

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

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EU-OSHA STRATEGY 2022-2027

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Abbreviations

CLP	Classification, Labelling and Packaging (EU Regulation)
ECHA	European Chemicals Agency
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ESENER	Enterprise Survey on New and Emerging Risks
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IRAT	Interactive Risk Assessment Tool
MSD	Musculoskeletal Disorders
MSP	Multi-annual Strategic Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OiRA	Online interactive Risk Assessment
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (EU Regulation)
SLIC	Senior Labour Inspectors Committee
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Foreword

EU-OSHA is one of the key players in the delivery of the EU's occupational safety and health (OSH) policies. This has been recognised in key documents such as the EU Occupational Safety and Health Strategic Framework 2021-2027.¹

When it comes to OSH, the aim for the EU is clearly formulated in the European Pillar of Social Rights which states that workers have the right to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work and that they have the right to a working environment adapted to their professional needs and which enables them to prolong their participation in the labour market.² The Management Board of EU-OSHA is very conscious of the important role the Agency plays in delivering on the EU policy objectives and has therefore decided to adopt this strategy to ensure a consistent focus of the Agency's work over the coming years. The Management Board is also adopting this strategy with the understanding that a more in-depth discussion of the future strategy will be initiated once a new Executive Director is in post.

This strategy is an updated and shortened version of the Multi-annual Strategic Programme 2018-2023. Solid evaluation evidence on the continued relevance of the strategic objectives and an assessment of the impact of the EU OSH Strategic Framework 2021-2027 are the basis for this update. With the development of the Single Programming Document to include more strategic content, the need for a detailed multi-annual strategic programme has diminished and this has allowed this document to be shorter and focus on the strategic objectives of the Agency.

The focus in the strategy is on the mission, vision, strategic objectives and priority areas within which the Agency will develop its work. The actual OSH topics to be covered will be decided by the Board when adopting the Single Programming Documents to ensure their relevance to the needs at any given moment.

As always, the Agency's networks will play a key role in delivering this strategy. It is through its networks, and in particular the Focal points network, that EU-OSHA has been able to demonstrate a sustained high impact in its work and the Agency will continue to rely on these networks for the success of the current strategy.

William Cockburn
Interim Executive Director

¹ See here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=151> for the strategic framework and here: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2709> for the communication.

² Quoted from the European Pillar of Social Rights available here: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/social-summit-european-pillar-social-rights-booklet_en.pdf

1. EU-OSHA's mission, vision and values

EU-OSHA is a mature organisation with more than 25 years' experience. The Agency's revised founding regulation from 2019³ defines the mandate within which EU-OSHA is to develop its activities. The mandate (article 1 (2)) says:

EU-OSHA's objective shall be to provide the Union institutions and bodies, the Member States, the social partners and other actors involved in the field of safety and health at work with relevant technical, scientific and economic information and qualified expertise in that field in order to improve the working environment as regards the protection of the safety and health of workers.

To that end, EU-OSHA shall enhance and disseminate knowledge, provide evidence and services for the purpose of policy making, including research-based conclusions, and shall facilitate knowledge sharing among and between Union and national actors.

This definition of the mandate represents continuity with the original 1994 founding regulation of EU-OSHA.⁴ The 2019 regulation provides some further clarification in the second paragraph as regards EU-OSHA's role in relation to knowledge, policy-making and knowledge-sharing.

The mandate in the founding regulation sets the framework and guides the development of EU-OSHA strategy. The EU-OSHA strategy shall contribute to an effective implementation of the mandate with the resources provided. The strategy will help prioritise activities within the scope of the mandate.

It was with this in mind that EU-OSHA's Management Board defined the Agency's mission and vision (below) in 2013. That mission and vision remain as relevant today as they were in 2013 and will therefore guide the work of EU-OSHA over the next years. The mission and vision are an adequate answer to the challenges and opportunities facing EU-OSHA over the coming. This conclusion was supported by an assessment of the impact of the 2021 EU OSH Strategic Framework on EU-OSHA carried out in autumn 2021.

