

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE OIRA TOOLS IN CYPRUS

### BACKGROUND

In 2011, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)<sup>1</sup> launched the Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA), a web platform that enables the creation of sectoral risk assessment tools in any language in an easy and standardised way.<sup>2</sup> EU-OSHA cooperates with national and social partners to facilitate the development of OiRA tools specific to country and sector needs. For Cyprus the national partner is the Department of Labour Inspection<sup>3</sup> of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, which has been responsible for introducing, revising and promoting OiRA tools since 2011. Currently, Cyprus has 11 OiRA tools published (and one more under development); ten of these are sector-specific, and one is dedicated to COVID-19 risk assessment.

All enterprises in Cyprus must conduct written risk assessments based on the Management of Safety and Health Issues at Work Regulations of 2021 (RAA 158/2021).<sup>4</sup> Despite legal obligations, a study conducted in 2021 found that 38% of micro, small, and medium Cypriot establishments did not carry out regular risk assessments.<sup>5</sup> Also, the ESENER 2019 findings on Cyprus indicated that 49.7% of companies did not meet the requirement, and 59.5% of companies with 5-9 employees did not conduct systematic risk assessment.<sup>6</sup>

Table 1: List of OiRA tools with release and revision dates

Type of OiRA tool	Release date	Revision date
Hairdressers	2011	December 2021
Catering	November 2014	April 2021
Office work	November 2014	April 2021
Educational establishments	September 2016	n/a
Shops	October 2017	April 2021
Guesthouses	November 2017	April 2021
Cafés and restaurants	November 2017	April 2021
Vehicles – Car repair and varnishing	December 2017	April 2021
Butchers	September 2018	n/a
Bakeries	March 2020	n/a

<sup>1</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) official website. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en>.

<sup>2</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), OiRA project website. Available at: <https://oiraproject.eu>.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Department of Labour Inspection official website. Available at: [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/index\\_gr/index\\_gr?opendocument](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?opendocument).

<sup>4</sup> Republic of Cyprus, The Management of Safety and Health Issues at Work Regulations of 2021 (R.A.A 158/2021). Available at: [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/all/21060B06AD2E039AC2257E03004124A5/\\$file/KDP158-2021.PDF?openelement](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/all/21060B06AD2E039AC2257E03004124A5/$file/KDP158-2021.PDF?openelement).

<sup>5</sup> Anyfantis et al. (2021) 'Employers' perceived importance and the use (or non-use) of workplace risk assessment in micro-sized and small enterprises in Europe with focus on Cyprus'. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0925753521001016>.

<sup>6</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), 'ESENER 2019. Workplace risks assessments'. Available at: [https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/esener/en/survey/detailpage-national-bar-chart/2019/osh-management/en\\_1/E3Q250/company-size/CY](https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/esener/en/survey/detailpage-national-bar-chart/2019/osh-management/en_1/E3Q250/company-size/CY).

Type of OiRA tool	Release date	Revision date
COVID-19	June 2020	n/a
Metal construction works	To be published soon	n/a

To encourage the use of OiRA tools and make them well known within companies, a two-fold approach to promotional activities has been taken recently. EU-OSHA launched a promotional support scheme for Cyprus in 2020. At the same time, the Department of Labour Inspection started to invest national resources in promoting the OiRA tools. This case study aims to investigate promotional activities conducted within both schemes, analyse the approach and channels of promotional activities, and present the outcomes and key success factors.

The organisations consulted to inform this case study were i) the Department of Labour Inspection of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (two representatives); ii) the Public Information Office; iii) the Cyprus Workers Confederation (SEK) and iv) the Cyprus Safety and Health Association (CYSHA),<sup>7</sup> both of which are members of the Pancyprrian Health and Safety Council; v) the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)<sup>8</sup> in Cyprus; vi) the European University Cyprus; and vii) a public transportation company involved in the promotional scheme.

## What was done and how?

### OiRA tool development in Cyprus

When Cyprus joined the EU, the implementation of the framework directive made it obligatory for companies to develop and implement a systematic risk assessment.<sup>9</sup> Although the legal obligation was introduced, there was still a need to implement effective measures to improve compliance. This issue was addressed in subsequent national Health and Safety Strategies in 2007<sup>10</sup> and 2013<sup>11</sup> as well as in the current Health and Safety Strategy 2021-2027, which specifically refers to the need for a written risk assessment and use of the OiRA tools.<sup>12</sup>

In 2011, when EU-OSHA launched OiRA, Cyprus took advantage of the opportunity to address existing gaps in risk assessment compliance. Cypriot institutions perceived the possibility to offer free, accessible and easy-to-understand tools as an opportunity to improve safety and health in micro, small, and medium-sized companies and to increase the number of risk assessments conducted in workplaces.<sup>13</sup>

At the time, the cooperation between EU-OSHA and Cyprus positioned Cyprus among the European pioneers who introduced the first online OiRA tool in 2011 (dedicated to hairdressers).<sup>14</sup> After the development and publication of the first tool, the Department of Labour Inspection decided to support the development of more OiRA tools in other sectors.

EU-OSHA has supported the development and implementation of numerous OiRA tools in Cyprus, which has further been made possible through broad cooperation with social partners (such as the Hairdressers Association's support in developing the Cypriot OiRA Hairdressers tool). Such stakeholder support has provided an invaluable source of information to adjust OiRA to the local environment, the sector-specific language and sector-specific safety and health issues, essential when developing the tools. As confirmed by the Cyprian Labour Inspectorate, these actors were aware of the most pressing problems and risks and offered a grassroots perspective. Social partners specifically focused on occupational safety and health (OSH), such as the case of CYSHA whose work on developing an OiRA tool for education offered considerable expertise in the field.

<sup>7</sup> For more information see [www.cysha.org.cy](http://www.cysha.org.cy)

<sup>8</sup> More information on the EEN is available at <https://osha.europa.eu/en/enterprise-europe-network>

<sup>9</sup> Eleni Leontidou and Georgios Boustras (2022) 'Occupational health and safety in Cyprus: A historical overview'. Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0925753521003179>.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 'Strategy of Cyprus for safety and health at work during the period 2007-2013'. Available at: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/All/9B6406D720A37D1CC2257DDC00209616?OpenDocument>.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 'Strategy of Cyprus for safety and health at work during the period 2013-2020'. Available at: [https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Strategy\\_of\\_Cyprus\\_for\\_safety\\_and\\_health\\_at\\_work\\_during\\_the\\_period\\_2013-2020](https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Strategy_of_Cyprus_for_safety_and_health_at_work_during_the_period_2013-2020).

