

Preventing psychosocial risks in Europe: strategies, legislation and lessons from practice

Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Scope and purpose of the study

This case study report forms part of a broader study on psychosocial risk (PSR) prevention across strategies and prevention measures, and complements the findings of the corresponding policy brief¹ and national reports² by providing in-depth insights into selected PSR management approaches. It presents nine detailed case studies: six focusing on strategic, policy or sector-level implementation projects, and three dedicated to specific company approaches implemented to tackle PSRs.

The sector-level case studies present initiatives that form part of national or sectoral approaches. The company-level case studies focus on successful examples initiated by companies themselves and are therefore not directly linked to national or sectoral initiatives.

Each case provides a detailed analysis of the design, implementation and outcomes of the measures, highlighting success factors, challenges and lessons that can be applied to different contexts. The case studies are summarised in Table 1 below and published separately under the provided links.

Table 1. Summary of the case studies conducted

Country	Name of the initiative	Description
Sector-level case studies		
AT	MEGAP (Human-centred workplaces through the application of gender and diversity in occupational safety and health)	MEGAP (2016-2019) was a national Austrian initiative led by the Central Labour Inspectorate to integrate gender and diversity into occupational safety and health (OSH). It trained 249 labour inspectors and supported around 700 companies to create safer, more inclusive workplaces for diverse groups such as women, migrant workers and people with disabilities. Through training and good practice examples, MEGAP improved inspectors' ability to identify group-specific risks and promoted equitable OSH measures. Caritas Wien, a large social services organisation, is presented as one of the companies that embedded insights from MEGAP into their workplace.
AT	No Respect – No Service (hospitality sector)	No Respect – No Service, a 2023 sectoral initiative, was implemented in 2023 by the Vienna Chamber of Commerce, the trade union Vida and the Vienna Chamber of Labour to combat sexual harassment in Vienna's hospitality industry. The partners developed a practical guide for employers and workers on legal duties, prevention strategies and responses regarding sexual harassment. The initiative raised awareness,

¹ Policy brief: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/strategies-and-legislation-psychosocial-risks-six-european-countries>

² Country report Austria: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/austria-psychosocial-risk-prevention-strategies-and-legislation>

Country report Belgium: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/belgium-psychosocial-risk-prevention-strategies-and-legislation>

Country report Croatia: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/croatia-psychosocial-risk-prevention-strategies-and-legislation>

Country report Denmark: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/denmark-psychosocial-risk-prevention-strategies-and-legislation>

Country report Estonia: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/estonia-psychosocial-risk-prevention-strategies-and-legislation>

Country report Spain: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/spain-psychosocial-risk-prevention-strategies-and-legislation>

Country	Name of the initiative	Description
		encouraged safer workplace practices and distributed materials to around 6,000 hospitality establishments. The example of NORDSEE, a large restaurant chain, showcases how the No Respect – No Service approach was applied within a company.
BE	<u>Building Mental Resilience (construction sector)</u>	Building Mental Resilience, led by a service provider together with Constructiv East Flanders, was a project implemented in East Flanders in 2019. It helped 10 construction companies address PSRs through tailored, company-level trajectories. It started with an in-depth intake process, after which firms selected actions from a modular training and coaching catalogue for workers, middle management and business owners, with a focus on primary prevention. Sessions on leadership, communication and stress awareness were supported by practical toolkits. The programme raised awareness, supported policy development within companies and fostered more open, supportive workplace cultures. One of the participating companies, a small firm with 25 workers, is showcased as an example of implementation.
BE	<u>PrePS in Wood (Prevention of Psychosocial Risks in the Wood Industries)</u>	PrePS in Wood (2022-2023) was a sectoral initiative led by Woodwize – the sectoral fund for the woodworking sector – and designed to improve psychosocial well-being in Belgium's wood industries. Using broad stakeholder input through a social hackathon, a focus group and company pilots, it produced a practical toolkit consisting of an online Quicksan tool, conversation guides and leadership support, designed to help companies assess risks, open dialogue on PSRs and adopt both quick wins and longer-term measures. One of the participating companies, a small firm with 15 workers, is presented as an example of implementation.
DK	<u>TEKSAM – The Consultancy Service</u>	TEKSAM is a joint consultancy service run by Danish social partners CO-industri and Dansk Industri. It has supported cooperative committees since 1998 and has addressed PSRs since around 2001. It carries out company visits and provides surveys based on the Danish Psychosocial Work Environment Questionnaire (DPQ), training and practical tools, and can escalate cases of non-compliance to the Working Environment Authority (WEA). The service covers about 230,000 workers across roughly 6,000 manufacturing companies and is embedded within industrial collective agreements. Its trusted partnership model facilitates tailored support and steady uptake across the sector. Machinismus AS, a medium-sized manufacturing company, is used as an example of implementation at company level.
ES	<u>XXIV Collective Banking Agreement (banking sector)</u>	The XXIV Collective Banking Agreement (2019-2023) is a sectoral framework negotiated by the Spanish Banking Association, trade unions and the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy to address PSRs in Spain's banking sector.

Country	Name of the initiative	Description
		Covering over 91,000 workers, it formally recognises workplace violence and digital disconnection as occupational concerns, strengthens anti-harassment protocols and embeds PSR assessments into prevention systems. Through joint health and safety committees and union OSH delegates, it promotes dialogue, transparency and participatory risk assessment, and has improved workload management, prevention culture and worker involvement across the sector. Banco Sabadell, a very large corporation, is presented as an example of implementation.
Company-level case studies		
AT	FOKUS Psyche (Takeda, a large multinational biopharmaceutical company)	FOKUS Psyche was a 2023 initiative by Takeda Austria's Vienna site aimed at improving the early identification and management of PSRs in the workplace. It offered workers a confidential reporting system to flag stressful situations, thus allowing the OSH team to act quickly through organisational measures and individual support. The programme strengthened the company's speak-up culture, leading to concrete improvements such as better workload management, clearer communication and enhanced psychological safety.
EE	Implementation of the Sustainable Employee framework (Swedbank, a large international financial institution)	The Sustainable Employee framework (Swedbank, Estonia; 2018-ongoing) is a company-wide approach that embeds PSR management into day-to-day leadership. Managers use the Sustainable Employee Index within quarterly People Pulse surveys to identify hotspots, rebalance workloads, clarify priorities and run follow-ups, while working environment committees provide oversight. The framework draws on the job demands-resources model and treats organisational, social, physical and digital factors as joint drivers of well-being. It has strengthened the speak-up culture and formalised prevention and response processes, thereby earning national recognition for mental health and family-friendly practices.
ES	Psychosocial Care Model (La Fageda, a social enterprise company)	La Fageda, a Spanish social enterprise employing around 370 people, about half of whom have mental-health conditions and intellectual disabilities, has a long-standing commitment to supporting workers' mental health. Since 2018, PSR prevention has been integrated even more systematically into its inclusive organisational model. The company combines production and social services, adapting jobs to individual capacities. Measures include extensive onboarding focused on empathy and inclusion, reflective training sessions, tailored risk surveys, and a participatory collective agreement with enhanced flexibility and mental health provisions. This people-centred approach supports emotional well-being, strengthens internal cohesion and serves as an inclusive employment model to inspire other organisations.

The report first presents the findings from the sector-level case studies, before examining the company-level case studies. Based on insights from both levels, the conclusion provides a comprehensive synthesis highlighting key challenges, success factors, lessons learned and policy pointers.

1.2 Methodology

The case studies were chosen based on the abovementioned national reports and the policy brief on PSRs in strategies and legislation. The selection aimed to capture a diverse range of successful or innovative approaches to PSR prevention across different sectors – including banking, manufacturing, construction, hospitality and the public sector – encompassing different company sizes, institutional contexts, and regulatory and organisational settings, with a focus on systematic risk prevention rather than individual measures. At sectoral level, cases were chosen to illustrate national or social partner initiatives with proven relevance and impact, while the company-level cases were selected to showcase practical, organisation-driven measures for managing PSRs in the workplace.

Data collection combined desk research and qualitative interviews conducted by national experts. The desk research involved reviewing policy documents, collective agreements, evaluation reports, relevant statistical data and other materials to understand the context and objectives of each approach. Semi-structured interviews were then carried out with key stakeholders, such as programme managers, social partner representatives, OSH specialists, company managers and workers' representatives. The analysis was conducted using a common template and analytical framework developed for the study to ensure consistency and comparability across cases.

2 Sector-level case studies

2.1 Identification of psychosocial risks and drivers of change

In each of the six sectoral case studies, the identification of PSRs and the development or strengthening of prevention measures were influenced by factors ranging from legal reforms to evolving work dynamics, and were preceded by clear signs of rising psychosocial challenges among workers. In addition to sector-specific triggers, all initiatives were based on the recognition – supported by data, consultation or direct feedback – that existing OSH measures were failing to adequately address these emerging PSRs.

2.1.1 Contextual influences

The development of PSR prevention across the reviewed cases and sectors has been shaped by a range of broader contextual influences.

- **Legal reforms and frameworks**

The primary overarching driver has been the growing institutional recognition of PSRs as an integral component of OSH. Across all countries reviewed, legislation has played a decisive role in legitimising PSRs within OSH and in mandating systematic prevention efforts.

