such as the obligation to assess risk areas, the provision of information and instructions, the prevention of risks, and the design of safe and healthy working conditions. The assessment of risks at the workplace is mainly laid down in §4.

In 2001 the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Reform Act (Arbeitnehmerschutz-Reformgesetz) entered into force. Considering the increasing psychosocial strains at work, it established that occupational psychological services should form part of the obligatory occupational safety and health (OSH) services, where – depending on the nature of work – a certain number of OSH service hours has to be provided for employees.

Nevertheless, the new patterns of illnesses and the changing nature of work challenged OSH services as well as rehabilitation organisations tremendously (and they still do). Similar to Sweden, it was necessary also in Austria to adapt the general risk assessments to the new work conditions and requirements. This eventually led to an amendment to the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act. It was passed in 2012 and entered into force as of 1 January 2013. The amendment regulates the evaluation of psychosocial risks at work and highlights the importance of preventing psychosocial risks to maintain mental and psychological health.

Furthermore, in consideration of the continuing high numbers of employees with severe health problems and long sick leave periods, the Austrian Government passed the Labour and Health Act (Arbeit- und Gesundheit-Gesetz)¹⁰ in 2011, followed by the Part-Time Reintegration Act (Wiedereingliederungsteilzeitgesetz)¹¹ in 2017. Both laws aim at

⁸ <https://www.wko.at/service/netzwerke/ein-personen-unternehmen.html> [1.9.2019]

⁹ Bundes-, Landes- und Gemeindebedienstenschutzgesetze, Heimarbeitsgesetz, ... (Federal, Federal State and Community Employee Protection Acts, Law for Homeworkers, ...)

¹⁰ It is implemented as a fit2work programme. The key objectives of fit2work business consulting are to reintegrate employees after longer periods of sick leave and to preserve their workability on a long-term basis. This is to be done by taking adaptive measures at organisational level and supporting the individual's efforts.

¹¹ Bundesgesetz, mit dem das Allgemeine Sozialversicherungsgesetz, das Beamten Kranken- und Unfallversicherungsgesetz, das Arbeitslosenversicherungsgesetz 1977, das Arbeit-und-Gesundheit-Gesetz, das Arbeitsvertragsrechts-Anpassungsgesetz, das

facilitating the return-to-work process after prolonged periods of sick leave as well as the sustainable integration of workers with chronic diseases or disabilities. These laws relate to psychosocial issues insofar, as the integration concept which has to be worked out for workers, includes a psychosocial work risk assessment, especially for workers with mental diagnoses.

In summary, it can be argued that the regulation on psychosocial risk assessment, as well as the controls and advice provided by labour inspectors, the Workers' Compensation Board and the increasing number of organisational psychologists working for companies, are slowly beginning to show positive effects insofar as the awareness of this topic has risen among employers and employees and that organisational measures are taken to ensure healthy and safe work conditions. But the regulation and consulting provided is not yet efficient enough to fully cope with the problem of the new work conditions and their negative impact on health.

3.2 The importance of the Central Labour Inspectorate in advising on psychosocial risk assessments

The Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz) plays a pivotal role. It is responsible for regulating all labour policy and working conditions. One of its main tasks is to put EU-OSHA campaigns and events into practice at national level.

As the official authority, the Central Labour Inspectorate is integrated into the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection. It is in charge of monitoring the employment conditions for the majority of Austrian employees. The Labour Inspectorate advises and controls. It also coordinates national networking and is also a key figure in supporting and promoting the EU-OSHA campaigns in Austria. It informs and trains the labour inspectors, when campaigns and specific projects are rolled out.

So, when the amendment on psychosocial risk assessment came into effect, the Central Labour Inspectorate developed a guideline for labour inspectors on how to perform psychosocial risk assessments and provided training specifically on psychosocial risk assessments.

The Central Labour Inspectorate receives sick leave figures from the Austrian Health Insurance – broken down by economic sectors. This allows the Labour Inspectorate to set priorities in advising and controlling.

During the inspections the task of labour inspectors is first and foremost to give the companies advice and provide consultation and not to control them. Topics addressed are general safety and health instruction, occupational safety and health services, work equipment, working hours and rest periods, occupational diseases and, of course, psychosocial risks and stressors and their assessment. For example, in 2017, 5 000 out of roughly 48 000 inspections mainly dealt with psychosocial risk assessments. Every year 5 % of all inspections address psychosocial risks at work.

The basic principle of psychosocial risk assessments is a continuous improvement process. By law, all companies are obliged to conduct risk assessments to a certain standard (using a tested, qualified instrument or method, participation of workers, etc.)