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, 'Strategy of Cyprus for safety and health at work during the period 2021-2027'. Available at: [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/All/B208115A0B53109FC22580B3002FB4D9/\\$file/HEALTH\\_AND\\_SAFETY\\_STRATEGY\\_20212027EN.pdf](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/All/B208115A0B53109FC22580B3002FB4D9/$file/HEALTH_AND_SAFETY_STRATEGY_20212027EN.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Eleni Leontidou and Georgios Boustras, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) (2016) 'Case study: OiRA tool for hairdressers in Cyprus'. Available at: <https://oiraproject.eu/en/case-study-oir-a-tool-hairdressers-cyprus>.

The Department of Labour Inspection has taken a two-fold approach when choosing specific sectors for which to develop and promote OiRA. On the one hand, the Department has focused on service sectors with an overall low number of occupational accidents (including education) and a less hazardous working environment (this includes OiRA for Office Work, Shops, Catering, Guesthouses, Coffee Shops, Restaurants and Schools). As services constitute a large share of enterprises operating on the market,<sup>15</sup> focusing on such sectors could help to reach a significant number of end users.

The second approach to OiRA development foresees focusing on sectors with hazardous work environments and a relatively high number of occupational accidents. Developing OiRA for more hazardous sectors such as butcher shops, bakeries and car repair is more complex, as it requires consideration of hazards such as chemical fumes, mechanical tools and sharp objects that pose more serious risks. Developing OiRA tools for these sectors responds to an urgent need to provide safe work environments and could have a more immediate impact in terms of decreasing the number of occupational accidents and diseases.<sup>16</sup> As for broadening the offer of sectoral tools, there are ongoing considerations to develop tools for other sectors, such as construction and agriculture.

One exception to these two approaches was the introduction of a COVID-19 tool in direct response to the impact of the pandemic on OSH. The model tool was developed by EU-OSHA during the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020. Unlike the typical sector-based OiRA approach, the COVID-19 tool was intended to support national partners with their actions related to OSH during the pandemic. As stressed by all interviewees, the OiRA COVID-19 tool significantly facilitated navigation through continually changing OSH regulations and guidelines during the pandemic and supported OSH compliance for all companies in Cyprus.

## The promotional activities

In 2020, the promotional pilot offered by EU-OSHA was an incentive to launch a wider OiRA promotional campaign in Cyprus. The Department of Labour Inspection adopted a broad cross-sectoral approach to promotion, rather than focusing on specific tools. The idea was to reach a wide audience and spread information on OiRA as a risk assessment tool adjusted to the needs of micro, small, and medium companies.

The promotion was planned for early 2020, which then coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, promotional activities were focused on informing and mitigating COVID-19-induced occupational risks, which both broadened the approach to promotion and presented some challenges, but also gave more visibility to OSH and OiRA. This first promotional campaign was conducted from June to November 2020, with the slogan ‘#STOPTHEPANDEMIC’. In June 2020, shortly after launching the COVID-19 tool in Cyprus, the Department of Labour Inspection held a webinar that was attended by 230 safety and health professionals from both the public and private sectors.<sup>17</sup> The campaign further involved the development of guidelines and support materials for use of the COVID-19 tool.<sup>18</sup> Promotional materials, graphics and a video featuring a cartoon character – *Risky the dog* – were developed to disseminate information about the COVID-19 tool.<sup>19</sup> These promotional materials were disseminated on social media and TV. The Department of Labour Inspection also organised a hybrid press conference supported by EU-OSHA, which was promoted on Facebook pages of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and Department of Labour Inspection. The participation of high-level officials from the Ministry and EU-OSHA attracted journalists, leading to national coverage on nearly all Cypriot TV channels.<sup>20</sup>

In February 2021, a second OiRA promotional phase started. Similar COVID-19 promotional activities were implemented, using and disseminating promotional materials featuring *Risky the dog* (picture 1) and the slogan: ‘Keep

<sup>15</sup> According to Eurostat, in 2020, gross value added by economic activities for services in Cyprus was above 83%. See: Eurostat (2020) ‘Gross value added by economic activities’. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20211021-1>.

<sup>16</sup> According to Eurostat, in 2019, the rate of fatal accidents at work in Cyprus was higher than EU average. See: Eurostat (2019) ‘Accidents at work statistics’. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents\\_at\\_work\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Accidents_at_work_statistics).

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (2020) ‘Online Seminar - COVID-19: Return to Work (KDOTH 15/2020)’. Available at: <https://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/All/F2D4590899EC7EDEC225858F0032F593?OpenDocument&fbclid=IwAR0FL2rhsh2O2WDhpMbZEVajrwb7rUi64hkSBchA7AvC5G0IB08DpTaqX>.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Labour Inspection, Pandemic COVID-19, ‘New Online Interactive Risk Assessment Tool - Online Interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) (KDOTH/16)’. Available at: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dli/dliup.nsf/All/2BF8A8970C40BA91C2258592003E7C1C?OpenDocument&fbclid=IwAR1Bfs1qq-d2GpPNuOCR8yUiRYGsahq3WYvmRYmKb3UBXDuXoD0BavxUHZ>.

<sup>19</sup> Department of Labour Inspection Facebook page, ‘Risks from coronavirus in the workplace?’. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=418607522402070>.

<sup>20</sup> Department of Labour Inspection Facebook page, ‘Ant1 news release’. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/DepartmentOfLabourInspectionCY/posts/pfbid02xrrBZJhoQa62Z9GZjnD1JKTnpGVEGH3u72hZ58JgWetGfThkBrU3hPknCd1yn79l>.



the coronavirus out of the workplace: Simple, quick and online #OiRAtools #EU-OSHA'.<sup>21</sup> As in 2020, the COVID-19 OiRA promotional activities in 2021 were held simultaneously with the nation-wide campaign on safety and health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because COVID-19 gained comprehensive coverage in the media, representatives of the Department of Labour Inspection were invited to talk about OSH on TV, considerably increasing the visibility of the OiRA tool.

In June 2021, the Department of Labour Inspection also released promotional materials on OiRA tools for specific sectors. This included a video spot promoting all available sectoral OiRA tools in Cyprus simultaneously. The video featured *Risky the dog*, first working as a butcher, and later as a baker and hairdresser.<sup>22</sup> In addition, a radio interview with the Chief Labour Inspector was broadcast on Active Radio.<sup>23</sup> This approach was complemented by a short written interview published on the online portal Philenews.<sup>24</sup>

Picture 1: Promotional material featuring *Risky the dog*



Then, in October 2021, during the European Week for Safety and Health at Work, the Department of Labour Inspection, in cooperation with the Public Information Office, created another radio and video spot, as well as further graphical promotional materials.<sup>25</sup> The promotional materials consisted of several videos with *Risky the dog*. One of them refers directly to OiRA while others are on general OSH aspects.<sup>26</sup> The Public Information Office displayed the videos on its YouTube channel with one gaining over 275,000 views in total.<sup>27</sup> The spot was also played on other social media channels and an audio version of the spot was aired on TV and 23 radio stations.

