

Risk assessment using OiRA at Lithuanian workplaces – a qualitative study

National report

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List of abbreviations

List of abbreviations used in the report	
IT	Information technology
MSEs	Micro and small enterprises
OiRA	Online interactive Risk Assessment
OSH	Occupational safety and health
RA	Risk assessment
SLI	Lithuanian State Labour Inspectorate
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises

1 Introduction

1.1 About this study

This report focuses exclusively on Lithuania as part of a broader pan-European study on the use and effectiveness of the Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) in workplaces. Building on insights from a qualitative study conducted in France (EU-OSHA, 2023a), which highlighted the tool's utility, flexibility and innovative applications by users, this study expanded its scope to include Cyprus, Slovenia and Lithuania — countries that, like France, have developed multiple OiRA tools.

The primary objective of this study was to contribute cross-country evidence on OiRA's functionality and understanding how the tool operates and is used across diverse national and contextual settings.

The study aimed to deepen the understanding of how OiRA is used at country level, also compared to other risk assessment (RA) tools and in the broader context of national approaches to RA. It analysed how companies and occupational safety and health (OSH) experts approached RA, focusing on how OiRA facilitated and improved RA processes and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of using OiRA. More importantly, the study examined how OiRA is used and what factors facilitate its adoption among establishments, providing insights into end users' experiences with this tool and other RA methodologies.

In this context, the study also included insights on Lithuania's approach to developing and promoting OiRA. It analysed the implications of national approaches to OiRA development and its use and practical application in workplaces. The study also explored the strategies for communicating and promoting OiRA to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) (as well as OSH experts), considering the diverse contexts in which the tools are used.

In summary, the study sought to provide insights that enhance the understanding and implementation of OiRA across different national contexts — in this report's case, Lithuania. Findings from the study aim to inform the overall perception of the implementation of RA processes in Lithuania and how and for what reasons particular methodologies and tools are chosen, with a specific focus on technical aspects and the utility of OiRA tools.

1.2 About OiRA

The OiRA application, launched by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) in 2011, aims to support stakeholders across EU Member States in developing user-friendly online RA tools tailored to national and sector-specific contexts. These tools are provided free of charge to micro and small enterprises (MSEs), facilitating their use through an interactive online platform. Unlike traditional RA approaches focused on risks, OiRA tools are normally structured around tasks and activities typical of specific sectors, making them accessible even to users without any OSH or RA expertise.

The OiRA process guides users through the full RA, including the prioritisation of risks and the formulation of an action plan and/or documented RA. The OiRA tool generator is freely available to EU sectoral social partners and national authorities, enabling them to create sector-specific tools. These tools are designed to help MSEs, many of which may not have previously conducted an RA systematically, to initiate and implement structured RA processes.

2 The Lithuanian OSH context

This chapter provides an overview of Lithuania's OSH landscape and how OiRA is situated in it. It gives general background information on how the system works and how OiRA supports the national approach. The information is further enriched by figures on the use of the OiRA tools in different sectors and user characteristics, as far as available.

2.1 Legal framework

The Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (Republic of Lithuania, 2016) and the Law on Safety and Health at Work (No IX-1672, Republic of Lithuania 2003)¹ are the primary legal acts regulating OSH policy in Lithuania. These legal acts outline OSH standards and the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers and provide a framework for its public administration (EU-OSHA, 2024).

The OSH system in Lithuania is underpinned by various legislative frameworks, encompassing areas such as social insurance for occupational accidents, compensation for workers, regulations on workplace and potentially dangerous equipment, management of chemical substances, oversight of hazardous tasks, vocational education and training, and state social insurance provisions (EU-OSHA, 2019a).

In the case of the RA process, the main regulation is the Legal Order No. A1-457/V-961 (*Profesinės rizikos vertinimo bendraisiais nuostatais*; Ministry of Social Security and Labour & Ministry of Health, 2012).²

In terms of obligations of employers, this Order contains precise information on the organisation of RA and its main stages, including documentation. In accordance with the Order, **RAs are required when initiating activities and altering workplaces, technology or company structure. They must also be updated after major accidents or when the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) uncovers violations of OSH regulations.** Occupational RA should be organised by the employer, their representative or a person authorised by the employer for OSH. The occupational RA has to be carried out with the participation of the workers or their representatives.

Further, the existing legal framework mandates that **RAs must be performed by a ‘competent person’**, including if using a state-provided tool such as OiRA. **While any individual or enterprise can employ OiRA for RA, a legally recognised competent person’s involvement and validation are required. Most commonly in Lithuania, this role is fulfilled by external OSH consultancies**, who also use OiRA to support the RA process in their clients’ establishments. Quantitative measurements of chemical, physical and biological risk factors are conducted by either company laboratories or accredited research institutions in compliance with established competence requirements. Once the occupational risks have been identified, RA documents must be completed in the form chosen by the company (the law requires the documentation to provide certain information).³ Finally, after assessing the occupational risks, the undertaking must draft and approve a risk elimination and mitigation plan to guide the implementation of risk prevention measures.

2.2 The role of external OSH services

In Lithuanian enterprises, RAs are predominantly executed by external experts or specialised services. A 2020 study revealed that 60.8% of Lithuanian enterprises and municipal institutions undertook occupational risk evaluations. According to the same study, those assessments are primarily (86%) performed by specialised institutions or individuals (Vainauskas & Tamašauskaitė, 2020). Similarly, the Third European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) 2019 data from Lithuania indicates that 61.7% of companies conduct RAs (EU-OSHA, 2019b). The same dataset indicates that RAs are predominantly carried out by external service providers, accounting for 68.4% of RAs, with an additional 6.2% being conducted jointly by both external providers and internal staff, totalling 74.6% (EU-OSHA, 2019c).

2.3 Programmes and strategies

Lithuania has consistently adopted multi-annual strategies to enhance OSH. The 2017-2021 National Action Plan includes the development of OiRA tools as one of its planned tasks:

¹ Amended on 18 June 2015 (No. XII-1806).

² The Order includes the consequent amendments No A1-535/V-1192 (17 10 2017) and No A1-484/V-1256 (21 07 202, Ministry of Social Security and Labour & Ministry of Health 2012, 2017a).

³ The Legal Order No A1-457/V-961 provides the exemplary template for the risk assessment documentation, please see section 2.5, RA tools other than OiRA.

'1.3. Task – With the assistance of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), to develop online interactive risk assessment (OiRA) tools and other information technology (IT) - based tools. Specifically, the plan foresees the development of tools for the following sectors: furniture manufacturing, plastic product manufacturing, cleaning services, sewing services, quarrying, agriculture, education, and social services' (Ministry of Social Security and Labour & Ministry of Health, 2017b).

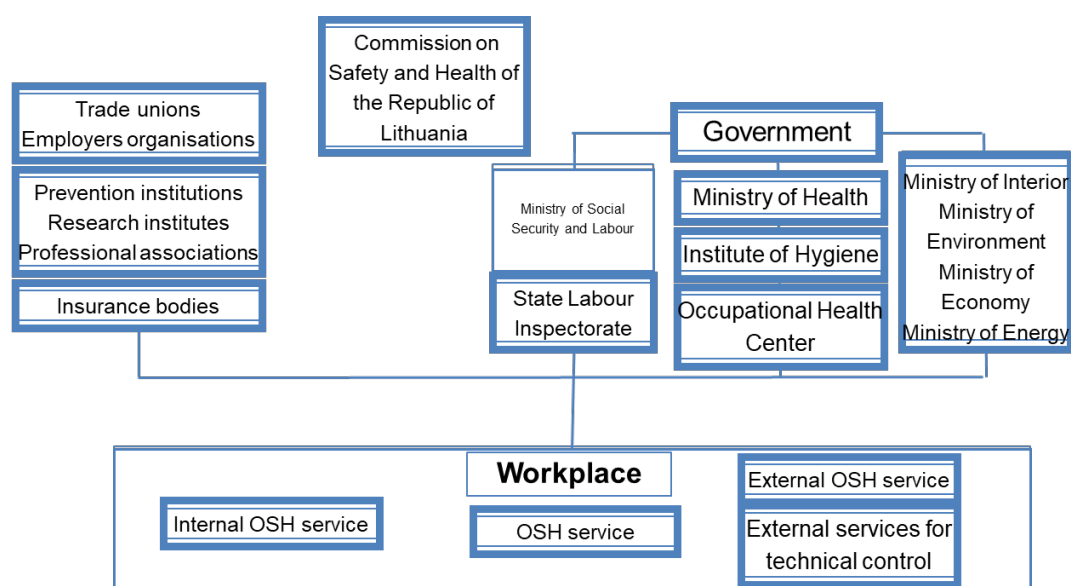
The current plan (2022-2027 Action Plan on Safety and Health at Work; Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2022; EU-OSHA, 2023b) outlines three primary goals and includes eight targeted tasks. Two of these tasks (and actions included in those tasks) specifically address RA:

- Task 4, Action 4.4 aims to bolster occupational risk management for companies and self-employed individuals. The goal is for 95% of persons participating in respective educative activities to acquire or improve their professional RA and supervision expertise.
- Task 6 (Actions 6.1, 6.2, 6.3) is dedicated to educating, training and advising employers and employees on occupational RA and other OSH issues.

2.4 OiRA in the Lithuanian OSH system

The Lithuanian OSH system comprises various actors spanning multiple ministries, institutions and organisations, as summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Simplified overview of the Lithuanian OSH system



Source: Ecorys, adapted from OSH system at national level – Lithuania (EU-OSHA, 2019a)

At the top-most national level, OSH responsibilities fall into the domain of several ministries, as also listed below. Most importantly, the Ministry of Social Security and Labour⁴ (overseeing the SLI) and the Ministry of Health⁵ (overseeing the Institute of Hygiene) implement national OSH policy (EU-OSHA, 2024). Additionally, a range of other ministries and authorities are involved in OSH to some extent, such as the Ministry of Interior, which oversees fire prevention.

The SLI, overseen by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, aims to prevent workplace accidents and occupational diseases by ensuring compliance with the Labour Code and other legislation. It consists of the Chief State Labour Inspector, divisions and services coordinating and organising

⁴ Ministry of Social Security and Labour official website: <https://socmin.lrv.lt/>

⁵ Ministry of Health official website: <https://sam.lrv.lt/en/>

activities of the SLI and territorial divisions (EU-OSHA, 2024). **The Occupational Safety and Health Division of the SLI is responsible for OiRA promotion and maintenance but not always for developing the tools** (see also further details in section 3.1, Main promotional approaches to OiRA).

The Institute of Hygiene, under Lithuania's Ministry of Health, is a state-funded institution focused on public health areas, including occupational health. The Institute's Occupational Health Centre conducts research on work-related factors affecting workers' health and wellbeing and develops occupational health and health promotion activities.⁶ **The institute is involved in developing OiRA tools** and is currently leading the development of six tools for the health and care sector.

The Commission on Safety and Health of the Republic of Lithuania was established based on the tripartite principle of cooperation among social partners. Its purpose is to coordinate the interests of the state, employers and workers in OSH. It comprises five representatives from each group and advises the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

Social partners also collaborate in other ways with the authorities to support employers and workers. They bridge the gap between the workplace and the authorities, offering insights into the implications of current OSH legislation and voicing the needs of those impacted. This exchange primarily takes place through the social dialogue system, encompassing tripartite meetings of the Commission on Safety and Health of the Republic of Lithuania at the national level (EU-OSHA, 2019a). **Sectoral social partners are involved in developing OiRA tools at different levels.**

2.5 RA tools other than OiRA

The proposed, though not required, **format for RA documentation is provided in the Legal Order No. A1-457/V-961** (Ministry of Social Security and Labour & Ministry of Health, 2012). It also provides an example of how to determine the severity and acceptability of occupational risk, which is intended to help companies to prioritise risks. As the law states, when prioritising risks, it is recommended to categorise the severity and likelihood of harm so that comparable events can be grouped and evaluated together. Further, it provides forms to assess the severity of potential health consequences and the probability of occurrence of damage, a scheme for assessing the magnitude of risk and determining risk acceptability. It also provides a table of recommendations for risk elimination and mitigation, summarising the approaches.

Lastly, an example of an Occupational Risk Assessment Card form is provided in the Legal Order (*Profesinės rizikos įvertinimo kortelė*). The card should include the following elements:

- occupational risk factor (name of the factor, its legal limit (if any) and the article, paragraph and clause of the legal act setting the factor; the magnitude of risk⁷);
- existing protective measures;
- occupational risk magnitude and acceptability determined;⁸
- name or number of the measures envisaged to eliminate or reduce the occupational risk in the occupational risk elimination or reduction plan; and
- date of implementation of the measure.

In general, employers and OSH specialists are encouraged to use the resources provided on the SLI website to learn more about possible risks (in relation to professions and vulnerability of workers) and mitigation measures.

The Institute of Hygiene provides a range of risk evaluation and management tools available free of charge on its website.⁹ The Occupational Health Centre of the institute has executed multiple projects aimed at adapting and adopting various RA tools for local use. Among others, these include, for example, the feasibility studies of management standards for work-related stress and Assessment of Repetitive

⁶ Institute of Hygiene official website: <https://senas.hi.lt/about-institute.html>

⁷ Assessing damage probability on a 4-point scale from very unlikely to very likely, and in three damage categories — from little damage to average damage and great damage.

⁸ The acceptability is described in relation to the magnitude of risk, where very low risks are considered acceptable, low, average and high as tolerable, and very high as unacceptable.

⁹ So-called Occupational Health Tools: <https://www.hi.lt/streso-darbe-valdymo-standartai/>

Tasks (ART) from the United Kingdom and the adaptation of a computer workstation checklist tailored for Lithuanian enterprises.¹⁰

Other common tools for RA include questionnaires and objective evaluation methods such as Rapid Upper Limb Assessment (RULA) and Rapid Entire Body Assessment (REBA).¹¹ Both are ergonomic assessment tools designed to evaluate the postural risks of workers.

3 OiRA in Lithuania

In 2012, Lithuania became an official partner of the OiRA community, with the first set of tools published in 2014. EU-OSHA initially funded the development of several tools, and others were funded by the Lithuanian government. The SLI, EU-OSHA's official OiRA partner in Lithuania, is responsible for ongoing maintenance and updates of these tools.

Since OiRA's inception in Lithuania, 24 tools have been developed. Table 1 presents the timeline of OiRA tool publications and the sectors/topics they focus on.

Table 1. OiRA sectoral tools in Lithuania – month/year of publishing

Sector	Month of publishing	Year of publishing
Woodworking	July	2014
Working in offices	July	2014
Wholesale and retail trade of non-food products	May	2015
Garage holders/car repair	September	2016
Cleaning	February	2017
Mining and quarrying	February	2017
Sewing services	February	2017
Furniture manufacturing	August	2017
Plastic products and manufacturing	August	2017
Hotels and restaurants	October	2018
Agriculture	January	2019
Education	May	2019
Bakeries	October	2019
Hairdressers	October	2019
Laundry services	October	2019
Social services	March	2020
COVID-19 update	July	2020
Earthworks (excavation)	November	2020
Transport and storage (warehouses)	November	2020
Confined spaces	February	2021
Roofing	August	2021
Scaffolding	August	2021

¹⁰ So-called Occupational Health Tools: <https://www.hi.lt/streso-darbe-valdymo-standartai/>

¹¹ Cornell University Ergonomics Web, 'REBA' website: <https://ergo.human.cornell.edu/ahREBA.html>, and EU-OSHA, 'RULA' website: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/musculoskeletal-disorders/practical-tools-musculoskeletal-disorders/rula-rapid-upper-limb-assessment-tool>

Sector	Month of publishing	Year of publishing
Collecting and handling of waste	November	2022
Petrol stations	November	2022

Source: Ecorys based on EU-OSHA communication

Despite initial doubts, one of the first tools — for car repair shops — proved successful, especially in covering numerous small businesses. Promotional efforts have been effective in this sector, and the car repair tool remains among the most successful tools in Lithuania until today.¹²

Subsequently, there was a shift in prioritisation from emphasising popularity and user count to targeting sectors with elevated rates of workplace accidents, recognising their greater need for support. Thus, the initial focus was on inclusivity across a broad spectrum of companies, followed by a concentration on sectors with heightened workplace accidents.¹³

Collaboration with social partners, who recognise the value of OiRA for small companies, has been important from the beginning of OiRA in Lithuania. Social partners are consulted for input, although their involvement in testing the tools is limited. The SLI typically updates social partners regarding ongoing initiatives and seeks their input. Active engagement and feedback on the tool content varies greatly depending on the sector and tool developed. For specific individual tools, social partners have been engaged and actively involved, while for others, the cooperation was less intense. For example, social partners requested the creation of an OiRA tool for social service workers working with people with disabilities. The government financed the tool development, and social partners were actively engaged in all developmental steps. They are also actively promoting the tool. The OiRA tool, designed for social workers, has garnered significant popularity, attributed to the involvement and support of social partners. This popularity might also be attributed to the high costs associated with OSH services and limited financial resources within the sector, making OiRA's free accessibility particularly appealing.¹⁴ Following the development and implementation of the OiRA tool specifically tailored for social workers, the SLI observed a decline in complaints from this sector, indicating an improved OSH situation.¹⁵

Currently, the Institute of Hygiene spearheads a governmental project to develop six OiRA tools for diverse healthcare services. The execution is entrusted to a publicly tendered company and overseen by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania. Their development is scheduled for a five-year period.¹⁶

3.1 Main promotional approaches to OiRA¹⁷

In Lithuania, the primary promotional approach for the OiRA tools centres on online and on-site seminars. These have proven to be the most effective and popular promotion methods, with on-site seminars often yielding more significant results. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a rise in online engagement, the tangible interaction provided by on-site seminars has been invaluable. Participants tend to ask more questions and engage more freely in a face-to-face setting, facilitating a more robust, thoughtful learning environment.

The reach of these seminars extends beyond the capital city Vilnius, thanks to the efforts of the Senior Adviser of the Occupational Safety and Health Department at the SLI. Staff from the Labour Inspectorate responsible for OiRA in Lithuania regularly organise seminars in various cities nationwide to ensure that the information is well disseminated.

¹² Interview with Lithuania OSH stakeholder (September 2023).

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ This section is based in its entirety on an interview with a Lithuanian OSH stakeholder (September 2023).