A clear definition of the nature of EU-OSHA's work and contribution to OSH in Europe is important for the management of expectations and for the best use of the available resources. The mission and vision statements stress the Agency's facilitator role in knowledge development and exchange, and cover the active role of the Agency in communication and networking. In line with this, the Agency also stresses the important role that intermediaries play in its work.

The **mission** is a brief statement of the fundamental purpose of EU-OSHA. The statement makes clear what the Agency provides to its users, and informs staff and stakeholders about the overall goal of the Agency:

We 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 which will serve the needs of those involved in OSH

³ 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

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 2062/94 of 18 July 1994.

The **vision** is a precise statement defining the ultimate goal for the strategy period as regards EU-OSHA's contribution to OSH in Europe:

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

While the mission and vision statements define the content and purpose of the Agency's work, the **values** set out the way that EU-OSHA operates:

Pan-European

We create European added value by bringing together actors from across Europe and by providing the tools to create a common approach to occupational safety and health while respecting national specificities

Relevant

We ensure that our activities are relevant to the most pressing OSH needs in Europe and contribute to the realisation of wider EU policy objectives

Tripartite

We work on the basis of, and promote, tripartism as the cornerstone of our work

Partnership- and network-based

We participate in and connect networks and build communities to create European added value

Reliable

We see the quality assurance of our work as a key condition for success

Responsive and innovative

We are responsive to new OSH developments and innovative in addressing them

Good governance

We place great importance on accountability and transparency towards our stakeholders and efficiency in the use of our human and financial resources

2. The context: challenges, opportunities and EU-OSHA

EU-OSHA is the European Union's agency for safety and health at work. As is clearly stated in the founding regulation, the Agency works with information, data and knowledge. It is therefore important to identify what the needs are for information, data and knowledge, and whether and how EU-OSHA can meet these needs.

2.1. Defining the policy context

The European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission states in its principle 10 the right of workers to a high level of protection of their health and safety at work and OSH is therefore one of the key building blocks towards a strong social Europe that is fair, inclusive and full of opportunity.

The most relevant follow-up to the Pillar of Social Rights for EU-OSHA is the EU OSH Strategic Framework from 2021. The strategic framework defines three key objectives for the strategy period, 2021-2027. The objectives are

- to **anticipate and manage change**, with a special focus on the green transition, digitalisation and demographic change
- to **improve workplace prevention** focusing on themes such as a stronger prevention culture, work-related cancer, circulatory diseases, mental health and musculoskeletal disorders and the promotion of a Vision Zero approach to work-related deaths
- to **enhance preparedness** in relation to ensuring a fast response to threats.

EU-OSHA is foreseen to play an important role in implementing these objectives through its defined areas for action.

The strategic framework sets out five areas for action through which EU-OSHA will contribute to the implementation of these three key objectives. EU-OSHA can make important contributions in areas such as improving the evidence base – via data collection, knowledge development and engagement with stakeholders; the application and monitoring of the strategic framework – via work on national strategies and the EU OSH information system, and; awareness raising – via the Healthy Workplaces Campaigns and other communication actions.

The EU OSH Strategic Framework will be the key reference throughout the strategy period.

2.2. Building on EU-OSHA's capacities

EU-OSHA is well placed to deliver on its mission and vision and to meet the expectations outlined above. The achievements of EU-OSHA are widely recognised and the Agency has a strong record when it comes to meeting set objectives.

The capacity to meet objectives and contribute to EU policy objectives has been documented several times.⁵ EU-OSHA consistently scores highly on meeting the needs, on contributing to EU policy priorities and on making good use of the resources available.

EU-OSHA's research practice is well-established and the knowledge produced is seen as coherent, relevant and of good quality. Of particular importance has been the fact that the knowledge developed in some cases is unique and often is the only source for Europe-wide information. In fact, EU-OSHA was recently mentioned as *"a good example of where a 'non-agencies' scenario would lead to Member States losing access to information on occupational safety and health in terms of legislation, research,*

⁵ See for example, Commission Staff Working Document, Evaluation of the EU Commission Agencies working in the employment and social affairs field: Eurofound, Cedefop, ETF and EU-OSHA, SWD(2019)160final, 9 April 2019.

facts and figures, good practices and advice to countries on how to deal with workplace health and safety issues.”⁶

The Healthy Workplace Campaigns and the other communication actions have been the main awareness raising actions at EU level over many years and the campaigning and communication actions have systematically been evaluated as successful.