In Austria, PSRs are explicitly addressed under the Health and Safety at Work Act, which obliges employers to evaluate and manage mental strain in the same way as physical hazards, making PSR assessment a binding element of workplace risk management.

In Belgium, the Act on the Well-being of Workers and its 2014 Codex on Well-being at Work explicitly define PSRs – covering stress, burnout, violence and harassment – as occupational hazards. The legislation creates a formal prevention system, requiring employers to conduct PSR assessments, provide access to internal or external prevention advisers and implement clear reporting and intervention procedures.

In Spain, the Law on the Prevention of Occupational Risks provides a broad legal foundation that implicitly covers psychosocial hazards under the general obligation to protect workers' safety and health. Although the law does not explicitly mention PSRs, its scope has evolved through complementary legislative measures. A notable example is the statutory right to digital disconnection, introduced in 2018 under the Organic Law on Data Protection and Guarantee of Digital Rights.

The examples show that legal changes often have established the normative basis for recognising and managing PSRs. Whether through explicit inclusion in OSH law, the creation of detailed prevention systems or the introduction of targeted rights such as digital disconnection, legislation has been crucial in shifting PSR prevention from voluntary practice to a legally mandated component of OSH in the countries analysed.

- **Structural transformation of the world of work**

A second driver has been the structural transformation of the world of work. Digitalisation, organisational restructuring and new work models have reshaped job design, workload and interpersonal dynamics (EU-OSHA, 2024a; EU-OSHA, 2024b; OSH WIKI, 2024). The Spanish banking sector provides a striking example of this: technological efficiency has led to the widespread closure of physical branches, forcing the remaining staff to deal with exponentially higher workloads and increased administrative complexity. The key PSRs identified related to high workload pressures, as well as the resulting emotional fatigue and an inability to digitally disconnect. In response, a collective bargaining agreement was established to mandate the right to digital disconnection for workers. This case illustrates how a contextual change such as digitalisation can quickly evolve into a company-level risk, requiring a protective response at collective level (EU-OSHA, 2024a; EU-OSHA, 2024b).

The Belgian construction and wood sectors further demonstrate how structural dynamics can lead to work intensification. Work is often project-based and characterised by tight deadlines, high physical demands and rigid work schedules. The very structure of the construction sector can therefore contribute to the development of risks triggering stress, motivational challenges and burnout. The Building Mental

Resilience project recognised the systemic pressures within the industry, with reliance on subcontractors and a frequently hierarchical management style often contributing to company-level issues. Similarly, in the woodworking sector, PSR identification frequently highlighted the need for better-defined roles and improved internal communications – a direct symptom of restructuring or rapid growth without clearly defined processes. At company level, job intensification might take the form of ‘high work pressure’, but the broader sectoral context, which demands leaner operations and higher productivity per worker, is also a root cause.

The Covid-19 pandemic also acted as a strong catalyst, forcing national administrations, organisations and social partners to move PSRs from the background to the heart of operational priorities (EU-OSHA, 2022a). The sudden shift to remote working, combined with isolation, health-related uncertainties and unprecedented job insecurity, intensified the strain on both workers and managers. The pandemic heightened issues of digital disconnection and work-life balance, especially among knowledge workers. Consequently, several existing initiatives, such as the Danish TEKSAM programme and Austria’s MEGAP project, were quickly adapted and expanded to strengthen communication mechanisms, provide specific support for remote working arrangements and foster ongoing dialogue between management and workers. These initiatives played a critical role in ensuring that PSRs were actively managed during an exceptionally challenging time.

- **Demographic and diversity-related challenges in the workforce**

Demographic and diversity-related challenges have also played a significant role. Modern workforces are more diverse than ever, encompassing a wide range of ages, genders, cultures, languages and employment statuses (Kiradoo, 2023; Byrd, 2024a; Lloyd-Jones et al., 2024a; Lloyd-Jones et al., 2024b; Scott, et al., 2024). While diversity is an immense strength, it becomes challenging when organisations fail to adapt their systems to ensure genuine inclusion and equitable treatment. The associated risks include exclusion, discrimination, violence and inadequate protection for vulnerable groups (Kiradoo, 2023; Byrd, 2024a; Lloyd-Jones et al., 2024a; Lloyd-Jones et al., 2024b; Scott, et al., 2024).

The Austrian Labour Inspectorate’s MEGAP programme was developed in direct response to challenges associated with the increasingly diverse workforce, based on the recognition that statutory risk assessments often overlook how diversity factors can exacerbate PSRs. For example, migrant workers face a higher risk of accidents when safety instructions are provided in the dominant local language only – German in the case of Austria (Premji, et al., 2023; Byrd, 2024b). Similarly, the Austrian hospitality sector’s No Respect – No Service initiative was driven by a sectoral understanding that workers, particularly women, in public-facing roles are disproportionately exposed to sexual harassment and third-party violence.

- **Cultural shift towards prevention and early intervention**

Finally, all initiatives were underpinned by a cultural shift towards prevention and early intervention. Across sectors, PSR prevention has evolved from a reactive response to an integral part of organisational and sectoral strategy.

In Austria, programmes such as MEGAP have demonstrated how labour inspection has shifted from sanctioning non-compliance to helping employers proactively identify and manage PSRs, while integrating prevention into routine OSH assessments. Prior to 2016, labour inspections often overlooked the gender, diversity and psychosocial dimensions of risk. MEGAP transformed this by training inspectors to recognise these factors and systematising preventive approaches. Rather than responding to complaints, inspectorates began promoting proactive, equality-based risk assessments.

In Belgium, projects such as Building Mental Resilience and PrePS in Wood have brought about a similar transition. Instead of limiting their response to burnout cases, companies have begun using participatory tools and periodic surveys to detect early signs of stress, improve communication and clarify roles. The explicit goal of Building Mental Resilience (construction sector) was to ‘trigger a cultural shift’ by embedding well-being in company prevention policies and treating it as an integral part of safety and sustainability. In PrePS in Wood (wood industry), stakeholders reported that the project ‘broke through’ resistance in a traditionally male-dominated sector and encouraged early intervention.

In Spain’s banking sector, the development of collective agreements from the early 2010s to the latest agreement reflects a steady institutionalisation of PSR prevention. Early agreements addressed equality

and harassment reactively, but the XXIV and XXV Collective Banking Agreements incorporated prevention into organisational routines, with mandatory PSR evaluations, anti-harassment protocols and the right to digital disconnection. This marked a shift from isolated initiatives to a comprehensive preventive framework.

These changes reflect not only the growing public focus on mental health but also the strategic alignment of well-being with productivity, service quality and worker retention. The shared lesson is that PSR management succeeds when it is treated not as a separate welfare concern but as a cornerstone of sustainable organisational performance. The integration of PSR management into sector-wide frameworks, such as those developed in Spain and Belgium, highlights the importance of a holistic approach involving all stakeholders in developing solutions to address PSRs.

2.1.2 Identification of psychosocial risks through assessments, observations and feedback

In practice, PSRs are often recognised through a combination of structured assessments and workplace experiences. The approaches included in this study identified them via surveys, inspections, participatory assessments, social dialogue, research, observations and feedback from workers, trade unions and safety professionals. Together, these processes have revealed challenges and gaps in psychosocial well-being management within sectors and provided the basis for developing more systematic prevention measures.

The No Respect – No Service campaign in the Austrian hospitality sector emerged in response to reports from inspectors and trade unions highlighting high levels of aggression and harassment from customers. A sector-wide survey conducted as part of the campaign confirmed the scale of the problem.

In Belgium, PSR challenges were identified through participatory risk assessments, work surveys and pilot projects. In the construction sector, OSH service providers and social partners observed the mental fatigue and isolation resulting from long working hours, heavy physical demands and subcontracting chains, prompting the development of sector-specific guidance and training. In the wood sector, the PrePS in Wood project was initiated in response to worker surveys and consultations that highlighted chronic workload pressures and unclear task boundaries as significant PSRs.

Research also played a crucial role in identifying these risks. For example, the report on job quality in the woodworking and furniture sector by the Flemish Foundation for Innovation and Work (StIA) identified key PSRs, including a lack of autonomy and limited learning opportunities. Furthermore, the use of focus groups and consultations with workers, combined with in-depth surveys, offered a nuanced understanding of the specific risks faced by workers. These findings were validated through workshops and dialogue that led to the design of preventive measures grounded in actual workplace experiences.

In Denmark, the TEKSAM model evolved within a well-established framework of social dialogue. PSRs were identified through recurring themes arising in collective bargaining discussions, union counselling and company feedback. These themes were further explored via ongoing research and feedback loops between unions, employers and workers to identify systemic PSR management challenges. Rather than treating PSRs as isolated incidents, social partners framed them as systemic issues requiring joint, cooperative solutions, shaping TEKSAM's continuous dialogue model between employers and workers.

In Spain's banking sector, sector-wide surveys and trade union monitoring documented widespread emotional exhaustion, digital overload and a lack of autonomy, exacerbated by restructuring and branch closures. The surveys not only captured emotional exhaustion but also assessed the impact of digital tools and restructuring on the mental health of workers, resulting in specific rights and measures designed to mitigate these risks.