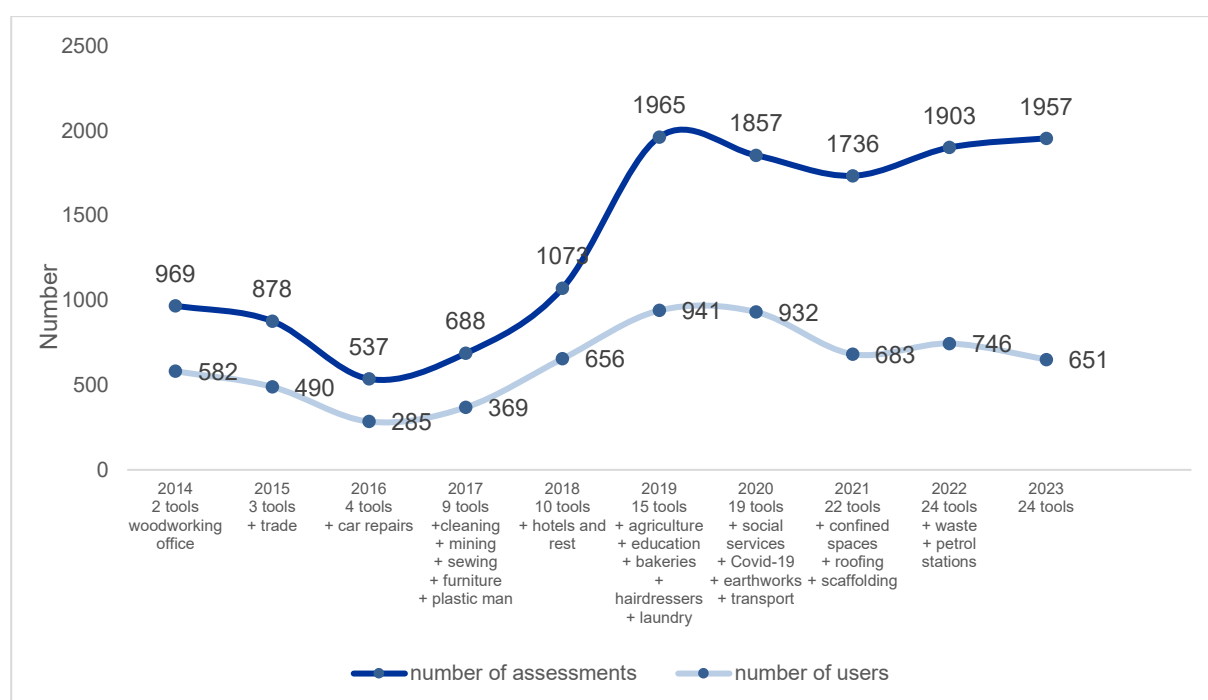
Complementing these seminars, targeted training sessions for inspectors form a crucial aspect of the promotional strategy. Inspectors often serve as the frontline advocates for OiRA, especially in resource-limited companies. Therefore, they must possess a comprehensive understanding of OiRA. Regular seminars are arranged to boost their knowledge and enable them to effectively promote the tools in their respective environments.

The SLI main website directly links to the OiRA tools, offering detailed explanations of their purpose and functionalities. The SLI reports its official website to be popular and to have a significant number of users. The SLI attributes this to the fact that the website provides centralised and free access to essential information.

3.2 Use of OiRA tools¹⁸

As of the end of August 2024, the total accumulated number of OiRA assessments in Lithuania had reached 15,367. Notably, the end of 2023 marked a significant increase in users, with 2019 and 2020 recording the highest number of new users, amounting to 941 and 932, respectively. The number of annual assessments is aligned closely with the number of users, with its peak being 1,965 assessments in 2019. Figure 2 summarises the number of assessments conducted and users registered per year since 2014.¹⁹

Figure 2. The yearly number of RAs and users of OiRA in Lithuania (including the number of tools available per year)



Source: Ecorys, based on OiRA Metabase²⁰

The available data also shows that 59.7% of RAs carried out with OiRA were conducted by internal persons from within the company. Only 10% of OiRA RAs were handled externally,²¹ contrasting the general trend of external specialised institutions being the primary conduits for company RAs in

¹⁸ The information in this section is sourced from the OiRA statistics based on Metabase: <https://www.metabase.com/>

¹⁹ At the time of writing this report, 2024 had not been finalised and no data was available for the full year.

²⁰ Accessed on 3 September 2024.

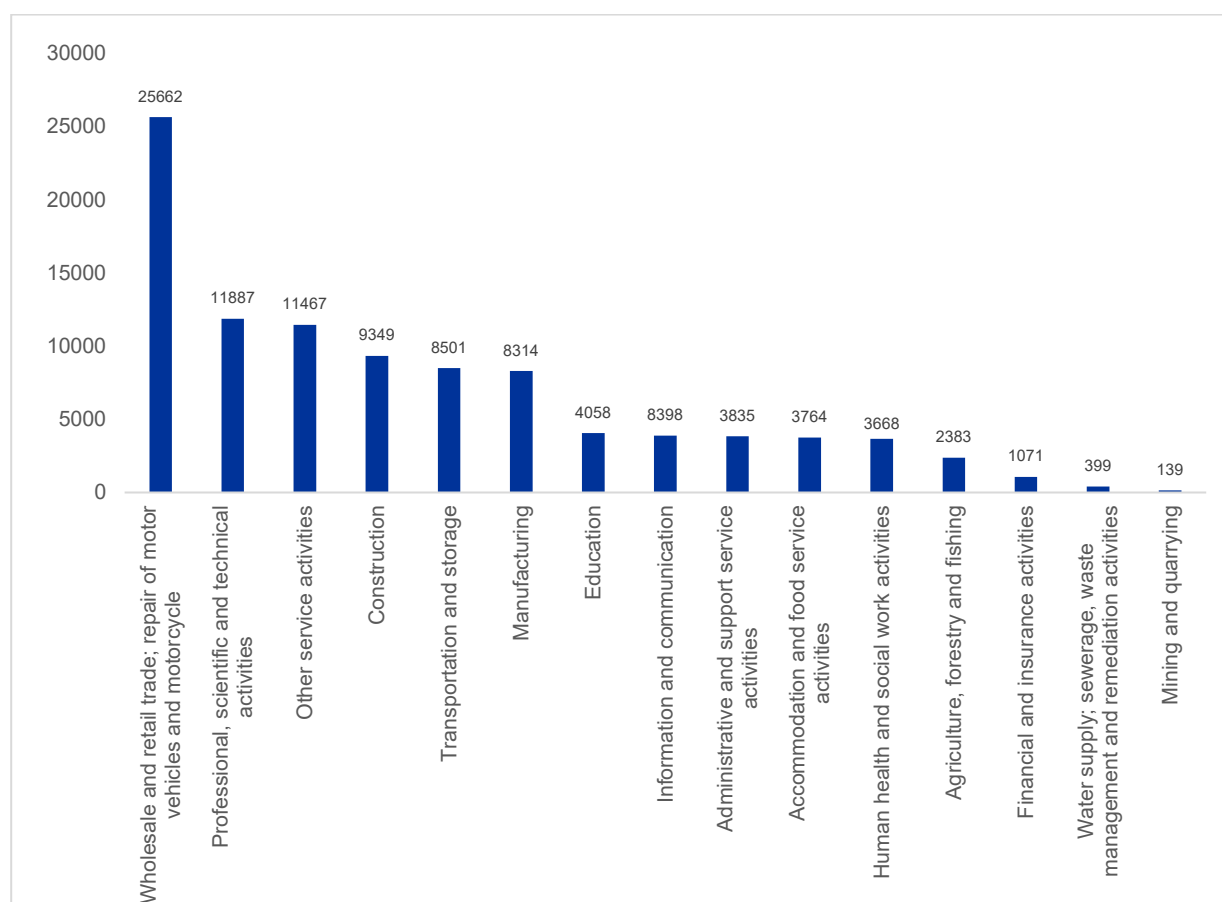
²¹ Based on OiRA Metabase, as of September 2024.

Lithuania as explained above (EU-OSHA, 2019c; Vainauskas & Tamašauskaitė, 2020). Notably, a significant portion, a quarter of respondents, did not specify who conducted the RA.

■ An overview of OiRA use in particular sectors

Before looking at the number of users and assessments of tools, it is important to highlight that these numbers alone do not define the success of a tool. Tools have to be looked at in light of the number of SMEs in the specific sector in the country, a figure that is not always available. Also, some tools refer to more than one sector and, as such, have a broader range than others. Altogether, most entities in Lithuania — more than 25,500 — come from the automotive sector (wholesale, retail and repair). Here, however, it is worth remembering that the tasks undertaken in those enterprises may vary (and include, for example, office work). Figure 3 summarises the number of economic establishments in Lithuania per sector.

Figure 3. Average number of enterprises per sector 2015-2024



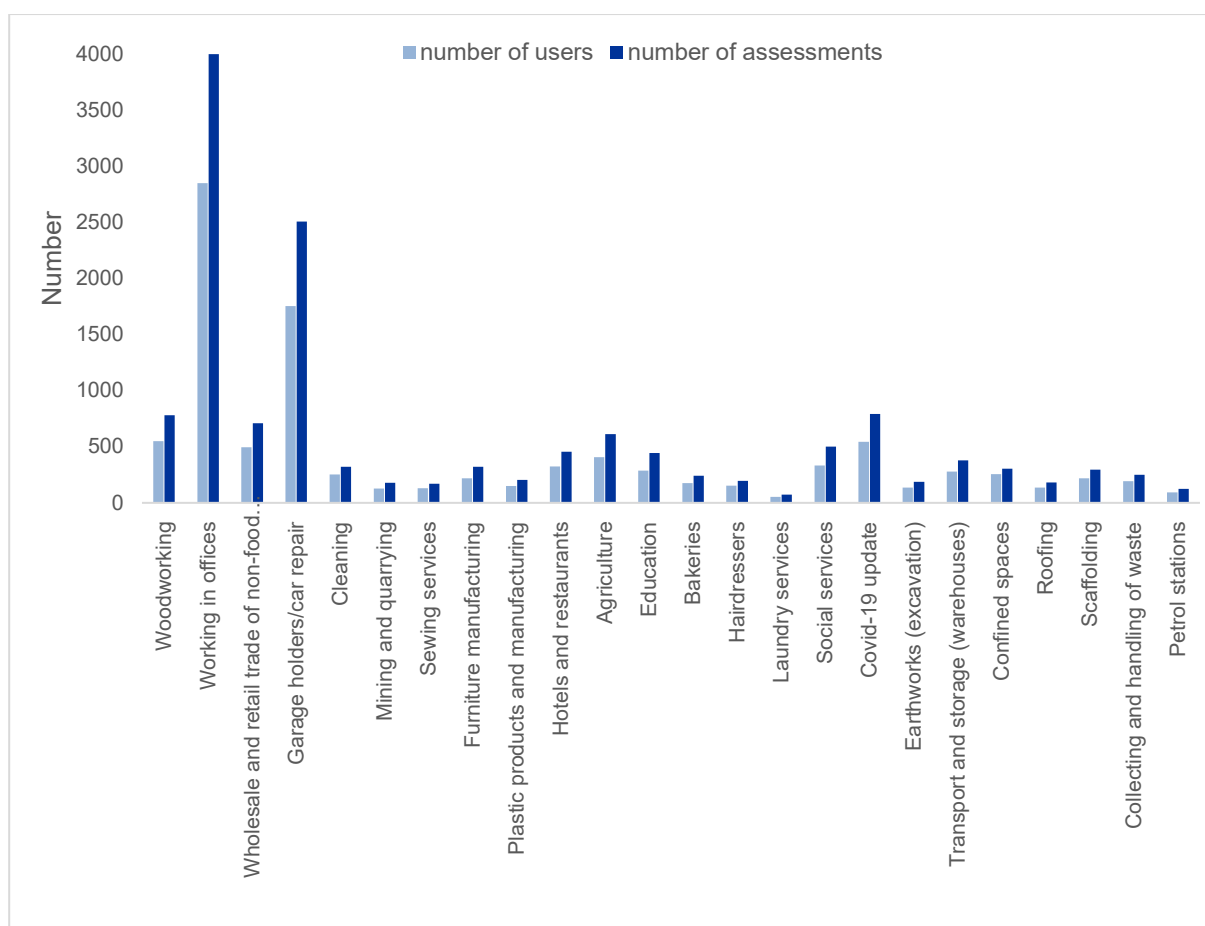
Source: Ecorys calculation based on data retrieved from Statistics Lithuania (Statistics Lithuania, 2023)

Importantly for this study, **SMEs account for 99.5% of all enterprises operating in Lithuania**, the majority of them (83.7%) being micro-enterprises (1-9 employees) (OECD, 2022).

The number of users of the Lithuanian OiRA tools vary widely across sectors. The office work tool leads the chart with 2,850 users and 4,574 assessments. The tool for car repair workers follows closely, registering 1,753 users and 2,507 assessments. These two tools dominate the OiRA landscape, with the next most significant tool related to COVID-19, used by 544 users. Other tools with higher user numbers are those designed for woodworking and the wholesale and retail sectors. On the other end, tools for roofing workers, petrol station workers and laundry workers show lower user numbers. There is no close correlation between the year of tool publication and the number of users and assessments.

While the most popular ones are coincidentally the ones published earliest (four tools by 2016), this is rather guided by design, where initial tools were supposed to have the largest audiences (they were designed to cater to the possibly highest number of Lithuanian workplaces). Another popular tool, for COVID-19, was successful, despite being relatively recent, because it addressed a pressing need. Figure 4 summarises the number of users and assessments per sector in the chronological order of tool publication.

Figure 4. Number of users and assessments per sectoral tools, organised chronologically by years of introduction of the tools



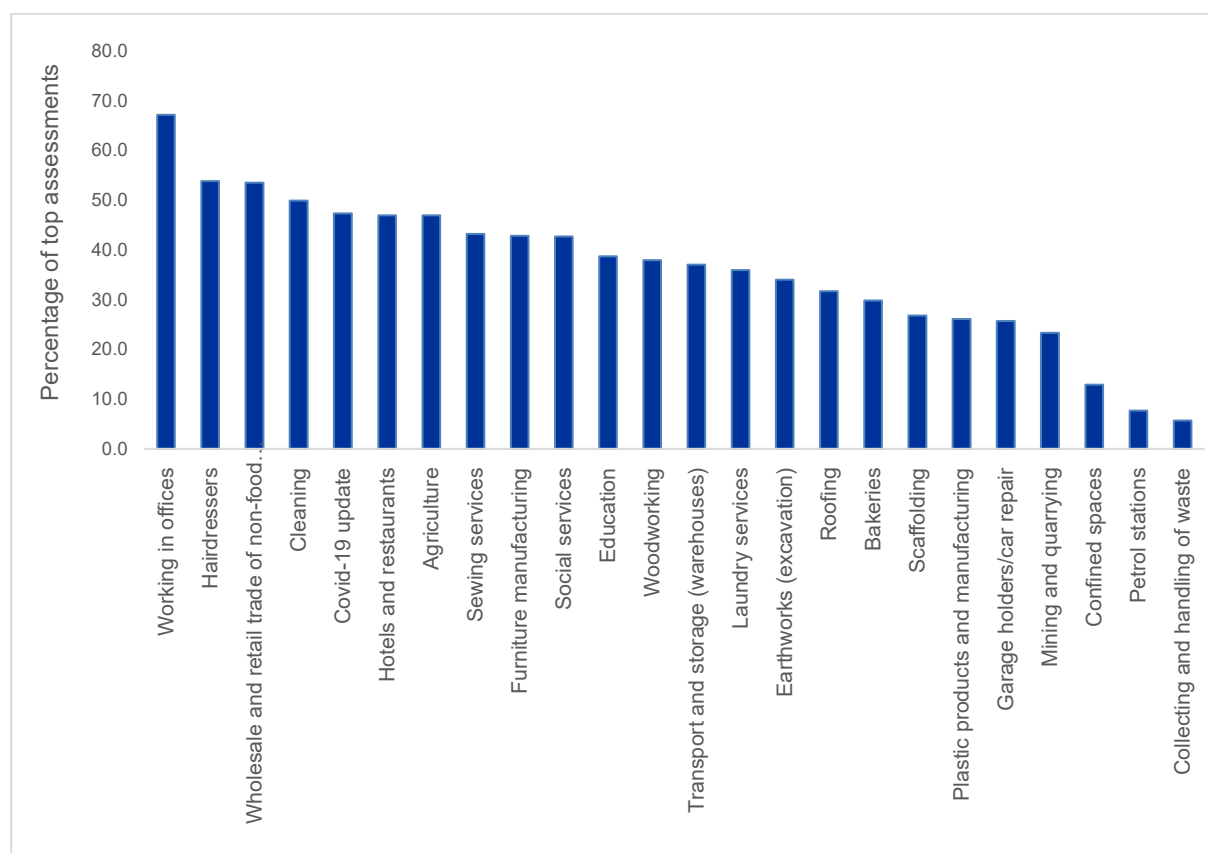
Source: Ecorys, based on OiRA Metabase²²

The numbers alone can only give some hints in relation to use of the tools. The completion rate of the RAs is another indicator that can be looked at but needs to be interpreted with care. The office work tool was top in popularity and thoroughness in terms of completion rates, with 67.1% (3,164) of assessments achieving top completion (more than 70% of risks in the tool answered). On the other hand, in the case of tools for petrol stations and collecting waste, over 85% of assessments had a low completion rate, indicating that fewer than 10% of risks were addressed. However, it is unclear whether this indicates that users have discontinued the RA or are progressively working on the tool, completing it step by step. Also, there is a hypothesis that in the case of some tools, users use specific modules they are interested in but not the whole tool since they might have other areas covered by an external service. The popularity

²² Accessed on 3 September 2024.

of particular sectoral tools and the share of top assessments (more than 70% of risks answered) by sectors is presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Lithuanian OiRA tools by share of top assessments



Source: Ecorys, based on OiRA Metabase²³

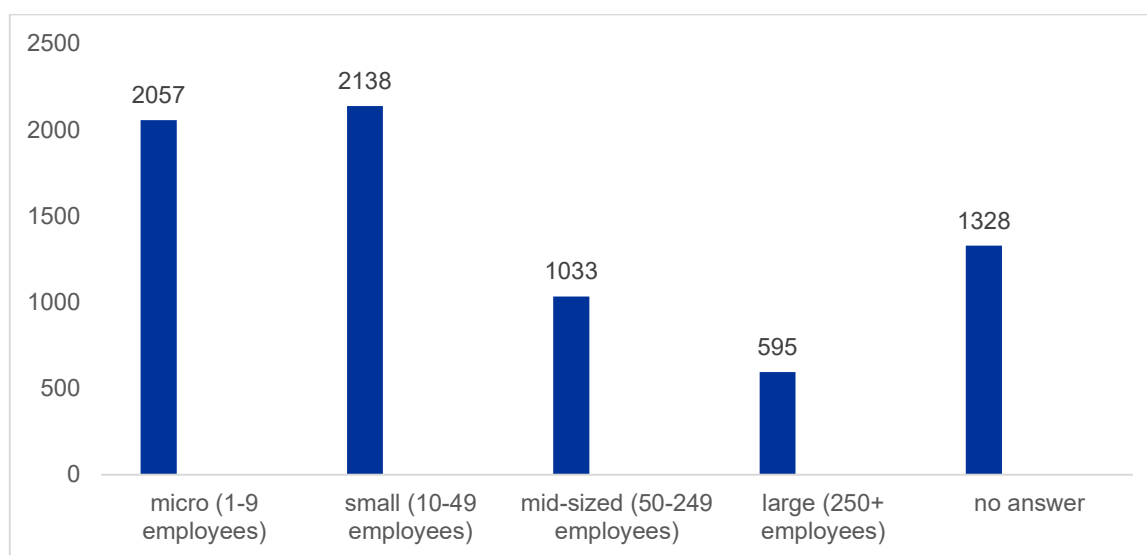
3.2.1 Profile and experiences of the companies using OiRA

The OiRA tools seem to mostly reach the relevant target audience in Lithuania, as indicated by one-third of the users who provided answers to the voluntary questionnaire²⁴ representing micro-enterprises (see Figure 6, 28.8% or 2,057 responses). Very closely, with a slightly higher number of responses, were small enterprises (10-49 workers, 29.9% or 2,138 responses). Both were followed by medium-sized enterprises (14.4% or 1,033 responses). Large companies accounted for the minority of the sample (8.3% or 595 companies). For this statistic in particular, the high ratio of respondents who did not answer the question on the company size in the survey poses a challenge in accurately assessing the OiRA user profile, so while the majority of provided responses point to OiRA serving the intended audience, with 18.5% of the respondents not providing the answer, the picture remains incomplete.

