

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS: DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF FRENCH OiRA TOOLS

Background

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) works in cooperation with national authorities, sectoral social partners and EU social partners (representing both workers and employers) to promote the development and uptake of risk assessment tools at European and national level. One of the main activities for achieving this goal is the **Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) activity** that was launched in 2011.

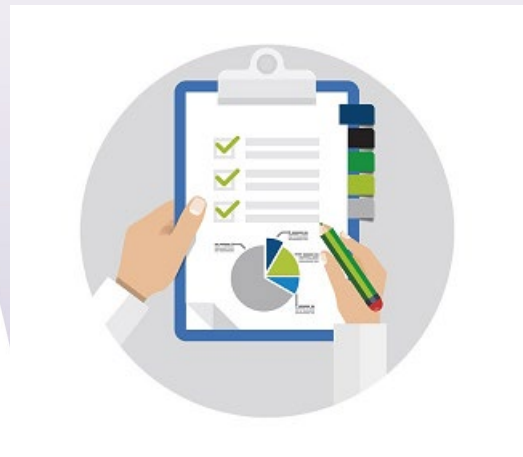
OiRA aims to help relevant stakeholders in European Member States develop user-friendly online risk assessment tools adapted to specific national and sectoral contexts, which are then promoted to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) for use free of charge. The OiRA tool generator is a piece of software that is designed to enable national authorities and sectoral social partners to develop and publish their own free online interactive risk assessment tools tailored to the specific national and sectoral context.

In France, responsibility for workplace health and safety sits within the remit of the **Ministry of Labour** and the national **Social Security** organisation (made up of four branches: Health Insurance, Health Insurance – Professional Risks, Pension Insurance and Family Benefits). While the Ministry of Labour is responsible for defining and coordinating government policy on occupational safety and health, Social Security is in charge of defining prevention measures, providing resources to support workplace implementation and guaranteeing compensation to victims of occupational accidents and diseases. Health Insurance – Professional Risks is implemented through the [national health insurance fund \(CNAM\)](#) and a network of regional offices. These are made up of the health insurance office of the Parisian region (CRAMIF), retirement and regional health insurance offices in metropolitan France (CARSAT), and the four social security offices for overseas territories (CGSS). All these organisations work to support victims of work-related illnesses and accidents and encourage a culture of risk prevention. This includes using financial incentives to promote active risk management in the workplace.

The **National Research and Safety Institute (INRS)** is the national OiRA partner in France.¹ It is financed by the National Fund for the Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Diseases (FNPAT), which is managed by Social Security. The [INRS Board of Directors](#) is formed of 18 social partners, including eight employer representatives and eight worker representatives.

The INRS is responsible for working with employers and employees to implement the national occupational risk prevention policy in France. This is achieved through four main activities:

- studies and research;
- training activities;
- dissemination of information on OSH; and
- provision of direct medical, technical and legal assistance.



Traditionally, the INRS has taken an approach to risk assessment that focuses on specific categories of risks (such as chemical or mechanical risks) rather than considering risks from the perspective of different sectors.

At around the same time that EU-OSHA launched the OiRA activity, Social Security and the INRS were considering new ways to engage MSEs in improving their approach to workplace risk assessment. Internal consultations with a small number of MSEs indicated that engagement with risk management practices was low. Many organisations did not carry out risk assessment at all.

¹ National OiRA partners are national authorities (ministries and labour inspectorates) and national OSH institutes that are members of the OiRA community and develop/implement OiRA

tools in their countries. More information is available at: <https://oiraproject.eu/en/national-partners>

Feedback from the consulted MSEs suggested that to engage MSEs with risk assessment, workplace health and safety needed to be linked to people's day-to-day understanding of their work environment. To engage MSEs, **a more concrete approach to risk assessment was needed** that started from the viewpoint of a worker or employer in a small business. From the perspective of MSEs, the identification and evaluation of specific risks would work best if **concretely linked to different activities** implemented in the course of carrying out a particular job.

The OiRA activity was viewed as a good method to begin exploring this new approach. EU-OSHA's OiRA tool had three main advantages: firstly, it was available **free of charge**, which allowed the INRS to test out their new sectoral approach to risk assessment without the need for a large investment in developing their own national tool; secondly, it was **easy to use** and provided a clear ready-made methodology for tools development that could be applied to multiple sectors; finally, it allowed the French national OiRA partners to **benefit from the experiences of other countries** and apply these learnings to their own tool development. The anonymity of the tool was also viewed as an important benefit for end users because it would give users confidence that their responses remained confidential and could not be monitored by Social Security or the INRS.