2.2 From identification to implementation

The true measure of any sectoral well-being or OSH initiative lies in its successful integration into the everyday practices of individual companies. Moving beyond policy statements, this occurs in two interlinked stages: first, the design and development of sectoral frameworks and resources; and second, their adaptation and implementation at company level. Together, these processes ensure that PSR

prevention is translated from strategic intent to practical action, supported by feedback, training and continuous improvement.

- **Design and development of tailored sectoral interventions**

Once there is a consensus on PSRs as a priority, the next step is to design sectoral initiatives with the capacity to reach companies and shape consistent prevention practices across the sector. These interventions are usually developed through multi-actor collaboration, evidence-based analysis and participatory dialogue among employers, unions, OSH experts and regulators.

At this stage, the focus is on converting policy goals into practical approaches, such as awareness campaigns, support mechanisms and diagnostic tools, which can then be tailored to individual workplace contexts. Worker feedback, collected through surveys, interviews and consultations, is key to ensuring that these frameworks reflect real workplace experiences.

For instance, the TEKSAM programme in Denmark was conceived as a sectoral consultancy model jointly developed by the social partners and expanded to also address recurring PSR issues across manufacturing companies. Similarly, the Belgian projects PrePS in Wood and Building Mental Resilience were designed based on participatory research and consultation to ensure that the resulting resources and methods addressed the specific pressures of their sectors.

- **Testing and refinement through pilots**

Once the frameworks and tools had been designed, sectoral initiatives were piloted at selected companies to test their relevance and effectiveness. These pilots bridged the sectoral design phase and company-level implementation, allowing project teams to gather practical feedback, adjust their approaches and ensure that interventions were feasible for diverse organisational contexts.

In the PrePS in Wood project, four pilot companies tested the newly developed toolkit, and their feedback was used to refine the materials before they were rolled out across the sector. Similarly, in the MEGAP programme, pilot inspections were conducted at companies in different sectors to test the PSR assessment tools and inspection protocols, thus ensuring that the methodology could be effectively scaled nationwide. The Building Mental Resilience project also adopted a pilot-based approach, whereby its mentoring and awareness-raising methods were implemented within a small number of volunteer companies to assess their practicality under varying site conditions.

These pilot phases not only validated the effectiveness of the tools, but also strengthened engagement among companies. This generated early good practice examples that sometimes encouraged wider participation once the full programmes were launched.

- **Development of tools, guides and resources**

Developing practical resources is crucial for translating sectoral strategies into actionable, company-level measures. These resources bridge theory and practice by providing companies with concrete tools to implement PSR prevention and interventions.

Such resources included the versatile digital toolkit developed specifically for the wood industry as part of PrePS in Wood. By offering resources that could be seamlessly integrated into existing OSH frameworks, the project aimed to streamline implementation and reduce the need to create new systems from scratch.

Similarly, the No Respect – No Service initiative developed immediate resources for frontline workers, including posters, flyers and emergency contact cards placed in staff areas, to address workplace violence and harassment.

The sectoral programmes also produced standardised templates and guidance materials to help companies implement PSR prevention practices consistently across the sector. For example, the TEKSAM programme provided ready-to-use templates to guide worker development dialogues, thereby ensuring a uniform approach to worker engagement and recognition across the manufacturing sector. Again, these standardised resources helped businesses establish best practices without having to begin from zero, while also remaining adaptable to different company needs.

Programmes such as MEGAP encouraged companies to develop their own tools within the framework of broader guidelines. This demonstrates how sectoral initiatives both promote the adoption of best practices and foster the development of tailored tools to address specific organisational needs.

▪ **Training and capacity building**

Training was another crucial element across all programmes, equipping staff at all levels within and outside companies with the knowledge and skills needed to manage PSRs effectively and promote well-being. Training is rarely a one-size-fits-all activity. Effective programmes must be tailored to different audiences to ensure relevance and effectiveness. For instance, the MEGAP programme trained over 200 labour inspectors in PSR assessment from a gender and diversity perspective, which enabled them to drive change across the 700 companies they audited during the project term. This training has had a lasting impact, with inspectors continuing to apply the approaches beyond the project term, integrating psychosocial and diversity considerations into inspection routines and contributing to more inclusive, prevention-focused oversight.

At company level, training typically targeted both management and workers. The No Respect – No Service initiative in the Austrian hospitality sector delivered workshops for site managers, human resources (HR) representatives and works councils to strengthen responses to harassment in line with company policies. The Building Mental Resilience project in the Belgian construction sector provided mentorship training to enhance interpersonal skills and foster stronger, more supportive workplaces.

Such targeted training helps address the unique challenges of each sector, thus ensuring that interventions are both relevant and actionable.

▪ **Monitoring and evaluation**

The final stage of the process is monitoring and evaluation, which ensures that interventions remain effective over time. Without robust systems, interventions may become outdated or ineffective as the working environment evolves.

At sectoral level, the TEKSAM programme collects regular feedback from participating companies through follow-ups and periodic surveys after initial visits to assess the effectiveness of their interventions. While these follow-up actions allow TEKSAM to adapt and refine its approach, no centralised system for tracking sector-wide outcomes is currently in place.

Similarly, the PrePS in Wood project included ongoing sector-wide surveys and focus groups that were used to monitor the provided tools' continued relevance and effectiveness and ensure that they remained practical for companies of varying sizes.

At company level, monitoring focuses on assessing the impact of PSR interventions within individual organisations. For example, the F-PSICO evaluation method in Spain, provided by the National Institute for Safety and Health at Work (INSST), is widely used by companies, including banks, to assess PSRs within the workforce. It helps organisations evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions by measuring key factors such as stress levels, work-life balance and autonomy. They can track their progress over time to keep their strategies aligned with best practices and industry standards.

2.2.1 Integrating psychosocial risk prevention into the workplace

Company involvement is crucial to the success of the projects presented here. Companies are encouraged to participate through application processes or sectoral incentives. In some cases, they are directly invited to participate, while in others they can apply to join pilot projects or training programmes. For example, during the negotiation of the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement led by the Spanish Banking Association and trade unions, the latter sought to ensure that companies embraced PSR management as part of their broader OSH practices. The agreement applies to all companies within the banking sector, which are legally required to implement its initiatives, including those aimed at implementing PSR measures, thus fostering a sector-wide commitment to enhancing PSR management.

The case studies show that effective PSR prevention relies not only on national or sectoral frameworks, but also on providing companies with information and tailored approaches to translate these frameworks into concrete actions.

- **Integration of prevention within organisational structures and procedures**

A common feature of all initiatives was the establishment of formal structures and procedures to integrate PSR prevention into routine OSH management. In the MEGAP programme, the Labour Inspectorate promoted systematic PSR assessments and the inclusion of psychosocial factors in companies' overall OSH risk assessments. By training managers and OSH officers to recognise PSRs and overcome communication problems, it helped normalise PSR discussions during regular workplace inspections and safety reviews.

Similarly, the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement in Spain integrated PSR prevention directly into the procedures of company-level health and safety committees, which include management and union representatives and are responsible for conducting PSR evaluations and implementing corrective measures.

Sectoral initiatives such as PrePS in Wood and Building Mental Resilience formalised PSR integration through structured protocols and assessment cycles. Participating companies were encouraged to carry out periodic PSR assessments and integrate the results into their organisational improvement plans. By positioning psychosocial well-being alongside traditional OSH metrics such as accident prevention, these frameworks embedded it within existing safety governance structures instead of creating parallel systems.

- **Managerial ownership and leadership engagement**

A decisive factor in workplace integration is the active role of managers and supervisors in recognising and addressing PSRs. The Austrian and Belgian experiences show that management training is key to implementation: supervisors were equipped to identify signs of stress, facilitate open dialogue and adapt work processes to reduce pressure points. The Danish TEKSAM model illustrates how leadership engagement can institutionalise PSR prevention by embedding continuous dialogue between managers and workers into daily routines, thereby fostering mutual trust and problem-solving.

- **Worker participation and social dialogue at enterprise level**

Worker participation is another defining feature of successful integration. Across sectors, workers and their representatives were involved as both survey respondents and co-creators of solutions. In the No Respect – No Service initiative, workers' testimonies about harassment informed the development of workplace guidelines and training content. In PrePS in Wood, focus groups allowed workers to reflect on causes of burnout and jointly develop preventive measures with their employers. Such participatory mechanisms ensure that interventions are effectively tailored to real workplace conditions while fostering a shared sense of responsibility for well-being. Spain's banking sector exemplifies sustained participation through the institutional role of prevention delegates. Supported by trade unions, these representatives monitor PSR assessments, engage with management on corrective actions and ensure transparency. Being partially relieved of regular duties allows them to stay closely connected to colleagues, serving as a bridge between worker experiences and company-level decisions.

- **Integration through risk assessment tools and monitoring**

Diagnostic tools and feedback systems helped integrate PSR prevention into everyday practice. Sector-specific surveys such as used in MEGAP and the Spanish banking sector provided data to guide decisions and track progress, while tools like the Spanish F-PSICO method turned psychosocial risks into measurable indicators for action.