²³ Accessed on 3 September 2024.

²⁴ 7,157 users provided answers to the questionnaire.

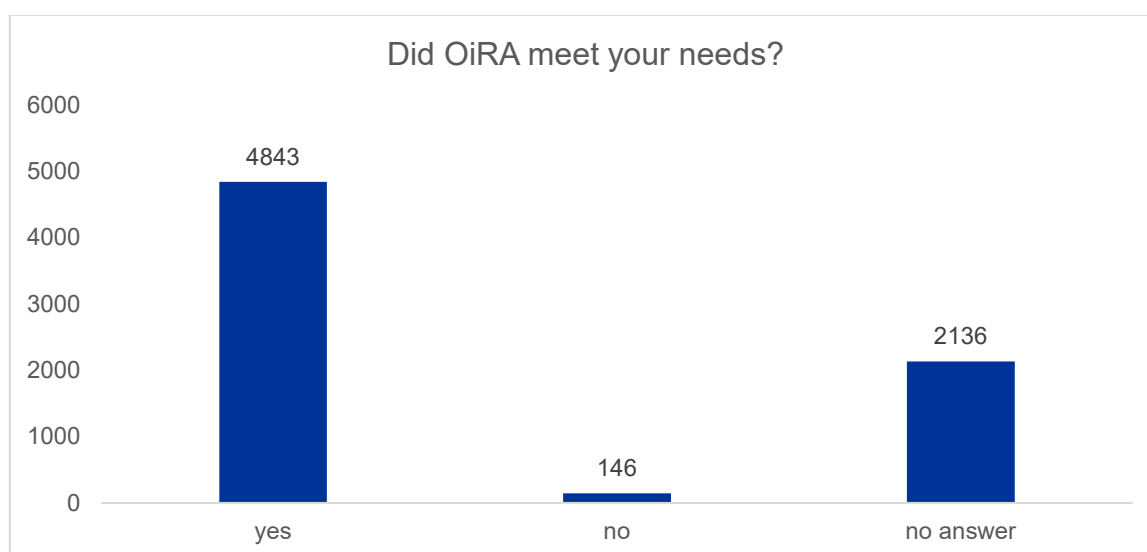
Figure 6.6 Size of companies using OiRA



Source: Ecorys based on OiRA Metabase²⁵

Overall, as illustrated in Figure 7, about two-thirds of respondents to OiRA's voluntary questionnaire confirmed that the tool responded to their needs (67.7%, or 4,843 out of 7,157 responses), with only 2.41% stating that it did not (172 responses), showing the tool's high level of usefulness among its users.

Figure 7.7 Users' feedback on OiRA meeting their needs

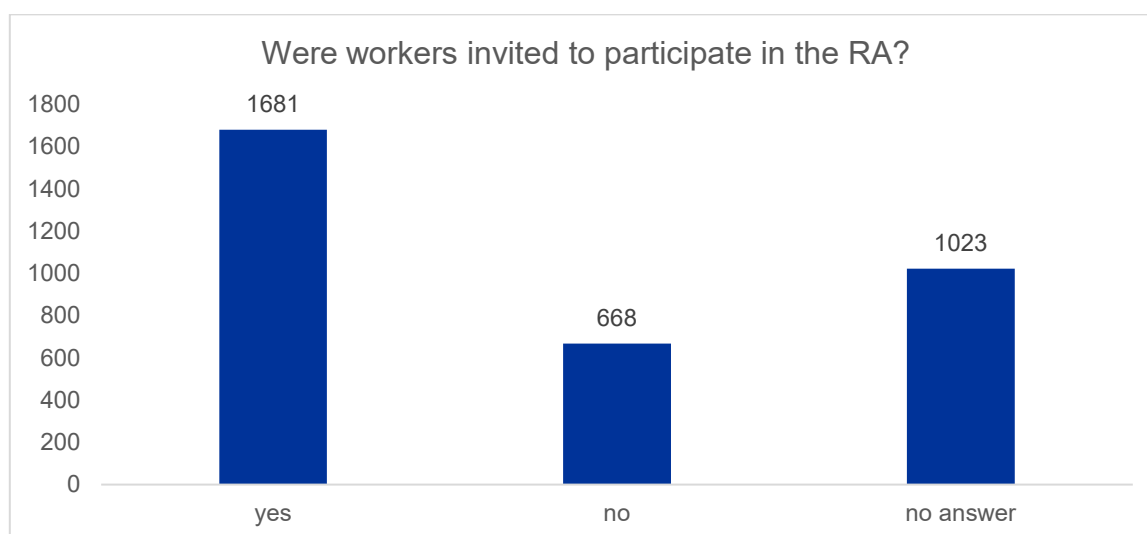


Source: Ecorys based on OiRA Metabase²⁶

Almost two-thirds of respondents (64%, 4,559) indicated that employees were invited to participate in the RA using OiRA (see Figure 8). At the same time, 10% (717 respondents) reported that employees were not involved, and a high ratio of 26% (1,875 respondents) did not provide an answer.

²⁵ Accessed on 26 September 2024.

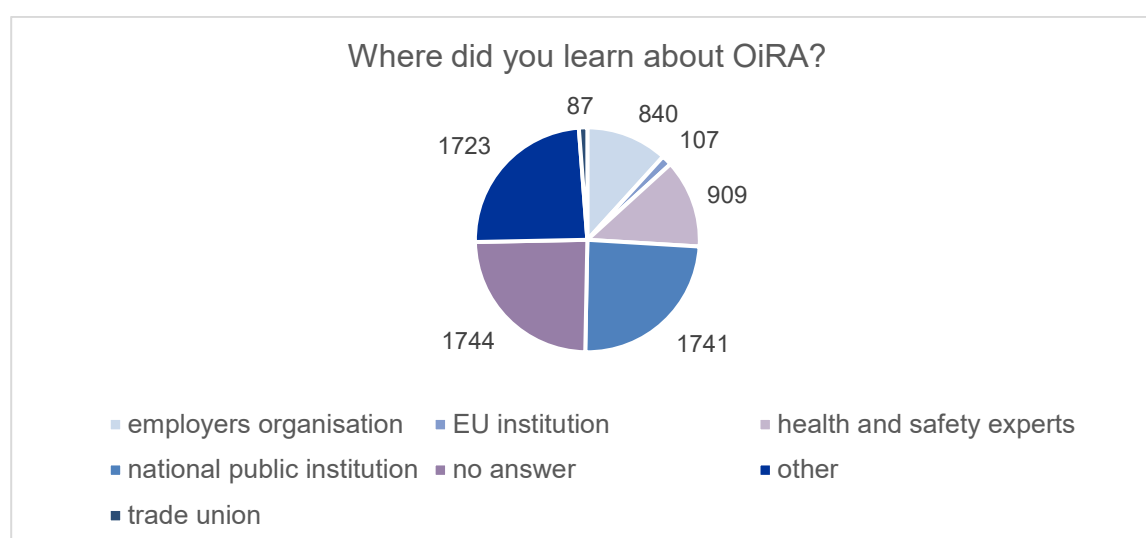
²⁶ Accessed on 26 September 2024.

Figure 8.8 Worker involvement in RA using OiRA

Source: Ecorys based on OiRA Metabase²⁷

3.2.2 Awareness around OiRA

For the question of where the respondents learned about OiRA, 24.4% provided no answer. Very similar percentages indicated public institutions and other sources, which is in line with the main promotional venues of OiRA as well as with study findings. 24.1% of respondents indicated that they found out about OiRA from non-specified other sources (this could include sources such as word of mouth, which was an answer that was not included in the survey). This was followed by 12.7% reporting that they learned about OiRA from health and safety experts and employers' organisations (11.7%). A minority of responses cited trade unions (1.22%) and EU institutions (1.5%).

Figure 9. Source of information about OiRA

Source: Ecorys based on OiRA Metabase²⁸

²⁷ Accessed on 26 September 2024.

²⁸ Accessed on 26 September 2024.

4 Methodology, challenges and adjustments to this study

This section outlines the primary methodological approaches, challenges encountered and mitigation strategies employed throughout this study.

4.1 Recruitment and sampling

The research was conducted between September 2023 and June 2024, with the fieldwork phase (including interviews) conducted from October 2023 to June 2024.

To ensure the coverage of OiRA users and non-users, diverse recruitment techniques had to be employed. The recruitment process included close cooperation with the SLI. Where possible, employers and workers contacting the SLI OiRA contact point were informed about the OiRA study, and their contact information, if consent was given, was referred to the research team. Researchers also participated in an event organised by the SLI to promote OiRA. These kinds of seminars are generally well attended by workers and employers who are eager to learn more about OiRA and RA in general. During this specific event, researchers introduced the study to participants and, in case of interest, obtained the company's consent for participation. In parallel, information about the study was also shared through the SLI's official website and via social media. All individuals interested in participating in the study could register through an online recruitment survey.

Other stakeholders, including social partners, were also approached to facilitate contact with relevant companies. After several months of following these approaches, the need to recruit more companies was obvious. A Lithuania-based marketing research company was contracted to mobilise enterprises for the study. Those who agreed to further participation were subsequently approached for interviews and were offered a small compensation for their involvement.

4.2 Key data collection methods

This study employed the following data collection elements:

- Scoping interviews with relevant national stakeholders: national OiRA partner from SLI, interviewee from the Institute of Hygiene. Furthermore, two interviews were held with representatives from social partner organisations (national-level trade unions).
- Qualitative and quantitative feedback from participants in the recruitment survey (to a limited extent).
- In-depth interviews with OiRA users.
- In-depth interviews with non-OiRA users.
- Desk research to complement interview findings, especially relevant to regulatory requirements and the OSH environment in Lithuania.
- Insights into OiRA statistics as indicated above.

The primary data collection method was structured in-depth interviews guided by two interview guidelines: one for OiRA users and another for non-users. While these protocols shared common/overlapping sections to explore RA practices comprehensively, the questionnaire for OiRA users explored technical aspects and the utility of OiRA tools more deeply. Background information was provided to the interviewers to enhance their understanding of the research and assist them if the interviewee did not have much time for an interview. These documents and instructions were shared and discussed with the interviewers during an internal briefing workshop. Remote interviews were facilitated through MS Teams, and all write-ups were completed in English to streamline the report-writing process and ensure consistency with the research conducted in other countries.

For this study, 31 qualitative interviews were conducted. Four were held with the representatives of relevant institutions or bodies, while the rest, a total of 27, were conducted with persons responsible for conducting RAs — individuals using or not using OiRA. Out of those, 21 were using or previously used OiRA in their practice, and six opted for other RA methods. Within the study sample of OiRA users, five respondents were external OSH experts providing their services to specific or multiple entities across various sectors. This subset of respondents is particularly significant as legally effective RA requires specialised knowledge and certification (the involvement of a so-called competent person). In Lithuania,

not all SMEs have access to such expertise internally, making the insights from external OSH experts important. Although these experts do not fully represent SMEs or sectors' perspectives in the traditional sense, their contributions provide insights into RA practices across Lithuania as well as into the use of OiRA in Lithuania. They bring experience from diverse sectors and tools used in RA, adding to discussions with perspectives from multiple workplace contexts.

Notably, several interviewees had previously used other RA tools and only recently started using OiRA, which means that their proficiency with the tool was not yet very advanced.

In addition to conducting interviews, the team created an online survey mainly for recruitment purposes. The survey focused on gathering information about potential interviewees and their interest in participating in the study. It also included a limited number of questions about respondents' experiences with OiRA. While most of the questions were closed, the survey also allowed respondents to provide qualitative feedback (open-ended questions). A total of 13 individuals completed the survey, with one respondent offering valuable qualitative and one quantitative feedback, which was incorporated into the analysis where relevant.

4.3 Categories and analytical lenses

For the analysis, the report considers the following aspects:

- 1) **Role of OSH experts:** as described in section 2.2, the role of external OSH services and OSH experts is important in Lithuania's OSH landscape. Consequently, **findings from OiRA and non-OiRA users reflect the impact on both internal and external OSH experts**. The importance of OSH experts was especially clear when recruiting respondents for non-OiRA samples. Generally, despite significant recruitment efforts, **finding respondents who were not using the services of external OSH experts was very challenging**. Further, several interviews were excluded from the sample since respondents did not have any knowledge about RA in their workplace. During the initial phase of some interviews, it became clear that RA was outsourced to external experts, and several companies did not know the actual RA process. This further confirms significant reliance on the services and knowledge provided by OSH experts (both internal and external).
- 2) In connection with the point above, the study considers the **general low coverage of RA in Lithuania**. Indeed, **ESENER data indicate that 38.3% of companies in Lithuania do not perform RAs. This percentage rises to 52.9% among small companies with 5-9 employees** (EU-OSHA, 2019b). Especially during recruitment for the non-OiRA respondents, it was challenging to identify companies that were carrying out RAs (or were informed enough to talk about it — see the point above).
- 3) **Impact of regulatory framework:** as discussed in section 2.1, Legal framework, two significant legal aspects influence RA:
 - Legal requirement to conduct RA by a 'competent person' reinforces reliance on the OSH experts;
 - The requirement to include quantitative measurements of chemical, physical and biological risk factors (in some cases) impacts the selection of RA tools. Since OiRA does not offer solutions in that area, OiRA tools are often used together with other solutions to fulfil that aspect.
- 4) **Different sizes of companies using OiRA:** although OiRA is intended to be used by micro, small and medium companies, while recruiting respondents, it became clear that all company sizes use OiRA. Hence, all company sizes were included to maximise the information coming from the interviews on OiRA tools in Lithuania and to overcome the recruitment challenges. At the same time, this has an impact on the analysis since large companies have different needs and preferences from their smaller counterparts. Therefore, where relevant and appropriate, the report distinguishes company size.
- 5) **Different length (and intensity) of experience with OiRA:** the sample includes different companies having only one experience in carrying out RA with OiRA, companies who recently started using the OiRA tool and are in the process of developing their consolidated approach to

RA, companies conducting OiRA RA over a longer period of time (or intense use over a short period of time), or companies that after completing one OiRA RA decided not to continue with the tool. In that way, the study presents an overview of diversified experiences with OiRA tools.

4.4 Overview of the sample from the perspective of the proposed typology

Following the general study design, the interview data were disaggregated into two key groups based on the dominant method used to support the RA: companies with experience in using OiRA (currently or in the past, see Table 2) and companies using other RA tools (either software or analogue, see Table 3). Both tables summarise background information on the interviewees to provide details about their role, either as an internal or external OSH expert, the sector where they conduct the RA(s) and the size of the company where RA was conducted, classified into four categories: large (>250 workers), medium (50-249 workers), small (10-49 workers) and micro (<10 workers; European Commission, 2016).