The importance of the networking approach developed has been confirmed on several occasions and has two main advantages. It helps ensure that EU-OSHA's work identifies and addresses the most important needs, and it is an essential element in the implementation of the work and in achieving the objectives. Of special importance is EU-OSHA's unique focal point network which ensures a close link between the Agency and the Member States.

⁶ CSES, Cost of Non-EU Agencies Focusing on the Health and Safety Cluster of the EU Decentralised Agencies, study carried out at the request of European Parliament's Committee on Budgets, October 2021.

3. EU-OSHA's strategic objectives and priority areas

On the basis of the mission and vision (chapter 1), six strategic objectives and corresponding priority areas have been identified. These strategic objectives are based on the challenges that EU-OSHA faces and on the opportunities that the Agency has, as well as on the Agency's founding regulation, and the experience that the Agency has built up. EU-OSHA's strategic objectives attempt to use the mission and vision statements to guide the activities within each of the priority areas. It is very important to have a clear, shared understanding of the role that the Agency plays, and this role is expressed in our objectives. Taken together our objectives implement our mission and vision statements in the best way possible, given the resources that we expect to be available. The strategic objectives will be the reference for the actual activities that will be included in the future Single Programming Documents.

3.1. **Strategic objective 1: Anticipating Change**

Strategic objective 1: The provision of credible and good quality data on new and emerging risks that meet the needs of policy-makers and researchers and allow them to take timely and effective action

The Agency works to identify new and emerging risks in occupational safety and health, to provide a basis to set priorities for OSH research and actions and to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of preventive measures. The agency has gained significant experience over the years with foresight techniques as the best available instruments to identify new and emerging OSH risks.

This priority area supports the first key objective of the 2021-2027 EU OSH Strategic Framework, to anticipate and manage change in the new world of work. It also links to the European Commission Communication 'A Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions' which addresses the multiple challenges Europe is facing: climate action, digitalisation and demographic change. Therefore, better risk anticipation is essential for improving prevention and consequently for sustainable working lives and higher employment rates in the medium to long term.

3.2. **Strategic objective 2: Fact and Figures**

Strategic objective 2: The provision of an accurate and comprehensive picture of current OSH risks, their health effects, and how they can be prevented and managed, to allow a better understanding of these issues among policy-makers and researchers

Decision-makers need to have an accurate and comprehensive picture of OSH risks, their health effects, and how they can be prevented and managed in order to set priorities. The Agency's regulation requires it to "supply the Community bodies and the Member States with the objective available technical, scientific and economic information they require to formulate and implement judicious and effective policies designed to protect the safety and health of workers".

The EU OSH Strategic Framework highlights research and data collection as a precondition for prevention of work-related diseases and accidents and highlights its importance for evidence-based policymaking. Instruments such as EU-OSHA's qualitative studies on specific topics (OSH Overviews), ESENER - EU-OSHA's workplace-level survey on management of OSH, the OSH barometer, and the worker exposure survey on cancer risk factors, aim to contribute to such an evidence base for policy-makers and researchers. Data from these and other sources, such as worker surveys, administrative data and qualitative data, from both the European and national levels also make an important contribution and are the source of indicators used in the EU OSH barometer.

3.3. **Strategic objective 3: Tools for OSH management**

Strategic objective 3: The provision of relevant tools for smaller workplaces to manage health and safety, and the engagement of intermediaries in the further development and dissemination of these tools

The Agency's founding regulation emphasises the need for "methods and tools for implementing preventive activities, paying particular attention to the specific problems of small and medium-sized

enterprises”. The priority area will directly contribute to the realisation of the EU OSH Strategic Framework which foresees the provision of sector-specific tools for SMEs as well as the ongoing adaptation of COVID-19 guidelines as measures to improve prevention and preparedness.