These efforts were reinforced through regular monitoring and feedback. In Belgium, follow-up surveys assessed whether changes reduced stress, burnout and work-life balance problems, helping organisations refine their measures. Some organisations also established systems to continuously collect employee feedback and translate it into workplace improvements. For example, Caritas Vienna (MEGAP) incorporated diversity and inclusion issues into appraisals and feedback discussions, ensuring concerns were identified and addressed through ongoing organisational adjustments.

- **Training support (beyond management)**

Training programmes are equally essential, as they help managers, OSH officers and workers build a shared understanding of PSRs and develop practical skills to prevent them. In TEKSAM, workshops strengthened communication and joint problem-solving capacities, while in Austria's hospitality sector,

campaign materials provided tangible support for companies to handle customer-related aggression. A key takeaway was the need to balance training duration and content, ensuring that sessions are concise while still covering the essential points. The Building Mental Resilience project underscored both the importance of striking this balance and the challenges in achieving it.

- **Cultural integration and long-term sustainability**

Beyond procedures and tools, integrating PSR prevention requires a cultural shift within organisations. The Danish, Belgian and Austrian examples all illustrate how mental health discussions have gradually become normalised at work, supported by leadership engagement and ongoing dialogue. Importantly, integration also depends on aligning PSR prevention with broader organisational goals such as productivity, service quality and staff retention. In the MEGAP programme, improved communication and PSR management were framed as drivers of efficiency and quality. This alignment between well-being and business objectives helped sustain commitment beyond the initial implementation phase.

2.2.2 Key actors and their roles

Identifying PSRs and implementing initiatives rely on the involvement and communication of multiple actors. The key actors identified across all approaches analysed are presented below.

- **State and regulatory authorities – mandated bodies**

Member States have incorporated various approaches into their legal frameworks to address PSR prevention at work. Beyond establishing a legal framework, national authorities often play a key role in driving sectoral or inspection-based action.

For example, the Working Environment Authority (WEA) in Denmark enforces PSR-related legal requirements under the national OSH law, provides companies with ongoing guidance on meeting their obligations and intervene where standards are not upheld. It also collaborates closely with TEKSAM to ensure that legal obligations on PSR prevention are effectively implemented at sectoral level through dialogue, training and company support.

In Spain, the Law on the Prevention of Occupational Risks establishes the legal foundation for PSR prevention and requires employers to assess and manage psychosocial hazards. The Ministry of Labour and Social Economy ensures that this framework is reflected in sectoral initiatives, and provided institutional oversight for the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement, negotiated between the Spanish Banking Association and trade unions.

Labour inspectorates also have an important mandatory and supervisory role. In Austria, PSR prevention is embedded in the Safety and Health at Work Act, which requires employers to assess PSRs as part of mandatory workplace risk assessments. The Labour Inspectorate is instrumental in ensuring compliance with this legal obligation, a role that was further enhanced by the MEGAP programme. By training inspectors to identify PSRs from a gender and diversity perspective, the programme strengthened the scope and quality of workplace risk assessments. The function of labour inspectorates thus goes beyond enforcement, providing guidance and consultancy to promote a more human-centred, preventive approach to compliance.

- **Social partners as a driving force**

Social partners played a key role in most of the approaches analysed.

In Denmark, the TEKSAM partnership exemplifies this cooperative model. Jointly managed by Dansk Industri (DI) and CO-industri, it builds on a long tradition of social dialogue within the manufacturing sector. Rather than reacting to isolated PSR incidents, the social partners institutionalised a permanent consultancy structure to support companies in addressing psychosocial risks, demonstrating how shared ownership by employers and trade unions can embed prevention and dialogue in daily practices.

As noted above, the Spanish Banking Association and trade unions jointly negotiated the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement to transform widespread concerns about emotional exhaustion, workload and customer aggression into binding commitments.

In Belgium, social partners collaborate through dedicated OSH bodies such as Woodwise in the woodworking sector and Constructiv in the construction sector, which jointly support the design and

implementation of prevention tools and training modules to ensure that PSR management is not only standardised across sectors but also tailored to their specific risks.

In Austria, social partners are also instrumental in reinforcing PSR prevention in workplaces. The Vienna Chamber of Commerce, the trade union Vida and the Vienna Chamber of Labour collaborated in the hospitality sector to come up with the No Respect – No Service project.

Across these examples, social partners acted as both mediators and innovators. Their combined perspective helped balance organisational efficiency with effective risk prevention, transforming reactive responses into proactive, jointly owned prevention systems.

▪ External experts, researchers and service providers

External experts, including consultants, trainers, psychologists, occupational health professionals and researchers, provide specialised knowledge and support throughout the design and implementation of PSR interventions within companies, lend evidence-based insights and offer practical advice on how to tackle complex psychosocial challenges.

In many initiatives, sectoral bodies and companies engage external consultants to design and implement PSR preventions, conduct assessments, run workshops and provide ongoing support to ensure that interventions are effective. For example, in the PrePS in Wood project, consultants helped develop the Quickscan tool to improve psychosocial well-being in the wood sector.

In physically demanding sectors such as construction and manufacturing, OSH professionals play a crucial role in identifying both physical risks and PSRs. These experts assess work environments, provide training and are often called upon to support workers with mental health challenges or refer them to specialised services.

In PrePS in Wood, OSH professionals also provided on-site psychological counselling at pilot companies to address specific issues and provide general preventive measures. Psychologists and counsellors can help support workers with mental health issues, whether work-related or not. However, to fully leverage this expertise, broader PSR prevention must also be addressed at company level, as showcased in the approaches presented here. In some sectors, these professionals operate within the workplace, offering on-site services or confidential helplines. For example, in the No Respect – No Service initiative in Austria, participating companies had access to external counsellors who addressed harassment incidents and supported affected workers.

Researchers are instrumental in ensuring that PSR prevention is grounded in evidence and continuously improved. TEKSAM's well-being surveys are based on the scientifically validated Danish Psychosocial Work Environment Questionnaire (DPQ), developed by the National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE). In Spain, the F-PSICO model, designed by the National Institute for Safety and Health at Work, provides a standardised and research-based framework for assessing PSRs across the banking sector. Its scientific validation, accessibility and alignment with workplace realities have made it the preferred evaluation model, endorsed by both trade unions and companies.

▪ Company-level actors and implementers

Successful PSR prevention depends on cooperation between management, supervisors, HR and workers. Senior leaders provide resources, set priorities and integrate psychosocial well-being into organisational goals. At **NORDSEE**, management strengthened policies and ensured that harassment by customers was addressed promptly.

Meanwhile, several case studies demonstrate how line managers and supervisors are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of PSR initiatives. They act as first points of contact for workers experiencing stress or reporting PSRs such as high workloads, harassment or interpersonal conflicts. Across the initiatives, they played a decisive role in identifying risks early, supporting workers and fostering an environment in which psychosocial issues can be discussed openly.

HR departments play a key role in integrating PSR prevention into daily operations. They are often tasked with implementing the practical aspects of PSR initiatives – conducting risk assessments, providing training and implementing support measures such as counselling services and well-being tools – as well as tracking the success of PSR interventions and reporting to senior management.

Ultimately, success also depends on the willingness of individual workers to participate and report incidents. For example, they can complete voluntary risk assessments (the Spanish banking sector) or use reporting channels (NORDSEE Austria), which allow workers to provide critical input to ascertain whether risks are being controlled or new issues are emerging.

2.3 Outputs and outcomes

The implemented PSR initiatives produced diverse outputs and outcomes, as summarised below.

Outputs:

▪ Tools, guidance and resources

A variety of practical resources were developed to help companies identify, prevent and address PSRs. These outputs included digital tools, training materials, organisational policies and sector-specific guidance documents. In Belgium, the PrePS in Wood project produced a Quicksan tool for the rapid assessment of PSRs, code of conduct templates and guidelines for conducting staff check-ins, providing companies with ready-to-use instruments to evaluate and manage PSRs. Similarly, Caritas Wien in Austria developed a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) toolbox as part of the internal implementation of the MEGAP principles. Hosted on the company's intranet, this digital hub provided workers with practical materials such as quizzes, podcasts and training content on inclusive teamwork and respectful communication, thus making these complex topics more accessible and actionable.

Many initiatives also produced sector- or company-level training materials. In Belgium's Building Mental Resilience project, tailored training modules were developed to strengthen interpersonal communication and teamwork on construction sites. In Denmark, the TEKSAM programme compiled checklists and templates for company-level cooperation committees to support dialogue and PSR risk assessment.

▪ Training and capacity building

Training was a central output across all programmes, tailored to different audiences to ensure that the right people had the relevant expertise. For instance, in the MEGAP programme, over 200 Austrian labour inspectors were trained to assess PSRs from a gender and diversity perspective. In the Austrian hospitality sector, the No Respect – No Service initiative delivered workshops for site managers, HR representatives and works councils on responding to harassment incidents swiftly and in accordance with company policies. The Building Mental Resilience project in the Belgian construction sector included mentorship training to strengthen team members' interpersonal skills and build stronger, more supportive working environments.