Stakeholder networks promoted OiRA in parallel through various activities. Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)<sup>28</sup> in Cyprus contributed by organising local seminars, including ones on stress management and dangerous chemicals. These seminars were organised with the support of the national focal point – the Department of Labour Inspection of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance – and targeted employers in

specific sectors, such as bakeries and hairdressing salons. Seminars included a section on OiRA and explained how to use it, presenting ready-made examples to illustrate how the tool can benefit companies and employers. Similarly, the Cyprus Safety and Health Association (CYSHA) shared knowledge and updates on OiRA among its members (health and safety professionals), including an informative presentation at its annual plenary meeting. CYSHA also held weekly two-hour seminars (each dedicated to a different topic), one of which was dedicated to OiRA.

The Cyprus Workers Confederation (SEK) distributed information about OiRA to their district organisations, which then passed the information on to their local members. The district organisations also ran seminars on OSH, including information on OiRA. Further, SEK shared information about OiRA in their nation-wide newspaper, including 8,000 hardcopies and another 8,000–10,000 emails. The trade union published a full-page advertisement for the OiRA tool, including a link to the website. This advertisement was displayed twice, once before the pandemic and once after its outbreak, the latter dedicated to the COVID-19 tool.

Finally, public transport companies, after having been contacted by the Department of Labour Inspection, agreed to promote OiRA within their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes. This support included different transport

Picture 2: Promotional material featuring *Napo*



<sup>21</sup> Department of Labour Inspection Facebook page, 'Online Interactive Risk Assessment Tool - OiRA COVID-19', Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=1135036413616538>; Public Information Office YouTube Channel, 'Workplace risk assessment tool for coronavirus' Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLoKBZywLug&list=PLlI5Cyomq1jBGXe8s9g4l0kYwwjxquXP&index=24>.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Labour Inspection Facebook page, 'Assess Occupational Hazards Simple, Fast & Electronic'. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=588510236125488>.

<sup>23</sup> Active Talks YouTube channel, 'Interview with Chief Labour Inspector'. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilcXogRbvsW>.

<sup>24</sup> Philenews, 'Online Interactive Occupational Risk Assessment (OiRA) Tools'. Available at: [https://www.philenews.com/koinonia/eidiseis/article/1211724?fbclid=IwAR2S1cC\\_Atqua0OBRigtORb\\_Ndl0534IPVV1Bfe5rutfNw7nemzcHg7hQG8#.YMcBFRk9QQA.facebook](https://www.philenews.com/koinonia/eidiseis/article/1211724?fbclid=IwAR2S1cC_Atqua0OBRigtORb_Ndl0534IPVV1Bfe5rutfNw7nemzcHg7hQG8#.YMcBFRk9QQA.facebook).

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance Facebook page, 'Safety and Health at Work Week'. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=1319471088470965>.

<sup>26</sup> Public Information Office YouTube Channel, 'The workplace is our second home', available at: and for the specific OiRA video, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXIAGcKt3tk>

<sup>27</sup> Public Information Office YouTube Channel, 'The workplace is our second home'. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRAfFMLPy3c>

<sup>28</sup> <https://eencyprus.org.cy/en/>

companies displaying an advertisement for OiRA on their buses (picture 3). In the case of one company, cooperation started in 2020 when three buses in Nicosia bore advertisements promoting OiRA for over a year. In another company, two buses started advertising OiRA in 2021, which were still running at the time of writing this summary.

To summarise, the promotional activities comprised the following actions:

### 1. Media campaign

- Developing promotional materials and posting them on the Department of Labour Inspection website;
- Distributing spots on radio and TV as part of the 2020 national COVID-19 campaign, and later as part of the 2021 'The workplace is our second home' campaign;
- Billboard advertisements;
- Radio and TV interviews with representatives from the Department of Labour Inspection;
- Social media campaigns (including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube);
- Events and seminars on OiRA and OSH, such as the 'Risk Assessment and Online Interactive Tools' press conference, which included participants from the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and EU-OSHA;
- Advertisements on buses; and
- Internet promotion through Google Ads.

### 2. Stakeholder engagement:

- Labour Inspectors providing information on OiRA during inspections;
- Distributing promotional materials (including promotional gadgets) among stakeholders' networks, organisations, newspapers and newsletters;
- Including information on OiRA in educational workshops, seminars, and training for members in organisations such as the Cyprus Workers Confederation, the Cyprus Safety and Health Association and Enterprise Europe Network; and
- Including information on OiRA in university courses run by European University Cyprus.

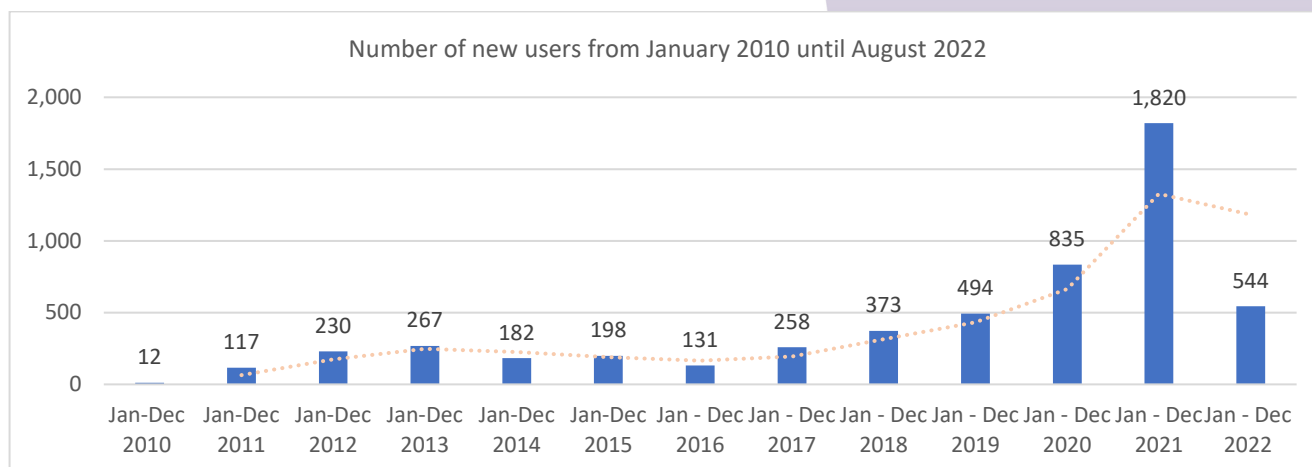
Picture 3: OiRA advertisement on a bus



## Promotional campaign analysis

The promotional campaign kicked off in June 2020, and some promotional activities are still ongoing. Figure 1 presents a significant increase in users since the start of the 2020 promotional campaign. In its first year, the number of new users almost doubled. In 2021, the increase in new users was four times greater than that of 2019. As of September 2022, the number of new users was already higher than that of the entire year 2019.