Risk assessment is the cornerstone of health and safety management and OSH legislation, but its implementation and quality need to be improved. There are challenges when it comes to complying with essential elements of EU health and safety legislation among SMEs, especially micro- and small enterprises, and particularly with regard to risk assessment. EU-OSHA therefore provides tools for smaller workplaces to manage health and safety, and the Agency aims to do so through its Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tool, and its collaboration with other developers of similar tools (Interactive Risk Assessment Tool (IRAT) network). The OiRA tool has tripartism at its core, in the way that it involves the social partners, as well as governments, in its development and diffusion.

3.4. Strategic objective 4: Raising awareness

Strategic objective 4: To get the occupational safety and health message across to multiple beneficiaries by raising awareness about workplace risks and how to prevent them, together with the Agency’s intermediaries

According to EU-OSHA’s founding regulation, one of the Agency’s tasks is to “*carry out awareness raising and communication activities and campaigns on safety and health at work issues*”. Getting occupational safety and health information and messages across to multiple target groups and beneficiaries⁷, including policy-makers, researchers, social partners and others, and raising awareness about workplace risks and how to prevent them, are key elements in the creation of a prevention culture. This is integral to the EU OSH Strategic Framework’s Vision Zero approach to work-related deaths. Furthermore, awareness raising is defined as one of the key areas for implementing the Strategic Framework.

The Agency’s communication and promotion actions, commitment to multilingualism and Healthy Workplaces Campaigns play an important role in reaching this goal. They aim to deliver reliable and relevant information, tools and other resources generated by the Agency’s research activities to the different target groups, primarily policy-makers, intermediaries and other message multipliers, with the ultimate aim of benefiting people in European workplaces.

3.5. Strategic objective 5: Networking knowledge

Strategic objective 5: Supporting the OSH community through new tools to promote and facilitate the generation and maintenance of a body of high quality knowledge

A key role for EU-OSHA is to “*collect, analyse and disseminate technical, scientific and economic information*” on risks, good practices and research aspects of occupational safety and health. This represents a very broad remit which – combined with different information needs at EU level and across the Member States, and the ever-growing task of maintaining the currency of the information – represents a considerable challenge, given the resources available. By forging links, creating synergies and facilitating the exchange of knowledge between different organisations involved in research, policy-making and development of resources for workplace level, the agency is able to act as a facilitator and catalyst of new knowledge and collaboration on OSH.

3.6. Strategic objective 6: Strategic and operational networking

Strategic objective 6: To develop and implement networking activities to ensure that the Agency’s activities meet the needs of its key stakeholders, to promote tripartism at European and Member State level, and to enable networks to take an active part in the Agency’s activities

⁷ **Beneficiaries** are those whom an activity is designed to support or help. The Agency, in most cases, does not work directly with beneficiaries but with others (**target groups or intermediaries**) who are in contact with or can influence the beneficiaries. The Agency, in most cases, aims at increasing the capacity and understanding of target groups (e.g. by providing them with tools) for them to better help and support beneficiaries.

EU-OSHA's founding regulation gives the Agency a number of networking tasks and the regulation established the focal point network which the Agency manages. EU-OSHA's focal point network is unique among the agencies and the focal points are key providers of information on OSH from the national level and at the same they are a route for dissemination of information about OSH at the Member State level.

The Agency was established as a networking agency from the beginning and networking activities are a way of ensuring the relevance of the Agency's work and creating a multiplication effect in its implementation.

4. Governance and Management

This Strategy is mainly about producing OSH outcomes and improving the state of OSH in the EU. EU-OSHA is, however, also part of the EU institutional landscape and a public body. This creates requirements and expectations, not only regarding what the Agency delivers, but also how it delivers it.

There exists a set of common principles for European public administrations and a number of more specific expectations in relation to the EU agencies expressed by the European Parliament, the Council, and the European Commission. These have been grouped together in a number of themes below which together set the strategic framework for good governance at EU-OSHA.