Outcomes:

▪ Greater organisational culture and awareness

Across several programmes, a stronger culture of openness and dialogue emerged. The initiatives helped normalise conversations about PSRs and their consequences, while also reducing stigma and promoting trust between workers and management. In Belgium's woodworking sector, participatory activities under the PrePS in Wood project improved communication and collaboration, while context-sensitive training in the construction sector fostered openness and mutual support. At Caritas Wien, under the Austrian MEGAP programme, increased awareness among supervisors and staff led to growing demand for tailored risk assessments and guidance on inclusion, reflecting a shift towards proactive management of psychosocial well-being.

▪ Integration of PSR management into company structures and procedures

The initiatives also brought about systematic and procedural changes. The company Machinismus AS, supported by TEKSAM in Denmark, embedded PSR management through structured social dialogue, formalised annual worker development dialogues and adopted a consensus-based policy on alcohol consumption, creating clear accountability mechanisms and sustained attention to PSR issues.

▪ Measurable impacts on worker well-being and health

One of the initiatives demonstrated clear, quantifiable improvements in worker well-being. At Banco Sabadell in Spain, proactive PSR management was linked to high levels of participation in well-being

measures. Moreover, the bank achieved an absenteeism rate of just 2.95%, significantly lower than both the sectoral and national average. Its 24/7 psychological support service recorded nearly 600 consultations in six months, and more than 80% of workers took part in voluntary medical check-ups, including mental health screening, confirming the high level of trust in the support systems provided.

In summary, the combination of practical outputs and long-term outcomes illustrates the effectiveness of integrated, multi-actor PSR prevention approaches. Together, they demonstrate that sustainable change can be achieved when top-down commitment and bottom-up participation are aligned through social dialogue and shared responsibility.

3 Company-level case studies

3.1 Identification of psychosocial risks and rationale for intervention

Across the three company-level case studies, the rationale for implementing PSR measures arose from a combination of internal assessments, worker feedback and evolving organisational realities, with each company recognising that traditional OSH frameworks were insufficient to address the growing mental and emotional challenges associated with modern workplaces.

At Takeda in Austria, the rationale was rooted in the company's long-standing commitment to OSH. Regular PSR assessments and worker input revealed a continuing need for accessible, confidential mechanisms to report PSRs and their outcomes. Management recognised that, while compliance-based PSR evaluations effectively identified broad organisational trends, they did not always allow for timely individual interventions. This understanding gave rise to FOKUS Psyche, a structured programme designed to capture PSRs and their consequences early, support workers through organisational adjustments and counselling, and strengthen the company's speak-up culture.

At Swedbank in Estonia, the intervention responded to PSRs stemming from rapid digital transformation, performance pressures and hybrid working models. Worker surveys and internal monitoring revealed rising stress levels, emotional exhaustion and difficulties maintaining a work-life balance, with managers acknowledging that these challenges were threatening both workers' well-being and service quality. Consequently, the company decided to develop an integrated approach to prioritise PSR prevention, leadership accountability and open communication, thereby transforming PSR prevention from a reactive compliance task into an integral part of organisational culture and strategic management.

For La Fageda in Spain, the rationale was deeply intertwined with the organisation's social mission. As a social enterprise that employs many people with mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities, La Fageda has always prioritised emotional well-being as a key aspect of inclusion. However, as the organisation expanded and diversified, it recognised the need to formalise its psychosocial care model to ensure consistency and sustainability across the whole workforce. This prompted the introduction of structured reflection sessions, collaborative decision-making and preventive mental health initiatives across all levels.

These three cases illustrate that the PSR prevention interventions were not isolated compliance exercises but responses to concrete organisational challenges, from operational and digital change to social inclusion. Each company's actions were triggered by evidence of psychosocial strain and the need for concrete, tailored measures aligned with institutional values and long-term strategic goals.

3.2 Main measures implemented

The company-level case studies demonstrate how PSR prevention can be successfully embedded into workplace practices. Takeda, Swedbank and La Fageda each adopted distinct yet comprehensive strategies that reflected their organisational contexts, resources and values.

- **Integration of psychosocial risk prevention into management systems**

Each company built PSR management into existing OSH or HR frameworks rather than treating it as a separate process. At Takeda, FOKUS Psyche was introduced within the health and safety system as a structured, confidential process to identify and manage PSRs. Workers could report concerns through a secure channel, after which trained staff and external psychologists evaluated the case and implemented measures in collaboration with workers and supervisors. Follow-up actions and regular feedback to supervisors ensured that both individual and systemic risks were addressed. In addition, a comprehensive risk assessment was in planning at the time of writing this report as part of a broader process to provide an overview of the programme's effectiveness. At Swedbank, PSR prevention was institutionalised within the Sustainable Employee framework, which integrated workload management, well-being and worker engagement into the bank's broader corporate governance model. Data from People Pulse surveys and the Sustainable Employee Index (SEI), along with ad-hoc risk assessments based on a template, was used to monitor the impact of PSRs and inform management responses. At La Fageda, PSR management formed part of the cooperative's participatory governance model,

whereby the People Management and Development Department, management team and workers' committee jointly addressed well-being and inclusion. Rather than relying on formal reporting systems, psychosocial well-being was continuously observed and discussed through direct interactions, regular team meetings and close supervision. Like Takeda, it recognised that maintaining a continuous focus on PSRs requires a formal risk assessment tool, which is currently being developed.

- **Strengthening of leadership and accountability**

Leadership accountability was central in all cases. At Swedbank, managers were directly accountable for their teams' psychosocial well-being, with training to identify early signs of stress, initiate conversations about workload and mental health, and use survey data to design team-level improvement plans. Prevention and regular dialogue were supported by HR and OSH specialists. At Takeda, managers were engaged through targeted workshops and communication initiatives to help them understand their role in creating psychologically safe working environments. When issues were reported, they were involved in follow-up discussions and in implementing corrective measures. At La Fageda, leadership was deeply embedded within the company's cooperative model. Managers and supervisors balanced production goals with care responsibilities, often acting as mentors to support workers with disabilities or mental health conditions. Their leadership style was grounded in empathy and active listening rather than hierarchical control.

- **Promotion of participation**

All three companies promoted worker participation as a key component of PSR prevention. Takeda created a confidential, transparent reporting system to encourage workers to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. This helped normalise conversations around PSRs and improved trust between workers and management. Swedbank maintained several participatory mechanisms, including working environment committees composed of management and workers' representatives who reviewed survey results, identified PSRs and proposed targeted interventions. La Fageda institutionalised participation through its cooperative structure. Workers, including those with disabilities, took part in decision-making and workplace planning through the workers' committee. This inclusion ensured that PSR measures reflected real worker experiences and fostered a sense of ownership and agency among workers over their working environment.

- **Training, awareness and capacity building**

Training and awareness-raising were vital for building internal capacity to manage PSRs. Takeda provided managers and workers with training on communication, conflict management and psychosocial hazards, which helped normalise mental health discussions and improved interpersonal communication. Swedbank integrated well-being and PSR awareness into leadership and staff training, with a focus on PSR management, work-life balance and sustainable work habits. Regular internal communication campaigns reinforced the importance of PSR prevention and mental health in everyday operations. La Fageda used experiential learning and reflection through initiatives such as 'double perspective' sessions to encourage workers to reflect on emotions, relationships and work situations from multiple viewpoints, thus fostering empathy and collective support.

- **Continuous support and monitoring systems**

Especially two of the companies implemented systems that went beyond general, occasional risk assessments, often centred on survey tools serving as early-warning systems. At Swedbank, this took the form of an SEI survey and an ad-hoc PSR template, both of which complemented regular risk assessments. At Takeda, the FOKUS Psyche programme introduced ad-hoc confidential reporting, which was followed up by the OSH team through a structured process.

La Fageda's approach was slightly less formal, with a suggestion box so that workers could submit feedback anonymously. This tool has proven especially useful for workers with disabilities, offering them a safe, accessible way to raise concerns or ideas, while enabling managers to stay informed about the current PSR situation and translate feedback into organisational adjustments, often with structural internal support.

- **Alignment of psychosocial risk prevention with organisational values**

Although their institutional settings differed, all three companies aligned PSR measures with their core organisational values. Takeda's approach was grounded in its global commitment to worker well-being and responsible corporate culture, translating these principles into tangible preventive mechanisms. Swedbank linked PSR prevention to its sustainability and corporate responsibility goals, based on its recognition that long-term business resilience depends on worker well-being. La Fageda, founded as a social enterprise, places mental health and dignity at work at the heart of its business model, and its holistic, community-based approach exemplified how economic and psychosocial objectives can reinforce each other.

In short, the measures implemented across the three companies reflect a shift towards integrated, proactive and participatory PSR prevention. PSR management is most effective when treated not as isolated interventions but as a shared organisational responsibility embedded in management systems, supported by leadership and aligned with organisational values and social purpose.

3.2.1 Key actors

Successful PSR prevention and management depend on coordinated involvement from multiple actors across organisational levels.