Figure 1: New OiRA users per year (January 2010–September 2022)

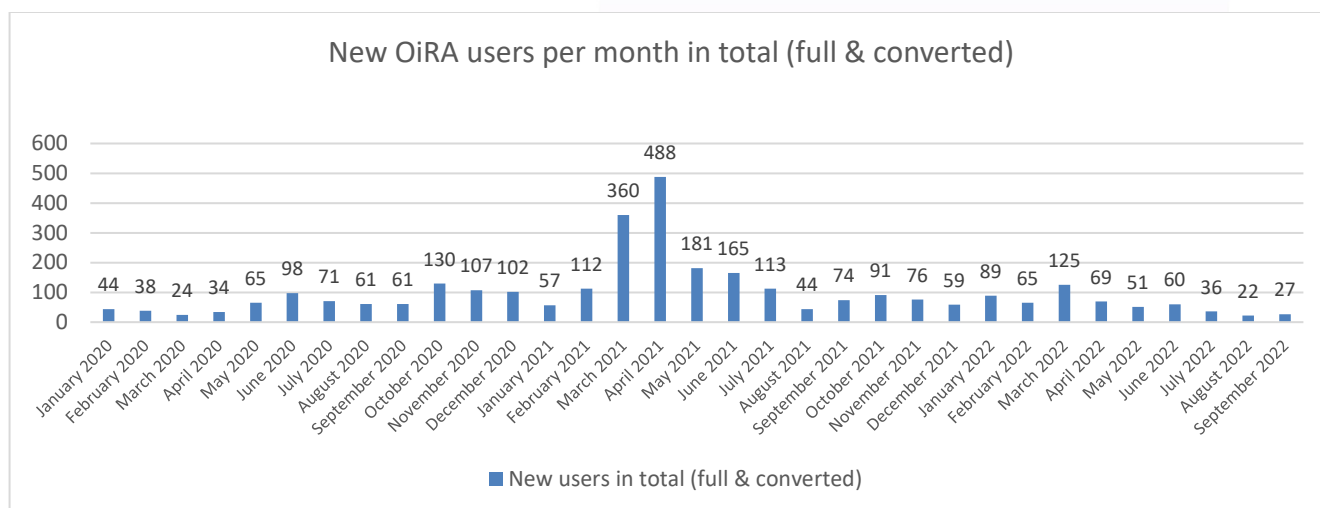


Source: calculations based on the OiRA metabase

It can be observed that the number of new users between January 2020 and September 2022 exceeded the number of new users in the ten preceding years (January 2010 to December 2019). However, when analysing these figures, it has to be taken into account that there were not 11 tools available when OiRA was first launched in Cyprus; as such, the number of new users per year is generally expected to be lower.

Figure 2 presents a more detailed analysis of the increase in new users per month since the outset of promotional activities in 2020. The number of users fluctuates from month to month, but the overall trend is persistent growth. The highest peaks in the number of users can be observed in March and April 2021, which coincides with the combined COVID-19 OiRA promotional activities and the two-fold campaign outlined above.

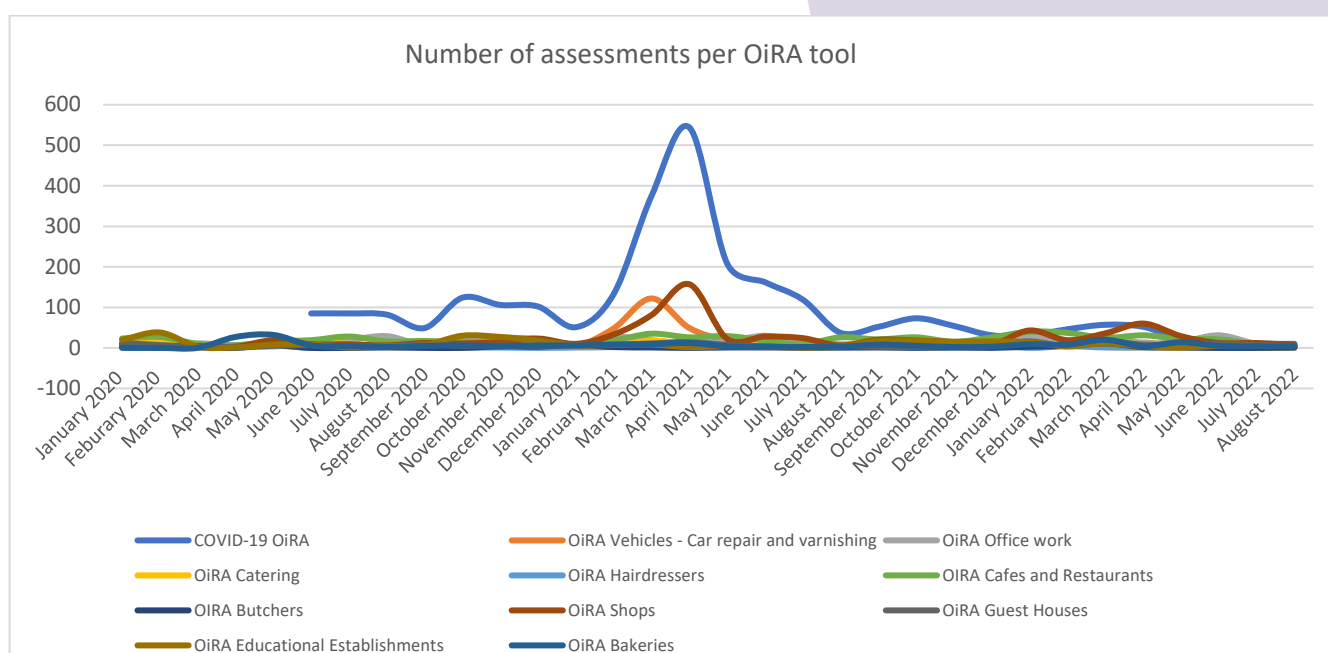
Figure 2: New OiRA users per month in total (January 2020 to September 2022)



Source: calculations based on the OiRA metabase

Analysing the number of assessments carried out with each different OiRA tool provides more insights. Figure 3 indicates that the highest peak in assessments occurred for the COVID-19 tool. However, an increase in new assessments is also significantly visible in the case of two other tools, OiRA Vehicles – Car repair and varnishing and OiRA Shops. There are two possible explanations for these peaks: the increase in the two mentioned tools could be a spill over effect from COVID-19 OiRA promotional activities; alternatively, the increase could be associated with tool updates. Both OiRA Vehicles – Car repair and varnishing and OiRA Shops were updated in April 2021 along with four other tools.

