

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

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Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2022

Executive Summary

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Management Board's analysis and assessment

The Management Board of EU-OSHA,

Having regard to:

- Regulation (EU) 2019/126 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 establishing the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94;
- Financial Regulation of EU-OSHA of 27 September 2019, and in particular article 48 therein;
- EU-OSHA's 2022-2024 Single Programming Document adopted by the Management Board on 10 December 2021, and, in particular, the work programme for 2022; and
- EU-OSHA's Consolidated Annual Activity Report of the Authorising Officer for the year 2022:

Acknowledges the results achieved by EU-OSHA and notes the following analysis and assessment:

1. Considers that the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2022 represents a comprehensive and transparent account of the Agency's activities and results of the year; takes note that the interim Executive Director, in his capacity as Authorising Officer, had no reservation to report.
2. Congratulates the Agency on the continued significant contribution, through several actions carried out alone or in collaboration with others, to safer and healthier workplaces in Europe further to the global health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic; congratulates the Agency on the good results achieved.
3. Notes with satisfaction the important role assigned to EU-OSHA in the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027 and the way this has been taken forward.
4. Commends the Agency for having ensured business continuity through a prompt reorganisation, reprioritisation and reallocation of resources in response to the delay in the appointment of a new Executive Director.
5. Appreciates the Agency's progress in achieving its strategic objectives as outlined in EU-OSHA's Strategy and welcomes that these are aligned to and contribute substantially to wider EU policy objectives on occupational safety and health (OSH) such as the Vision Zero approach and beyond; acknowledges in particular the Agency's contribution to:
 - better knowledge on and higher awareness about the risks and prevention measures related to musculoskeletal diseases through the Healthy Workplaces Campaign 'Lighten the Load';
 - anticipating and managing the impact from digitalisation through its thematic research on prevention, policy and practice in relation to digitalisation and the impact from the green transition through the Foresight Study on the Circular Economy; and
 - the availability of official EU OSH information via the OSH Barometer. The barometer provides qualitative and quantitative data that constitutes an evidence base for policymaking.
6. Notes with satisfaction that the results for key performance indicators are positive across all activities and that the ambitious targets were to a large extent achieved.
7. Welcomes the very high implementation rate of the annual work programme resulting in an almost full implementation of the budget.
8. Stresses the importance of tripartism at the EU and national levels to ensure the effective functioning of the Agency and its focal points and encourages EU-OSHA to keep up its efforts to disseminate its activities and engage with the relevant stakeholders.

9. Acknowledges the key role played by Focal Points and their networks in contributing to the achievement of EU-OSHA's objectives, through the provision of high-quality information and data from the national level feeding into the planning and implementation of the Agency's work programme, and their effort in disseminating the Agency's work in the Member States.
10. Appreciates the cooperation established with other EU agencies aimed at expertise and methodology exchange as well as joint delivery; welcomes that the Agency has fully implemented the action plan adopted in response to the evaluation of EU-OSHA, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), European Training Foundation and European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop).
11. Considers that the internal control systems put in place by the Agency are adequate as confirmed by various audits.
12. Observes that the interim Executive Director's declaration of assurance is based on a robust control system built around the Internal Control Framework. The robustness of the control system is confirmed by the absence of significant findings from the Internal Audit Service and the Court of Auditors.
13. Considers that the information provided in the Consolidated Annual Activity Report gives the Management Board reasonable assurance that the resources available to EU-OSHA in 2022 were used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management. Furthermore, the control procedures in place give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

In light of the above, the Management Board requests the Consolidated Annual Activity Report 2022 be forwarded, together with this analysis and assessment, to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission and the Court of Auditors.

28 June 2023

(signed)

Andreas Stoimenidis
Chairperson of the Management Board

The Agency in brief

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) is an agency of the European Union (EU). Established in 1994, the Agency works on the basis of a founding regulation, which entered into force in early 2019.¹ The regulation defines EU-OSHA's mandate and governance arrangements.

EU-OSHA's mission and vision are enshrined in the EU-OSHA Strategy 2022-2027 adopted by the Management Board in June 2022. The Agency's mission is to develop, gather and provide reliable and relevant information, analysis and tools to advance knowledge, raise awareness and exchange occupational safety and health (OSH) information and good practice that will serve the needs of those involved in OSH.

The Agency's vision is to be a recognised leader promoting healthy and safe workplaces in Europe based on tripartism, participation and the development of an OSH risk prevention culture, to ensure a smart, sustainable, productive and inclusive economy. EU-OSHA's Strategy defines six long-term strategic objectives and associated priority areas. The priority areas are: Anticipating change, Facts and figures, Tools for OSH management, Awareness raising and communication, Networking knowledge, and Strategic and operational networking.