Table 2 Interviewees – OiRA users

No	Sector(s)	Size of the company	Interview/survey	Role within the company (internal/external OSH provider)
1	Car repair	Micro	Interview	Internal – Owner
2	Agricultural company	Micro	Interview	External OSH expert
3	Trade union	Small	Interview	Internal – Chairwoman with OSH qualifications
4	Company selling laboratory (medical) reagents	Small	Interview	Internal – Director of the company with qualifications to perform RA
5	Manufacture of metal equipment	Small	Interview	Internal – Human resources manager responsible for OSH
6	Education (secondary level)	Small	Interview	Internal – Deputy director for economic affairs, an internal OSH expert responsible for RA
7	Municipal public library	Small	Interview	Internal – Director who conducts RA
8	Woodworking	Small	Interview	External OSH expert
9	Import, wholesale and service/ maintenance of electrification and automation equipment	Medium	Interview	Internal OSH expert
10	Education (secondary level)	Medium	Interview	Internal – Director, coordinates RA process (engaging different divisions)
11	Construction sector	Medium	Interview	Internal – Head of OSH and environment protection department
12	Covering different sectors	Medium	Interview	External OSH expert
13	Covering different sectors	Medium	Interview	External OSH expert
14	Manufacturing, sewing and sale of knitted garments	Large	Interview	Internal OSH expert
15	Education	Large	Interview	Internal OSH expert
16	Education	Large	Interview	Internal OSH expert

No	Sector(s)	Size of the company	Interview/survey	Role within the company (internal/external OSH provider)
17	Public agency under the ministry	Large	Interview	Internal OSH expert
18	National public health centre	Large	Interview	Internal OSH expert
19	Law enforcement	Large	Interview	Internal – Head of OSH department; coordinating RA, conducted by (four) employees of the department
20	Covering different sectors	n/a	Interview	External – Owner of micro-OSH consultancy company
21	Covering different sectors	n/a	Interview	Internal/external – Currently internal OSH expert in a public service entity, also external OSH expert for different enterprises
22	Education	Medium	Survey (qualitative feedback)	Both internal and external OSH services)
23	Human health and social work activities	Large	Survey (quantitative feedback)	Company is using internal OSH services

Source: Ecorys based on interviews

Table 3. Interviewees – non-OiRA users

No	Sector(s)	Size of the company	Role within the company (internal/external OSH provider)
1	Electric equipment repair and maintenance services	Small	Office manager
2	Deployment of smart technologies, smart engineering (railways, highways)	Small	Employee/OSH expert
3	International petrol company	Small	Internal OSH expert
4	Repair and maintenance of ships and boats	Medium	Head of quality, environment and OSH
5	Educational institution (polytechnical school)	Medium	Performing OSH services (no required training for OSH experts)
6	Sales of interior products	Medium	Internal OSH expert

Source: Ecorys based on interviews

5 Findings on OiRA tools use

This chapter summarises the experiences of companies that currently use or have previously used OiRA. It is also organised to provide an overview of the context in which OiRA was implemented. This includes examining the motivations and challenges faced in conducting systematic RAs, the decision-making processes for choosing specific RA approaches, and, finally, how OiRA is utilised and evaluated within these organisations.

5.1 What motivates companies to carry out systematic RA?

Interviewees reported being motivated by **external factors**, such as legal requirements and concern about possible consequences for non-compliance from national OSH enforcement bodies. Additionally, interviewees reported being motivated by **internal factors** within their organisations, such as the desire

to learn about OSH to support workers' wellbeing or to learn about OSH risks emerging from organisational changes.

Legal compliance and regulatory pressure are the most common external factors, especially when coupled with the expectations of upcoming inspections or direct requirements from the Labour Inspectorate (four interviews). In particular, those four company representatives reported undertaking RA to comply with national legislation and recommendations from the SLI. Further, as discussed during the interviews, RA may also be initiated due to an inspection or an upcoming inspection. In essence, external recommendations of the SLI, existing legislation and expectations of subsequent inspections play an important role. However, one interviewee, a director of the micro-company delivering OSH services externally to different sectors, noted that companies often view RA and OSH as a burden rather than integral parts of their operations, as they tend to prioritise profit over safety, only taking RA and OSH seriously after a workplace accident occurs. Even after such incidents, he reported that RAs are often treated as mere paper exercises. Companies aim to classify risks as low or moderate to fulfil regulatory requirements with minimal disruption to their business. In the opinion of another external OSH advisor delivering services for different small companies, this attitude results in RAs being conducted more to comply with legal standards than to enhance workplace safety genuinely.

While most companies named legal compliance as the primary motivator for systematic RAs, some were also aware of the shortcomings of such an approach. Indeed, one interviewee, who is a head of an OSH department in the law enforcement sector, indicated, for example, that because current legislation requires RAs only when a company is established or undergoes technological change or other restructuring, this can result in companies with high-risk working conditions not having updated their RAs in over a decade. According to this interviewee, Lithuanian trade unions generally advocate for more frequent RAs, but the lack of specific legislative requirements makes regular implementation unlikely. The interviewee stated that this is particularly concerning for addressing psychosocial risks, where regular assessments are important, never mind if there has been a change in the work organisation or not.

In the case of internal motivating factors, some companies carrying out RA reported **concern for worker safety and wellbeing** (three interviews). For example, one of the interviewed internal OSH specialists exhibited a genuine concern for worker safety and wellbeing. In this case, their commitment is evident in reported efforts to cater to the specific needs of office workers. Similarly, another interviewee reported that physical safety and OSH are the main reasons for protecting workers and implementing the RA. Another example was provided by an educational establishment of more than 400 workers, where RA was made (by external service providers) in 2014 and is still considered valid formally. However, the new internal OSH representative decided to renew the RA without a formal requirement to do so, showing concern for OSH as a personal priority and motivation.

Another example of motivating internal factors is **a company's desire to adapt its RA approach to its changing workplaces and to learn about emerging risks**. For example, one company had moved into a new library building and wanted to ensure that workers and library visitors used the new equipment and building correctly. The company reported that the safety assurance processes were covered better in combination with an RA. Additionally, there was a need to verify that construction work had been completed correctly and to ensure that no construction-related issues could pose health risks to workers. The following quote came from that specific interview:

We thought that both employees and library visitors should know how to use the new equipment, what is the work order and how to use this equipment effectively. On the other hand, we wanted to make sure that the construction works in the new building had been done correctly and there were no side-effects that could cause health issues to the employees.

Internal OSH expert – director responsible for RA, municipal public library, office work OiRA tool

5.2 What are the challenges to systematic RA?

The research findings suggest that external OSH experts play a significant role in systematic RA, as noted above. At the same time, interviewed companies expressed **two challenges related to reliance on the OSH external experts: dissatisfaction with the quality of their services, and the financial costs of their services.**

Companies often mentioned needing external experts for technical assessments requiring specialised equipment or special expertise (four interviews). For example, one interviewee from a large construction company dealing with heavy machinery mentioned internal company discussions on the maintenance and assessment of heavy machines. Conducting an RA with regard to these machines requires expensive efforts, which the company was not eager to cover. Therefore, they turned to external experts with access to equipment needed to measure the OSH impact of heavy machines for RA purposes. In other instances, interviewees reported that external OSH providers may have other necessary equipment to assess, for example, noise or light — acquiring those apparatuses may make no sense for smaller companies.

On the other hand, interviewees also expressed **dissatisfaction with the quality of work provided by external services** (four interviews), citing, for example, instances where external providers conducted RAs without visiting the actual workplaces, resulting in assessments that did not reflect the company's situation. The director of a company providing external OSH services highlighted, however, that external RA providers face their own challenges, for example, as providers often have limited time to dedicate to each company. They further noted that large companies would rather hire external RA providers because they lack time to perform the assessment internally.

The **cost of hiring external service providers**, especially for small companies and budget-constrained institutions such as schools, does pose a significant challenge to establishments (four interviews). For example, a secondary-level education establishment directly indicated that they have limited financial resources to conduct RAs while employing a considerable number of personnel (approximately 40). Because the cost of hiring an external expert was too high, they decided to conduct their RA internally.

At the same time, both dissatisfaction with OSH experts' services and financial aspects were important elements of why users selected OiRA. (see also section 5.3.2, *What was the motivation to select OiRA, which methods did OiRA replace? and Who took part in the decision-making process?*) Therefore, it could be argued that the OiRA tools respond to the identified systematic challenges to the RA, associated with the prominent role of OSH external experts in the OSH landscape in Lithuania.

5.3 How was OiRA chosen?

5.3.1 How did the company find out about OiRA?

The two main sources of information about OiRA were the SLI and word of mouth. The responses gathered from interviewees confirm the previously presented statistics from the voluntary questionnaire for OiRA users (see Figure 10), where almost 50% of respondents indicated both of those sources.²⁹

A substantial number of interviewees (nine interviews) learned about OiRA through direct recommendations or interactions with the SLI channels and activities. For example, three interviewees mentioned that the SLI recommended using the OiRA tool for conducting RAs during inspections or consultations. In these instances, the SLI suggested that OiRA was suitable for carrying out the required assessments. One interviewee sought guidance from the SLI on conducting an RA for their library and was advised to use the OiRA tool instead of hiring an external RA company due to library concerns about high costs and long implementation times. Following this consultation, the company used the office work tool. Other companies (three) found out about OiRA through the SLI website.

Importantly, **SLI seminars** were the most often mentioned source of information about OiRA, cited by six interviewees. Those seminars were not only the entry point for OiRA but also promoted its use, as the interviewees reported that they learned about OiRA through them and attended subsequent

²⁹ The OiRA questionnaire did not include the category of 'word of mouth', but it can be assumed that those responses were included in the category of 'other'.

seminars to learn more and update their knowledge. This is especially significant as the seminars were also indicated by the SLI representative as the most effective channel to promote OiRA (see section 3.1, Main promotional approaches to OiRA).







Word of mouth also played a role in spreading awareness of OiRA. One interviewee was introduced to OiRA by the head of their subdivision, who suggested trying the tool. Another learned about OiRA through family connections, as a family member working at the SLI informed them about the tool when it was first introduced in Lithuania. OiRA was also mentioned during non-SLI seminars for OSH specialists, which some interviewees attended (two). These seminars then sparked their interest to learn more about the tool.

It should also be noted that several interviewees reported that they had been using OiRA for many years already, so they were not able to provide information on how they had first learned about OiRA.

5.3.2 What was the motivation to select OiRA, which methods did OiRA replace?

Companies expressed varied aspects that impacted their motivation to select OiRA, as presented in Table 4. In most cases, companies considered other RA methods when they discovered OiRA as a viable alternative. In some other cases, companies were attracted to OiRA due to RAs tailored to the needs of the sectors or tasks. Others cited direct recommendations to use OiRA.

Table 4. Main motivation for selecting OiRA as a tool for RA

Alternative to exiting RA methods	Sector-specific and relevant to tasks performed at the workplace	Comprehensive and exhaustive
		
Free of charge	Human factor (personal recommendation, previous experience with tool)	Innovative and online
		

The primary motivation among the interviewees was the need to find new and more adequate RA tools that corresponded to their needs. In most cases, they had had some experiences with RA, which did not satisfy them. A shift has often been observed away from OSH external experts (seven). As noted above, the main reasons for this were quality of service and cost. Further, several companies have used OiRA to replace paper-based approaches. For example, five companies had been using tools that they described as outdated, such as checklists/tables that provided an insufficient indication of risks, with one company representative describing these methods as ‘shallow and superficial’ (small metal manufacturer). By contrast, OiRA seemed ‘modern’, ‘structured’ and ‘efficient’ (two companies). Notably, OiRA did not in all cases fully replace former RA approaches. In one case, the company used the

Occupational Risk Assessment Card (*Profesinės rizikos įvertinimo kortelė*) RAs (see section 2.1, Legal framework).³⁰ Upon discovering OiRA, they decided to include it in the RA but kept the previous methods to align the RA fully to their specific needs.

A crucial factor in choosing a tool is whether it adequately covers the sector or specific tasks performed (10 interviews). For example, the OiRA office work tool was widely used for administrative tasks (six workplaces) because it aligns well with office environments. Office work is also present in many different types of companies, and the tool is quite flexible in different contexts (e.g. was also reported to be used by schools and a library). Conversely, for example, an OSH specialist working for different companies found the OiRA manufacture of furniture tool suitable for a woodworking company. At the same time, she expressed the need for more tools for other sectors, such as vegetable drying and transport activities, areas of work that were covered by another company where she provides OSH services. The availability of sector-specific tools was also highlighted by the director of an external OSH consultancy, who uses parts of the OiRA tool based on the functionalities needed for their clients; for example, they reported only partly using the sector tool for mining and quarrying for covering the excavation works in the construction sector.

While many users were motivated to use OiRA due to its sector-specific content, they also pointed out some gaps in coverage of specific risks. In particular, the lack of physical, chemical and psychosocial measurements (four companies). In such cases, they used OiRA and other tools in a complimentary way or they used support of external OSH experts, especially in technical measurements. Notably, these gaps did not stop companies from integrating OiRA into their RA approaches. However, finding out that OiRA did not suit the company for lack of coverage of some risks was a deciding factor for companies that tested OiRA, but eventually decided on not using it further.

Another decision-making factor was whether the selected OiRA tool allows comprehensive and practical assessment of workplace tasks and risk categories. While OiRA was assessed as comprehensive by representatives of small companies, this view was not often shared by people working for medium and large companies. These interviewees mentioned that some OiRA tools were not exhaustive enough for complex and hazardous tasks. For example, the warehousing tool was deemed 'too simple' and unsuitable for more complex activities in medium and big companies. OiRA's overall aim of targeting MSEs needs to be taken into account when drawing conclusions based on these results.

Further, there were several other aspects attracting users to OiRA. Overall, **cost-effectiveness and accessibility were important reasons for using OiRA.** Many interviewees appreciated that OiRA is free, making it an attractive alternative to external services that were described as costly. This was particularly important for budget-constrained institutions such as small companies, schools and other public entities. For instance, the director of a budgetary institution mentioned limited financial resources as a reason for choosing OiRA over external providers. Another interviewee noted that the OiRA tool is suitable for educational institutions, which often operate with tight budgets and cannot afford expensive external assessments. Additionally, OiRA attracted some users due to **its innovative, online nature** (two interviews).

Human factors also played a role in selecting OiRA. Often, someone within the organisation recommended the tool, or the company heard about OiRA and was eager to try it out (six). This was the case, for example, for an interviewee from a company operating in the public health sector, for whom the head of the subdivision suggested OiRA. Additionally, several interviewees (four) **mentioned prior experience with OiRA** as a motivating factor for using it at the current workplace. For example, an OSH specialist in a newly merged educational institution chose to use OiRA based on approximately five years of experience with the tool in his previous role at another establishment.

▪ Who took part in the decision-making process?

Since the motivation to use OiRA tools was connected with the general need to change the RA approach, it is logical that the same people who were engaged in the previous RA were also involved in the selection of the OiRA tool. This group predominantly includes OSH experts, whether they perform additional duties, work across multiple companies or serve as external consultants. Five interviewees

³⁰ Here, the interviewee meant the offline checklist type of RA, which was structured as provided in the Order.

(internal OSH experts and heads of departments responsible for RAs) decided to adopt OiRA. Additionally, three directors, including those leading small companies or public institutions who also undertake OSH responsibilities, reported having chosen to use OiRA. This should be linked with the general observation that smaller workplaces included in the sample did not have separate OSH positions. Hence, the decision was transferred to the management.

Interestingly, while the decisions were made by OSH experts or directors/management, the decision-making process was more collaborative. Indeed, often interviewees mentioned the involvement of other people from the organisation or department. For example, one OSH specialist proposed using OiRA to their employer, and the director agreed, thanks to the tool's cost-effectiveness and the ability to conduct RAs internally. In another case, the library had a planned visit from the Labour Inspectorate, which suggested carrying out the RA using OiRA. This recommendation was taken on board by the management.

One case illustrates an even more collaborative approach, where an OSH specialist and a director jointly decided to use OiRA after looking at it and being convinced about its usefulness. Here, the need for in-depth RA and alignment with budget constraints underlines the practical considerations influencing the final decision. The considerations were not only if the tool meets the technical requirements but is also actionable and sustainable within the organisation's resources:

I heard about OiRA in one of the Labour Inspectorate seminars some time ago, so I decided to check it out. I used the test session once. I thought it would be quick but once I started to dig deeper, I noticed that it takes hours if you really want to complete the process in depth. So, I decided to stop, consult with the director [of the school], and perhaps do it together to ensure that we analyse all the risks completely. It is important as well to create an actionable plan for the future because if we add something that we are not able to achieve due to budget constraints, the assessment won't help us.

Internal OSH expert – deputy director for economic affairs, secondary level school, education OiRA tool

5.4 How is OiRA used?

5.4.1 Who carries out the OiRA RA?

All interviewees responsible for carrying out RAs had a certain level of OSH expertise: either workers with specific OSH knowledge or training, directors or owners with the respective expertise, or external advisors. The latter conduct RAs supported by OiRA and support companies with specific technical examinations. In those instances, the RA was a process that combined different tools or methods.

Decisions on how to proceed with RAs — taking into account the factors discussed above — were typically left to those conducting them, whether carried out jointly or individually, based on what is deemed most appropriate both practically and legally. This also took into account questions such as: 'What can be done without engaging external expertise for technical assessment?' and 'Is the assessment using OiRA enough?'.

In some instances, **external OSH providers were employed to conduct the RA, the relevant information was shared with the provider, or the OSH expert visited the company.**

5.4.2 How much time do users need to complete an OiRA RA?

As interviewees reported, **the time spent on RA was dictated mostly by the complexity of the workplace and their level of experience in conducting RA (including using OiRA).** Here, however, OiRA's flexibility can be recognised, as it enabled the RA process to be aligned with the time

users need to commit to completing RA. The flexibility of the OiRA tool in terms of time is also supported by tool functionalities, such as allowing users to come back to particular questions or modules when convenient. Overall, when OiRA was used in larger enterprises (not in line with its design), the process took longer, while when applied in smaller companies (as primarily intended), it was shorter.

This translated to the time spent on an RA with OiRA ranging from as little as 1.5-2 hours for simpler evaluations to a timespan covering several weeks or even months for more comprehensive assessments involving multiple stakeholders and complex work environments (where OiRA was one of several tools used). Also, as discussed in the section 5.4.5, How often do companies use OiRA?, RA is a never-ending process for some companies, as the workplaces and regulatory expectations change. This means that, in practice, there is sometimes no particular time dedicated to finalising the RA. **Most commonly, the whole assessment process took some days**, with interruptions while working on the RA. In instances where the process was longer (even in smaller enterprises), it was caused, for example, by performing the OiRA RA 'in stages'.

Time dedicated to conducting OiRA RA may also depend on a number of people/stakeholders engaged in conducting RA. For example, in a public education facility employing approximately 450 workers, the interviewee reported meeting with the OSH committee while performing the RA. In total, the OiRA RA process took three full days.

5.4.3 How do users complete OiRA?

Interviewed OiRA users shared varied ways of using the tool, indicating its flexibility. It allowed its users to adapt it to their particular requirements. Here, the possibility of skipping modules was especially mentioned.