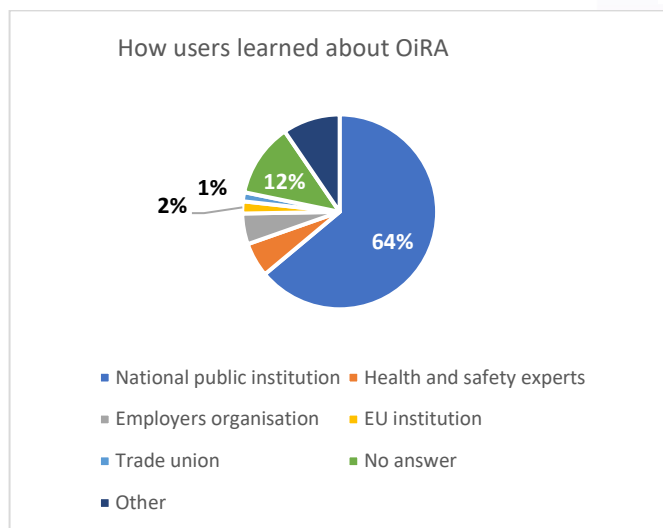
Figure 3: Number of assessments per OiRA tool



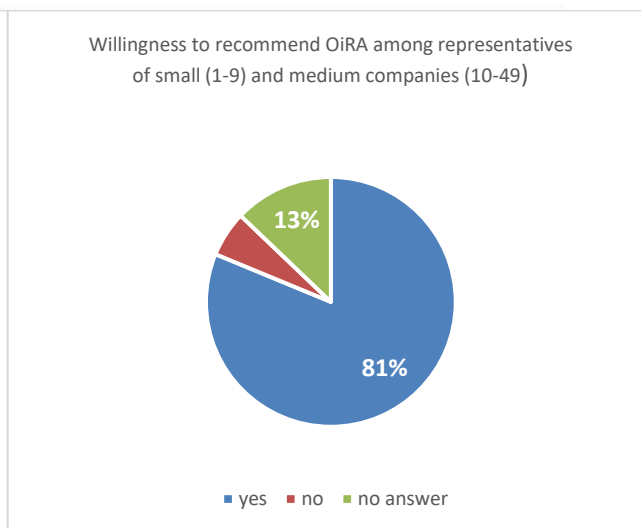
Source: calculations based on the OiRA metabase

Furthermore, some indication of the effectiveness of the promotional activities can be observed from users' responses to questions presented at the end of the OiRA risk assessment. One question asks how users learned about the tool. Figure 4 summarises the responses, indicating that most users heard about OiRA from national public institutions, which would either be a result of the promotional materials distributed by the Department of Labour Inspection or other activities conducted by the Department of Labour Inspection, such as Labour Inspectors visiting companies and recommending the use of the tools. Further, two other key information providers mentioned by the end users were OSH services and employers' organisations. This suggests the effectiveness of involving professional networks, sectoral social partners and OSH specialists in the tool development and promotion.

**Figure 4: Sources of information about OiRA**  
(n = 1,195)



**Figure 5: Willingness to recommend OiRA among representatives of small (1–9 employees) and medium companies (10–49), based on responses from all OiRA tools from January 2020 to September 2022 (n=1034)**



The user survey in the OiRA software also gives other interesting data: In Figure 5, it can be observed that the majority of end users who answered the questionnaire would recommend the tool. Similarly, users gave positive responses when asked if their needs were met (66.2% yes, 4.6% no, 29.2% no answer).

## Key success factors

### COVID-19 OiRA tool

The Department of Labour Inspection published the COVID-19 tool in July 2020. It facilitated companies' carrying out a risk assessment and compliance due to changing situations and safety and health regulations. Furthermore, Labour Inspectors informed employers about OiRA tools during COVID-19-oriented labour inspections, promptly providing a possible solution if a risk assessment was missing.

All interviewees emphasised that the introduction of the COVID-19 tool facilitated the promotion of risk assessment in general and increased the visibility of all OiRA tools.

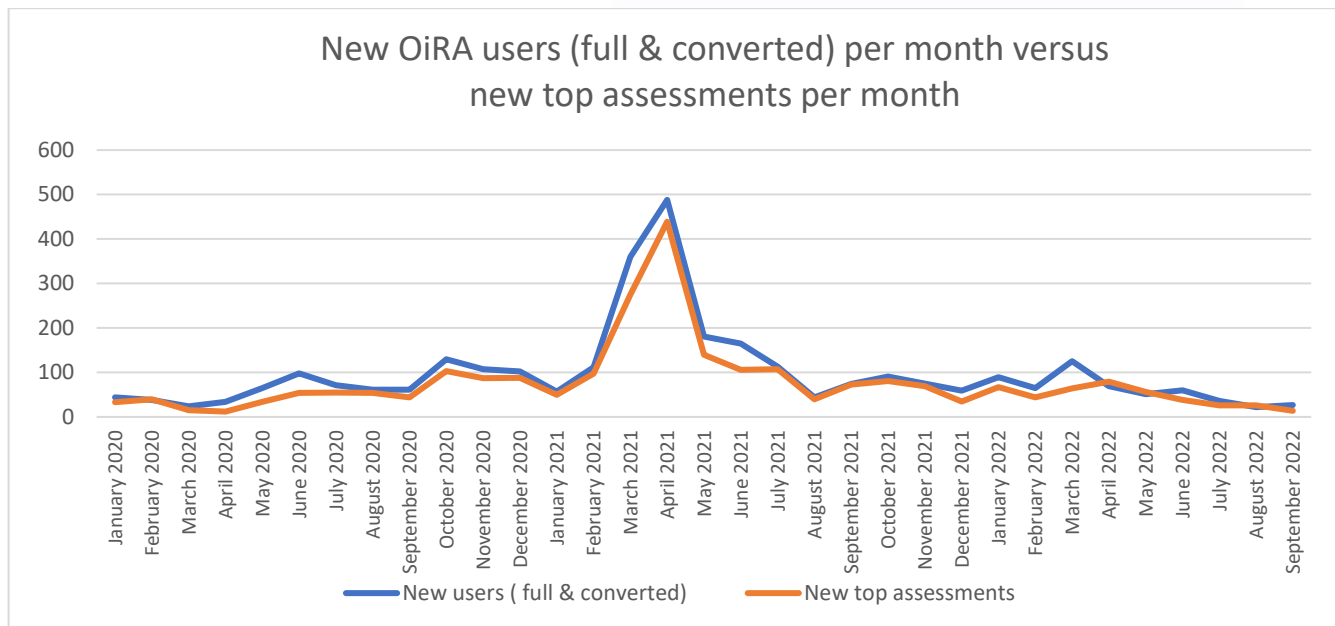
The COVID-19 tool gained considerable media attention in general coverage of OSH issues during the pandemic. On several occasions, TV channels and radio stations invited representatives of the Department of Labour Inspection to talk about OSH during pandemics. On these occasions, they mentioned the COVID-19 OiRA tool. TV and radio also agreed to release the promotional spots for free under their Corporate Social Responsibility scheme, allowing them to reach a broad audience. Later, when the Department of Labour Inspection planned to introduce a new non-COVID-19 OiRA promotional campaign, it was easier to capitalise on existing relationships with the media. The COVID-19 tool also reached a considerable number of the top assessments (at least 70% of the assessment completed) conducted with that tool. Overall, since January 2020 there have been 2,488 top assessments across all OiRA tools. The COVID-19 OiRA tool accounts for almost 37% of all top assessments across all 11 OiRA tools in Cyprus.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> OiRA metabase.