The importance of ensuring **effectiveness** and **efficiency** is a continuous priority. The Agency must ensure that it meets its objectives and produces outcomes and impacts (effectiveness) and it must do this without using more resources than needed (efficiency). The Agency carefully evaluates new activities before they are initiated (ex-ante evaluations) and involves the Management Board to ensure that resources are spent on impactful activities. The Agency also enhances efficiency – for example via a well-functioning network that can increase the impact of its work, but also through careful consideration of implementation arrangements. In addition to ex-ante evaluations, the Agency systematically carries out mid-term and ex-post evaluations to ensure accountability and learning.

Transparency and openness are key ingredients in good governance, as recognised in the values of the Agency. It basically means that it is clear to everyone who is involved in decision making and implementation that the Agency's decisions, processes and actions are open to scrutiny by others. Transparency is essential for creating trust in the Agency. EU-OSHA makes the majority of its corporate governance documents available to the public via its website (for example minutes of the Management Board meetings, programming documents, activity reports etc). An important contribution to transparency and openness is respect of the policy for preventing and managing conflicts of interests.

Closely linked to transparency and openness is **accountability** which is also expressed in the values of the Agency. Accountability for the Agency means a willingness to show the extent to which its activities and results are consistent with clearly defined and agreed objectives. The key measure for EU-OSHA here is an annual Board meeting dedicated to looking backwards and to analysing and assessing the activity report, giving an opinion on the accounts etc.

Needs-orientation is a further theme. It means that EU-OSHA's start and end-point are the needs regarding OSH. It also means that the Agency is willing to change direction and respond at short notice if needs change and to (re)examine its own role in meeting needs – as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Various ways of involvement are in place – from stakeholder surveys to face-to-face discussions. The needs-orientation also entails a commitment to basing decisions on sound evidence.

Compliance is a priority for the Agency: it means that the Agency carries out its operations in a legal and regular way. Positive reports from the Court of Auditors are one of the key indicators on the extent to which the Agency fulfils this value.

A final theme is **social and environmental responsibility**. The Agency will aim to carry out its work in a socially and environmentally responsible way, i.e. with the least possible impact on the environment and promoting recognised social objectives.

To integrate the themes outlined above into the work of the Agency a number of specific actions will be carried out. These actions will be fully developed in the Agency's Programming Documents and in particular in the Annual Work Programmes, but some of the main ones are:

Programming, monitoring and evaluation actions: The Agency will continue its programming, monitoring and evaluation actions to provide the necessary evidence for learning, management and accountability. The actions will range from the provision of the necessary basis for the formulation of clear objectives to the assessment of whether objectives have been met.

Quality management: Quality management will continue to be a priority. This will include documentation and review of key processes to ensure that there is a focus on needs, as well as efficiency and effectiveness.

Internal control and risk management: The Agency has a well-established internal control system. It will continue to be a priority to ensure that the Internal Control Framework is applied in a way that ensures both compliance and efficiency and that risks are identified and managed.

Management of resources: Sound management of the Agency's financial and human resources becomes more and more important in order to increase efficiency. The key objective is to ensure that the resources are available for achieving the objectives defined in the EU-OSHA Strategy and the subsequent Single Programming Documents.

