

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

Prevalence and strategies for prevention

## Joint report from EU-OSHA and Eurofound

EU-OSHA seminar on psychosocial risks in Europe  
Brussels, 16 & 17 October 2014



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

- Working conditions and psychosocial risks in Europe (EWCS, EurWORK and other Eurofound research)
- Policy interventions and initiatives
- Management of psychosocial risks in European establishments (ESENER)
- Organisational interventions
- Conclusions

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# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

25% of workers  
experience work-  
related stress

25% of workers  
report that work  
affects their health  
negatively

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

Job content (monotonous, repetitive and complex tasks / skills mismatch / restructuring)

Work intensity (high speed, deadlines, job done) and autonomy (changing tasks, methods of work and speed of work)

Working time arrangements and work-life balance (working hours, regularity, fit between work and social commitments)

Social environment (relationships, adverse social behaviour, conflicts)

Job (in)security

25% of workers experience work-related stress

25% of workers report that work affects their health negatively

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

Job content (monotonous, repetitive and complex tasks)

- Example: “monotonous job” is reported by 45% of workers

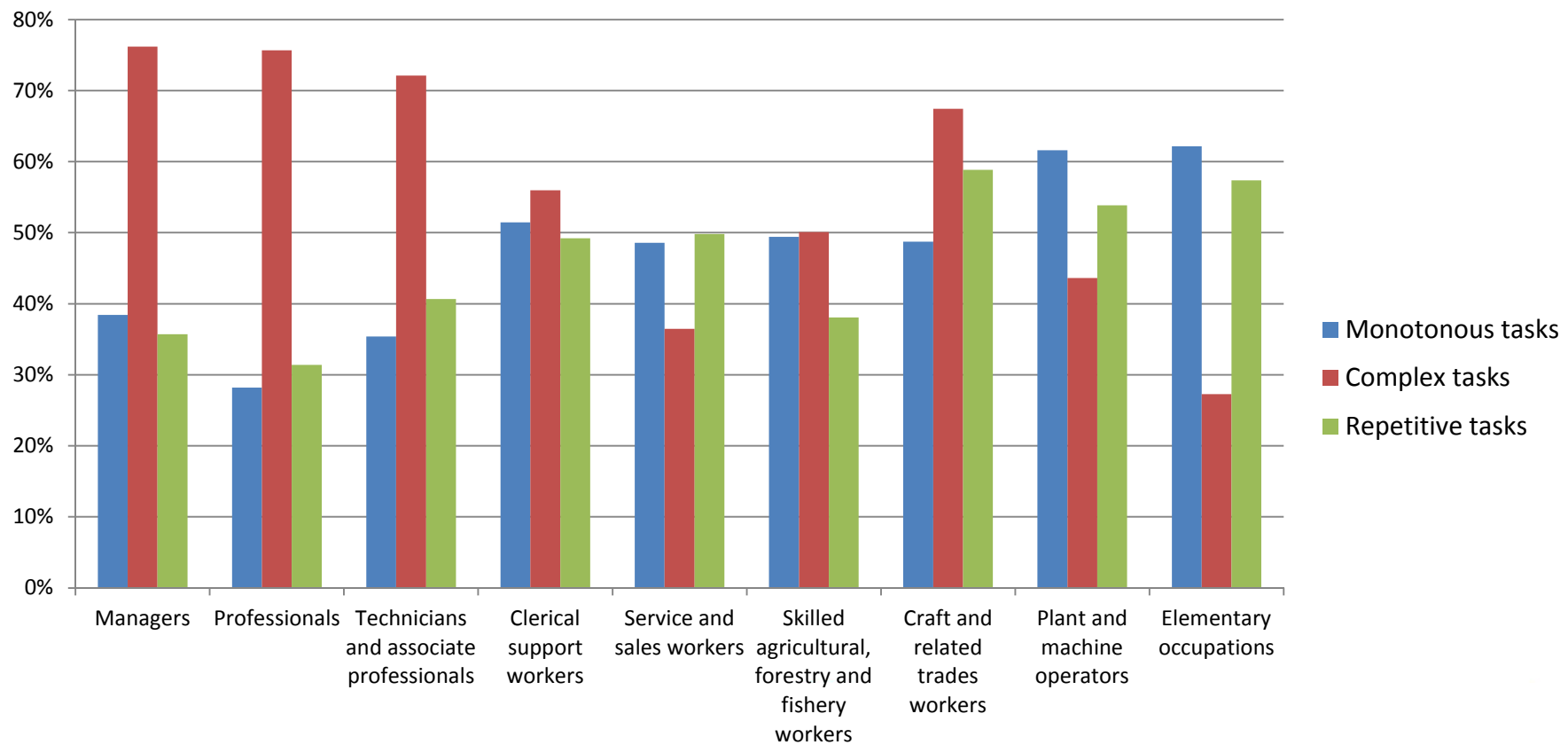
Work intensity (high speed, deadlines, job done)