Figure 6 compares the number of new users and new top assessments per month, suggesting that OiRA end users are well-informed on how to navigate the OiRA tools. Another interesting insight suggests that the updates for several sectoral tools in April 2021 may have positively impacted the quality of assessments and increased the number of top assessments across the tools.

**Figure 6: New OiRA users per month versus new top assessments (all 11 tools) per month, from January 2020 to September 2022**



Source: calculations based on the OiRA metabase

## Combining different promotional channels – Looking for creative solutions within budget

From the beginning of the promotional campaign, the Department of Labour Inspection has been aware that choosing a single promotional channel would not be sufficient to reach a broad and diversified audience. As highlighted by the Public Information Office, conducting TV promotional activities is usually very effective but it has significant limitations. Primarily, airing promotional spots requires a substantial budget. One solution discovered by the Department of Labour Inspection was airing promotional materials as part of TV channels' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budget during the COVID-19 crisis. However, the interviewed representative of the Public Information Office noted that since the promotional spot in this case was displayed for free, there was little control over certain aspects related to playing the spot. For example, there was little flexibility for choosing the time slots in which TV spots were displayed for free. This could impact the number of viewers significantly, as well as the type of viewers in front of their TV at that time.

As a result, the Department of Labour Inspection decided to also use other promotional channels that required fewer financial resources and provided more control. One of the critical channels chosen for this approach was the radio, which is commonly used in Cyprus. The OiRA promotional spots were aired on all 23 radio stations, allowing them to reach a broad audience. For example, the second most popular radio station, Mix FM, has around 20,000 listeners per day. Another vital channel was OiRA advertisements displayed on buses by several transport companies, which has had excellent potential to reach a broad audience.

In general, promotional materials attracted a lot of attention due to the cartoon hero – *Risky the dog*, developed by the Department of Labour Inspection and the Public Information Office. These animations were used in the video and TV spots to facilitate better understanding of OSH issues. As indicated by the representative from the Public Information Office, the goal was to tell a story without using words so that the message would be clear for the audience. Indeed, other interviewees mentioned that people in their environments immediately associated safety and health issues with *Risky the dog* after having seen one of the video spots.

The representative from the Public Information Office also noted that social media is a good approach, as it complements the effectiveness of other channels used in the promotional campaigns. Using Facebook, Instagram



and YouTube allows targeting audiences based on chosen characteristics like age, location or gender, which means certain groups can be included (or excluded). For example, in the case of OSH-oriented activities, promotional campaigns target audiences of working age. In addition, using Google Ads in the campaign also made it possible to reach a particular audience. Google Ads monitored online users who typed in keywords such as 'health and safety tool', and then displayed targeted advertisements on multiple social platforms visited by these users. These advertisements led users to the website of the Department of Labour Inspection, where information about OiRA was prominently displayed. One of the videos displayed on Facebook as part of the October 2021 campaign during the European Week for Safety and Health at Work reached 33,876 individual users that have seen the advertisement on their platforms 367,406 times.

Direct engagement of human resources in the Department of Labour Inspection also contributed to achieving promotional success – for example, training labour inspectors to provide information and support on OiRA during inspections. The commitment of the entire Labour Inspectorate staff was key to the increased use of the OiRA tools.

Another example of good coverage was the organisation of the hybrid press conference called 'Risk Assessment and Online Interactive Tools' with EU-OSHA support and participation. The Department of Labour Inspection streamed it on its Facebook page and reached over 3,700 users.<sup>30</sup>

## A win-win approach to cooperation with stakeholders

The support received from stakeholders would not be possible without securing good cooperation with them first. As noted by the Chief Inspector of the Department of Labour Inspection, the philosophy is to create win-win situations that benefit all cooperating parties. The interviewed stakeholders have confirmed the same understanding of the principles of good cooperation. For example, the representative of the European University Cyprus stressed that they appreciate the collaboration with the Department of Labour Inspection, as it allows the university to be aware of tools and approaches used in the inspection and keep up-to-date with OSH practices. Likewise, the Department of Labour Inspection can benefit from another promotional channel, since the European University Cyprus has introduced students of the MSc and PhD programs to the OiRA tools as part of the course on risk assessment.

The active role of the Department of Labour Inspection in the cooperation was key to the success of the OiRA tool:

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*The Department represents the government's interest [...], and the main government interest is to have satisfied citizens. Employees are citizens. On the other hand, as trade unions, we want a safe environment for our members, and the employers [...] don't want occupational accidents that might lead to bad publicity. At the end of the day, all of us have something to gain, and it is in our interest to work together, so we cooperate to meet our aims.*

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The partnerships formed with stakeholders working closely with sectors and knowing end users also benefitted both sides. For example, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) representative underlined the importance of support and OSH knowledge received from the Department of Labour Inspection. At the same time, the EEN representative emphasised that the cooperation with the network benefits the Department of Labour Inspection because they gain a strong understanding of employers' perceptions and challenges related to risk assessment. The interviewee mentioned that small companies often feel sceptical about risk assessment, seeing it just as another administrative obligation without much benefit for them. The interviewee assured that working closely with enterprises and being able to provide practical advice allowed them to overcome employers' initial reluctance to risk assessment.

Additionally, all interviewed stakeholders' representatives appreciated the availability of training and materials on OiRA provided by the Department of Labour Inspection, which facilitated the promotion of the tool among their members. Stakeholders also appreciated the availability of the Department of Labour Inspection support, stating that it is 'just a phone call away'.