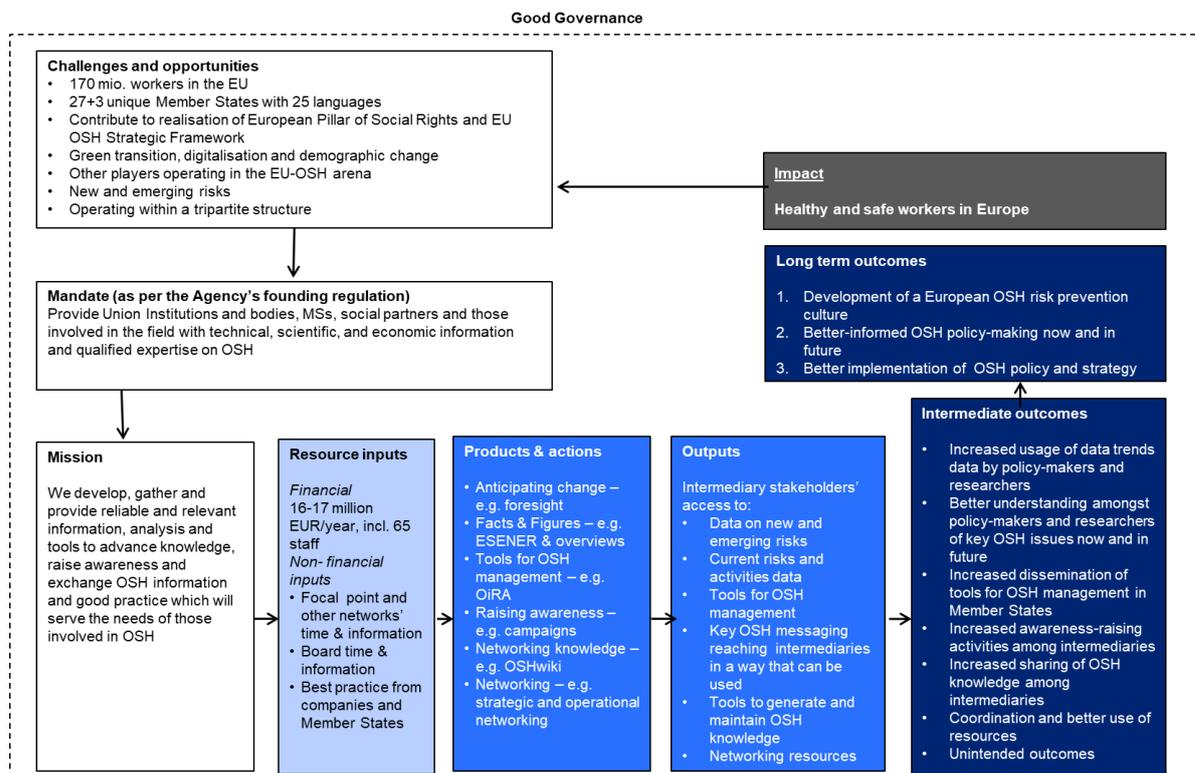
The Agency remains committed to social dialogue and will give a high priority to close involvement of staff and the staff representatives.

5. Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy

A monitoring and evaluation system is in place to monitor and assess progress in implementing this Strategy. The monitoring and evaluation system provides the necessary information to learn from on-going or finalised activities, to manage the implementation of the Strategy, and to provide the evidence for accountability. Building on the Agency's legal requirements and the Better Regulation approach, the monitoring and evaluation system provides information on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, EU added value, coherence and sustainability of EU-OSHA's work. The tools to provide the necessary information will be a mixture of narrative reports, performance indicators and evaluations.

The monitoring and evaluation framework follows the logic model underlying the Strategy, which describes how resources are converted into outputs via activities in the different priority areas. This part of the process is under the Agency's immediate control. Intermediate and long-term outcomes are much less under the control of the Agency, but are necessary if EU-OSHA is to achieve its desired impact. The logic model underlying the Strategy is illustrated below.