- Example: “high speed” is reported by 59% of workers

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

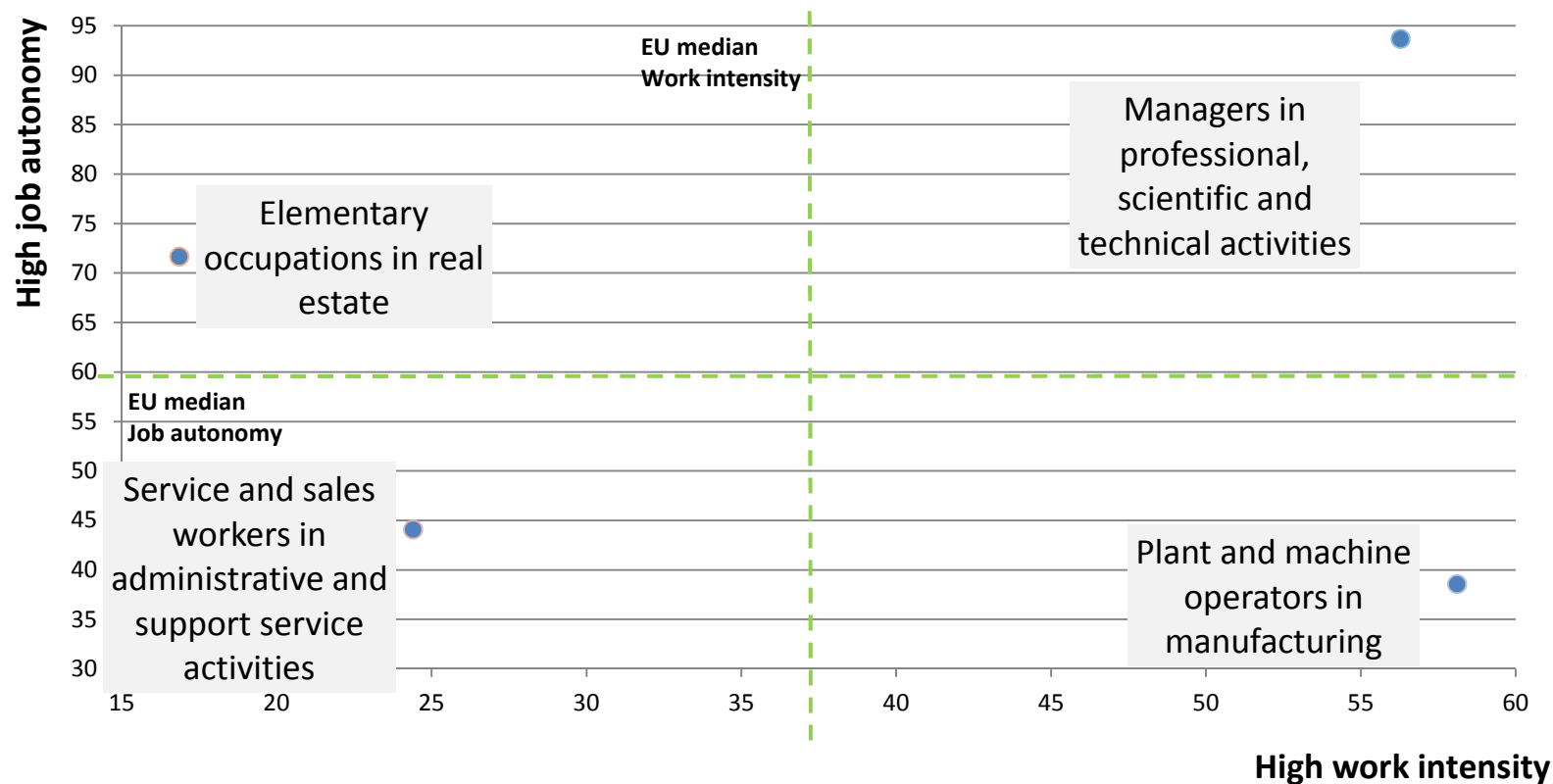
### Job content-related risks are distributed differently across major occupational groups



