

PREVENTION AND RESEARCH UNIT (PRU)

Description of the Unit

The Prevention and Research Unit is responsible for the Agency's technical, scientific and economic information on occupational safety and health (OSH). It informs policymaking in the EU and its Member States, as well as raising awareness about OSH and helping to develop tools for use at the workplace. The unit offers in-house expertise through its 15 project managers who have a diverse background in terms of skills and competences in OSH and project management. They work closely with external experts either under a research contract or from a collaborating institution.

The PRU team works not only on 'core' OSH areas such as work-related illness and injury, epidemiology and workplace prevention of occupational risks, but also on implications for OSH of key trends in work, such as digitalisation, new forms of work, or of different regulatory approaches and national systems. It contributes to different parts of the policy-research cycle, from planning to commissioning, review and dissemination of activities in the following thematic areas:

Anticipating changes in the world of work that impact on OSH in order to anticipate emerging risks and improve the timeliness and effectiveness of preventive measures. Research methods used include literature reviews, expert surveys to provide forecasts and scenario building as part of a foresight.

Providing facts and figures to give an accurate and comprehensive picture of OSH risks, their effects and how they are prevented and managed. Comprehensive analyses are carried out based on survey data, administrative data, expert interviews, focus groups and literature reviews. Example activities include:

- Research into the OSH implications of digitalisation (platform work, automation, algorithmic management, monitoring of workers, etc.);
- The workplace survey ESENER that interviews respondents in 45,000 establishments across 36 countries on how they manage OSH in practice;
- Research on work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) aiming to promote the prevention of MSDs, raising awareness of good practice for national authorities, employers and sector-level organisations;
- Setting up a major new survey in Europe that will estimate workers' exposure to factors causing cancer;
- Developing, in collaboration with the European Commission and national ministries, the EU OSH Information System, which presents indicators on OSH in the context of national and European strategies.

Developing tools for OSH management for small businesses to manage health and safety and so improve compliance with OSH legislation. Implementation of the online interactive risk assessment tool (OiRA) through the development of sector-specific tools.

Raising awareness of workplace risks and their prevention. Using campaigns to get the OSH message across to target audiences, such as national ministries and labour inspectorates, trade unions, employer organisations and OSH professionals, by campaigning.

Networking knowledge to mobilise the OSH community through new tools. The OSHwiki provides information on a broad range of OSH issues and at the same time functions as a platform for collaboration and knowledge sharing.