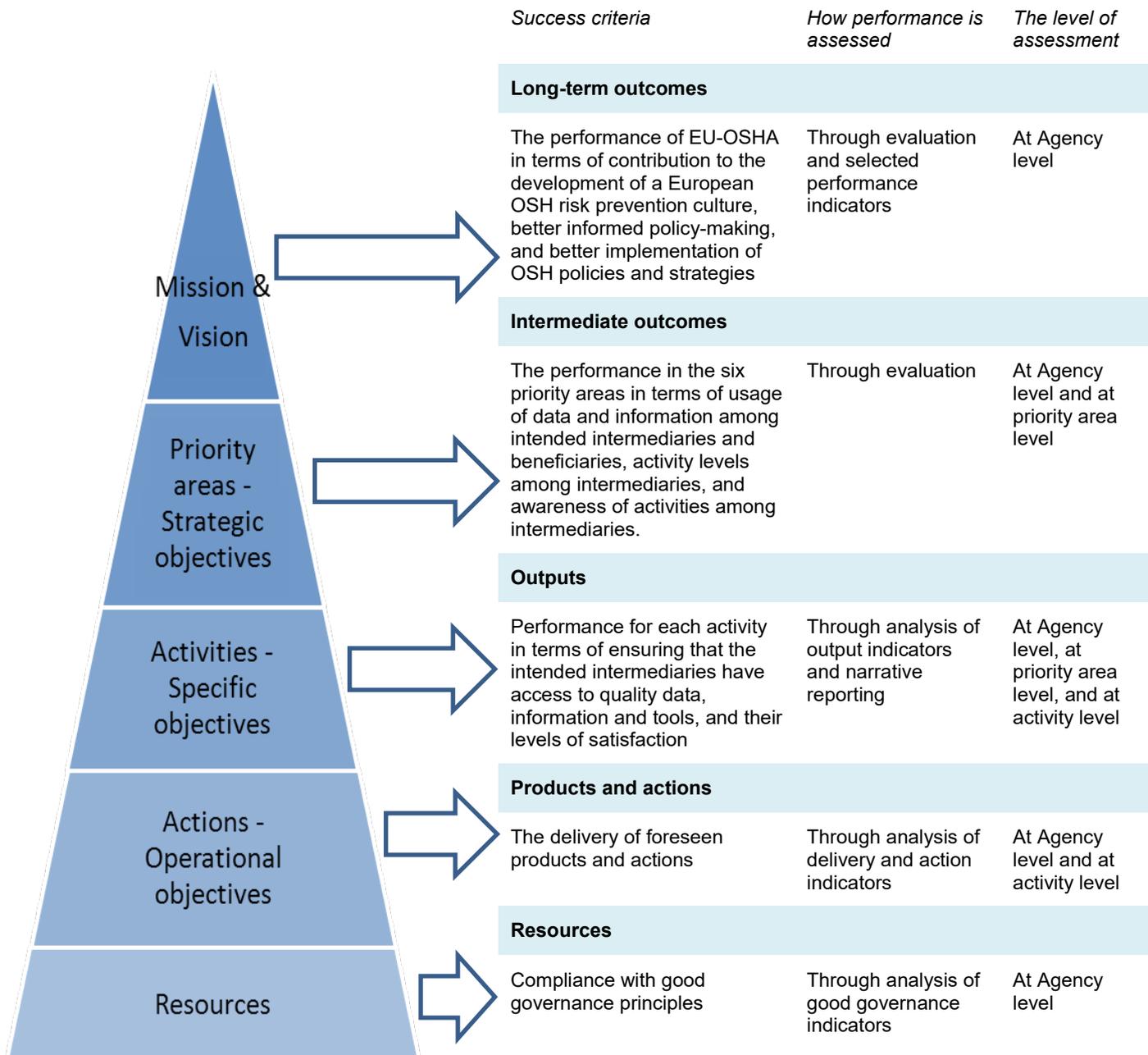
Figure: Logic model underlying the Strategy



The monitoring and evaluation framework follows this logic model and describes what is measured (success criteria) at each step – see figure below. While indicators are an adequate tool for resources, products and actions, and outputs and some outcomes, this is much less the case for long-term outcomes. For long-term outcomes, an evaluative approach will be used. It is important, however, not to see the indicators and the evaluations as mutually exclusive.

Indicators and targets are defined in the Single Programming Document.

Figure: Monitoring and evaluation framework



The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)

contributes to making Europe a safer, healthier and more productive place to work. The Agency researches, develops, and distributes reliable, balanced, and impartial safety and health information and organises pan-European awareness raising campaigns. Set up by the European Union in 1994 and based in Bilbao, Spain, the Agency brings together representatives from the European Commission, Member State governments, employers' and workers' organisations, as well as leading experts in each of the EU Member States and beyond.

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