Eight interviewees mentioned using the OiRA **module by module, following a chronological order**, to ensure they did not miss any relevant information. Meanwhile, many users **skip parts or questions** within the OiRA deemed irrelevant to their company's operations (five interviews). They mentioned that this selective approach allows them to streamline the assessment process and focus only on the most important risks.

Further, considering how OiRA is completed, several interviewees (three interviews) mentioned that they did not conduct the RA in one go but stopped to gather more information and resumed it once they got it.

At the same time, it has to be considered that OiRA was used both on its own and as a supplement to other RA methods. This then translated into how interviewees perceived and reported on completing the questionnaire. In less complex working environments, there was no need to conduct RA for multiple separate roles, and RA could be done more easily. For example, one establishment decided to initially conduct 11 separate RAs — one for each subdivision. However, they later realised that most responses to RA questions were similar across all subdivisions. As a result, they opted to perform a single RA for the entire organisation.

At the same time, larger companies sometimes needed multiple assessments at the same workplace, where OiRA covered some of the different tasks but not all. For example, as mentioned by a public school director who coordinates the RA, the tasks within the establishment are highly diverse and therefore creating a comprehensive RA covering all workers with one tool was not seen as feasible. The school employs workers working under vastly different OSH conditions, teachers, cleaners, drivers, kitchen staff, stokers and security personnel. Separate RAs had to be prepared for each worker category, and it was considered too time-consuming to utilise the different OiRA tools for such a wide array of job roles.

Additionally, in cases where OiRA was deemed inappropriate and was supplemented with other methods, interviewees reported using other information to assess the risks, from information published by the SLI to AI tools.³¹ Still, **none of the companies indicated that they added their own risks to the OiRA tools.** This was primarily due to their perception that the tool was already comprehensive

³¹ One interviewee reported they use AI to ask questions about 'what are the risks' at the workplace, which guided him in researching more information.

enough or, in some cases, overly complex (see section 5.5, How is OiRA assessed?). One respondent said that they were unaware of the possibility of customising the tool in this manner.

5.4.4 How often do companies use OiRA?

Considering the frequency of performing RA, our study findings suggest that OiRA is a flexible tool that can accommodate the varied needs of its users. Some companies, especially smaller ones, used OiRA tools in a minimal capacity, carrying out one RA to fulfil their legal obligations. At the same time, larger companies or those with more complex operations decided to conduct RAs numerous times or on an ongoing basis. Additionally, external OSH advisors may have different relationships and obligations towards their clients, which also dictates how often RAs (using OiRA or not) are performed.

The majority of interviewees said that they used OiRA just once, either as a pilot or experimental RA or to comply with the requirements for RA once. For instance, one external OSH advisor, delivering an RA for a medium sized woodworking company, reported starting to use the relevant OiRA tool recently and conducted a pilot RA with no immediate plans for updates. Another interviewee, the owner of a micro-enterprise, used the tool for an initial RA in 2022, citing no changes requiring subsequent updates. Similarly, an OSH advisor providing RA in a small agriculture company used OiRA for a seasonal RA but did not repeat it due to the cessation of company activities shortly afterwards.

Similarly, an external OSH expert delivering RA services for different sectors stated that they also applied this kind of on-off approach to OiRA use but with regular updating included. They explained that they usually perform the full RA only once, as, in their case, OiRA is used as a supplementary tool. At the same time, they indicated that they provide daily/weekly supervision of the companies they provide services to and also review the existing RA every year, sometimes making some additional changes according to the current situation.

Several interviewees highlighted a periodic approach to using OiRA, revisiting the tool at intervals that suited their organisational needs. Specifically, one respondent highlighted their proactive approach to updating the RA tool frequently, aligning with the dynamic nature of their organisational changes and structural adjustments. Another interviewee articulated plans to systematically evaluate all workplaces in the coming months to identify common risks and formulate a cohesive action plan. Additionally, there was mention of conducting periodic reviews approximately twice a year to assess any changes and ensure the RA remains current. Those, however, were larger employers.

At the same time, some interviewees conduct the RA as a continuous effort in the ever-changing working environment (three interviews). For example, one interviewee responsible for OSH and RA in a large construction company, having used OiRA for several years, emphasised its role as a 'living document', which is regularly updated based on new information or changes in workplace conditions identified during periodic reviews or after attending relevant seminars.

Some interviewees conducting RAs for larger companies in which OiRA was used as a complementary tool reported to periodically check for missed areas or updates relevant to their operations. No particular timeline was provided here, as OiRA is supplementary and used as an addition to the RA processes.

There were significant **differences between the companies regarding how many assessments were carried out using OiRA, suggesting tool flexibility to facilitate as many RAs as relevant for each user.** Apart from the instances where OiRA was just tested (one assessment was carried out), some interviewees had been using OiRA for many years; in other cases, the assessments were adding up to almost 100: as one interviewee, an internal OSH expert for a public health institution employing over 500 people, reported, they started to use OiRA 10 months ago and since then have already done 99 evaluations; these evaluations cover around 230 workplaces.³² The large law enforcement establishment conducts separate RAs with OiRA for every individual workplace. By the end of the year, they expect to have completed 600 RAs.

³² This also correlates with the diversity of approaches to RA and OiRA, where different OSH specialists decided on different solutions (one assessment for whole company, one per sector, division, employee and so on).

5.4.5 Working with the reports OiRA generates

In general, most companies downloaded the action plan and different types of reports generated by OiRA. Only two respondents directly stated that they did not download the documents. Both represented the education sector — in the case of the smaller organisation, OiRA was used to check its usability only, and in the case of the medium-sized organisation, OiRA was regarded as too complex, and the assessment was not finalised as the interviewee felt discouraged.

The attitude towards the documents that OiRA creates (action plans and reports) is largely mixed. Companies appreciate the extensiveness and ease of generating these documents — especially action plans — but many have found significant issues with the reports' clarity, design and practical usability.

Seven companies of all sizes shared favourable opinions on the action plans. For instance, a micro-company in the automotive sector reported downloading all documents and finding them satisfactory, appreciating the clarity and ease of navigation. Similarly, another interviewee found OiRA very useful for creating action plans and noted that the tool provided valuable guidance in linking identified risks to relevant legal documents. They specifically valued the fact that legal acts are included in the tool, giving in-depth information on particular issues of the RA.

However, not all feedback was positive. Several companies encountered **significant issues with the reports**. These included mostly technical difficulties, and a lack of understanding of how to read and work with them.

Several companies highlighted that they found **discrepancies and emerging risks in the reports that they did not remember identifying during the evaluation process**. In particular, one interviewee, who provided internal services for a small woodworking company, was very critical of the report. They mentioned downloading it but faced numerous difficulties, making it challenging for them to use. In summary, the user **did not think the report reflected the data included in the tool**. However, it remained unclear whether this was due to a lack of understanding of how to deal with the tool or if this was related to technical issues in the tool. An assumption here could be that users did not understand the behaviour of so-called priority risks. These risks always appear and require the decision to register measures, even if the company has answered the risk as 'not present'. Another interviewee reported issues with the accuracy of the report, making it unsuitable for official use.

A critical issue emerged regarding the clarity and acceptability of the reports generated by OiRA. For example, one company — a large institution in the education sector — found one of the two reports they downloaded hard to understand, leading to confusion. The interviewee downloaded the overall full report, which contained risk identifications and was understandable and satisfactory. However, the second report, which included graphs and figures (presumably the 'overview of risks report' or the 'overview of measures report'), was described as confusing and not understandable, leading the interviewee to frequently open and then close the report without fully comprehending the information. Also, importantly, according to some of the interviewees, the **reports cannot be used as a confirmation of RA**. According to one interviewee, a director of a small chemical company, the report produced by OiRA was 'absolutely unclear, wrong and not acceptable for the company to use as an "official" RA result'.

This was seconded by an interviewee from a large education institution who said that they had no idea how to interpret the results of the RA and 'how to show this RA output to their director'.³³ Lack of clarity was strongly criticised by one particular interviewee, who provides external services for a medium-sized automotive company, who stated: 'There is an "absolute mess"; it is absolutely non-usable, inconvenient for practical use. You simply receive a lot of pages with the same questions and nothing else. You receive not the report, but more like a very long list of questions'. This lack of clarity further translated into how users worked with the report; for example, an external provider stated that they do not share the information from the OiRA directly. Instead, they felt that they needed to adjust the messages to

³³ In this case, the interviewee reported that the whole report was 60 pages long, with the most uncertainties connected with the part 'Hazards/problems, that were identified, however, do not have prevention/action plan': in this part dozens of issues were presented, which by the interviewee were identified as not problematic while filling in the questionnaire. It may point to the issues with understanding how OiRA works, and what are the end results and how to use them.

different target audiences to ensure that they were easily understandable for non-OSH specialists. According to this interviewee, the reports and action plans were not suited for this purpose.

In general, the criticisms can be summarised as follows:

- Reports included confusing and repetitive questions, making them challenging to use.
- Reports were not well designed and unclear, often resembling a long list of questions that were difficult to understand.
- Interviewees do not know if the report is seen as a formal certification of RA.
- Discrepancies and emerging risks were identified in the reports that were not initially mentioned during the evaluation process, necessitating manual corrections.

On the contrary the overall action plan that the tool produces seem to have been understood and appreciated by most users.

▪ How are reports and action plans used in practice?

Despite these criticisms, many companies still saw value in OiRA since the perception of reports and action plans was ambivalent. Interviewees reported on the impact of OiRA and its outputs on the workplace. It seems that OiRA provides much-appreciated information and education about the risks, and as such is reported to increase the safety of the workplace, even if action plans are not followed up on directly.

Concretely, some interviewees said that they are either implementing the action plan at the company (three internal experts) or that they share it with their clients (three external advisors). One company — a small-sized enterprise in the manufacturing sector — specifically reported on how the action plan is implemented in practice: they used the action plan and liked it very much. In particular, they divided the responsibilities to different people in the company for improving the shortcomings. They also agreed to jointly check how they are working to improve the situation throughout the year.

While action plans may not have been often reported as being introduced to the fullest, they have nevertheless, at least to a degree, been found useful in increasing workplace safety and health. The documents have been reported, for example, to be used as a learning exercise (where risks identified provided a better understanding of OSH at the workplace), as a checklist to supplement RAs done using other methods, to improve some (although not all) of the risks at the workplace, as a reminder or a reference point of what should be improved, or as a tool to validate the needed improvement, as indicated by one interviewee:

If I say that we have to fix one area and he [the manager] doesn't believe me, I can just quote the legal act from OiRA and say that we have to fix it by law.

Internal OSH expert, public agency under the ministry, office work OiRA tool

5.4.6 (How) Are workers involved in the RA?

Most interviewees believed that completing RA is impossible without active engagement from workers directly exposed to workplace risks. Multiple interviewees shared this perspective and highlighted various forms of worker involvement. At the same time, the diversity of the modes of engagement of the workers was dictated by the size of the company and the individual approach of the person providing the assessment.

However, **workers were not involved in completing RAs with OiRA in the small companies interviewed for this study.** The interviewees from smaller companies explained that since the company does not have many employees, they know enough about the working environment and they did not consider individual worker involvement as necessary. At the same time, from research, it is known that employee engagement is less formal and, as such, often less effective in smaller companies (EU-OSHA,

2016), which is why this result is likely not directly related to the use of OiRA but simply to the company size.

Only one interviewee in this category stated that they read some OiRA questions out loud to their co-workers (fewer than 20 employees, company selling medical reagents). Another interviewee, a library director employing about 40 people, described how they gather worker input regularly. Once a month, there is a round-table discussion with all workers, and decisions regarding the current action plan generated by OiRA are discussed there.

By contrast, most interviewees — representing medium and large companies — spoke of some form of worker involvement, although the extent of worker involvement and ways of engagement differed.

Several interviewees representing larger enterprises (six interviews) indicated that **all workers were fully engaged in the RA process**. This approach involves visiting each workplace, talking to workers and gathering detailed information before completing the RA. For instance, the internal OSH expert for a large public health facility stated that when preparing to fill out the OiRA tool, an OSH specialist goes to the particular workplace/employee, talks to them, and then returns to the office and fills out the tool.

Some companies use surveys or other consultation methods to reach all workers. One company, with around 100 workers, reported using surveys to gather feedback on various workplace aspects, particularly psychosocial factors.

Some large companies **work with worker representatives instead of involving every individual worker**. This approach was noted by an interviewee who delivers RA for an extensive educational facility. According to them, this enabled the workers' interests, views and opinions to be respected while managing time efficiently. One case of a joint RA was especially interesting. As one of the interviewees reported, as a budgetary institution with very limited financial resources, they try to perform RAs using their own human resources. Specifically, three deputy directors divide various occupational risk areas depending on their particular competencies, which include occupational health surveillance, safe environment, sexual harassment, civil security and fire safety. These deputies conduct RAs in close cooperation with the trade union, representing approximately 90% of the workers. All three deputies are trained according to the requirements for individuals responsible for OSH issues.

In some cases, especially in larger companies, the RA is conducted in close **cooperation with project and production managers, who consult with staff members**. This approach ensures that worker insights are integrated into the RA process.

Separately, in one specific instance in the public service sector, **workers may provide information to external RA providers** rather than participate directly in the RA process. One interviewee explained:

We include workers to provide more information for the external RA provider ... because I might not be aware of some risks and factors related to work in specific situations.

Internal/external OSH expert – currently internal OSH expert in a public service entity, also external OSH expert for different enterprises, agriculture and office work OiRA tools

5.4.7 Is OiRA useful during inspection visits?

The use of OiRA during inspection visits gathered mixed feedback. As noted in previous sections, OiRA is sometimes seen as a supplementary tool for larger companies, used with other tools, especially in instances where more specialised assessments are needed (e.g. technical assessments). Because of that, interviewees were sceptical about whether OiRA provides enough coverage of OSH issues and whether it will be considered a 'complete' RA in line with existing legislation. One interviewee pointed out that the tool does not fit well into the national RA framework and cannot be used as definitive proof of a completed RA during Labour Inspectorate visits (see also section 5.4.8, How and why is OiRA used with other RA tools?).

Further, while the SLI explained (as reported by one interviewee) that the OiRA report is considered to be a legal RA document, the OSH specialists were unsure of it and did not consider it 'legal'. As the owner of a small chemical company reported, they received 'oral' assurance from the SLI that they can use the tool, but still, there is some 'uncertainty' about this information as it is not 'publicly provided in written statement'. They further added that even though the SLI promotes usage of OiRA, after inspection, representatives of the SLI 'ordered to carry out a "proper" risk assessment'. Also, while not directly mentioned in interviews, it seems that the lack of specific tools for some sectors or appropriate tools to cover all the tasks performed in the workplace hindered interviewees to do a fully compliant RA.

In general, **interviewees in this study did not mention whether and how the OiRA documentation was used during inspections**. However, **several interviewees acknowledged and appreciated the usefulness of the OiRA tool in identifying occupational risks and providing relevant information on regulations — linking the risks with the existing legislation**. One interviewee, an OSH advisor delivering RAs for different small companies, highlighted that, despite using OiRA as a supplementary tool, it was valuable in offering extensive information on possible risks and legislative requirements. A survey respondent added that **'[OiRA] presents not only dry legal regulations but also explanations on how to act and/or what measures to take'**. Hence, OiRA's ability to remind users of various risks and provide focused, legally pertinent information was appreciated.

5.4.8 How and why is OiRA used with other RA tools?

Several interviewees mentioned using OiRA with other tools (eight interviewees); however, the reasons for combining OiRA with other tools varied. The most prevalent reason is a need to perform technical measurements. Additionally, some users claimed that they feared that OiRA would not be recognised as official proof for RA in general. Interestingly, some users were adding additional tools to cover specific thematic areas like psychosocial risks. Several users used OiRA on top of their valid RA to learn more about OSH and support their daily OSH management.

Companies reported combining OiRA tools with external OSH services to complement an RA's technical/physical aspects. That need was expressed by representatives of both small and large companies, suggesting that it can be a common company experience regardless of the company size. Indeed, several companies mention a lack of biochemical, chemical or technical assessments, such as measurements of noise, which they considered relevant to have a valid RA. For example, this was the case for a medium-sized construction company. For non-construction activities, the company conducted its RA using OiRA for its office, but an external OSH conducted the RA for all construction activities, despite the fact that there are several Lithuanian OiRA tools covering the construction sector. As mentioned by the interviewee, part of the assessment done by OSH external experts reviews available aspects of construction sites, such as vibrations, noise, light, temperature, machinery used and so on, which is not included in OiRA.

A similar situation was reported by a small library that decided to use OiRA for financial reasons instead of OSH external expert services. Even though the library was very satisfied with the general scope of the OiRA tool and the user friendliness of the tool, the company decided to request an additional budget for next year's operations so that the library can request the services of an OSH external expert for assessment of the level of light and noise, which require special equipment to conduct measurements. The library concluded that in these areas, they do not have the expertise to conduct measurements, and they do not have access to the relevant equipment.

Some external OSH experts who use OiRA for RA for their clients also combine them with other tools. For example, one external OSH expert claimed to use different parts of OiRA tools, depending on the assessment of each client's needs. Another OSH external expert claimed to use OiRA only as a secondary/supporting tool since, in her opinion, OiRA was not aligned with the 'General provisions on occupational risk assessment' (*Profesinės rizikos vertinimo bendraisiais nuostatais*, see section 2.1, Legal framework). During the interview, she claimed specifically that each RA should be finalised with the preparation of the Risk Assessment Card. However, in her opinion, the 'report', generated as an output of the OiRA assessment, does not cover such information.

Interviewees also highlighted situations when the company already had a valid RA, which was carried out several years previously but decided to use OiRA to complement their existing

approach or learn more about the environment's safety (three respondents). That was the case with the small trade union, which had carried out an RA with external experts in the past but decided to carry out an additional RA to check if they had any gaps in the current RA. In that case, they noted that they appreciated OiRA and its educational aspects and further reported that the RA results from OiRA and the one done by the external OSH expert were very similar.

A large company covering different sectors also decided to use OiRA to enrich its current approach. Given the company's size, they contract RAs externally. Additionally, the person responsible for the company's OSH also noted that no OiRA tool was dedicated to their sector. This company reported starting OiRA as an information-seeking exercise by combining OiRA for office work, OiRA for agriculture and OiRA for landscaping. Later, the company incorporated OiRA fully into their RA approach, and they claimed that: 'It is very useful per se, but it would be great if the RA done with OiRA would officially be qualified as the finalisation of the full RA, but this unfortunately is not always the case. Sometimes, you must use other experts for technical/physical assessments'.

