

DRONES AND IMPACT ON OSH - FOW SEMINAR, 02/02/2023

Summary of group discussions

In general, a lack of data on how many companies use drones in the EU countries was reported. The strong privacy concerns as well as safety concerns, as mentioned in the article, associated with the use of drones were recognized and raised by the participants. In work context, the participants agreed that the use of drones is acceptable in high-risk situations, where they prevent high-risk work tasks such as dangerous inspections for example of high-tension electrical lines, or where on balance the risks they may create to workers are lower than those that they allow to eliminate or minimise. However, economic benefit was not seen to be an argument strong enough to justify the use of drones. In any case, during the discussion it was emphasized that according to the OSH framework directive, a risk assessment needs to be done before using drones and the hierarchy of control measure has to be followed.

There was also a general agreement that drones should keep a minimum distance from the workers and that workers should have the means to keep drones away.

Psychosocial risks associated with the use of drones were also discussed. The potential feeling of job insecurity that the use of drones may generate in workers (for example when replacing workers for high-risk work tasks) should also be taken into account in the risk assessment. Workers should also be informed about the measures taken to respect their privacy when drones are used at work. People/workers' perception about drones and their lack of knowledge about what they (are able to) do is a major psychosocial issue that should be addressed.

In many EU countries the use of drones seems to be emerging but is not yet well researched. Specific national situations were mentioned:

- In Finland, the only legislation specific to drones is related to air traffic. There is no specific OSH legislation however the OSH framework directive applies.
- In Estonia, the use of drones is also an emerging topic but the Labour Inspectorate (LI) has not been approached so far with any specific request related to the use of drones. The body responsible for air traffic control has to be notified before using a drone, but there is no need for user certification.
- In Greece, drones are used in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and entertainment. The Ministry of Infrastructure receives many questions and request for information mainly related to air traffic control, not to OSH.
- In Cyprus, drones are used in the post-office sector, and also for monitoring purposes for example of forest and fire prevention. To design, construct and use a drone, its OSH impact has to be taken into account and a risk assessment has to be performed. Designers should consult with OSH experts and integrate a cost-benefit analysis that includes OSH into the product risk assessment before its use. Risks associated with the use of drones have to be reduced to minimum.
- In Lithuania, users of drones should be trained and inform authorities. The LI itself uses drones for inspection, for example of construction sites.
- In Latvia, the LI uses drones for example to detect undeclared work. The LI also collaborates with the police and municipalities, for example each police car is equipped with a drone to check for example roof cleaning of snow and whether the workers performing these tasks use adequate safety equipment. The LI users of drone receive training depending on the size and load of drones. Market research may be done to have more data on how many drones are manufactured and used.
- In Poland, the LI has used drones for 2 years. They are mainly used to inspect closed spaces and there are plans to use them more broadly. There are no data on how many drones are used in companies but there is an increasing demand for training in the use of drones.

- In Ireland, drones are not currently used by public authorities, it is at an exploratory stage. The Health and Safety Authority looked at options to buy drones for the purpose of inspections.
- In Portugal, the LI bought drones some years ago but eventually was never allowed to use them because of privacy issues.
- In Austria and Switzerland, the LI is not allowed to use drones because of data protection issues. Also, the use of drones to check on individual workers would be seen going against the hierarchy of control measures as per the OSH Framework Directive according to which collective prevention measures, including workers' training, should have the priority.

A general conclusion was that the risks and benefits of drones depend on how they are implemented and used. Drones offer clear benefits where they allow to take high-risk tasks off workers. The involvement of OSH experts, a human/worker-centered approach, transparency and information to workers are key to their successful implementation..

Workers with mental disorders in a digitalized world

Summary of group discussions

In the groups discussing “mental health issues in a digitalized world”, the difference between mental health and mental disorders came up in different ways. Mental health at work refers traditionally to work as a source for mental wellbeing. It is related to managing psychosocial risks in the workplace to prevent mental health conditions. In this article we refer specifically to “mental disorders” (diagnosed or undiagnosed), such as ADD or Depression, that are in principle unrelated to work. However, the Mental Disorders can in combination with work - in this case related to the upcoming digitalisation - have consequences related to OSH and so lead to specific needs. Not much research has been done on mental disorders in the context of OSH. It is acknowledged that the topic is a sensitive topic, not always “in the open”. It is very important, though, that the needs of workers with (un)diagnosed disorders are acknowledged to be able to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

Moreover, it was discussed if this topic is already captured within the research on Revalidation of work, which includes physical as well as mental disorders. In this context the importance of inclusion in Risk Assessment and other preventative measures have already been described elaborately.

Regarding to mental health at work, it was emphasized that work organisations and processes have an important role in either improving mental health at work or causing problems, and that actions should be on organisational level, and not only on individual workers (i.e. therapy sessions for individuals are not the cure, if nothing changes at work). This viewpoint should be taken in relation to Mental Disorders as well.

Related to mental disorders, we expect that organisational measures are needed, related to awareness and training, as well as specific measure and actions need to be taken, related to how specific mental disorders can be affected by the upcoming digitalisation. In this context the value is seen of approaches going within and beyond the scope of “revalidation” and the protection and promotion of mental health at work.

In addition: interesting links from Finland:

- [Manifesto for mental health in the workplace - Ministry of Social Affairs and Health \(stm.fi\)](#)
- [Mental Health at Work Programme - Ministry of Social Affairs and Health \(stm.fi\)](#)
- [Mental health policy strategy - Ministry of Social Affairs and Health \(stm.fi\)](#)
- [Mind and work | Mental Health Support Toolkit \(ttl.fi\)](#)

Next to that, we received via our German Focal point, another link (in German) to the interesting project: “**AI Compass Inclusive**” <https://www.bagbbw.de/innovationen/digitalisierung/fuer-mehr-berufliche-teilhabe-start-von-ki-kompass-inklusiv/>

For more professional participation - start of KI-KOMPASS Inclusive10/12/2022

The aim is to set up a competence center for AI-supported assistance technologies and inclusion in working life over the next five years. The competence center will advise and support people with disabilities, specialists, companies and other stakeholders in a practical and needs-oriented manner with regard to the introduction and testing of AI-supported assistance technologies.

KI-KOMPASS Inclusive consists of three project pillars and is managed by the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI). Technology monitoring provides a continuously updated and freely accessible database for AI-supported assistance systems, which is to be consolidated in the structures of vocational rehabilitation. At the same time, a range of training and advisory services as well as information events for people with disabilities and stakeholders are planned, which will focus on promoting digital skills for participation in working life. The transfer of knowledge from the consulting and training courses on AI-supported assistance technologies is ensured by setting up a knowledge database. In practical laboratories, AI assistance technologies are being tested with a view to inclusive workplace design. In addition, recommendations for technology developers are designed and framework conditions for an inclusive working world are developed. People with disabilities are actively involved in the project in an advisory capacity in the form of an inclusive advisory committee. The competence center will continue to promote and strengthen participation in working life for people with disabilities.