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

**Plant and machine operators and managers are occupations with high work intensity but they differ in their work autonomy**





# Psychosocial risks in Europe

Prevalence and strategies for prevention

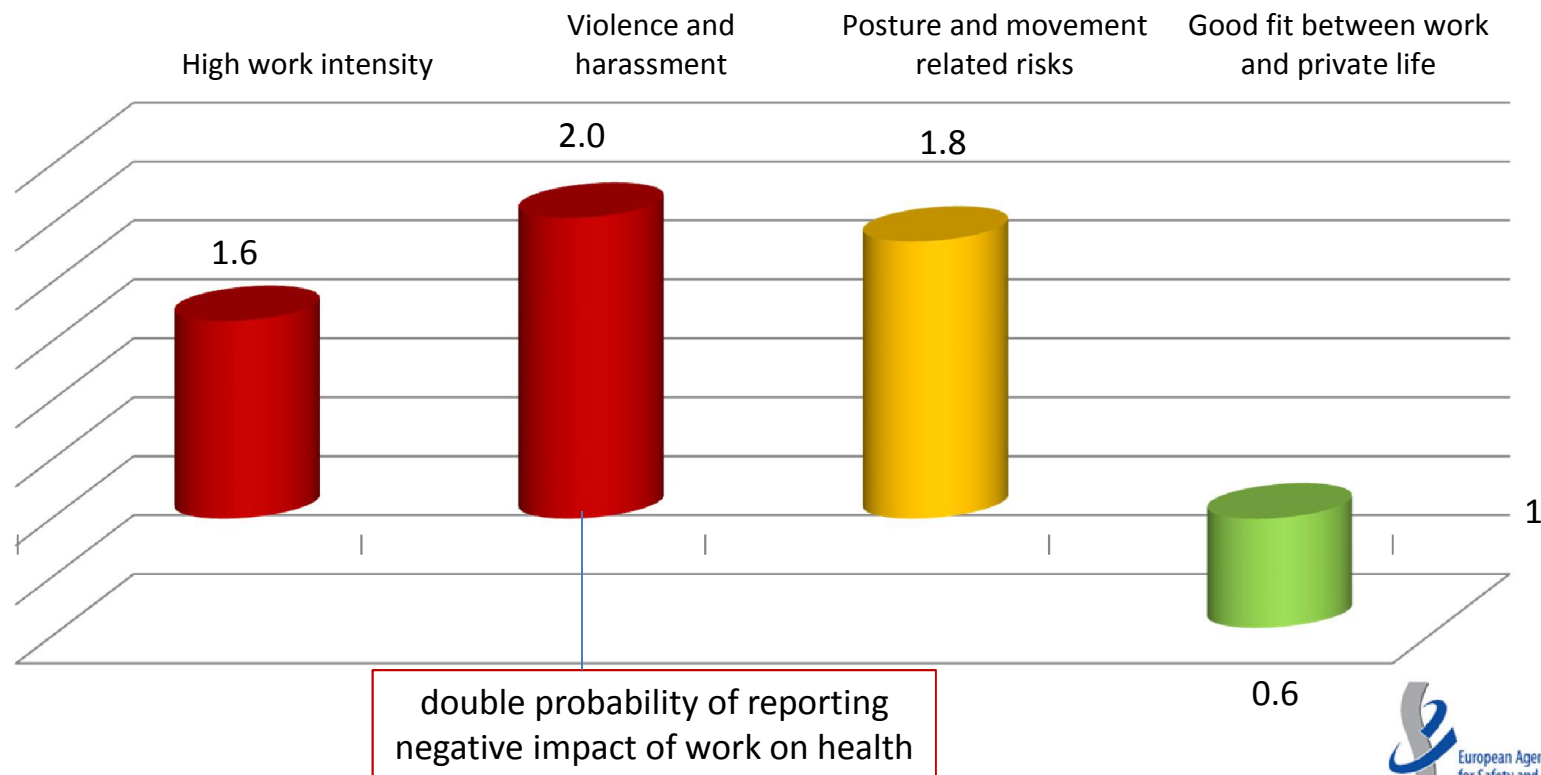
Working conditions related to psychosocial risks are associated with the health and well-being of European workers