Three OiRA users decided to use another tool apart from OiRA to include the topic of psychosocial risks in their RA. One large company from the manufacturing sector complemented OiRA with additional services of OSH external experts for a psychosocial RA (they also used external experts for technical RA). Further, a large educational establishment complemented its RA on psychosocial risks by using a questionnaire developed by the Institute of Hygiene. One large company in the law enforcement sector also complemented their OiRA RA with additional methods. This company reported performing an RA based on a questionnaire on the psychosocial risks based on methodologies presented in 2022 in the OSH courses organised by the Lithuanian Association of Ergonomics and Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. They adapted these methods to their particular needs and used them in different areas of their establishment.

Overall, medium and large companies were more often found to combine OiRA with other approaches, however not exclusively. Small companies also reported using OiRA with other tools, especially to cover technical measurement.

Using OiRA tools with other tools could be considered from two perspectives. First, it could be claimed that OiRA tools in Lithuania have significant gaps in coverage of technical/physical risks. That gap can prevent companies from using OiRA, or if they decide to use OiRA, they feel the need to supplement RAs with these measurements, most commonly with the support of OSH service providers. Therefore, it could be argued that OiRA does not fully respond to the company's needs in relation to RA. However, it should be acknowledged that many OiRA tools in companies efficiently support RA to some extent, which could be covered in-house. In these cases, **OiRA tools, rather than providing a free-of-charge experience with RA, contribute to reducing the costs of RA to a minimum, which needs to be covered with the support of OSH experts.** Additionally, cases where OiRA was used as an extra step to verify the current approach to RA should also be assessed as positive, as in such cases, OiRA enriches the RA approach and improves how OSH is dealt with within the companies.

5.5 How is OiRA assessed?

Overall, OiRA is a well-regarded tool, although it has its challenges. The assessment depended very much on who used the tools and in what context. For this reason, some users regarded the same features as positive and others as negative. This, for example, was the case in relation to the complexity of statements and information given. In some instances, information was perceived as not detailed enough, while for others, the statements and information were too detailed and too long.

Another example is the tool's practicality and usability. While some users found it very helpful, guiding them and describing it as easy to use, challenges emerged in correctly answering the statements. Whether this was based on the tool's usability or a lack of OSH knowledge and information was not entirely clear.

Overall, the reported strengths and weaknesses of OiRA should be viewed mostly in individual contexts, such as who performs the RA and where and how it is performed.

Generally, **OiRA was appreciated for its free-of-charge nature**, and interviewees saw it as supporting them in switching from external to internal RAs. Most users also found it **easy to navigate and appreciated its flexibility**. It was also complimented for **effectively linking risks to relevant legal**

documents and regulations, enhancing its educational value and practical applicability — it was generally appreciated for its guidance, educational value and comprehensive information provision.

5.5.1 Aspects appreciated by OiRA users

▪ Providing OSH guidance and raising awareness and knowledge

Companies assessed OiRA as a tool that supports OSH knowledge and guidance. It was reported to be relevant for individuals conducting RA for the first time without extensive OSH knowledge and for end users with more advanced OSH knowledge. Indeed, interviewees without OSH experience valued OiRA and its detailed information, which users find beneficial in enhancing their understanding of OSH regulations and best practices by informing them about additional risks that should have been considered. Further, OiRA's practical design makes the RA process clearer and more manageable for some users. Users found that the tool effectively guided them through each assessment step, ensuring no critical aspect was overlooked. These insights may indicate that users not only appreciate the OSH knowledge within the tool but also the fact that the tool structure enhances the learning experience.

In addition, the tool's **effectiveness in identifying the most high-risk tasks and activities and preparing preventive measures was noted.** In this instance, OiRA helped pinpoint potential hazards and formulated actionable plans to mitigate these risks. This dual functionality is invaluable for individuals delivering RAs internally but without extensive OSH knowledge, as it provides a structured approach to safety and health that might otherwise be challenging to achieve without expert guidance.

Further, **even for users with more extensive OSH knowledge who usually keep up with the latest OSH-related news, OiRA was reported to add value by enhancing their understanding of workplace safety and health.** Interviewees with OSH experience claimed that OiRA has proven highly effective in **providing another perspective on OSH aspects that they considered in the past.** Those were identified through different statements, such as helping to 'rethink' the risks, 'consider alternative scenarios', 'revitalising' the knowledge, 'refocusing', and 'the assessment and reminding them of all relevant aspects of RA'.

For example, one company noted that OiRA serves as a valuable reminder of potential risks that might otherwise be unnoticed, even for those with more expertise in OSH. The detailed questionnaires and systematic approach ensure that a wide array of potential hazards are considered, **leading to a more thorough identification of risks.** Another interviewee seconded this by recognising that the tool covered a wide range of possible risks, as it helps to 'rethink' and concentrate all the necessary information for RA (external expert for a small agricultural company). Another company mentioned that using OiRA did not provide any new knowledge, but nevertheless, it allowed the company to recall risks related to details about the risks drivers face from vibrations caused by a vehicle's motor and to act accordingly.

This idea of stimulating more expanded, nuanced and renewed assessments, in general, is mentioned several more times, for example, through statements such as:

A lot of ideas have come up that we hadn't even thought of before - a lot of dangers; when you read the explanations, it really does give you a lot of new ideas. ...

Internal OSH expert – company owner, car repair, garage holders/car repair OiRA tool

and

The tool has plenty of information, and you can dig deeper and deeper to find more information on the topic. It is very comprehensive in this respect.

Internal OSH expert – deputy director for economic affairs, secondary level school, education OiRA tool

Those assets of OiRA can be further linked with the already noted **appreciation for linking the risks with the current legislation**, which was a highly regarded OiRA feature mentioned by several interviewees.

- **Usability and ease of navigation**

OiRA has been widely recognised for its **user-friendly interface and ease of navigation**, making it accessible and efficient for various users, including those without specialised OSH expertise. Users consistently highlighted that working with OiRA is straightforward and intuitive, allowing them to engage with the software without significant obstacles.

Multiple interviewees indicated that the tool is designed to facilitate ease of use from the outset.

One user noted that 'in general, it was rather easy to work with the tool' (an internal expert for a medium-sized automation company). Indeed, many users shared the common experience of the initial interaction with OiRA being smooth and manageable. This ease of use is a significant strength, as it lowers the entry barrier for individuals and organisations who choose to perform RAs internally but may not have extensive experience in the field.

Another frequently mentioned advantage is the **software's clarity**. Users appreciated that 'everything was easy and clear'. This clarity extends to the registration and connection process, with another user mentioning that the tool is 'easy to use, register, and connect' (internal and external experts for different companies).

Despite its overall simplicity, some users noted a **learning curve associated with fully understanding all of OiRA's functionalities**. One interviewee pointed out that while OiRA is an easy tool, 'it takes a bit of time to get to know the platform, to understand its functionalities' (internal expert for a large construction company). Therefore, users still need to invest some time familiarising themselves with the full range of its features. However, this learning period does not significantly detract from the overall positive experience, as users generally find the effort worthwhile once they become accustomed to the tool.

This positive user experience also extends to the completion of RAs. One user reflected that 'overall the experience was considered positive — it was easy to use the tool and complete the RA' (internal expert for a medium-sized public institution), pointing to the ease of use that translates directly into practical outcomes.

Importantly, in some cases, **technical and usability problems also arise**, particularly regarding tool handling, skipped questions and repetitive elements. Some users suggested very specific issues with the software, suggesting that some guidance in the form of instruction/tutorials could support software navigation (see *Improvement in support for OiRA users* in section 5.5.2).

- **Action plans**

One of the most complimented features of **OiRA is its ability to generate action plans**. While some shortcomings were identified, it was still an appreciated feature with a potential for more widespread use. One user stated:

We downloaded all documents at the end of the assessment and were highly satisfied with the reports and Excel sheets that indicated responsible persons and timeframes for actions. These forms were used to present information to the director and all staff members, showcasing the tool's role in structured and organised risk management

Internal OSH expert – human resource manager responsible for OSH, metal manufacturing, office work and manufacture of furniture OiRA tools

Another user — from a small education establishment — highlighted the tool's effectiveness in creating comprehensive RA plans for specific subdivisions of their institution. Making general parts applicable to the whole institution while specifying other parts for subdivisions was particularly beneficial. This adaptability was seen as a significant advantage, allowing for more precise and tailored RA processes.

As this interviewee highlighted, OiRA offers flexibility, allowing users to print and utilise action plans as needed. However, as indicated in section 5.4.5, Working with the reports OiRA generates, there was also a range of critical voices regarding the usability of the reports generated by OiRA. Many users find these reports confusing and unfriendly, making it difficult to interpret and apply the results effectively.

▪ **Comprehensiveness and flexibility**

Interviewees frequently mentioned the issue of the comprehensiveness of OiRA tools. OiRA users expressed contradictory opinions about the tool's complexity. In this regard, the feedback was very diverse. While some users mentioned that OiRA tools are too comprehensive (mainly small and medium companies), others described them as just right or even as not comprehensive enough (only larger companies and external OSH experts).

Further, **some larger companies reported OiRA tools as inadequate for more complex and hazardous industries or various roles in one company.** Some interviewees criticised the tools' lack of specificity and overly simplistic approach. Such a concern was raised, for example, by an internal OSH expert delivering RAs for a medium-sized automation sector company, saying that 'OiRA is too simple,' making it 'not exhaustive, incomplete, not sufficient for such complex and hazardous activities'. Similarly, RA was mentioned as needing to cover more diverse roles in more complex companies. For example, one educational institution mentioned several roles (teachers, cleaners, kitchen staff, etc.) and difficulty in properly addressing RA for all roles, given the scope of OiRA tools.

Feedback on tool comprehensiveness also varied across different OiRA tools. One company reported using the OiRA office work tool and finds it very effective. This tool is valued for its detailed legal information, making it easy for the company to meet all OSH legal requirements. The team was very happy with the tool and used all its features to conduct thorough RA. However, their experience with the OiRA warehousing tool was described as disappointing. They found the tool too simple and not suitable for their needs. It was described as lacking depth and insufficient for complex and hazardous activities, and as a result, the company had to rely on other sources and methods to carry out proper RAs:

Now it mainly asks very simple things, such as risk of slippage, sharp things, falling objects and lighting, but there are dozens and even hundreds of various more complicated risks and hazards, which are not even mentioned in the OiRA tools. ... For example, if you take a 'welding with gas' – there could be dozens of different types of risks associated with this activity.

Internal OSH expert, import, wholesale and service/maintenance of electrification and automation equipment, office work and warehousing OiRA tools

On the other hand, several interviewees pointed out that **OiRA tools are often perceived as overly comprehensive, especially by interviewees with limited experience on OSH and RA.** While a thorough RA is important, the sheer volume of questions was reported to be overwhelming. One interviewee — an external OSH service provider for a small woodworking company, noted: 'The tool might be evaluated as too comprehensive. It took a long time, and there were many questions that were not relevant for the company'.

This sentiment is echoed across multiple interviews, where users were considering numerous questions irrelevant to their specific context. For example, in the case of a small agricultural company, the tool's

comprehensiveness meant that it covered many areas that did not pertain to their operations — they skipped the questions (showcasing the adaptability and flexibility of the tool), but such a shortcoming was still reported.

On the other hand, interviewees also frequently mentioned tools as being comprehensive, highlighting the strengths of using such an exhaustive tool. Several interviewees praised OiRA for its broad coverage of topics and risks, emphasising its ability to address a wide array of potential hazards effectively. This extent and scope were recognised as a significant strength if they matched workplace needs, facilitating more thorough RAs across diverse sectors and activities.

For example, one interviewee highlighted the tool's capability to match their specific needs, stating:

... the content matches our needs. Topics and risks covered are sufficient; if something is not relevant, we skip those questions. Content is rather detailed, but we like this because 'it is better, when it is more – you can choose what is the best for you'.

Internal OSH expert – head of OSH department coordinating RA, law enforcement, office work OiRA tool

In general, despite the drawbacks as indicated above, **the complexity of the OiRA tool seems to be an asset.** At the same time, it must be acknowledged that it **may be challenging for some companies.** **The response to this issue seems to be greater tool flexibility.** Indeed, section 5.4, How is OiRA used?, refers to different elements of flexibility in OiRA. These aspects include who can be involved in completing the RA with OiRA, how much time a company wants to commit to completing an OiRA RA, how the company wants to approach completing the OiRA RA (by chronological order, selecting specific modules), if the company wants to address all the questions or only the most relevant ones, and/or if the company desires to incorporate their own risks (although no companies reported doing that). In that way, **conducting an RA with OiRA could be as comprehensive as the company wishes.**

▪ **Positive feedback on the office work tool**

The clarity and adequacy of the office-specific OiRA tool were particularly appreciated. According to one interviewee:

The 'Office' OiRA tool is very clear, all the questions are understandable. There are enough questions included to assess all the relevant risks. For example, sections on smoking facilities and resting rooms, all of that was very clear. There were also some sections not relevant, for example, cleaning services are subcontracted to the external company, so we did not need to assess risks there.

Internal OSH expert – head of OSH and environmental protection department, construction sector, office work OiRA tool

This clarity is especially important, given the reported widespread use of the office work tool across different sectors within the study sample.

Furthermore, the tool's detailed content is tailored to meet specific areas that are often related to office work, enhancing its practicality and relevance. Interviewees highlighted the appropriateness of the content for their roles, such as those involving client interactions and document handling.

5.5.2 Ideas for further development and improvement

The analysis of the interviews points to some areas of improvement for OiRA, which can be classified into three main categories: (1) **tool content**, (2) **support in using OiRA**, (3) **expansion of coverage and collaboration**. Overall, all of the suggested improvements, either mentioned directly or suggested based on the analysis of the data collected in this study, aim to increase the use of OiRA and also improve the end-user experience.

▪ Tool content & length

Redundancy of questions

Repetition was one of the issues mentioned in interviews. Users reported **encountering numerous similar questions, which they found unnecessary and time-consuming**. Two interviewees remarked that what they did not like (in the context of an overall positive assessment of OiRA) was that there were too many repetitive questions. This redundancy not only prolonged the assessment process but also potentially frustrated users. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that this was reported especially by larger organisations with diverse or complex work environments which are not the primary target group of the tool.

The excessive length and repetitive nature of the questionnaire also led to incomplete assessments. In one case, a user attempting to use the tool for 'Educational establishments' for medium-sized education establishments found it so cumbersome that they did not finish the questionnaire. They described their experience, stating: 'There were too many questions, the tool was too long'. This ultimately rendered the tool less effective, as incomplete assessments might fail to provide the comprehensive risk evaluation intended.

▪ Improvement in support for OiRA users - Requests for more support and training

Despite the OiRA tool's reported benefits, several users have reported **significant challenges related to its usability and the lack of adequate support and training**. These issues, while not the most frequently mentioned, **impacted OiRA's effectiveness and the overall user experience**. However, it is important to note that those issues may be caused by individual predispositions and capacities, as they were only reported by a few interviewees. There were no specific types of companies that required support, but some small and some larger companies reported such a need. It is expected that those with less extensive OiRA experience (e.g. first-time users) will benefit the most from such support.

Some users reported insufficient training and support as a significant barrier to using the OiRA tool effectively. One interviewee pointed out that they probably did not work correctly with the tool. However, the problem was that there was neither thorough training nor a clear indication of where to find help in case of any uncertainties while using the tool. Another highlighted their struggle with the tool, stating that there was no one to ask, so they tried to manage the issues themselves but were unsuccessful. The problems interviewees encountered, and for which they may use additional support, included, for example, uncertainty in how to use OiRA overall and how to answer questions — briefly or in detail. This points to two different issues: on the one hand, users seemed to have doubts related to OSH, and on the other hand, users actually encountered insecurity on how to deal with the process in the software.

A particularly illustrative example comes from an interviewee working in an educational institution that employs 400 people. The interviewee indicated that they had to complete the RA for three different educational levels separately: pre-school, secondary, and vocational education. Despite the working conditions and environments being almost identical across these levels, the interviewee had to answer nearly a hundred questions three times. This repetitive task was described as 'very inconvenient, exhausting, and time-consuming'. Yet, possibly for formal reasons, RA needed to be conducted separately for each education level (i.e. each institution). However, the user was not aware of the option to copy the assessment from the ones done previously which would have solved his issue of repetitiveness and excessive work.

Overall, to summarise, support could be targeted to clarify the following issues as indicated by the interviewees:

Box 1. Issues indicated by OiRA users to be addressed through additional training/support

- Users were not aware that there is a possibility to **clone an RA and start editing it then**, causing them to repeat the whole questionnaire in certain situations.
- They also reported to be unsure about the possibilities to **make some parts of the questionnaire applicable** to the whole company (e.g. more general information) and some to more specific workplaces or sub-divisions.
- Users wished to **change the name of the RA** but did not know how to do so.
- First-time users **felt lost in how to navigate the tool**, which made them feel discouraged.
- Less experienced users were not fully aware of **how to skip elements that were not useful** to their assessments.
- There was a lack of understanding **of the different kinds of outputs produced, specifically this seemed to be valid for the overall general report**: for example, what is the role of a section in the full report titled 'Identified risks/problems, that are still not solved' (*Pavojai/problemos, kurios buvo 'nustatytos' ir kurios dar nėra išspręstos*).
- Risks that were identified as 'solved' when filling in the questionnaire were reported to appear in the report as 'not solved'. This may point to users not being aware about the functionality of 'high priority risks' that always show up requiring a solution, never mind if the risk is assessed as being under control or not.
- User reported **not knowing how to fill in comments boxes and for what purpose**.

Separately, as was indicated by one study participant, that the legal information is not always up to date. While most interviewees highly appreciated OiRA's ability to link risks with the current legislation, it may be the case that the updates are not provided in an appropriately timely manner (the example given was guidelines on assessing ergonomic risk factors that had been revised at national level, yet it was not (yet) reflected in the tool). Considering the limited resources of the SLI, responsible for the updates, this critique should be approached cautiously. However, considering the importance users give to the information provided in OiRA, specifically for legal aspects, it is worth keeping this in mind.