The Agency is based on a tripartite structure as is the standard in the employment and social affairs field. Key actors in OSH in Europe are represented in the Agency's Management Board: representatives of governments, employers and workers of the EU-27, and the European Commission. An expert appointed by the European Parliament (EP) Employment and Social Affairs Committee also participates in the work of the Management Board, and, together with European Economic Area and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries' representatives and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and European Labour Authority (ELA) representatives, they have observer status in the Management Board. Whereas the Management Board takes the key strategic decisions, the Executive Board oversees effective preparation and follow-up of the Management Board decisions.²

As a tripartite organisation, the Agency works closely with governments', employers' and workers' representatives – in addition to the European institutions – in order to share good practices and engage intermediaries across Europe.

The tripartite dialogue is an essential element, not only at the decision-making stage but also at the implementation stage of EU-OSHA's mandate – both at European level and at Member State level via the national, tripartite Focal Point networks. The Focal Points are the Agency's main operational network. Whereas they are not directly involved in the governance of the Agency, they play a key role by providing input to the Agency's implementation of the work programme at the national level. They are key actors for the development and coordination of the tripartite network in Member States. It is only by engaging Focal Points and their networks that the Agency can achieve its objectives and it is therefore decisive that the network partners perceive the Agency's work as adding value to their work. Thanks to their input, EU-OSHA can rely on high-quality information and data from the national level that feeds into the implementation of the Agency's activities, and through their networking and dissemination actions involving social partners, the work of EU-OSHA reaches out to the intended target audiences in the Member States.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2019/126 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 establishing the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94, cf. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32019R0126>

² With the 2018 Regulation, the 'Governing Board' and 'Bureau' have become 'Management Board' and 'Executive Board', and the 'Director' became the 'Executive Director'. In this report, the terminology from the new Regulation is used unless reference is made to actions and decisions taken before its entry into force on 20 February 2019.

While preparing decisions for the Management Board, the Agency regularly consults its three Advisory Groups, the 'Tools and Awareness Raising Advisory Group' (TARAG), the 'OSH Knowledge Advisory Group' (OKAG), and the 'Workers' Exposure Survey Advisory Group' (WES-AG), and has regular coordination meetings with Directorate C, Unit 2 of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), which serves as the Agency's primary partner at the Commission.

Internally, the Agency is organised in four units, three of which are operational (Prevention and Research Unit, Communication and Promotion Unit, and Network Secretariat) and one administrative (Resource and Service Centre). The Executive Director³ also serves as the Head of Unit of one of the operational units (Network Secretariat). The Executive Director has delegated appointing authority powers by the Management Board whereas all Heads of Unit as well as one Temporary Agent/Administrator staff member in the Network Secretariat have delegated Authorising Officer powers.

The Executive Director is assisted in their management responsibilities by the Heads of Unit. There are regular meetings at the management level to monitor the Agency's performance, the implementation of the annual work programme and the budget, follow-up to audit recommendations, the internal control and risk register action plans, and human resource matters as well as any other issue that is relevant for the smooth running of the Agency.

The Agency's activities are implemented under direct decentralised management.

The year in brief

Key conclusions in relation to operational activities

The Agency's long-term strategic objectives are established in the EU-OSHA Strategy 2022-2027. The Strategy addresses the main challenges in OSH in the EU as identified in the main EU policy documents, particularly the EU OSH Strategic Framework 2021-2027. During 2022, EU-OSHA continued to make progress towards its strategic objectives across its six priority areas. This resulted in a budget implementation of 99% and a work programme implementation of 96% (target: 90%).

In 2022, EU-OSHA continued to make important contributions to the implementation of the EU OSH Strategic Framework 2021-2027 across the main objectives of the framework focused on anticipating and managing change, improving workplace prevention and enhanced preparedness.

One of the main challenges identified for the EU is the digital transition and its impact on the workplace. Based on previous work, particularly a foresight on digitalisation, EU-OSHA has implemented an OSH Overview research project on digitalisation. The activity looks into the consequences of digitalisation for workers' safety and health and for prevention, policy and practice. The research has covered topics such as advanced robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) systems for automation, digital platform work and remote work/telework. The research work will feed into the Healthy Workplaces Campaign 'Safe and Healthy Work in the Digital Age' running from 2023 to 2025.

Another key challenge at EU level is the green transition. This transition will also have an important impact on work, and it is necessary to anticipate and manage this impact. Based on the solid foresight experience

³ Please note that as from 16 September 2021, the Management Board has appointed an interim Executive Director until a new Executive Director is in post. In the present report, reference will be made to 'Executive Director' when referring to tasks that are in general ascribed to the function as per the policies and procedures in place; to 'interim Executive Director' when referring to specific actions carried out as from 16 September 2016.

developed by EU-OSHA, a Foresight Study on the Circular Economy entered its final stages in 2022. Based on the research of the previous years, the focus in 2022 was on dissemination and tailoring the developed scenarios.

2022 was also the last year of EU-OSHA's Healthy Workplaces Campaign addressing one of the key OSH challenges, musculoskeletal disorders. The 'Lighten the Load' Campaign was initiated in 2021 and built on the OSH Overview finalised in 2021 on musculoskeletal disorders. A number of priority areas were addressed through the Campaign such as prevention, chronic conditions, diversity and telework. Telework was included to address a challenge that grew rapidly with the COVID-19 pandemic. Campaign activities took place throughout the Member States and at EU level, culminating in the Summit in November 2022.

