

Promoting participative psychosocial risk assessments to achieve a healthier work organisation.

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In 2001, CCOO (Comisiones Obreras, the largest Spanish trade union confederation) and its affiliated Union Institute of Work, Environment and Health (ISTAS) established an action plan with the goal of empowering workers' health and safety representatives to promote participative and *at the source* psychosocial risk prevention processes on the shop floor, as a way to achieve a healthier work organisation.

Among other actions, it included: 1) Adapting COPSOQ¹ to Spain, in collaboration with professionals at various Spanish institutions and under the scientific leadership of the Danish NRCWE², meanwhile developing alliances with and between scientific, administrative and technical bodies. 2) Providing a participative, experience-based, efficient and feasible prevention process adapted to the Spanish context. 3) Developing guidelines, training materials and tools for trade union action and for occupational health professionals' interventions, sharing and spreading the experience.

To date the most important outcomes have been:

a) The establishment of a working plan for CCOO workers' health and safety reps on the shop floor. Its main features are: 1. Dealing with psychosocial risk exposures *at the source*, promoting risk assessments with COPSOQ (ISTAS21, PSQCAT21) as the first step and focusing on making changes to the stressful working conditions; the goal is reversing the mainstream focused on the individual and injury; 2. Making exposure's inequalities visible, endorsing the use of risk assessment methodologies that enable it, with the goal of promoting psychosocial risk prevention as a universal right; 3. Making specific proposals and advocating for the negotiation of them in each phase of the preventive intervention process (i.e. proposing the risk assessment method, the design for the awareness campaign and the data field work, discussing the interpretation of risk assessment results and proposing primary preventive measures, to change unhealthy working conditions); the goal is moving beyond a position where workers' reps 'monitor' action on the shop floor, to a 'proactive' position; 4. Promoting concrete changes in labour management practices to develop democracy and justice at the workplace as an effective way to prevent psychosocial work hazards. Support actions to this plan had great success – i.e. online training course launched in January 2009 had attracted 2000 participants by March that year.

b) The utilisation of COPSOQ (ISTAS21, PSQCAT21) methodology in Spain. It is used in no less than 3,600 companies of all sectors and sizes, following a participatory process, culminating with the implementation of agreed upon *at the source* preventive measures in 40% of cases. It is considered a valid and reliable risk assessment methodology, technically operative and socially participative which accomplish all scientific, operative and legal requirements.

c) The achievement of the official approval of COPSOQ (ISTAS21, PSQCAT21) methodology: NTP 703, a "reference booklet", was issued by the Spanish National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety; the Catalan government adopted it as the reference methodology for psychosocial risk assessment in Catalonia (Spanish region); public funding from the Spanish National Plan of Research and Development was obtained twice (PI031499, PI061521) to develop COPSOQ (ISTAS21, PSQCAT21)-related projects.

¹ The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ), developed by Denmark's NRCWE, is a tool used to measure psychosocial risks in the workplace.

² National Research Centre for the Working Environment.