Arbeitszeitgesetz, das Betriebliche Mitarbeiter- und Selbständigenvorsorgegesetz, das Lohn- und Sozialdumping-Bekämpfungsgesetz und das Einkommensteuergesetz 1988 geändert werden (Wiedereingliederungsteilzeitgesetz) [Federal Law which amended the General Social Insurance Law, the Civil Servants' Health and Accident Law, the Unemployed Security Act of 1977, the Work and Health Law, the Law on the Modification of Work Contracts, the Working Time Law, the Social Insurance Law for Employed and Self-Employed, the Law on the Prevention of Wage and Social Dumping and the Income Tax Law of 1988 (Part-Time Reintegration Act)]

covering the following main aspects of work: work culture (social support, acknowledgment, gratification, feedback, etc.), work characteristics/requirements (multi-tasking, responsibility for other people, emotionally stressful work, work requiring high levels of concentration, etc.), work environment (noise, workplace equipment, etc.) and work processes (information, organisation, responsibilities and competences, etc.). The companies' own or external OSH experts carry out the workplace assessments. The labour inspectors can supervise or control the workplace assessments, but they never carry them out personally.

The way psychosocial risk assessments are dealt with in Austria strongly resembles the Swedish concept of organisational and social work environment. Companies should develop measures that primarily focus on organisational, cultural (or technical) level in order to reduce psychosocial risks at work. In addition, training of staff to develop strategies for coping with psychosocial risks can be provided but should never replace organisational interventions. Similar to the new regulation in Sweden, also in Austria the focus is primarily on the organisation and not on individuals. Measures at the workplace must be evaluated and assessments repeated, if measures are not effective, the work situation changes, or special incidents occur (including episodes of violence at work). Recently the Labour Inspectorate also published a manual on how to assess the effectiveness of measures based on the psychosocial risk assessments¹².

3.3 Austria's OSH strategies

The National OSH Strategy forms the foundation for the implementation of jointly developed prevention and safety measures and the protection of health at work. All relevant national and regional stakeholders in occupational safety and health such as the Workers' Compensation Board, Austrian Trade Union Federation, Federation of Austrian Industries, Austrian Economic Chambers, Austrian Chamber of Labour, Austrian Safety Experts' Organisation, Austrian Society for Occupational Medicine¹³ are involved and jointly develop measures in accordance with their competences and the resources they can provide voluntarily. The collaboration with the social partners is part of the National OSH Strategy. In 2004, the Austrian social partners prepared a guideline to enforce the European social partner framework agreement on work-related stress. 8 years later the social partners also agreed on the explicit consideration of psychosocial risk in the amendment to the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act. Moreover, several booklets have been developed from the social partners together with the Workers' Compensation Board, including on the assessment of psychosocial risks for professional lorry drivers.

Every new OSH regulation is intensively discussed and developed with the different stakeholders, just as the amendment on psychosocial risk assessments was.

The National OSH Strategy 2007-2012 supported the implementation of the 2012 amendment to the Safety and Health at Work Act and thus very prominently highlighted the topic to reduce psychosocial risks and violence at work. 2012 an Austrian-wide campaign on psychosocial risks at work took place to raise awareness and provide information. It was supported by the social partners, above all by the Austrian Chambers

¹² Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz (BMASGK), Sektion VII - Arbeitsrecht und Zentral-Arbeitsinspektorat, 2019. Arbeitsplatzevaluierung psychischer Belastung (§§ 4 und 7 ASchG). Eine Handlungsanleitung zur Wirksamkeitskontrolle von Maßnahmen (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, Section VII - Labour Law and Central Labour Inspectorate, 2019. Evaluation of psychological stress factors at work (§§ 4 and 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act). A manual for assessing the effectiveness of measures).

¹³ Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt, Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, Industriellenvereinigung, Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, Arbeiterkammer, Verein österreichischer Sicherheitstechniker, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Arbeitsmedizin

of Labour and the Austrian Economic Chambers. Several events for companies took place, workshops for OSH experts were organised and information material produced and disseminated in companies. Also, the most important recent trends in relation to OSH (such as flexible working hours, new forms of communication and information technology (Work 4.0), teleworking, demographic changes, psychosocial risks) are reflected in the current National Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2013–2020¹⁴. The current Austrian National OSH Strategy is also concerned with work-related illnesses. One of its work groups focuses its activities on sector-specific approaches in the prevention of work-related stressors, also including violence at the workplace. It considers gender issues, demographic changes and corporate cultures (especially the work organisation and social environment).

Campaigns are designed in the National OSH Strategy. In accordance with the EU-OSHA campaign, the current 2018–2019 campaign is 'Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances'.

3.4 Present situation and measures

The Labour Inspectorate states that prompted by inspections and consultation the number of companies conducting psychosocial risk assessments is growing, although only a small number of companies develop proper and suitable measures focusing on organisational interventions (interviews with labour inspectors in 2018 and 2019). This is why, in order to support companies, it published the previously mentioned manual to assess the effectiveness of interventions.