- **Occupational safety and health teams as technical anchors**

OSH experts played a central role in designing and operationalising PSR management systems across all three companies, providing the technical and methodological basis for identifying, assessing and addressing PSRs. At Takeda, the occupational health management team – comprising OSH specialists and an occupational psychologist – designed and managed the FOKUS Psyche reporting system. Their role bridged policy and practice, translating psychosocial findings into concrete preventive measures while safeguarding confidentiality and trust. Similarly, at Swedbank, OSH specialists were part of a broader Sustainable Employee governance framework that analysed survey data, advised managers and monitored compliance with well-being standards. Their contribution ensured that PSR prevention was based on evidence, reinforcing the scientific and procedural credibility of the company's approach. Although La Fageda did not have a formal OSH department, the People Management and Development Department performed a similar function. It coordinated psychosocial support, liaised with psychologists and maintained regular communication between workers, managers and health professionals.

- **Human resources as strategic enablers**

In all three cases, HR departments went beyond administrative compliance to act as strategic enablers, linking PSR prevention to broader organisational goals such as performance, engagement and retention, and embedding PSR prevention and well-being in policies and everyday management. At Swedbank, HR was directly responsible for implementing the Sustainable Employee framework and ensuring that data from worker surveys was translated into targeted HR policies. The team supported managers in interpreting results, planning improvements and monitoring follow-up actions. At Takeda, HR collaborated closely with OSH teams to promote the FOKUS Psyche programme through communication campaigns, awareness-raising sessions and integration into leadership training, thereby normalising PSR discussions and positioning mental well-being as a shared corporate responsibility. At La Fageda, HR functions were largely merged with social support under the People Management and Development Department. This hybrid model allowed HR professionals to address psychosocial issues with both administrative efficiency and social sensitivity, ensuring that all workers, particularly those with mental health conditions, were approached with an holistic view in mind.

- **Managers and supervisors as first-line actors**

Line managers and supervisors acted as key intermediaries in translating PSR strategies into practice. Their ability to detect early warning signs, foster open communication and create psychologically safe environments was a consistent success factor across all three cases. At Swedbank, managers were made explicitly responsible for team well-being. They were trained to interpret survey results, hold follow-up discussions and co-create improvement plans with their teams, supported by leadership accountability mechanisms. At Takeda, they implemented interventions triggered by FOKUS Psyche reports. Once an issue was identified, they collaborated with OSH specialists and workers to adjust

workloads and improve team communication. At La Fageda, supervisors combined production oversight with mentoring, providing daily psychosocial support to vulnerable workers and those with disabilities. This dual role required empathy, flexibility and close coordination with psychologists and the People Management and Development Department, illustrating that managerial involvement in PSR prevention in this case extended beyond compliance to continuous relational care.

- **Workers' representatives and participation structures**

Worker participation was another key component across the cases, with workers and their representatives acting as both information sources and co-creators of solutions. At Takeda, staff representatives participated in consultations with the OSH team and reviewed aggregated feedback from FOKUS Psyche reports to ensure measures were transparent and legitimate. Swedbank institutionalised worker participation through working environment committees, where delegates discussed survey findings, shared feedback and monitored action plans. This structure created a formal dialogue between management and workers and reinforced shared ownership of psychosocial well-being. At La Fageda, workers' voices were structurally embedded in the organisation through the workers' committee, which included workers with disabilities. This participatory mechanism, both an OSH feature and a cornerstone of the cooperative's inclusive philosophy, facilitated early detection of issues and the joint development of preventive measures through regular meetings between workers and management.

- **External professionals and institutional support**

While internal actors were the main drivers of PSR management, external professionals were also instrumental, particularly in providing expertise, neutrality and psychological support. Takeda's FOKUS Psyche model involved collaboration with external occupational psychologists who ensured that reported cases were handled confidentially and professionally. At Swedbank, external consultants occasionally supported survey design, data analysis and benchmarking to ensure methodological robustness. Meanwhile, La Fageda is working with external professionals to design a comprehensive internal assessment tool for the ongoing monitoring of PSRs within the organisation.

4 Challenges and success factors

This chapter reflects on the key challenges and success factors in PSR prevention identified across the sectoral and company-level cases. It highlights common elements, context-specific factors and implications for scalability and transferability. Where possible, it also situates success factors and challenges within the context of both legislative and non-legislative PSR measures across the five countries involved (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia and Spain) and, in doing so, links the findings of the EU-OSHA policy brief and national reports on legislation and PSR prevention strategies (EU-OSHA, 2025a) to the case studies.

4.1 Challenges in implementing psychosocial risk prevention

▪ Structural and systematic challenges

Despite increasing recognition of PSRs in the workplace, the case studies revealed that structural and systemic barriers, such as resource constraints, coverage gaps and a lack of structural anchoring, can limit the effectiveness, reach and sustainability of PSR prevention efforts.

With respect to resource constraints, the MEGAP case revealed that labour inspectors often lacked formal education on gender and diversity issues prior to the implementation of the programme, thus limiting their ability to assess such risks effectively and from a PSR perspective. Similarly, TEKSAM faced constraints in consultant availability and organisational resources.

In terms of coverage gaps, TEKSAM's services are restricted to companies and workers covered by specific collective agreements, thereby excluding firms outside those agreements and limiting the reach of its PSR prevention efforts. In the Building Mental Resilience project, despite dedicated outreach to self-employed contractors and micro-companies supported by a bipartite sectoral fund, engaging these parties in the programme proved very difficult.

Another challenge is that PSR prevention initiatives are often ad hoc, disconnected from OSH or HR policies, and lack formal anchoring within organisations. At sectoral level, these initiatives are often tied to specific projects or programmes with limited time and resources. For example, the MEGAP network ceased to exist after the project ended. Nevertheless, labour inspectors were trained and continue to apply this knowledge in their daily work. Encouragingly, the approaches adopted by Takeda, La Fageda and Swedbank have evolved into more comprehensive and systematic measures over time. Even in sectoral initiatives, the measures often triggered broader and long term change and raised awareness of PSR management within companies.

Other structural or systemic challenges related to the interventions themselves, as the need for standardisation sometimes conflicted with the need for flexibility. For example, the TEKSAM surveys were designed to ensure scientific validity, but their rigidity can limit adaptation to diverse organisational contexts. A similar challenge arose in the Building Mental Resilience project, where balancing sufficiently substantiated sessions with the need to keep them short and easy to digest, proved problematic.

Data collection and evaluation mechanisms were often absent or informal. Without centralised data collection, longitudinal tracking and monitoring and evaluation, it is difficult to assess the actual impact of interventions or guide continuous improvement. A related challenge is the difficulty of obtaining measurable evidence of improvements in worker well-being and health. Only a few case studies included quantitative assessments of these outcomes and how they evolved over time.

▪ Organisational and managerial challenges

A common feature across the nine case studies was the presence of organisational and managerial challenges, although these manifested in different ways.

In all cases, the involvement of middle management proved essential, yet was sometimes challenging. In TEKSAM, for example, managers sometimes provided contradictory instructions and sometimes failed to actively engage in the daily implementation of PSR prevention measures, which limited deeper organisational change. In several cases, this stemmed from the organisation's or management team's readiness to address PSR prevention and promote workers' mental health and well-being. In the Building Mental Resilience project, the training and coaching provider leading the project observed

significant differences among the 10 participating construction companies in their openness and readiness to engage with PSR prevention. Although all companies joined the programme voluntarily, the interviewees mentioned that some companies were more receptive to guidance and coaching and more willing to move towards an organisational culture where PSR prevention is integral to OSH policy and practices.

Similarly, in relation to the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement in Spain, Banco Sabadell reported that it initially encountered barriers in conducting PSR assessments, including resistance from management and trade union representatives, as well as managers prioritising other tasks. Over time, it overcame this challenge through several approaches, such as structural embedding, working groups and workshops, which helped change the organisational culture. Another example is Swedbank, where PSRs and mental health concerns were initially rarely addressed. Managers prioritised operational tasks and had limited influence over the organisational culture around OSH. When addressing OSH issues, they tended to focus on physical improvements rather than workers' mental health and well-being, due to both limited awareness among management and gaps in leadership capacity.

The two other company cases presented in this study support these observations. In Takeda's FOKUS Psyche programme, the importance of openness and rapid responses to worker feedback among managers was highlighted. Managers were trained to lead with trust and respect and to integrate PSR awareness into their daily practices. This case further illustrated the importance of engaging managers constructively to avoid creating a sense of blame that could make them defensive or uncooperative. La Fageda, which operates in the agri-food and social services sector, faced the challenge of coordinating flexible working arrangements in a growing organisation, which required trust and dialogue across teams and active managerial involvement to balance individual needs with the organisation's social and operational goals.

Many case studies involved programmes, actions and initiatives that included or targeted small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), often because such organisations are predominant in the sector in question (e.g. construction and hospitality). Compared to larger organisations, SMEs tend to have a more limited awareness of PSRs, are less likely to include PSR factors in their risk assessments and adopt fewer PSR prevention measures. This is supported by the initial results of the 2024 European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER): among the 25% of establishments reporting no identified PSR factors, smaller establishments are overrepresented (EU-OSHA, 2025b). Importantly, the survey also found that a higher proportion of establishments in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors reported no PSR factors compared with other sectors. For SMEs, this is often attributed to limited resources and a lack of awareness, including technical, financial and human aspects (EU-OSHA, 2018). Managers within SMEs often perform multiple roles, which limits their time and capacity for PSR initiatives.