## Barriers, challenges and opportunities of OiRA tools promotion

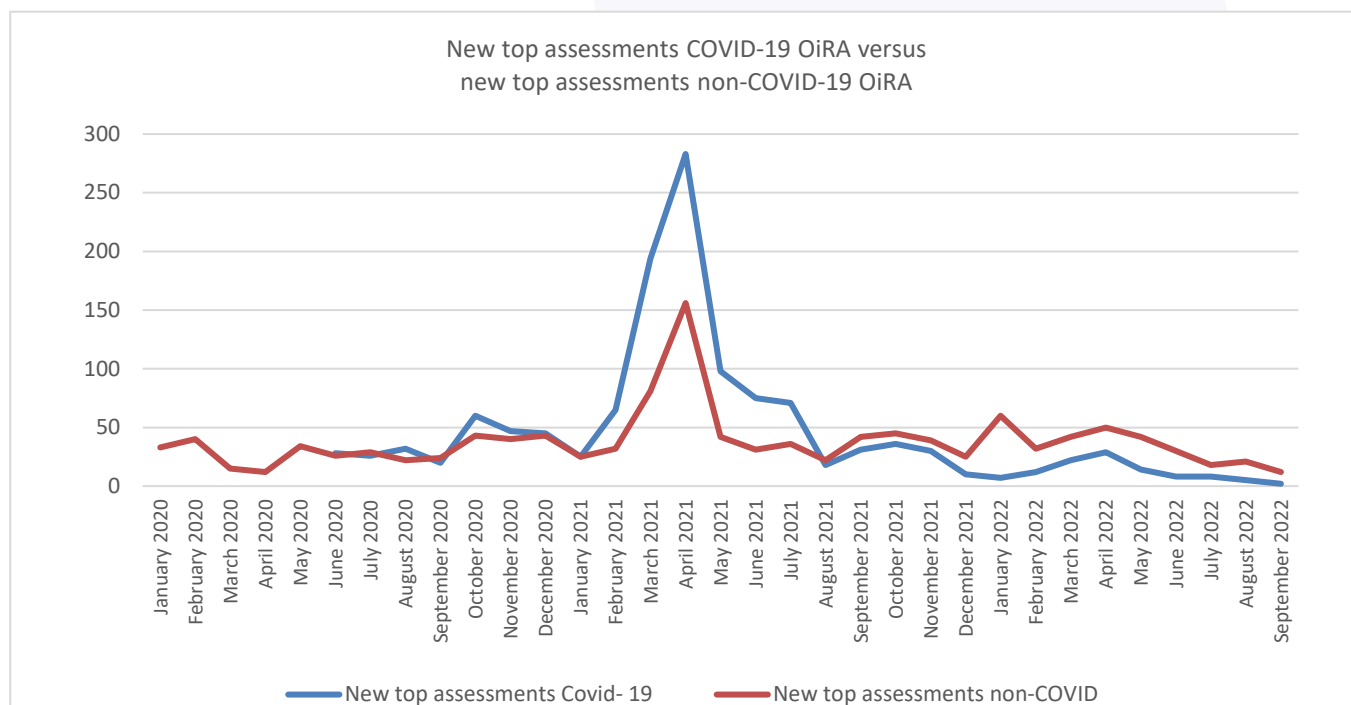
There are several challenges and barriers to promotional activities. The main challenge is the difficulty in evaluating the effectiveness of a single promotional channel, especially considering that multiple channels were often used and their interaction is considered successful. For example, comparing the impact of the promotional campaign in early

<sup>30</sup> Department of Labour Inspection Facebook Page, 'Risk Assessment and Online Interactive Tools' conference. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/DepartmentOfLabourInspectionCY/videos/3153917181386622>.

2021 and during the European Week for Safety and Health at Work in 2021 (see section on 'The promotional activities'), it is clear that the same or similar promotional activities do not guarantee the same results. While in early 2021, the number of users significantly increased as a consequence of the promotional campaign, the promotional activities in October 2021 did not have the same impact (see figure 2). As noted by the representative of the Public Information Office, these two activities had different scopes, with the early 2021 activities having a much higher intensity of actions, which indicates that the same promotional channels can have varied impacts, despite similar approaches and audiences.

OiRA statistics indicate the time when users registered and started performing their risk assessment. This enables observance of the periods with the highest user increases. Comparing that data against the promotional activities conducted at that time, allows us to observe that the highest peak of new users occurred between February 2021 and May 2021, when many activities were conducted simultaneously (including TV spots, bus advertisements, press conferences, radio spots, distribution of promotional materials, cooperation with stakeholders, and so on). To a large extent, as Figure 7 indicates, the peak in top assessments (excluding the COVID-19 tool) could be associated with an increase in the top assessments conducted using the COVID-19 tool.

**Figure 7: Number of new top assessments COVID-19 OiRA versus new top assessments non-COVID-19 OiRA per month from June 2020 to September 2022**



Source: calculations based on the OiRA metabase

The figures clearly indicate that the COVID-19 tool and its promotional activities, which were developed to respond to the public health crisis, had a spill over effect on OiRA tools dedicated to other sectors (figure 3). Additionally, there are some observable increases in the number of users during the launch or update of some OiRA tools.

Recent OiRA research from another country (France) suggests that the application and its tools are generally judged as very intuitive, and that users normally do not have problems dealing with the software. In addition, users highly appreciate the individual support and information they get from other stakeholders, such as authorities.<sup>31</sup> This recent research also suggests that OiRA helps companies to save time when dealing with risk assessment.