What was done

Between 2016 and 2021, the INRS published a total of 26 OiRA tools in collaboration with Social Security. A further 12 tools are in the process of being developed, with the intention that 38 sectoral OiRA tools will be available in France by the end of 2022.

Development of the tools was carried out in two phases:

- an initial **experimental phase** that involved an intensive co-development process among the INRS, Social Security and sectoral social partners; and
- a **scale-up phase** that used the learning from the design of the initial OiRA tools to create a more streamlined approach.

Phase one

The first phase of tools development was implemented from 2014 to 2018. Tools were selected based on an analysis of Social Security statistics. These were used to identify sectors which had both a high concentration of MSEs and a high incidence of workplace accidents and occupational diseases.

During the initial development phase, a total of four tools were developed in the following sectors:

- restaurants (2014);
- garages (repair of cars and heavy load vehicles) (2015);
- road transport (2016); and
- non-food shops (2016).

Development

The approach to tools development taken in the first phase was described as very hands-on. INRS worked in direct collaboration with regional Social Security offices and relevant sectoral social partners to develop the tools and tailor them to the needs and experiences of workers and employers in each sector.

During phase one, **all partners were involved in design, development, testing and promotion** of the tools. This meant that sectoral social partners felt a strong sense of ownership for the tools developed during phase one and were keen to promote them to their members.

The approach to tools development taken during phase one was **lengthy and resource-intensive**. INRS reported that it took four years to publish the first four tools. Social Security also dedicated significant resources from their network to pilot, provide input on and promote the tools.

This more resource-intensive approach was described as necessary during the initial phase to gain support for the OiRA concept and ensure that the design of the tools responded to the needs of MSEs. However, scaling up the number of OiRA tools being produced would require a more streamlined approach.

Promotion

To promote the tools, a joint communication plan was developed among the INRS, Social Security and sectoral social partners. Social Security and sectoral social partners were responsible for encouraging their members to complete risk assessments using the tools. This was achieved through a number of activities, including demonstrations, webinars, print and digital marketing campaigns, social media promotion and direct communications to members.

Additionally, INRS and Social Security carried out some specific activities that were perceived as significant success factors in terms of increasing uptake and use of the tools.

Social Security **linked successful completion of OiRA risk assessments to subsidies** in the form of reduced prices for specific equipment that will help prevent specific risks. To access these subsidies, organisations must prove they have completed a risk assessment. This financial incentive is believed to be an important factor in supporting the promotion of French OiRA tools.

INRS also invested in **targeted promotion of the tools at national level**. One particularly clear example was a national postal campaign implemented to promote the restaurants tool. All restaurants were sent an invitation to use the tool. The invitation was in the form of a letter bearing the official letterhead of the INRS. The influence of the mailshot is clearly noticeable in the usage statistics for the OiRA tools. There was a notable increase in use of the restaurants tool following this dissemination activity. The costs of implementing the

mailshot were high, however. Although it was effective in increasing uptake of the restaurants tool, it may not have presented the best value for money.

Uptake was high across all four tools. This is believed to be a result of the high level of ownership felt by social partners due to their direct involvement in developing the tools.

The **collaborative approach to tools development** was also viewed as an important method of educating social partners on how to identify, measure and address risks in the workplace. By engaging social partners in each step of the tools development process, INRS and Social Security were also able to help them understand how to implement risk management processes in a structured and organised way.

Example: Restaurants tool

The restaurants tool is one of the most successful French OiRA tools and one of the oldest. It was first published in 2014, with an updated hotels and restaurants tool launched in 2018. These two tools have received a combined total of 28,185 users and 34,271 assessments since 2014. This equates to approximately one quarter of restaurants in France.



Reasons given for the success of the French restaurants tool include: the clear-cut and tangible nature of the sector, which makes it easy to identify and target relevant actors; the existence of strong social partners with a clear understanding of risk; and investment in a targeted postal campaign at national level (as described above).