According to the second European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER 2014) 50% of surveyed Austrian companies stated, that they have sufficient information on how to include psychosocial risks in risk assessments. 42% reorganised work in order to reduce job demands and work pressure, but only 23% provided an action plan to prevent work-related stress and 32% had developed a procedure to deal with possible cases of bullying or harassment.

Generally, two focus areas can be recently observed in the development of psychosocial risk assessments at work. One focus lies on micro enterprises with fewer than 9 employees. In 2018 about 85 % of all companies in Austria were micro companies accounting for about 22 % of the working population (i.e. over 570 000 workers¹⁵). Most of these micro companies are from the following industries: trade and commerce, manufacturing, tourism as well as information and consulting.

The Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt provides feasible instruments and training for psychological risk assessments for these companies¹⁶ free of charge.

The most recent instrument developed on behalf of and published by the AUVA is called "Evaluierung im Dialog" (EVALOG, evaluation through dialogue). This provides information on how to assess psychosocial risks in micro companies.

The second focus area is gender and diversity. In order to promote gender and diversity issues, the Labour Inspectorate set up a programme called *Menschengerechte Arbeitsplätze durch Anwendung von Gender und Diversity im ArbeitnehmerInnenschutz*

¹⁴ The Austrian National Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2013-2020 is run by the Labour Inspectorate. It foresees the development of prevention measures to protect the safety and health at workplaces and involves all national and regional stakeholders in occupational safety and health in accordance with the competences and resources they can provide voluntarily.

¹⁵ Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, 2017. Wirtschaftskraft KMU 2018 (Austrian Economic Chambers, 2017. Economic strength of SMEs 2018).

¹⁶ The Workers' Compensation Board provides free-of-charge OSH services for companies with fewer than 50 employees through its prevention centres (known as 'AUVAsicher Präventionszentren').

(MEGAP, healthy workplaces by applying gender and diversity principles in occupational safety and health). It developed a guideline for inspectors to check work conditions for gender issues and produced information material, partly based on videos and other material provided by the Swedish Work Environment Authority (SWEA) and translated into the German language. The aim of the programme is to deal with all relevant gender issues in occupational health and safety and, also, to consider psychosocial risks. Focussing on gender and diversity aspects, 249 labour inspectors investigated work conditions in over 600 companies from October 2017 to February 2018. In early 2019 a guideline on MEGAP was developed and examples of good practices provided for companies and OSH suppliers. The MEGAP project itself is a very good example of how the Labour Inspectorate picks up current issues and developments. The MEGAP project is also part of the National Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2013–2020.

4 Assessment of success factors and transferability of the host country example

4.1 Achievements and success factors

Some of the listed success factors in Sweden have already been implemented in Austria. For example:

- Several psychosocial workplace risk assessment tools and instruments are provided for free (including EVALOG, work assessment scale (Arbeits-Bewertungs-Skala, ABS). Especially micro and small companies with fewer than 51 employees are advised in OSH by the Workers' Compensation Board free of charge¹⁷.
- All labour inspectors (about 300) have been trained to supervise psychosocial work risks assessments and advise on them.
- Public awareness on the topic was raised in a joint effort by the different stakeholders of the National OSH Strategy, including the social partners, when the amendment on psychosocial risks assessments was enforced. An information campaign was rolled out and information disseminated (but not to that extent as in Sweden, see Chapter 4.2).
- Labour inspectorate in Austria has developed a manual for employers and OSH experts how to evaluate the effectiveness of measures based on the psychosocial risk assessments¹⁸.

¹⁷ Consultation does not include the conduction of psychosocial risk assessments; it includes basic OSH service and the provision of tools and instruments.

¹⁸ Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz (BMASGK), Sektion VII - Arbeitsrecht und Zentral-Arbeitsinspektorat, 2019. Arbeitsplatzevaluierung psychischer Belastung (§§ 4 und 7 ASchG). Eine Handlungsanleitung zur Wirksamkeitskontrolle von Maßnahmen (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, Section VII - Labour Law and Central Labour Inspectorate, 2019. Evaluation of psychological stress factors at work (§§ 4 and 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act). A manual for assessing the effectiveness of measures).

4.2 Learning from the past, learning from Sweden and factors that were more successful in Sweden

In Austria, in contrast to the intensive campaign in Sweden, information on psychosocial risks was provided gradually and only after the amendment had been passed.

Especially at the beginning companies were not clear on which instruments to use in order to comply with legal provisions. Free-of-charge tools were published only after the amendment had passed.

Some consultation services used (or abused) the situation and sold expensive psychosocial risk assessments to companies.