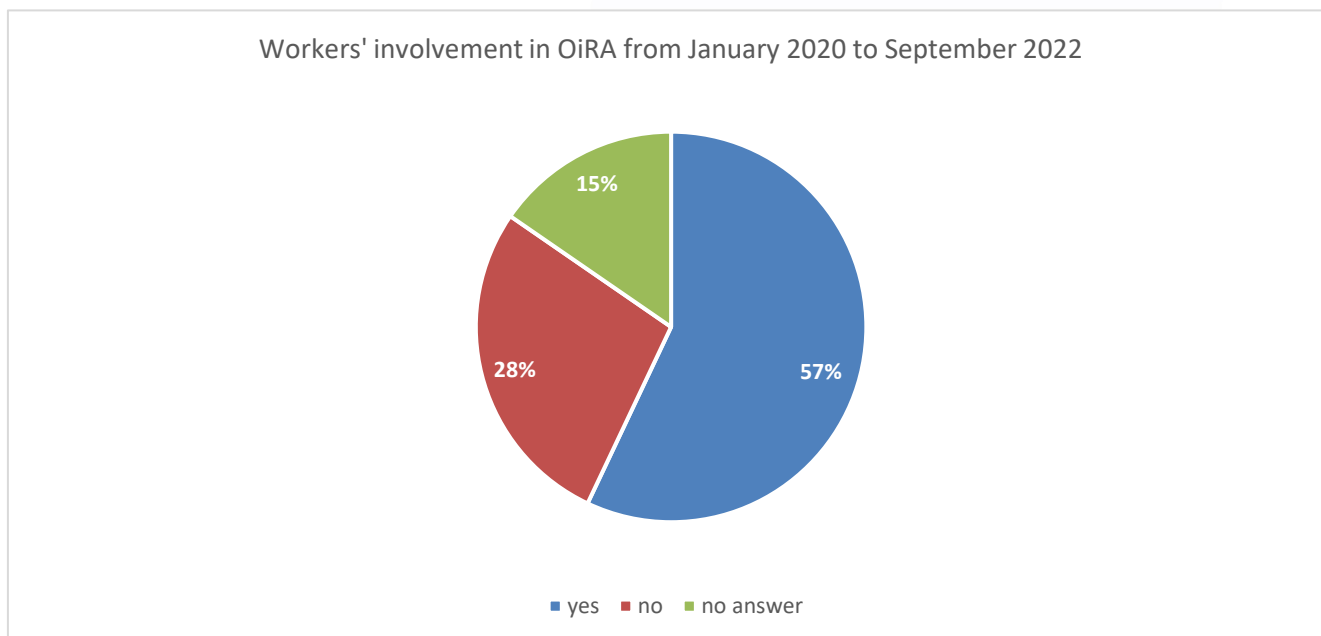
Another challenge mentioned in the interviews is the lack of employee involvement in risk assessment. As mentioned by the representative from the Cyprus Workers Confederation organisation, OiRA is a great tool to get employees actively involved and the content in the tools is well-structured. Figure 8 indicates that most respondents involve employees, which suggests that OiRA could be a platform to increase employees' involvement in OSH.<sup>32</sup> Similar results come from the mentioned OiRA research study conducted in France. The possibility for employees'

<sup>31</sup> OiRA qualitative research implemented in France, EU-OSHA 2022

<sup>32</sup> The ability to monitor actual workers' involvement and its extent and quality are limited. OiRA assessment contains the component of a voluntary questionnaire, with questions on company size, satisfaction and other additional questions. As the questionnaire is voluntary, it is not completed by all users. Considering the limitations to the data presented, the sample of 1195 responses received since January 2020 indicated that over half of all assessments included employees.

involvement has an implication for promotional activities. As mentioned in the interview with the trade union representative, the shared and non-restricted access to OiRA supports employees and allows them to advocate for conducting risk assessments in the workplace. Therefore, one of the promotional implications could be to design promotional communication to attract employees' attention and present OiRA as an 'employee-friendly' tool. At the same time, highlighting the possibility to improve employee involvement and understanding of OSH can also serve as additional incentive for employers to use the tools.

**Figure 8: Workers' involvement in OiRA from January 2020 to September 2022 (n=1195)**



Source: calculations based on the OiRA metabase

## The future of OiRA

As mentioned, the current Cypriot Safety and Health at Work Strategy 2021–2027 supports OiRA and will lead to further actions increasing tool visibility. The strategy indicates that the Department of Labour Inspection plans to continue informative and promotional activities on OiRA as an easy-to-use, cost-effective, accessible and flexible tool. The strategy strongly focuses on developing online solutions in the OSH environment and pays special attention to micro-companies. As mentioned by the representative of Cyprus Safety and Health Association (CYSHA), such an approach supports organisations and encourages companies to learn and adapt online solutions such as OiRA.

In addition, the Department of Labour Inspection foresees adopting legal provisions to support online risk assessment tools through an ordinance of the Minister. Such an ordinance of the Minister can include a Code of Practice requesting the employer to use online risk assessment tools. In that way, the Code of Practice would incentivise online risk assessment tools, including OiRA.

The Department of Labour Inspection plans to capitalise on previous successes and solutions. The upcoming promotional activities will be aligned with the development of new OiRA tools, for example, in construction and agriculture. This will require extending cooperation to new stakeholders to attract new target audiences. Such activities will be facilitated by the Pancyprian Health and Safety Council<sup>33</sup> members. As mentioned by several interviewed members of the Council, meetings of the Council provide a nation-wide platform to discuss safety and health issues, which in the past was used to discuss approaches toward OiRA and facilitate outreach to stakeholders.

<sup>33</sup> The Pancyprian Health and Safety Council is a tripartite body focusing on health and safety issues.

## Conclusions

General findings suggest that several issues were key to the OiRA promotional activities in Cyprus:

- The COVID-19 OiRA launch and promotional activities played a prominent role in the overall OiRA promotional activities' success in Cyprus. The variety of promotional activities and channels created a general interest in OiRA and resulted in new users and rising risk assessment numbers.
- Another positive factor was the tool updates conducted in 2021, which generated moderate increases in new users and assessments sustained over time.
- Most interviewees stressed the importance of using several promotional channels. Data indicate indeed that a multi-channel approach to promotion is key to making end users more aware of the OiRA tools.
- Interviewees especially appreciated the support of the Department of Labour Inspection, which facilitated stakeholders' promotional activities.

While OiRA statistics indicate a significant increase in users and risk assessments, they do not provide information on the intangible effects of promotional activities, such as an increase in overall awareness about risk assessment and OiRA, which are difficult to pin down. Many interviewees mentioned that the campaigns were widespread, and that people in their environment were aware of the promotional activities, including the mascot – *Risky the dog* – used in the promotional spots. Therefore, the overall impact of the undertaken promotional activities led to increased awareness of OSH, which did not only translate into new users and assessments, but also went beyond these measurable numbers.

Interviewees suggested that intensifying OiRA development and promotional activities positively impacted the OSH environment in general. The Cyprus Workers Confederation (SEK) representative stressed that OiRA is available for all users within chosen sectors, and allows knowledge gaps in the work environment to be promptly addressed, without additional costs or time required for OSH consultation. Indeed, all interviewees regarded OiRA as an easy-to-use tool that benefits the work environment in companies. While this conclusion is based on conversations with stakeholders rather than end users, the stakeholders did provide some indication of end users' perceptions of OiRA when known.

Finally, the win-win approach to stakeholder cooperation has led to sustainable and long-lasting relationships. The Department of Labour Inspection consistently promoted OiRA as a tool that contributes to a positive safety and health culture, fostering alliances between stakeholders that can support future promotional activities.

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