The MEGAP programme also highlighted that SMEs had less-developed OSH practices, including with regard to PSRs, due to limited capacity and awareness, a finding confirmed in interviews with labour inspectors. This challenge was also encountered in the No Respect – No Service initiative, since many businesses in the hospitality sector are micro or small enterprises lacking formal PSR management structures. The same was true of the Belgian case studies involving the wood and construction sectors, which are characterised by a high proportion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). For example in PrePS in Wood, it was noted that, although awareness of available tools is growing among smaller organisations, full and sustained uptake remains rare.

▪ **Challenges related to job characteristics and employment conditions**

Closely related to organisational challenges, several sectoral and company-level case studies revealed how job characteristics and employment conditions can influence PSR prevention – for example, by affecting awareness of PSRs and how they are prioritised relative to other risks.

Several case studies related to sectors or occupations in which workers are exposed to high levels of PSRs, such as hospitality (No Respect – No Service), the care sector (MEGAP) and banking (XXIV Collective Banking Agreement) at sectoral level, and Swedbank and La Fageda at company level. Across these cases, commonly reported PSR factors related to work pressures and tight deadlines, complex working environments, organisational challenges, exposure to violence and harassment, especially in customer-facing roles, and precarious employment. Despite the well-documented risks in

these sectors and occupations, significant gaps persisted in PSR awareness and prevention prior to the implementation of the specific measures.

Some examples highlighted workers who are particularly vulnerable to PSRs, such as young hospitality workers. In the MEGAP study, women were disproportionately more often assigned monotonous and repetitive tasks in some sectors, reported higher incidences of violence and aggression, and faced disrupted workflows and missed communications when working part time.

This study also focused on sectors where PSRs are often overlooked because the work is physically demanding or considered dangerous, with safety taking precedence, such as the construction and wood sectors in the two Belgian cases. As a result, PSR awareness and prevention were limited. However, workers are exposed to a range of PSRs arising from challenges in work organisation and coordination, communication and interpersonal relations within and across teams. In addition, PSRs frequently interact with physical hazards and influence their outcomes (see EU-OSHA, 2024c).

More generally, companies under commercial pressure and high productivity demands often experience increases in workload and work pace. In such cases, PSR prevention may be deprioritised due to competing priorities. This was reported in TEKSAM and the Spanish banking sector.

The case studies also confirm that global megatrends, particularly the digital and green transitions, are reshaping the world of work, with consequences for workers' physical and mental well-being. The rapid digital transition is creating new risks, blurring the boundaries between work and personal life, and calling for constant adaptation of roles and skills, as reported in the Spanish banking sector and the Estonian Swedbank case. This concern also emerged in the Building Mental Resilience project, where digital technologies and tools such as smart helmets raised privacy issues and were viewed by workers as a cause for concern. In the wood sector, the digital and green transitions were cited as giving rise to new types of risks, including PSRs, especially in settings that rely heavily on traditional craftsmanship, where these risks may be difficult to manage. These developments pose new challenges to PSR prevention, as emerging risks may not yet be fully understood or captured in existing risk assessments, prevention plans or OSH policies. An ageing workforce was also highlighted as a contributing factor.

The TEKSAM case highlighted that emerging challenges, such as the digital and green transitions, require adaptation not only from sectors and companies, but also from supporting organisations – social partners, training providers, consultancies and civil society – and the services they provide. In TEKSAM, this was evident in the context of the #MeToo movement, which prompted updates to services and materials. However, keeping pace with such developments can be a challenge in itself, especially as some initiatives or measures are limited in duration or scope, such as when project funding is available for a specific period of time only.

In some case studies, the impact of Covid-19 was evident. In the Spanish banking sector, for example, workers reported increased hostility and aggression from customers both during and after the pandemic, which led to stress and safety concerns among frontline staff. At Swedbank in Estonia, the pandemic highlighted PSR prevention challenges that had previously been overlooked.

▪ **Cultural and perceptual barriers**

Another key challenge identified across all case studies related to cultural and perceptual barriers, which shape how PSR factors and mental health outcomes are understood, discussed and addressed, often determining the success or failure of interventions. Such barriers are particularly difficult to overcome.

Trust and legitimacy emerged as central concerns. Workers may distrust external consultants, especially if they are seen as very much aligned with management. In TEKSAM, this challenge was addressed through dual representation (workers and management), but it remains an issue in contexts lacking such structures. Even where frameworks exist, as with the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement in Spain, scepticism around company-led initiatives may persist, particularly where transparency is limited or past experiences have undermined trust. The Spanish banking sector managed to overcome this issue as described above.

Resistance to change and stigma around mental health are major issues. Moving from informal communication to structured dialogue requires a cultural shift that can be slow and uneven. In many workplaces, PSRs are still seen as secondary to physical risks or productivity goals, and discussing mental health remains a taboo. This latter point was confirmed in the male-dominated woodworking and

construction sectors in Belgium as also elaborated above. Workers may fear retaliation or disbelief when reporting sensitive issues such as violence, harassment or psychological distress, leading to underreporting and inaccurate assessments. This is precisely what the No Respect – No Service project sought to address. In the case of Swedbank, workers were reluctant to speak openly about psychological distress before the change process started. The Sustainable Employee framework, which was introduced to strengthen the speak-up culture, formalised prevention and response processes. In the case of FOKUS Psyche at Takeda, efforts were made to ensure that workers felt safe when reporting sensitive issues. Workers were encouraged to report PSRs, and management responded quickly. This cultural shift was supported by training, communication and tangible improvements, such as task prioritisation and better team communication, and workers felt heard and empowered to contribute to organisational change.

At NORDSEE Austria, cultural differences affected how sexual harassment was perceived. The works council invested in training and dialogue to raise awareness and empower workers to speak up, and the company's code of conduct and branded materials reinforced its zero-tolerance stance. A clear message was communicated to both staff and customers defining what constitutes harassment and sexual harassment, emphasising that such behaviour would not be tolerated, while support systems were put in place. La Fageda's inclusive model required continuous adaptation to support individuals with disabilities, mental health conditions and those from diverse cultural backgrounds. The 'double perspective' programme helped technical staff develop empathy and psychosocial awareness through tools such as the iceberg metaphor to understand the underlying causes of behaviours. Finally, the PrePS in Wood initiative used an appreciative inquiry approach to reduce stigma and promote dialogue.

4.2 Success factors for effective and sustainable psychosocial risk management

▪ Strong social dialogue and institutional cooperation

A key success factor in effective and sustainable PSR prevention is the presence of robust social dialogue and institutional cooperation.

Across the six sectoral case studies examined, institutional frameworks and close collaboration between stakeholders emerged as important factors determining the effectiveness and sustainability of PSR management. PrePS in Wood, for example, was promoted by the sectoral fund for the wood sector, which is managed by trade unions and employers' organisations. Such sectoral funds are common in Belgium and are well positioned to develop tools, launch projects and support companies. The Building Mental Resilience project also involved a sectoral fund, albeit with a more limited role. Similarly, the success of TEKSAM is rooted in Denmark's industrial relations system. Other examples of such cooperation emerged in the two Austrian sectoral case studies, both of which relied on collaboration between stakeholders such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Labour, trade unions and labour inspectorates, while the XXIV Collective Banking Agreement was negotiated by the Spanish Banking Association, trade unions and the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy to address PSRs.

With specific regard to social partners, the report on national legislative and non-legislative approaches notes that these play a crucial role in shaping national policies and strategies for PSR prevention in the workplace (EU-OSHA, 2025a). One of the report's main recommendations is to foster social dialogue and strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration. The findings from the sectoral and company-level case studies provide further evidence in this regard, with strong social dialogue and institutional cooperation emerging as key success factors across almost all cases.

The contribution of social partners and social dialogue to PSR prevention was striking, especially in the sectoral case studies. Collective agreements, as illustrated in the Spanish banking sector and TEKSAM cases, provided a stable framework for governing PSR prevention. Moreover, the Austrian and Belgian case studies relied on the active involvement of social partners, often in leading roles. Their participation, representing both workers and employers, reinforced relevance, legitimacy, trust and balanced decision-making.

In addition, institutional anchoring and collaboration with multiple stakeholders such as national OSH bodies, inspectorates and training providers fostered sustainability and alignment with broader policy

frameworks (see, for example, MEGAP and No Respect – No Service). Such collaboration was also an important success factor at company level. The FOKUS Psyche initiative at Takeda was driven by the company's own OSH team, but other actors collaborated and provided support. At La Fageda, the works council and health and safety committees ensured diverse representation and the co-design of measures, with input from all organisational levels. At Swedbank, a key success factor was the collaboration between actors such as HR, trade unions and the health and safety committee, which allowed for oversight and strengthened trust.

- **Worker participation and empowerment**

Closely linked to social dialogue and trade union involvement, worker participation and empowerment emerged as another key success factor. In many cases, direct and indirect forms of worker participation were mutually reinforcing. Some of the companies in the case studies were small enterprises, without trade union representatives. In such cases, direct participation was important but was often complemented by sector-level trade union involvement – for example, trade unions were engaged at overarching programme level and monitored implementation in that capacity.