Phase two

During the second phase of tools development, INRS and Social Security set themselves the target of developing more than 30 tools in the space of four years. This represented a significant increase in the scale and ambition of the French OiRA programme, requiring a more streamlined approach in order to achieve this goal efficiently. Tools were chosen using the same method as in the first phase, based on a detailed analysis of the number of MSEs and incidence of occupational accidents and diseases in a given sector. Learning from phase one was used to inform approaches to tool design, development and promotion. Responsibilities for development, testing and promotion are therefore divided among the main partners:

- **INRS** has primary responsibility for developing OiRA tools;
- **Social Security** is responsible for testing and promotion of the tools and for engaging with sectoral social partners through their regional offices (CARSAT, CRAMIF and CGSS). One regional office is nominated to take responsibility for each tool being developed; and
- **sectoral social partners** are responsible for supporting with the testing and promotion of the tools.

Development

The approach to tools development in phase two is organised around a more streamlined approach, which involves less direct collaboration between partners. Instead, each organisation gets involved at a specific stage with different responsibilities for technical development, verification of content and testing.

Development of each specific tool follows these key steps:

1. INRS develop an **initial excel 'version zero'** of the tool.
2. The excel tool is shared with the regional office specialist nominated by Social Security designated for the sector, who provides **feedback on the content and structure**.
3. The regional office specialist of the sector **engages with national social partners** to understand the specific problems and risks faced by professionals in the sector and to ensure these issues are included in the tool.
4. Once initial feedback has been incorporated, the excel tool is **converted into an online (beta) tool** by INRS using the OiRA tools generator.
5. The link for the beta version of the tool is provided to the regional office specialist who engages with the relevant sectoral social partners to **carry out testing**.

6. Sectoral social partners are responsible for **testing the tool to ensure that all relevant risks are covered**, no specific measures are missed and that the issues identified are described accurately.
7. Once the tool has been tested and revised accordingly, a **final public version is published** by INRS and shared with other partners for dissemination.

Although this approach is less collaborative than in the first phase, it was perceived as necessary by stakeholders in order to scale up the number of tools being developed while making best use of the resources available. In some cases, specific learnings from one tool are applied to all tools under development – for example, following feedback from social partners, the length of each tool does not exceed 30 questions.

Promotion

Social Security holds primary responsibility for dissemination and promotion of the new OiRA tools. As with the first phase, specific subsidies are offered to enterprises which provide evidence of having completed a risk assessment. The organisation has developed a database of email addresses for relevant contacts, which is used for **mass dissemination regarding new tools** that are published. A number of supporting promotional activities have also been implemented, including sector-specific webinars, advertisements on social media and in the trade press.

A number of products are currently being developed to further promote the OiRA tools and ensure risk assessments completed using the tools are acted on. Accompanying sectoral toolkits include a training module on risk prevention, a tool for occupational accidents and analysis, and an accompanying webpage and leaflet. A **series of one page 'solutions' documents** are currently under development, which provide information on how specific risks can be prevented or addressed. These fact sheets cover issues such as how to safely welcome new employees, advice on purchasing equipment that preserves health and safety, and a summary of the basics of risk prevention.

To accompany the release of the second phase OiRA tools, INRS have produced a **promotion plan and accompanying leaflet**. These materials are shared with social partners via the relevant regional offices. Social partners are requested to validate the promotional leaflets by providing their logo, which is included in the leaflet to inform enterprises that they support the use of the OiRA tool in question. The leaflets and other information are then disseminated by the regional offices to chambers of commerce, artisanal associations and other work-related contacts.

In 2020, Social Security commissioned an external agency to carry out a survey of CEOs. This was used to understand what their needs are, what their information sources are and how best to interact with them. The

learnings from this survey, combined with historical knowledge from the internal communications department, have helped **target the purchase of advertisements publicising OiRA in magazines that are read by CEOs**. Often these are not specifically related to OSH but to more general areas of business interest.

One concrete learning from this research was that when it comes to prevention, **occupational doctors are an important source of information** for employers. Social Security has therefore been approaching occupational healthcare providers to collaborate more closely on disseminating information regarding the OiRA tools.

With regard to self-employed workers and MSEs, **expert accountants are an important point of reference** as they often provide support with completing tax returns and ensuring independent workers are compliant with the appropriate tax law. Social Security has therefore begun contacting accountants to provide information on the subsidies associated with completion of an online interactive risk assessment. As these subsidies represent financial savings, there is a clear logic to asking accountants to share this information with their clients. This is viewed as a promising route to increasing the uptake of OiRA tools among self-employed workers, who are often not members of more traditional trade unions and professional associations.

