

PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS GLOSSARY

Bullying (or harassment): Usually perpetrated by individuals within the organisation, harassment is an escalatory process that involves repeated attempts to threaten, intimidate, demean, or humiliate one or more co-workers.¹ The perpetrator at work can be a supervisor, co-worker, subordinate, client, or customer, and can be anyone with whom a worker comes into contact due to their job.

Burnout: A syndrome resulting from chronic work-related stress, with symptoms characterised by three elements: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy.²

Depression: It is a common mental disorder that involves a depressed mood or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for long periods of time. Depression is different from regular mood changes and feelings about everyday life. Depression is also known as "depressive disorder".³

Diversity at work: Diversity refers to the presence of differences within a given setting. In the workplace, this can mean a variety of personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability status, socioeconomic background, and education level. A diverse workforce is closely linked to inclusion. While "diversity" is about the who, "inclusion" is about the how. See inclusive workplaces. .⁴

Harassment (or bullying): Usually perpetrated by individuals within the organisation, harassment is an escalatory process that involves repeated attempts to threaten, intimidate, demean, or humiliate one or more co-workers.⁵ The perpetrator at work can be a supervisor, co-worker, subordinate, client, or customer, and can be anyone with whom a worker comes into contact due to their job.

Inclusive workplaces: An inclusive workplace is one that ensures every worker feels appreciated and recognised for their unique contributions, while also respecting worker's differences and diversity. Inclusive workplaces are based on proactive measures to eliminate bias, discrimination, and unequal opportunities and are adapting to each worker's ability.

Individual measures: In terms of psychosocial risk prevention, individual measures refer to measures addressing and supporting the individual in contrast to changing organisational or technical aspects. Individual measures can for example refer to training on how to deal with difficult customers, mindfulness courses, coaching, access to confidential advice, etc.

¹ Campaign guide

² WHO (2019), [International Classification of Diseases, ICD.](#)

³ [WHO](#)

⁴ [Diversity and Inclusion \(D&I\) - Definition and Explanation](#), The Oxford Briefings.

⁵ Campaign guide

Job autonomy It refers to the extent to which workers can influence how they perform their job.⁶ This may relate to, for example work, methods and planning.

Job performance Indicates how well an individual worker accomplishes daily work activities in a way that helps the organisation achieve its goals.⁷

Mental disorders are characterised by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour. They are usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning.⁸

Mental health: A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.⁹

Mental health promotion: Aims to promote positive mental health by increasing psychological wellbeing, competence and resilience, and by creating supportive living conditions and environments.¹⁰ Workplace mental health promotion encompasses initiatives provided by the employer to improve workers' mental health.

Mental health stigma: Mental health stigma is when people are judged, excluded, or treated unfairly because they are experiencing mental health issues. This stigma is often rooted in misunderstanding, fear or stereotypes, and can lead to feelings of shame and discrimination.

Mobbing: Usually perpetrated by individuals within the organisation, mobbing is an escalatory process that involves repeated attempts from a group of workers to threaten, intimidate, demean, or humiliate one or more co-workers.¹¹ Mobbing at work can be initiated by supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, clients, or customers, is to say by anyone with whom a worker comes into contact due to their job. While EU-OSHA defines “mobbing” in the sense of the English origin as coming from a group of aggressors (coming from a mob), in many European countries “mobbing” is used as an equivalent to harassment/bullying.

Neurodiversity: Neurodiversity refers to the idea that all humans have diverse cognitive profiles, neurological abilities, strengths and challenges, which should be recognised and respected.¹²

⁶ Adaptation from [ILO \(2011\), “Autonomy and Control” in the ILO Encyclopaedia](#)

⁷ [Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C. M., Hildebrandt, V. H., Schaufeli, W. B., de Vet Henrica, C. W., & Van Der Beek, A. J. \(2011\). Conceptual frameworks of individual work performance: A systematic review.](#)

⁸ [WHO \(2022\). Mental disorders \(factsheet\).](#)

⁹ [WHO \(2005\). Promoting Mental Health.](#)

¹⁰ [WHO \(2004\). Prevention of mental disorders.](#)

¹¹ Campaign guide

¹² ILO: <https://www.businessanddisability.org/neurodiversity/>

Organisational culture: Set of shared values, beliefs, meaning and expectation that shape how people work and interact within an organisation. It influences communication, decision-making and the overall work environment¹³

Organisational measures: In the context of OSH, organisational measures refer to the change of organisational aspects, work processes and job design to minimise potential harm for workers. In terms of psychosocial risks, possible organisational measures are the clarification of responsibilities and tasks, clear instructions, flexible working schedules, job rotation, improvement of replacement arrangements, shaping organisational culture etc.

Presenteeism: Refers to when someone goes to work despite being ill or injured, while their condition prevents them from performing effectively and/or safely.

Psychologically healthy and safe workplace: A workplace that promotes workers' psychosocial well-being and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological and physical health including in negligent, reckless, or intentional ways.¹⁴

Psychosocial factors: Elements of the design and management of work and its social and organisational contexts, for example emotional demands, workload, social support.

Psychosocial hazards: Negative aspects of psychosocial factors that may adversely affect workers' health and other organisational outcomes, for example, low autonomy or poor social support.

Psychosocial risk: The potential of psychosocial hazards to cause psychological, social or physical harm.¹⁵ When referring to psychosocial risks, we therefore focus on how psychosocial hazards may translate into actual impacts on workers' health and organisational outcomes.

Psychosocial risk assessment: Systematic identification of psychosocial hazards in the workplace and evaluating their potential to cause injury or harm, resulting in decisions whether they could be eliminated and, if not, what preventive or protective measures are and should be in place to control the risk.¹⁶

Psychosocial risk management: Process of proactively dealing with psychosocial hazards in the workplace, starting from the preparation and implementation of the psychosocial risk assessment, planning and implementing respective measures and reviewing the measures for ensuring ongoing adaptation and improvement of interventions.

¹³ [European Commission \(2014\). Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace.](#)

¹⁴ Adaptation from [European Commission \(2014\). Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace.](#)

¹⁵ Adaptation from Cox & Griffiths (1995)

¹⁶ Adaptation from [European Commission \(2014\). Promoting Mental Health in the Workplace.](#)

Return-to-work programmes: Programmes that are designed to enhance the ability of workers to return to work and remain in employment after a sickness absence period, involving a combination of medical care, rehabilitation, and work-focused interventions and support.¹⁷

Self-stigma: Self-stigma refers to the situation where a stigmatised individual has internalised the negative attitudes and attributions as part of their identity.

Sexual harassment (at work): Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.¹⁸

Third-party violence: Third-party violence involves acts of physical or psychological/verbal aggression perpetrated by individuals from outside the company, not from co-workers.¹⁹

Work-related stress: Work-related stress can be defined as a pattern of emotional, cognitive, behavioural and physiological reactions to adverse and noxious aspects of work content, work organisation and work environment. It is a state characterised by high levels of arousal and distress and often by feelings of not coping.²⁰

Work-related suicide: is a suicide that either has been caused by work or work has contributed to it.

Workplace Health Promotion: Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) is the combined efforts of employers, workers and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work. This can be achieved through a combination of:

- improving the work organisation and the working environment
- promoting active participation, and
- encouraging personal development.²¹

¹⁷ [WHO and ILO \(2022\). Policy Brief: Mental health at work.](#)

¹⁸ [EIGE](#)

¹⁹ Campaign guide

²⁰ [European Commission \(2002\). Guidance on work-related stress.](#)

²¹ [ENWHP \(2018\). Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion in the European Union](#)