▪ Improvements concerning broader scope and increased collaboration

Broader coverage of sectors

One of the challenges faced by users of OiRA is the lack of tools tailored to specific sectors. This inadequacy is particularly problematic in larger companies with a range of workplaces where multiple tasks coexist, necessitating an RA approach that addresses the diverse nature of their operations. On the other hand, it needs to be pointed out that the larger companies do not fall under the primary target group of OiRA, and their needs have not been considered when developing the software and the tools' content. Such a shortcoming — lack of specific tools — was not mentioned by the interviewees conducting RAs for smaller enterprises.

Considering this, **adding tools for more sectors may prove beneficial for OiRA development.** Focusing on public sector needs might yield the most immediate benefits. Study findings suggest that public sector entities often need reliable, free and easy-to-use RA tools to conduct the RA internally within existing budget constraints. They also appear to be more receptive to using OiRA. Developing new tools for critical public sectors could provide much-needed support and further add to the tool's popularity. This process is already ongoing with the reported development of tools for the health and care sector.

Additionally, **including modules from other sectors in a tool (e.g. modules on office work in other tools)** could help address the needs of workplaces with diverse roles (even in the case of smaller enterprises). A modular approach would allow users to create more customised RAs better tailored to their specific organisational needs.

Study participants also indicated that OiRA **does not respond to their needs for a psychosocial RA**, recognising that they must resort to other RA methods (three interviews, see section 5.4.8, How and why is OiRA used with other RA tools?). As a survey respondent indicated: ‘The methodological basis for assessing psychosocial risk factors is very weak’, pointing to OiRA’s shortcomings in this regard. This is especially important, as those kinds of risks are present in all workplaces, and therefore their significance in OiRA’s usefulness should not be overlooked.

Considering the use of certain OiRA features in Lithuania

The insights from this study show that many OSH services use OiRA to assess risks for their clients. A collaborative approach was also mentioned, working jointly on the RA. **OiRA offers the possibility to facilitate this process by enabling the OSH Service feature at the country level.** The feature allows users to invite an external OSH service to check and correct the RA as well as to validate it.

On the other hand, the **learning effect that users reported can be expanded by enabling the training feature, which allows users to go through the full content of the tool by clicking on a set of slides.** Such training could enhance commitment from employers who still do not conduct the RA themselves and would also help employers to involve workers in the RA process.

5.5.3 Would users recommend OiRA to others?

Feedback from the interviews is in line with the OiRA statistics reported in section 3.2, Use of OiRA tools, with a majority of users recommending the tools. Multiple interviewees expressed satisfaction with the tools’ ease of use and effectiveness. For example, one interviewee stated:

Good, easy to use, would recommend.

Internal OSH expert, public sector, office work and COVID-19 OiRA tools

Another interviewee, from a large public institution, echoed this sentiment by saying: ‘We are satisfied and would recommend using OiRA widely’.

Additionally, one interviewee highlighted the cost-saving aspect and satisfaction with the tool in the important context of its usability for internal RA, by stating:

Why do you need to hire external service providers if you can use such a brilliant tool?

Internal OSH expert, education sector, manufacture of furniture and education OiRA tools

While there were some different options, in general, the assessment of the tool is positive, with users appreciating its user-friendly nature and practical benefits.

6 Companies not using OiRA

The six non-OiRA users interviewed for this report demonstrate a diverse array of approaches to occupational RA, characterised by customised internal procedures, adherence to external standards, hybrid assessment strategies and digital tools.

Several non-OiRA users follow external standards and guidelines, adapting them to their internal procedures. At the same time, a common characteristic among non-OiRA users is the reliance on

internal procedures tailored to their specific needs. These companies developed RA processes that align with their operational requirements and industry standards. In addition, some companies in this category employ a hybrid approach that combines internal assessments with external evaluations. The list below summarises the different approaches that these companies have used for conducting an RA.

Small-size companies:

- One company has its own internal procedure for conducting RAs. The procedure is carried out by the interviewee, an OSH specialist and sub-contractors. While they do not mention specific tools, they use RA cards and a table with risks. They follow the parent company's policies (in Poland), ISO 4001 standards, and conduct monthly inspections.
- One company inherited and uses long questionnaires developed by the previous OSH specialist, which are reviewed annually. The current OSH specialist conducts these reviews, sometimes consulting with the director or managers. The questionnaires' content follows guidelines based on Lithuanian legislation as well as instructions from the company headquarters in Germany.
- One company performs a general RA by functions/positions and workplaces, separate RAs for specific objects and a psychosocial RA. The OSH specialist and the leading engineer conduct these assessments, with input from employees through a questionnaire done in Microsoft Forms. They also use Excel sheets. The input comes from legislation, descriptions of good practices from other countries and information from the SLI web page.

Medium-size companies:

- One company hires external OSH service providers for the conduction of their RA. External experts and the interviewee conduct the assessments together. They use questionnaires for employees and also conduct on-the-spot visits. The guidelines they follow are the recommendations and plans provided by the external service providers.
- One company uses a hybrid approach with internal assessments and external service providers for specific tasks. The interviewee conducts psychosocial and ergonomic risk evaluations while external OSH service providers handle specific tasks. They use questionnaires for psychosocial RA and do not have special instruments for ergonomic and physical assessments. The guidelines followed are the ones discussed in Legal Order No. A1-457/V-961 (Ministry of Social Security and Labour and Ministry of Health, 2012) and psychosocial risks are assessed using questionnaires received from colleagues from other companies.
- One company is currently transitioning from external RA services to in-house RA. The new quality, environment and OSH manager will be responsible for conducting these assessments.

Importantly, findings on the non-OiRA users should consider overall difficulties in recruiting companies involved in RA and respondents capable of providing specific information on the RA approach present in the company. Indeed, as presented in section 4.3, Categories and analytical lenses, recruitment targeting SMEs performing RA was challenging to the extent that even several interviews were excluded from the sample since respondents did not have sufficient information about RA in their establishments. In these cases, mostly it became clear that RA was outsourced to external experts, and internally in the company, there was not enough knowledge of the process. Based on these observations from the fieldwork, there can be three considerations. First, the coverage of RA among SMEs may be limited, which is in line with ESENER data as reported above. Second, in many cases, SMEs rely on OSH external experts. Third, often, when using the services of external experts, companies had low awareness about RA and OSH. **At the same time, it should also be acknowledged that it was very difficult to recruit OiRA respondents.** However, in comparison, there were no difficulties in including respondents in the sample, and all recruited OiRA interviewees had a correct understanding of what a RA is and thus were able to provide insight on the RA steps taken by them.

6.1.1 What motivates companies to carry out RAs?

As in the case for OiRA users, the motivations of non-OiRA users for conducting RAs are generally legal compliance and worker safety. A difference in the case of companies not using OiRA was the important addition of adherence to parent company procedures.

Those motivations were well illustrated in the example of the Lithuanian branch of an international petrol company. Here, their main motive for conducting RAs was to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. The interviewee described their internal procedure for RA as part of their OSH plan, which includes responsibilities assigned to different contractors and sub-contractors and detailed RAs for specific workplaces and tasks. Additionally, these procedures are designed to align with the standards and policies of the mother company, especially here, when the interviewee reported that the entity is compliant with stringent OSH standards, such as ISO 4001. Compliance with these procedures ensures that the company not only meets national regulations but also adheres to international standards, improving safety and operational credibility.

It may be observed, to a degree, that the companies in the sample generally show an interest in worker wellbeing, often extending beyond mere legal obligations. This commitment is especially apparent in two cases. The interviewee quoted above further indicated that a significant motivation for conducting RAs is the care and safety of workers. They directly mentioned the importance of a safe working environment and the role of RAs in identifying and mitigating potential hazards. In another company, employees are required to fill in questionnaires daily or almost daily, recognising the importance of dynamic risk management at their particular workplace. This level of diligence exceeds legislative requirements.

6.1.2 How do the companies find information about OSH and RA approaches?

How a company organises its OSH responsibilities heavily influences the approach to finding OSH and RA information. Companies generally fall into the following categories: (1) those with internal OSH specialists, (2) those relying on external OSH service providers, and (3) those that are required to follow the guidelines of their parent company. This diversity impacts the overall approach to finding and utilising information and sources and highlights that there is generally **no single source of information for OSH and RA; instead, companies tailor their methods to best suit their specific needs and organisational structures.**

A small company in smart technologies that conducts the RA internally uses an Excel sheet to catalogue various job roles and describe all possible risks associated with each position. This tool's creation involves consulting valid legislation, reading good practice descriptions from a range of providers, and utilising all information available on the SLI webpage, including recommendations, questionnaires and legislation.

Companies that hire external OSH service providers delegate the responsibility of sourcing and managing OSH information to these external entities. For example, one company uses external services for their RA, including checking all necessary documentation and providing OSH training.

For companies that are part of larger international organisations, the sourcing and implementation of OSH information are often guided by the parent company's standardised procedures and guidelines so that all branches, regardless of location, adhere to the same high standards of safety and health management.

6.1.3 Who makes the final decision about a tool, and why are specific tools selected?

The decision-making process for selecting and implementing RA approaches and tools **varies significantly among companies**. It is influenced by various factors, including the company's internal structure, specific needs and regulatory requirements.

Again, **in companies that are part of larger international organisations, the decision regarding OSH tools and RA approaches is predetermined by the parent company**, as discussed above.

In companies where the decision-making process is more local, the selection of OSH tools and RA approaches is often influenced by the company's specific needs and preferences. For example, one company decided and designed a method that best suits its needs and developed a detailed internal process for RA, including general RAs by functions and positions and specific RAs for individual projects. The decision to implement an internal, tailored digital RA tool for employees was driven by the need to ensure higher OSH standards and enhance safety practices within the company. Previously, the company relied on paper forms for RA, but this method proved ineffective as employees frequently neglected to use them. The new tool is recognised as instead a preventive measure implemented in the ongoing OSH processes:

This digital tool for employees serves more like a risk prevention tool, but also it is a kind of a daily RA process.

OSH specialist, smart engineering sector

Another company, dissatisfied with the services of their external provider, decided to bring the RA process in-house with the arrival of a new quality, environment and OSH manager. The decision to switch to an internal RA process was driven by the need for a more comprehensive and tailored assessment that better suited their operational realities.

In a company where the RA process is hybrid, combining internal evaluations with external services, different tasks are performed by different people. The interviewee, who is not a certified OSH specialist, performs psychosocial and ergonomic risk evaluations for administrative and general educational staff. For specific vocational roles, they hire external OSH service providers. This hybrid approach was chosen because the internal evaluations are intended for internal use and gathering information on the existing OSH situation. In contrast, the evaluations performed by external providers ensure adequate quality and compliance with legal standards. The interviewee recognises that they are not certified to perform all the RAs, as legally required. At the same time, they want to have more in-depth knowledge about particular OSH issues at the workplace — such as psychosocial risks, which are not part of their 'official' RA. Separating the two provides more comprehensive data on possible risks, complementing each other.

Some companies opt to hire external OSH service providers for their RA needs. This decision is influenced by efficiency, objectivity and the lack of internal expertise. For example, one company from the sales sector chose to use external OSH service providers because they considered this approach to be time-saving. Additionally, they believed that an external evaluator could provide a more objective view than an insider who might overlook specific details due to familiarity with the workplace, such as high steps or low ceilings. The approach was reported to be beneficial, as it raised awareness of the internal OSH specialist and all company staff, and it contributed to identifying a number of previously unknown risks.

The variation in decision-making processes reveals that companies, in general, were seeking solutions that offer customisation and flexibility, allowing them to meet specific operational needs effectively. The interviews also indicated that similar to OiRA users, the legality of RAs is an important factor in the choice of approach.

6.1.4 What do the respondents appreciate in the tools used and approaches taken?

Companies generally express satisfaction with their current RA methods, particularly when these align with national legislation and international standards. For instance, one company highlighted that their questionnaires cover all necessary aspects of OSH as per Lithuanian legislation, ensuring comprehensive risk management. 'In general, they [the company] are satisfied with the content of the tools (questionnaires) used' (small electric equipment repair and maintenance service company), the interviewee noted. Further, the company that follows procedures based on the parent company's petrol-chemical standards and ISO 4001 standards values the methodical and thorough nature of their procedures, which include responsibilities by different contractors, detailed RA cards and regular updates to accommodate changes in the workplace. The respondent emphasised: 'The procedure is designed according to the main headquarters rules and ISO standards, so the content is very detailed and fit for purpose'.

At the same time, companies appreciate the flexibility of their internal procedures, which allows them to tailor RAs to specific projects and conditions. The company mentioned further above used a digital tool, which was a suitable solution within a dynamically changing working environment, as with each new project, risks and tasks were up to change. The company highlighted its ability to reassess risks dynamically, especially when additional sub-contractors are involved.

The main challenges we have in our environment is continuously changing risks while working ... we need to reassess risks again as the nature of the work changes.

OSH specialist, smart engineering sector

The satisfaction is grounded in this adaptable and responsive nature, which best suits the company's ever-changing environment.

Companies that prefer hiring external OSH service providers for conducting RAs appreciate the expertise, objectivity and efficiency they bring. This fresh perspective of external experts helps the companies identify risks that might be overlooked by internal staff.

The satisfaction expressed by companies with their RA and OSH systems points to the effectiveness of comprehensive, flexible and integrated approaches in managing workplace safety. In companies not using OiRA, flexibility in RA processes allowed them to adapt to changing work environments and specific project needs, enhancing their responsiveness to emerging risks while simultaneously aligning RA procedures with national and international standards was appreciated and required.

6.1.5 What would they change or improve in their tools?

Several key areas emerged where the interviewees would like to see changes or improvements in their RA tools and approaches. At the same time, they are mostly satisfied with what they have chosen or what is currently implemented. It is important to note that in some instances, changes are not possible at the level of particular companies, as they are branches of bigger corporations and, therefore, any change would need to come from this level of management. Companies generally seek more efficient and flexible RA tools and continuous support from external providers.

A significant challenge identified by one company is the need for a more efficient reassessment and approval process in dynamically changing work environments, which current procedures do not facilitate or support:

If, during the work, we realise that we need an additional sub-contractor to perform an additional function, we need to reassess risks again as the nature of the work changes. If this happens, we have to redo the RA and send the OSH plan to the main work organiser for approval. Sometimes, these works need to be carried out urgently and in one day, so while you carry out the aforementioned procedure, the work is already completed.

OSH specialist, petrol sector

This example suggests the need for tools that can accommodate rapid changes and approvals.

Similarly to some companies using OiRA, one company shifted from using external RA services to conducting RA in-house. This decision was driven by the desire for more tailored and continuous risk management. The decision was taken because the external provider only evaluated fixed workplaces, while many workers were working remotely and performing various tasks in various environments. In addition, there was a lack of feedback — the external service provider evaluated the workplaces and provided conclusions and recommendations, but there was no further follow-up on the process. By the time of the interview, the company had already decided to try OiRA to support the internal process, but they had not yet used it.

6.1.6 How are workers involved in RA?

Workers' and other stakeholders' engagement in the RA process is multifaceted and involves different feedback mechanisms, direct participation, the use of technology and surveys. In general, workers were engaged in RA procedures in all the interviewed companies, and employee feedback was reported as being included in the company's RA process (five interviews).

When companies sometimes engage external OSH service providers to conduct comprehensive RA, workers are involved through questionnaires and on-site evaluations. One interviewee described their process by stating that they hired external OSH service providers and conducted an RA in several steps:

First, they did comprehensive RA with the workers using a survey, covering various issues, starting from psychological harassment and finishing with physical and ergonomic environment. Later, together with the external RA company, they visited all subdivisions throughout the country.

OSH specialist, interior products retail

A survey was also employed in the case of another company, where a worker without specific OSH training decided to conduct RA on their own. Here, psychosocial and environmental surveys were conducted to assess the workplace climate and identify any risks. These surveys were based on questionnaires that covered various aspects of the working environment, including relationships, remuneration and working conditions. As noted by the interviewee, they annually repeat the so-called microclimate evaluation survey in the company. The survey results are then analysed to address any issues promptly and maintain a positive working environment. While the results cannot be considered 'legally valid' due to the lack of OSH certification of the person performing it, it was apparent that employees' opinions were important in overall RA and OSH procedures.

Implementing technology — digital templates — was another method mentioned in one interview to engage workers in the RA process. Although, as an interviewee from this company reported, this task was not popular among workers, in their opinion, it significantly contributed to maintaining high OSH standards by ensuring that risks were documented and assessed consistently and immediately in a dynamic workplace environment of this particular company.

In one smaller company, the close-knit structure allows for daily monitoring and collaborative planning of RA activities. The OSH specialist reported often working closely with employees and management to ensure that all potential risks are continuously assessed and mitigated. They noted that:

In such a small company, things come up daily and are dealt with, and therefore, it is enough to make a more thorough review once a year.

OSH specialist, maintenance of electric equipment sector

In this instance, according to the interviewee, the daily interaction and monitoring by the OSH specialist ensured that risks were managed in real time rather than periodically, which was closer to the company's needs. Additionally, if any uncertainties appear, they are clarified through consultation with the director and managers. So, while the employees were not necessarily approached directly to conduct the RA, their daily close interactions were deemed very informative for the overall RA process and OSH improvements.

6.1.7 Would they be interested in OiRA?

From the interviews, it is clear that **awareness about OiRA varies significantly among companies**.

Some companies not using OiRA were aware of its existence but learned about it only very recently through seminars or presentations by the SLI. For instance, one interviewee mentioned hearing about OiRA during an SLI seminar a few months previously and expressed an intention to try it, particularly due to a new tool relevant to gas stations.

Others were completely unaware of OiRA until the interview. One OSH specialist from a small company had no prior knowledge of OiRA but expressed interest after learning about it and considering using it internally to ensure compliance.

For those who had prior contact with OiRA, the experiences and perceptions were mixed. One interviewee, who had checked OiRA four years ago, found that it did not meet all their needs at the time due to the limited availability of tools in Lithuania. Despite this, there was recognition that the situation had improved recently, with more tools becoming available.