In 2013 the employers' attitude towards psychosocial work risks assessments was negative, partly based on a common misunderstanding that the risk assessments addressed workers with mental disorders and not organisational stressors. For many employers it was not clear that they could benefit from a proper and thorough assessment; initially employers considered it as an additional bureaucratic burden of the legislator and the Labour Inspectorate.

It took time and good examples for employers to change their opinion, even by now not all employers have been convinced of the usefulness of psychosocial risks assessments.

Regarding gender and diversity aspects in OSH and risk assessment, Austria has learned a lot and profited from the Swedish studies carried out by SWEA and transferred valuable information to the Austrian MEGAP programme.

4.3 Open issues

Promotion of safe work environments and working conditions for self-employed and relevant legislation are still underdeveloped.

Evaluation and research on the effects of psychosocial risks assessments on work ability, sick leave and early retirement still need to be further developed.

The importance of the Labour Inspectorate will have to be strengthened to meet the challenges of the future world of work. This means, for example, that increasingly psychologists are employed to enhance the knowledge on psychosocial work requirements within the authority¹⁹.

In order to ensure OSH standards in micro and small companies, it will be crucial not only to maintain the Workers' Compensation Board, but even to strengthen its position in counselling micro and small companies, e.g. the Workers' Compensation Board should directly provide experts to conduct psychosocial risk assessments in the companies and not "only" tools.

¹⁹ All labour inspectors were trained on psychosocial issues, but many of them are technicians with a different approach to psychosocial risks in comparison to psychologists.

5 Questions

- Has the new approach on psychosocial risks at work already had positive effects on sick leave rates, early retirement, life quality?
- How are the effects evaluated?
- What will SWEA or other authorities do to improve the working conditions for the self-employed?
- How are the psychosocial risks at remote workplaces and teleworking places assessed and what methods are used?
- Was the employment of psychologists in the central authority and inspection districts pivotal to change the mind set about psychosocial risks? How were they accepted by the other professions within these organisations?
- How is SWEA financially funded?

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Annex 1 Summary table

The main points covered by the paper are summarised below.

Scale and nature of psychosocial risks at work

- Psychosocial risks due to changes in the nature of the work lead to work-related stress, ill-health, sick leave etc.
- With the amendment of the Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act, which provides for psychosocial risks assessments, it was recognised that work conditions had changed and were still changing.
- Recent trends focus on psychosocial risks and OSH of micro enterprises as well as gender and diversity.
- Much work in this respect still needs to be done for the self-employed.

Legislation and practical management of psychosocial risks at work

- The Austrian Safety and Health at Work Act of 1994 forms the basis of OSH in Austria.
- It embodies the principle of worker protection and lists obligations for employers, one of them being workplace risk assessments.
- The assessment of psychosocial risks at work is regulated in an amendment of 2013.
- The National OSH Strategy 2007–2012 supported the development of this amendment and prepared its implementation. Upcoming relevant trends are reflected in the National Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2013–2020.
- The Labour Inspectorate and the Workers' Compensation Board, who advise and support companies and OSH services, play a central role in risk assessments.

Assessment of success factors and transferability of the host country example

- Information and risk assessment tools have been provided.
- Labour inspectors have been trained to support psychosocial workplace assessments.
- An information campaign was run to raise public awareness and create a positive public image.
- Work conditions for self-employed still need to be improved and the positive effects of psychosocial risk assessments still need to be evaluated.

Questions

- Has the new approach on psychosocial risks at work already had positive effects on sick leave rates, early retirement, life quality?
- How are the effects evaluated?
- What will SWEA or other authorities do to improve the working conditions for the self-employed?
- How are the psychosocial risks at remote workplaces and teleworking places assessed and what methods are used?

Annex 2 Example of relevant practice

Name of the practice:	Evaluation of psychological stress factors at work (§§ 4 and 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act). A manual for assessing the effectiveness of measures (Arbeitsplatzevaluierung psychischer Belastung (§§ 4 und 7 ASchG). Eine Handlungsanleitung zur Wirksamkeitskontrolle von Maßnahmen).
Year of implementation:	2019
Coordinating authority:	Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection, Section VII – Labour Law and Central Labour Inspectorate (Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz (BMASGK); Sektion VII – Arbeitsrecht und Zentralinspektorat).
Objectives:	A manual for employers to assess the process of psychosocial risk assessments and to assess the effectiveness of measures.
Main activities:	Analyses of the Labour Inspectorates showed that measures based on the psychosocial risk assessments only partly meet the desired quality standards to achieve improvements in the organisation and work environment. For this reason, the Central Labour Inspectorate together with experts from the social partners and other members of the National OSH Strategy developed a manual for companies (employers and executives).
Results so far:	The manual was published in spring 2019. The information is disseminated in companies by labour inspectors, OSH experts etc. The feedback from the companies is throughout positive.

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