Other research projects on supporting compliance (looking into the external factors influencing companies' compliances with OSH regulations), psychosocial risks, and the health and social care sectors progressed as foreseen.

In parallel, work continued on the online dashboard "OSH Barometer – part of the EU OSH Information System that provides harmonised data on OSH in the EU and which is the basis for the report 'Occupational Safety and Health in Europe – State and trends 2023' that will feed into the stocktaking exercise in relation to the EU Strategic Framework.

EU-OSHA's surveys also provided new data in 2022. The OSH Pulse was published in autumn 2022 providing insights into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic based on more than 27,000 interviewed employees. The survey more generally looked into the mental and physical health stressors workers are confronted with and measures implemented in the workplaces. Preparations for the Workers' Exposure Survey on cancer risk factors continued. The survey will provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of current risks related to workers' exposure to cancer risk factors that is in line with current policy developments and Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. First results from the survey are expected in 2023. Using data from EU-OSHA's third and most established survey, the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER), the Agency provided publications on health and safety representatives, human health and social activities, the education sector and psychosocial risks. Finally, together with the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) data were collected from inspectors in the field of SOH on high risk occupations.

Through the Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) activity, EU-OSHA, together with its partners, provides a tool for employers to carry out a good quality risk assessment, thereby facilitating compliance with the legal requirements without compromising the quality of the risk assessment, especially among SMEs. OiRA is explicitly mentioned in different policy documents and is an activity that will be continued throughout the programming period. By the end of 2022, a total of 325 tools were available, with another 60 under development.

Furthermore, EU-OSHA has been serving as an information-based resource and platform for debate, facilitating the exchange of information on OSH research, policy and practice. In particular, it has provided support to the Commission, other institutions and key stakeholders when requested, to strengthen the evidence base for their decision-making and to provide them with the input necessary for their policy work.

Evaluations have several times confirmed the performance and the relevance to EU policy priorities of EU-OSHA. This is both the case for activity evaluations commissioned by the Agency and for the evaluation of EU-OSHA and three other agencies under DG EMPL's remit commissioned by the European Commission in 2019. The [Staff Working Document of the Commission following up to the four agencies' evaluation](#) highlights that: EU-OSHA contributes to and sometimes is the only source of high-quality information on OSH; supports EU policies and legislation through awareness raising and implementation, making knowledge and good practices available to stakeholders; and complements work and knowledge developed by others such as the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work. By the end of 2021, the Agency

had implemented all the actions agreed upon by the Management Board to meet the recommendations from the four agencies' evaluation. A new evaluation study was initiated in 2022 by the Commission.

EU-OSHA has continued collaborating closely with other EU agencies in 2022 – both those within the employment and social affairs policy field and beyond. In addition to continuing the established cooperation with Eurofound, the European Training Foundation (ETF) and European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), EU-OSHA has also formalised collaboration with the more recently established ELA.

Further to the former EU-OSHA Executive Director Dr Christa Sedlatschek's retirement in September 2021 and the Management Board's decision in January 2022 to close the recruitment procedure for a new Executive Director without appointing any of the shortlisted candidates, the Commission started a new recruitment procedure in early 2022 that is still ongoing. The Management Board had taken measures to ensure business continuity after Dr Sedlatschek's departure that mainly involved appointing as interim Executive Director William Cockburn, Head of the Prevention and Research Unit. It is expected that the Management Board will be able to appoint an Executive Director later in 2023 on the basis of the shortlist of candidates to be provided by the Commission.

As the 2022 results demonstrate, the arrangements put in place to mitigate the impact of the delay in the recruitment of a new Executive Director resulted in minimal disruption to planned work and have not affected EU-OSHA's overall performance.

Key conclusions related to management, internal control and assurance

The Agency's internal control systems and management of resources is based on a systematic analysis of the evidence available.

Overall, the interim Executive Director received reasonable assurance that the Agency's internal control systems had been adequate, and that the compliance and the implementation of the Internal Control Framework are satisfactory, risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated, and necessary improvements and reinforcements are being implemented.

EU-OSHA can rely on a variety of sources to carry out this assessment and of processes and procedures to ensure completeness and reliability of the information. The interim Executive Director issued his judgment on the basis of: the control processes in place and the outcomes of such controls; the resources spent to raise awareness with respect to ethics and integrity and fraud prevention; the annual risk assessment and Internal Control Framework assessment exercises; the quantitative and qualitative nature of the non-conformities included in the register for 2022; the assurance received by the Internal Control Coordinator; and, last but not least, the overall favourable opinions expressed in the final reports by internal and external auditors and their recommendations in the past few years.

In his declaration of assurance, the interim Executive Director has not deemed it necessary to include any reservation.