Several interviewees were motivated to try OiRA due to the lack of alternative RA tools and the inefficiencies associated with external service providers. An interesting example has emerged of a company transitioning from using external OSH services to managing their OSH internally with the help of OiRA. This case illustrates the practical benefits and considerations of such a switch. As previously discussed, this company initially relied on external OSH service providers. However, they were dissatisfied with the limited scope and lack of feedback from these external providers. Seeking a more tailored and responsive approach, the company explored various alternatives. In their search, they identified a lack of suitable and cost-effective RA tools in Lithuania. The person responsible for OSH and RA within the company had been following EU-OSHA news and was aware of the OiRA availability in Lithuania. Initially, only a few OiRA tools were accessible, but the recent expansion of available tools made OiRA an attractive option. A few months back, the company's OSH manager attended an OiRA SLI seminar. Following this seminar, they decided to trial three specific OiRA tools: 'Scaffolding', 'Work in confined spaces', and 'Office work', which were relevant to their operations. Although they have not yet started using these tools, they are optimistic about the support and advice available from the SLI. Interestingly, the company's decision to volunteer for the study was driven by a desire to express their need for more specialised OiRA tools, to address 'working with hot objects/environments' and 'lifting', which are essential for manufacturing companies like theirs. They hope their feedback will be taken into account by the SLI to expand and enhance the national OiRA toolset.

Despite this interest, notable concerns could hinder the adoption of OiRA. The **fear of an immediate obligation to conduct RA upon registration** was a significant deterrent for some — as one specific interviewee pointed out, they were concerned that if they registered, they would be required to conduct the RA using this tool from now on. They also pointed out that it is possible that others may feel

discouraged for the same reason. Additionally, while improving, the current range of tools was still seen as not covering sufficient areas/sectors.

Similarly, it has to be reiterated that **not all companies can freely choose the RA methods**. If the company follows the procedures of the parent company, its interest in other tools might be diminished, as it is not the one making the decisions on OSH procedures at the company. So, while one interviewee who represented such a company expressed interest, it is doubtful that they can introduce OiRA as a practice.

7 Comparative findings

In this chapter, we present a comparative analysis of the findings established from interviews with two groups of companies: those using OiRA, and those not using OiRA but employing different techniques for RA. Concretely, this section explores how various motivations, challenges and approaches to RA play out across the study sample, providing insights into the adoption and advantages of different RA methodologies.

It is essential to interpret the findings with caution. Based on a small sample size, the purpose of this qualitative study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the wide range of practices rather than being able to offer generalisations. Additionally, the study sample only includes companies that conduct RAs, contrasting with the broader ESENER data that indicate that 38.3% of companies in Lithuania do not perform OSH RAs at all, rising to 52.9% among small companies (EU-OSHA, 2019b). In this regard, it has to be taken into account that the results presented here stem from companies generally performing better in OSH than the overall average.

Finally, challenges that came up during the recruitment and possibly added a certain bias in the interviewed group need to be considered.

7.1 Motivations to carry out the RA and opt for a specific method

The motivations for conducting RA in companies using and not using OiRA exhibit significant similarities, albeit with slight differences in emphasis and additional factors.

Legal compliance and regulatory pressures emerge as primary motivators for both groups. Companies undertake RA to align with national legislation and recommendations from the SLI, particularly during establishment phases or technological restructuring, often in response to inspections or impending audits. Also, genuine concern for workers' safety and wellbeing is equally prevalent in parts of both groups.

Despite these shared motivations, there are nuanced differences between the groups. Companies not using OiRA cite adherence to international parent company procedures as an additional motivation. As already highlighted, this result also has to be seen in light of the sample's composition, including enterprises being part of international entities and additionally not always necessarily classifying as MSEs, which are the main target group of OiRA.

7.1.1 *Why was a specific tool/method chosen and who made this decision?*

Considering who decides to use a specific RA method, there was **not one consistent approach** in any of those groups, as their operation procedure, internal structures and sizes varied. In companies using the OiRA tool, decisions regarding its adoption typically rested with OSH specialists and directors responsible for overseeing these assessments. Sometimes, decisions were taken by external OSH consultants contracted by the company. In companies not using OiRA, some organisations adhere to standardised procedures mandated by their parent companies or headquarters; in others, the person internally responsible for OSH decided to internally develop very company-specific checklists.

The motivations for selecting specific RA approaches and tools among companies, both using and not using the OiRA tool, display overarching similarities **primarily focused on practicality and**

compliance. However, distinctions emerge not only between OiRA users and non-users but also among the various implementations within the OiRA user group itself.

It is important to remember, as was discussed in previous chapters, that OiRA is sometimes utilised together with external services or other internal tools, as OiRA by itself was often considered not to be sufficient. OiRA users in Lithuania generally reported high reliance on external experts due to legal requirements and technical expertise gaps. The **overarching consideration for choosing an appropriate approach was then to ensure compliance and comprehensiveness of the assessment.** For the same reason, challenges with external providers, such as the application of standard assessments not reflecting the company situation and high costs, seem to drive companies to search for other approaches and use OiRA. Similar principles have guided the companies that are not using OiRA.

On the other hand, some differences emerged: as mentioned, the **issue of adherence to parent company standards** appeared for non-OiRA users. Furthermore, non-OiRA users, typically large companies, tend to navigate procedural and service quality issues within already established frameworks, while for OiRA users, specific aspects like **costs and quality of the methods applied seem to play a more important role.**

7.1.2 How does using OiRA compare to other tools/approaches?

Comparing only companies using OiRA and those not using it does not fully capture the picture since OiRA was often used alongside other approaches. Hence, this section aims to summarise the overall differences in interviewees' reports of using OiRA, building on combined approaches, and using other methods.

In essence, OiRA was praised as **a free tool that did not generate** additional costs for the company, as externally provided OSH services do come with certain costs compared to OiRA. However, in some cases, when companies needed to contract OSH external experts for technical measurements, **OiRA was a tool that offered to reduce the cost of RA to the required minimum.** This fact was highlighted not only by smaller companies but also by public sector entities using it. Where companies reported adhering to parent company standards or having developed internal documents to support the RA process, it can be assumed that these developments also involved internal human resources rather than external costs. Both for OiRA and non-OiRA users, some costs were associated with the services of external OSH experts.

OiRA also stands out for its **ease of use and accessibility.** It is easy to understand, and most users report being able to deal with the software easily. Additionally, they appreciate the guidance given by following the tool path. On the one hand, it leads them to a practical action plan and, on the other hand, makes them aware of risks that they might have overlooked otherwise. Users of other approaches, specifically the interviewees not using OiRA, indicated that the methods used currently do not always seem straightforward and easy to apply. One such company noted, for example, the procedural complexities, particularly in the dynamic working environment with many changes on a daily basis, hindering the efficiency of their RA processes.

The **legal information** provided in the tools and that OiRA supports legal compliance by doing so was highly appreciated. On the other hand, users of other approaches reported that they do not always have the latest legal information. Specifically, those who used OiRA in combination with other methods reported the added value of OiRA, which also enabled them to check if they had covered everything with the other approaches taken.

However, regarding the communication about the tool, users raised concerns about **OiRA's legal status** and the lack of an official statement that the tool would be accepted as an official RA document during inspections. In general, the non-OiRA users did not report these doubts concerning their approaches to RA. This might be, on the one hand, because they might assume that their approaches would be legally valid, though it was not indicated in the interviews. An alternative interpretation is that they simply do not have the same expectations as OiRA users, considering that their RA is based on internal approaches and, therefore, no general statement from the authorities on these is expected until an inspection takes place. On the other hand, approaches reported by non-OiRA users could be fully compliant with legal requirements, and, therefore, they do not have concerns about validity.

OiRA users highly appreciated **communication channels** related to tool support, seminars and the possibility of calling the SLI. For non-OiRA users, no such support was reported consistently, apart from one instance when a parent company visited the Lithuanian branch. However, several non-OiRA users referred to the SLI website as an important source of information with regard to OSH and their RAs.

In terms of **RA outputs and follow-up**, on the one hand, OiRA reports were appreciated, and the guidance and educative approach was described as very helpful by the users. Generally, it also seems that the action plan is highly valued by users. On the other hand, there was a range of concerns about the general report, starting from doubts about its legal validity, as mentioned above, but also stating that it was confusing, not very clear, and did not give a good overview of the situation and included repetitive information. Understandably, no such concern was raised for other tools since it was not possible to cover such details in the interviews for the broad range of approaches taken by non-OiRA users.

Further, certain OiRA limitations were reported by bigger companies or those operating in more complex industries, which were missing a **greater level of flexibility and adaptability of the OiRA tools to their specific situations**. This situation was not given to companies that adhered to mother company standards. However, others who invested resources in their homemade approaches also reported a good fit between the company situation and their targeted RA approach. These tailored RA procedures ensure high **compliance with industry standards, and some** involve workers directly. However, they are resource-intensive and costly (mostly in terms of internal human resources), and the quality may vary depending on internal expertise.

Internal and external OSH experts were reported to play a significant role in RA, both for OiRA and non-OiRA users. Especially, OSH external experts were frequently mobilised to carry out RA, especially in the areas where companies could not conduct in-house, as in the case of technical measurements. However, several interviewees whose companies rely on external services (both those who currently use OiRA and those who had these experiences in the past) reported a lack of fit between the method used and the company's real situation. This perceived lack of quality of services encouraged some companies to look for other solutions, including OiRA.

8 Conclusions and key pointers

Findings from the interviews and analysis of the data from the OiRA Metabase (see Chapter 3, OiRA in Lithuania) indicate that **the OiRA tools are relevant within the OSH landscape in Lithuania**. This study has reflected on the varied OiRA tools used by companies in various sectors, different company sizes and their diverse experiences with OiRA. This sampling composition indicates that OiRA tools are relevant across different company sizes, circumstances and working environments.

Companies reported being motivated to select the OiRA tools as **they have seen OiRA as a relevant alternative to their current approaches** (which was mostly relying on external OSH experts), particularly as many claimed not to be satisfied with their previous experiences. In that regard, OiRA tools could effectively address the existing needs of companies seeking an improvement in their RAs.

Companies applied different approaches to using OiRA, differing in the time and human resources invested, and in the level of detail they wanted to incorporate into their RA as well as the amount of updates and so on. Overall, **supporting such a range of flexible approaches** was regarded as an important asset of OiRA. The issue of the **comprehensiveness of the tool** gathered mixed and often contradictory feedback from users, while, overall, it was assessed as somewhat positive. Considering the comprehensiveness of the feedback, it is indicated that while some companies **are satisfied with the level of information** and see it as appropriately detailed, **others desire more or less detail**. In that sense, the comprehensiveness of the information that OiRA tools provide has been assessed very differently, depending on the user's concrete needs. In other aspects, the comprehensiveness of tools should be balanced against the level of detail needed and also the time required for users to navigate the tool. **Designing tools most flexibly**, allowing end users to opt out of certain modules (optional modules) or giving them 'not applicable' as an option to answer statements, as well as using profile questions, might enhance users' needs for flexibility. However, this approach should be carefully weighted with the core target group (micro and small companies) in mind. Interview results from this group mainly indicate that MSEs were generally satisfied with the level of detail and flexibility in the tools.

Interestingly, OiRA was reported to be used together with other RA methods — these often included OSH external experts responsible for providing technical RA and relevant technical measurements (such as noise or light) or internal approaches like questionnaires to address psychosocial risks. The coverage of certain risks in OiRA, such as psychosocial risks or working in hot environments, was also mentioned by end users as a valuable asset to consider for the future. Further tool content might be improved in this regard by highlighting in the tools where specific technical and other measurements are required.

The use of OiRA not as a stand-alone tool but as a complementary tool as well as the flexible approach many companies take on it also leads to **different interpretations of the OiRA statistics** (see section 3.2, Use of OiRA tools). While, so far, RAs that consist of less than 70% of the statements answered had been viewed as not so relevant, the insights from this study provide alternative interpretations of RA not considered as ‘top risk assessments’. Many interviewees said that they would use OiRA information to check the completeness of their current approaches by going through OiRA; this step does not necessarily mean that users completed the full OiRA RA. Rather it seems that some users **benefit from the information provided in OiRA without necessarily filling in the full RA**.

In general, users positively assessed OiRA. They appreciated OSH guidance and knowledge, which was reported to be relevant for users with limited OSH experience but also for some with more advanced OSH experience. In that sense, OiRA is also seen as an **educational tool** that provides valuable information and guidance, especially for those unfamiliar with OSH. This educational side of OiRA can be further advertised and also supported, for example, by enabling the **OiRA training feature at Lithuanian level**, which gives a good overview of the tool content for users who want to learn about OSH.

Users also praised **the tool’s ease of use and navigation**, and most did not report any issues with the interaction. As such, OiRA is **mainly considered self-explanatory**, and users were able to understand how to use the software mostly very quickly.

The **ability to generate action plans** was also positively mentioned as adding to the guidance and facilitating an easier follow-up of the RA. On the other hand, **several issues were reported concerning the overall report**. Users reported not understanding the report’s structure and logic; they reported that repetitive information was included and were often generally unsatisfied. In this regard, it has to be noted that after finalising the interviews before finalising this report, the SLI already released a new report format in OiRA that was developed based on the idea of overcoming such issues mentioned in the interviews.

Finally, companies pointed out **the sector-based approach** and wished for the **development of more sectoral tools**. Here, positive mentions included the increased coverage of sectors over the last few years, and more users now see their sectors represented within the Lithuanian tools. However, specifically, the diverse use and also the use of multiple tools in one company hint to the fact that the coverage of more sectors might be beneficial. In this regard, specifically, entities from the public sector seem to benefit a lot from the tools. The current development of six tools for the health and social care sector fits very well into the overall feedback.

Users also pointed out the **usefulness of the support provided by the SLI**. One-on-one meetings and presentations during seminars have proven effective for promoting OiRA and increasing knowledge about its functionalities. However, some users also requested more specific guidance on using the tool (both in terms of the software and OSH guidance).

In terms of communication on the tool, **the flexibility of OiRA could be highlighted and utilised to a greater extent by promoting it**. Promoting OiRA as a versatile tool that can be used for different purposes, such as internal audits, supplementary assessments, initial risk evaluations and training purposes, might broaden its appeal further. Expanding the already existing initiatives might further support users.

Additionally, developing **easy-to-understand tutorials or recorded training sessions** could serve as valuable resources for both new and experienced users to counteract the reported difficulties and uncertainties in using OiRA as well as to make users aware of the broad range of possibilities the tool provides.

One of the most pressing issues identified is the uncertainty surrounding the **formal status of OiRA assessments**. Many users are **unsure whether the SLI will recognise an assessment conducted using OiRA as a legitimate and comprehensive RA**. This uncertainty leads to a lack of confidence in the tool, with users often believing that OiRA is insufficient for conducting a ‘proper’ assessment. While it is understood that OiRA cannot perform physical measurements for factors such as chemical exposure or noise levels, **providing clear guidance on its role and limitations** can help improve its perceived effectiveness and usefulness. Simultaneously, pointing out within the tools where such measurements are needed to streamline the process might enhance the support OiRA can give to users.

In line with OiRA’s intended focus — that is, to serve as a comprehensive tool to conduct the RA for a whole small enterprise — efforts might be made to position it as **an official document recognised by regulatory bodies**. This could involve more proactive communication from the SLI, endorsing OiRA’s use and confirming its acceptance in official inspections. Clear messaging about the scope and intended use of OiRA can help manage user expectations and increase its credibility as a reliable yet flexible and customisable tool.

Separately, while not directly mentioned in the interviews, clarification may be required regarding the person delivering the assessment. In line with the current legislation, RA is valid only if conducted by a ‘competent’ — that is, trained and certified — person. OiRA does not pose such a requirement, suggesting that this issue warrants clarification.

Especially among non-OiRA users, **there was a certain fear or reservation about trying the tools** since they feared that registering would either make it obligatory for them to use the tool or would maybe even additionally put them into the focus of the SLI. Clearer communication on this aspect might remove hindrances for possible new users to create an OiRA account.

8.1 Key pointers

Based on the study’s findings and conclusions, recommendations can be formulated to guide OiRA national partners in effectively assisting companies in optimising OiRA’s use and generating ideas for the tool’s overall improvement.

- OiRA should continue to be advertised as a **free, easily accessible tool**, particularly targeting companies wishing to conduct RAs internally or those with limited budgets.
- It is important to highlight its **versatility, emphasising that it can be used both as a stand-alone tool and as a supplementary aid to other RA tools**, depending on the company’s needs. Additionally, here the tool’s flexibility could be presented as OiRA was reported to support companies in including as little or as much detail as needed.
- There should be clear and consistent communication regarding **OiRA’s legal status** as an RA tool. It is crucial to highlight whether the reports generated by OiRA are sufficient for inspections, particularly for certain sectors, or if additional technical assessments are required. This will help companies understand the tool’s limitations and strengths in meeting regulatory requirements.
- The communication should **clarify that registering for OiRA does not automatically obligate a company to conduct an RA**, either immediately or specifically using OiRA.
- It should be officially clarified that **completing OiRA does not mean the company will be selected for inspection**. This clarification helps address the misconception — mentioned by the SLI representative responsible for OiRA — that because the SLI promotes the OiRA, participating companies will face increased scrutiny from authorities.
- **Seminars** have proven effective in promoting OiRA and providing users with necessary support and training and should be maintained.
- Expanding support through **additional methods, such as online tutorials, would further enhance user experience and satisfaction**.
- The feedback on the general report’s lack of clarity and usability has already been taken into account, and the new report is available for Lithuanian users.
- **Aspects that enhance the flexibility of tools** and allow **OiRA to be tailored to a company’s specific needs**, such as skipping questions, are appreciated by users. Using these features

while not forgetting the needs of the main target group of the tools (MSEs) seems to be beneficial.

- **An important step would be to develop a concise approach to the technical/physical aspects, which are believed not to be covered in OiRA RAs.** To address the issue of these technical measurements, several actions could be considered:
- providing clarification in OiRA tools when the measurements are required and what is the scope of the measurements; and
- as has been done in the past (e.g. work in confined spaces), developing specific tools covering specific risks or tasks might help overcome certain gaps in tools at the national level.
- For the continued development of OiRA, the advice would be to consider adding **further sectoral tools, as users appreciated that OiRA was tailored to specific sectors.**
- **Both OiRA and non-OiRA users reported to be interested in the psychosocial risks.** Developing psychosocial risk modules in the existing OiRA tools or developing an OiRA tool dedicated to psychosocial risks could be beneficial.

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