Example: Printing tool

The OiRA printing industry tool was developed as part of the second phase of OiRA in France. The tool was officially published in February 2021. In its first seven months, 201 assessments have been carried out using this tool.

While this number may seem relatively low, INRS estimates that it amounts to approximately 7% of enterprises within the French printing industry. Of these, 47 (1.6% of all enterprises) have completed a 'top assessment' (that is, more than 70% of the assessment has been completed).

The first 132 risk assessments were carried out in the three months following publication of the tool, suggesting that the promotion which accompanied the tool's launch was particularly successful.

Success Factors

The following success factors were identified by stakeholders:

1. A **significant level of resources** have been dedicated to the OiRA project from all partners. This commitment has enabled a significant expansion in the number of tools being created and has allowed for the development of a structured approach to tools development and promotion.
2. The phased approach helped to create a **proof of concept, building the validity of the OiRA approach** with social partners, laying the groundwork for solid cooperation between different

actors and gathering learnings to be applied in the scale-up of tools development seen under phase two.

3. The use of a **large network of different actors** (including CARSAT, CNAM, CGSS, sectoral social partners and the INRS) allows for widespread promotion of the tools using a variety of different routes to reach MSEs.
4. The combination of official government actors such as INRS and Social Security, combined with the endorsement of social partners, is believed to **give the tool legitimacy** in the eyes of end users.
5. There has been significant investment in researching **how and where target audiences consume information**. This has allowed new approaches to be developed around promotion of the tools, such as analysing what publications CEOs read and ensuring advertisements are placed there, as well as reaching out to accountants and occupational doctors.
6. The existence of a **subsidy programme that is explicitly linked to the OiRA tools** provides a tangible financial incentive for enterprises to complete online risk assessments. During the COVID-19 outbreak, this was believed to be a significant motivating factor as completion of a risk assessment through a French OiRA tool allowed SMEs to access support for buying specific materials such as face masks, alcohol hand sanitiser and so on. In the two months after this offer was introduced, the number of completed OiRA assessments rose by 2,000.

Difficulties faced

The transition from intensive production of a limited number of tools to a larger scale, more streamlined approach has caused some difficulties, particularly regarding promotion. Examples given included webinars to promote the tools, where participation levels have been relatively low compared to expectations.

The lack of a direct link between those developing the tools (INRS/Social Security) and their target audience (MSEs) does create a significant barrier to uptake. The more limited engagement of social partners in the second phase of production has amplified this issue as it is perceived to have led to a lower sense of ownership of the resulting OiRA tools.

Interviewees also raised the level of data available on use of the OiRA tools as an obstacle to improving uptake. Concrete examples where more data would be useful included the number of final reports/risk assessment documents being downloaded, the number of 100% completed assessments and information on the specific characteristics of different users. In particular, the confidentiality of end users – while helpful in

encouraging uptake – prevents more nuanced analysis of issues such as which types of enterprises are using the tool and whether there are any specific patterns (such as certain organisation types starting assessments but not completing them).

Further functionality, such as being able to break down the statistics by region or company size, is available and could provide even better insights. Additionally, the ability to send automated reminder messages to those who have not completed a risk assessment was identified as a potential future adaptation, which could have a positive impact on overall completion rates.

Conclusions

The French approach to developing and promoting OiRA tools shows clear commitment and collaboration from a number of key partners at national level. This includes the national actors for occupational risk prevention (INRS and Social Security) and sectoral social partners, with the use of official endorsements (such as logos and letterheads) underlining the support of all parties for the use of OiRA tools.

All aspects of the French methodology are evidence-based, with an analysis of relevant statistics informing:

- **initial tool selection** (sectors are chosen based on the level of accidents and the number of MSEs in a given sector);
- **specific content of OiRA tools** (designed around concrete activities implemented in the course of carrying out a particular job and not exceeding 30 questions); and
- **choice of promotion activities** (based on research into the habits of CEOs).

In particular, the continuing collection and analysis of evidence to understand what works and what doesn't helps to ensure the continued improvement both of the tools being developed and their dissemination to MSEs in France.

Further information:

Former case study on the French OiRA tools:

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/oira-promotion-france/view>

OiRA in France: <http://www.inrs.fr/metiers/oira-outil-tpe.html>

Information about the OSH system in France: https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/OSH_system_at_national_level_-_France