When workers are actively involved, PSR prevention and management measures gain legitimacy and relevance. To achieve this, workers across the case studies were engaged in participatory formats such as workshops, took part in field visits and provided feedback anonymously through surveys, scans or focus groups. The Austrian, Estonian and Spanish case studies further underscore the importance of inclusive implementation, confidentiality and safe spaces.

- **Managerial engagement and leading by example**

The nine case studies highlight the importance of strong managerial involvement. Leadership at all organisational levels played a decisive role in initiating, supporting and sustaining PSR prevention programmes. At Banco Sabadell, managers participated in quarterly PSR reviews, while at NORDSEE Austria, they supported workshops, communications and a new workplace agreement, which helped advance PSR prevention efforts. At Takeda, senior managers' endorsement and swift follow-up of FOKUS Psyche contributed to the initiative's success. In TEKSAM, line managers at Machinismus AS helped establish cooperative committees, while senior management provided formal backing, thus reinforcing legitimacy and organisational commitment. In addition, several case studies developed materials specifically for management, such as the MEGAP toolkit.

Managers often acted as facilitators, ensuring that PSR prevention was embedded in strategic planning and OSH and HR processes. Structured follow-up processes such as quarterly reviews and individual feedback sessions ensured that measures were not only adopted but continuously improved. When managers lead by example through active participation, responsiveness to feedback and open communication, the organisational culture shifts towards openness, care and shared responsibility (see also EU-OSHA, 2022b, for further discussion on the importance of leadership in PSR prevention). The company cases also provide a clear illustration of this. At Takeda, sessions on leading with trust and respect helped managers understand their role in shaping their organisation's culture and psychosocial safety climate. At Swedbank, managers took ownership of PSR prevention by recognising their influence on the work organisation and team dynamics.

- **Incorporation into existing OSH and HR systems**

A key factor for effective and sustainable PSR prevention is embedding it within existing OSH and HR systems. As the Austrian cases show, this should be approached broadly to ensure alignment with policies and practices on gender, diversity and related topics. This enhances the coherence and sustainability of measures and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all actors. However, as noted above, a lack of integration was identified as a major challenge across the case studies.

In Denmark, TEKSAM complements legally mandated safety committees by focusing specifically on PSRs, thereby enhancing the overall risk management structure without duplicating efforts. This complementary role is key and was highlighted in other case studies. For instance, in MEGAP, PSR prevention was integrated into work process assessments and safety instructions, and checklists and guidelines were developed that are still used during inspections. The use of validated tools also contributes to integration (e.g. F-PSICO in the Spanish banking sector).

- **Awareness, communication and cultural change**

Raising awareness, improving communication and fostering cultural change are all central to effective and sustainable PSR prevention and management. Across the nine case studies, the first critical step was to raise awareness about the importance of PSR prevention. Next, efforts to improve internal communication and transparency around PSRs proved highly effective, especially in fostering a cultural shift (e.g. PrePS in Wood and MEGAP). Again, insufficient or fragmented communication was cited as a barrier in several case studies.

Accessible materials such as flyers, digital bulletins, videos and guides, along with branded campaigns, slogans and media coverage, effectively raise awareness of PSRs and reduce communication barriers. Once again, Banco Sabadell stands out as an example, since it publishes annual reports on progress in PSR prevention. In addition, cultural sensitivity played a role, with interventions adapted to generational and social movements such as #MeToo. Other examples emerged at Takeda, La Fageda and Swedbank, where communication and awareness efforts made workers feel safe to report issues and suggest improvements.

5 Lessons learned and policy pointers

An analysis of the nine case studies provides lessons learned and corresponding policy pointers, as presented below. Wherever possible, these are contextualised alongside insights from the legislative and non-legislative approaches examined in the policy brief (EU-OSHA 2025)³ and the respective national reports. It should be noted that the case studies were selected due to their focus on collective rather than individual PSR measures, which was key to their effectiveness and sustainability. In cases that combined individual and collective approaches, the latter proved essential in bringing about a cultural shift within the participating organisations.

- **Raise awareness about PSR prevention and reduce stigma.** National legislation and PSR prevention analyses had already highlighted the importance of raising awareness about PSRs and mental health to reduce stigma and promote more proactive PSR management. The case studies further supported this finding, showing that the uptake, effectiveness and sustainability of PSR prevention measures depend on organisations' awareness of, and readiness to address, PSRs and mental health issues. However, many organisations require support from actors such as government agencies, sectoral bodies, trade unions and training providers to develop a solid understanding of PSR prevention.
- **Ensure clear and transparent communication on PSRs to further reduce stigma.** Approaches to support uptake and engagement among companies and following that workers, include clear framing of initiatives and programmes, use of internal ambassadors and easy access to relevant materials.
- **Treat PSR prevention as a systemic issue, embedded in organisational policies and practices.** Effective PSR prevention requires a systemic approach, addressed at organisational level through structured risk assessments, formal policies on aspects such as data collection, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up, and reporting procedures, and should be viewed as part of the organisation's wider OSH policy. Formalisation and clearly defined responsibilities strengthen coherence and ensure continuity. Several examples of structured procedures and tools that were developed by the organisations themselves or made available by other entities were identified. This also connects to the policy pointer on PSR risk assessments and prevention plans in the mentioned policy brief.
- **Prioritise PSR prevention.** Placing PSR prevention at the heart of an organisation's policies, practices and culture, and linking it to its overall management and OSH approach, helps keep PSRs high on the agenda even when other pressing issues arise. Numerous case studies highlighted the risk of issues such as safety concerns overshadowing PSR prevention, especially in sectors where PSRs are often overlooked.
- **Promote validated tools, procedures and protocols to support organisations in PSR prevention.** The organisations in the case studies benefited from a range of tools, procedures and protocols to support them in conducting PSR risk assessments, clarifying the PSR prevention and management duties of employers, and embedding PSR prevention within the wider OSH policy.
- **Ensure continuous, structured data collection, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of PSR prevention efforts.** When accompanied by structured, transparent follow-up and input from a broad sector-level stakeholder community, such tools can drive meaningful change over the long term. The cases underscored the importance of standardisation and benchmarking options, while ensuring that data remains contextualised so that its relevance is clear. High participation rates and collaboration with external providers contribute to improve data quality and build confidence in the process. As noted in the policy brief in the section on national legislative and non-legislative PSR measures, robust data collection and reporting systems are imperative for informing policy and practice (EU-OSHA, 2025).

³ [Strategies and legislation on psychosocial risks in six European countries](#), national reports showing under the same link under "twin publications".

- **Involve workers in PSR prevention.** Another lesson is that legitimacy and trust in the process are further strengthened when staff representatives from all levels of an organisation are involved in designing and reviewing programmes, and when companies foster openness and transparency around their programmes and actions. As for general OSH approaches, worker involvement is a crucial aspect to make sure PSR assessment and the follow up are well aligned with the workforce experiences.
- **Tailor interventions to the specific context of each sector and workplace.** Effective PSR prevention requires tailored approaches. Across the cases, it became clear that workers and managers respond better when tools reflect their roles, environments and challenges. At the same time challenges were reported when the tools were not fully aligned with the type of work.
- **Provide training.** Several cases included training for workers (and their representatives) and/or managers. In some cases, training was also offered to HR staff, workers' representatives, including union representatives on OSH committees and others, thus enabling them to act as facilitators or mediators. Training strengthens the cultural foundations of PSR prevention, especially in sectors where mental health issues remain stigmatised or under-prioritised. The three company cases, in line with current research and insights⁴, underlined the importance of leadership training to embed awareness of PSR prevention and better shape the company culture. Beyond the target group, the training format is also critical: interactive workshops and participatory sessions bring together diverse stakeholders in co-creation and knowledge exchange exercises. Striking the right balance between duration and depth is also essential.
- **Strengthen social dialogue.** This was also noted as a key factor in the analyses of national legislative and non-legislative measures supporting PSR prevention. Effective and sustainable PSR prevention is closely tied to the quality and structure of social dialogue. Several case studies underscored this finding. Parity-based cooperation and dual representation of employers and workers can foster trust, legitimacy and sustainable outcomes, while sectoral agreements and union involvement at sectoral and company level are key to building trust and ensuring that PSR measures are not only implemented, but also accepted.
- **Strengthen labour inspectorates.** Labour inspectorates can play a pivotal role in enforcing PSR legislation and promoting prevention efforts. Efforts to enhance the effectiveness of both inspectors (e.g. training) and inspections (e.g. capacity building) are both promising investments for improving PSR prevention approaches at company level. This point was highlighted in both the policy brief on national legislation and non-legislative practices and in the sectoral and company-level case studies.
- **Ensure stable funding and institutional support for PSR prevention efforts at both sectoral and company levels.** In several cases, the long-term impact of PSR prevention and management interventions depended on stable funding, institutional support and ongoing engagement, such as when they are embedded in collective agreements or put forward by (bipartite) sectoral bodies. These are important points to consider when designing new PSR prevention measures.

⁴ [The role of managers in preventing and managing psychosocial risks](#)

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