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

**Violence and harassment is highly associated with negative general health outcomes, even at a higher level than physical risks**

*Relative probability of a worker reporting that work affects their health negatively*

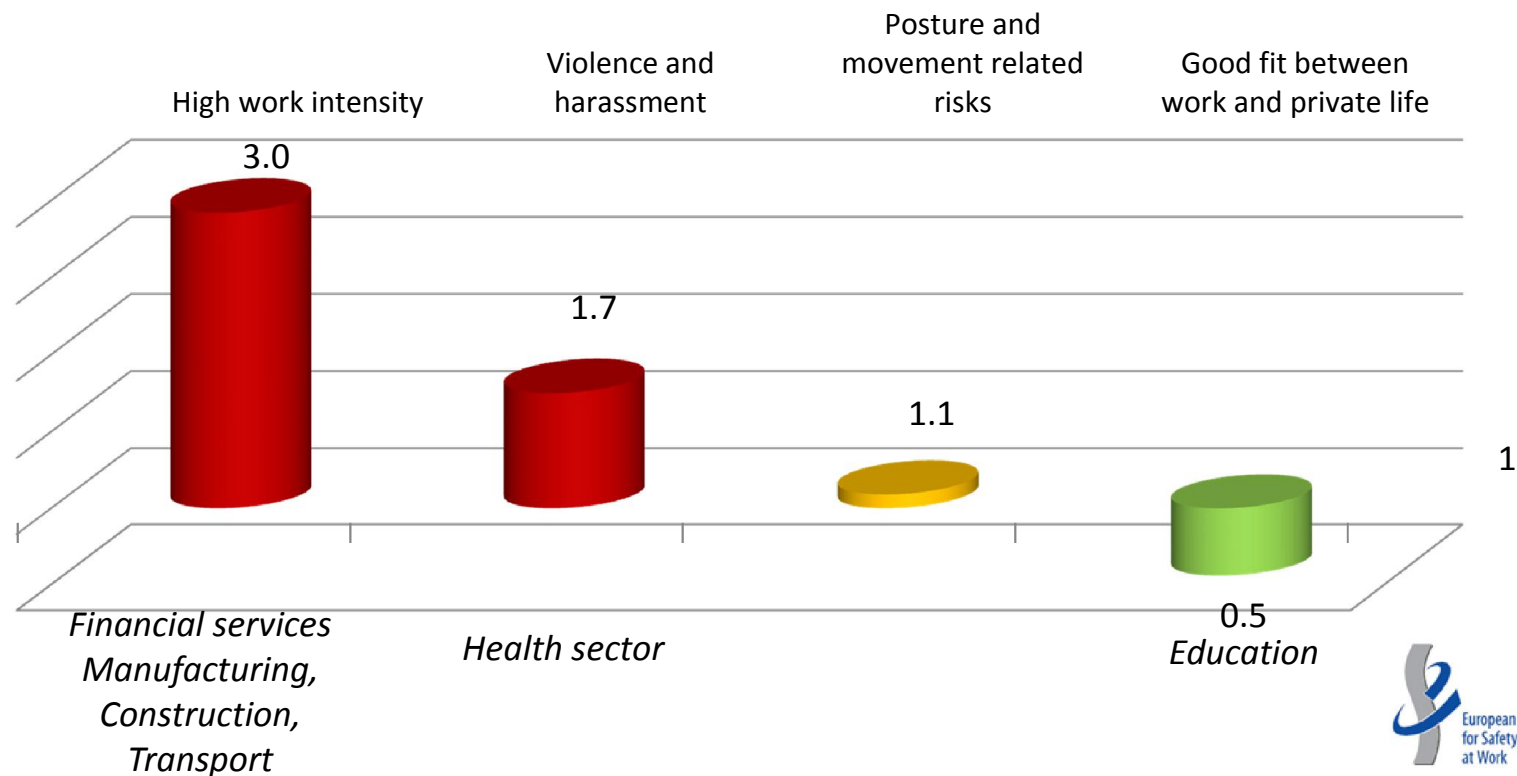


# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

**High work intensity increases the probability of workers experiencing “stress” always or most of their working time**

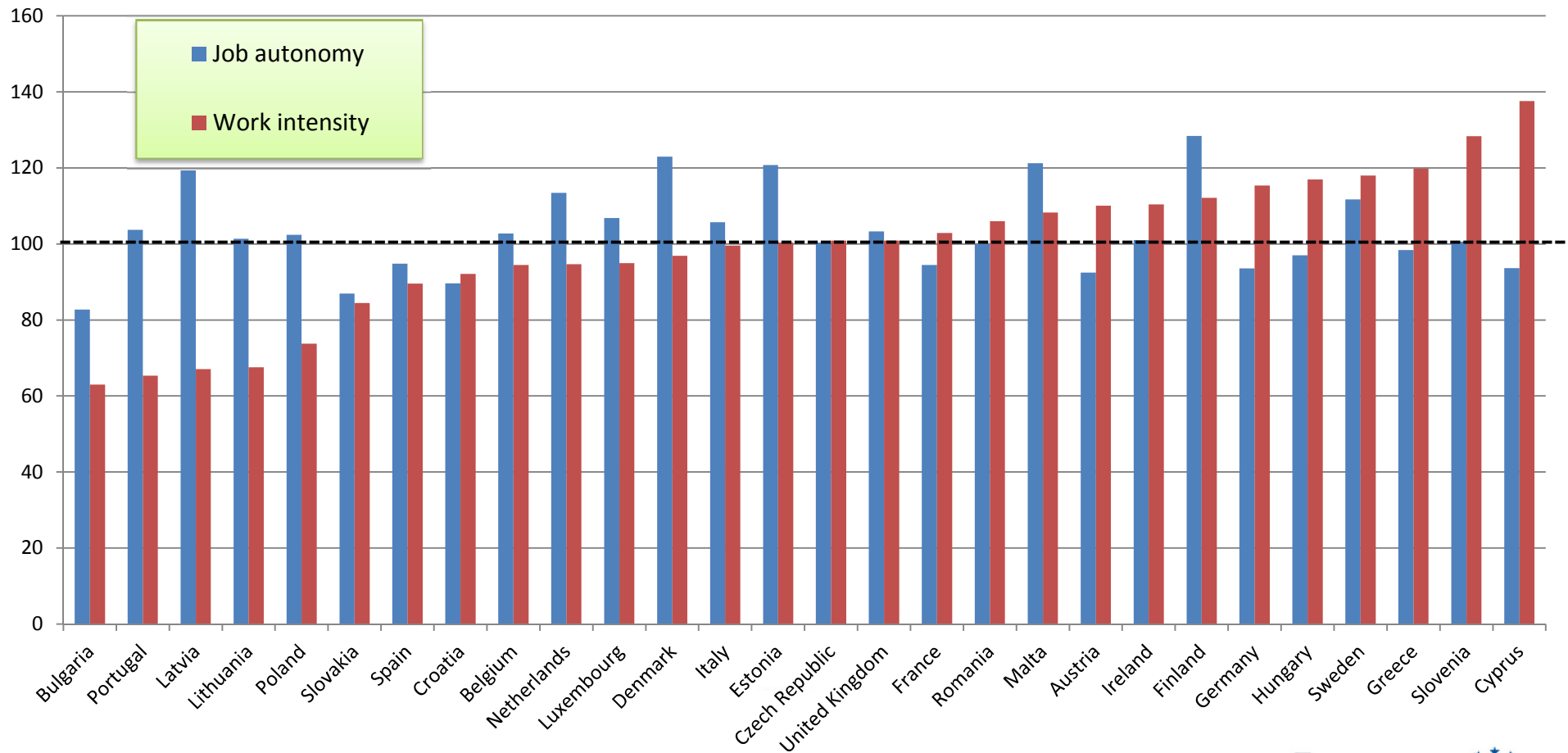
*Relative probability of reporting work-related stress*



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

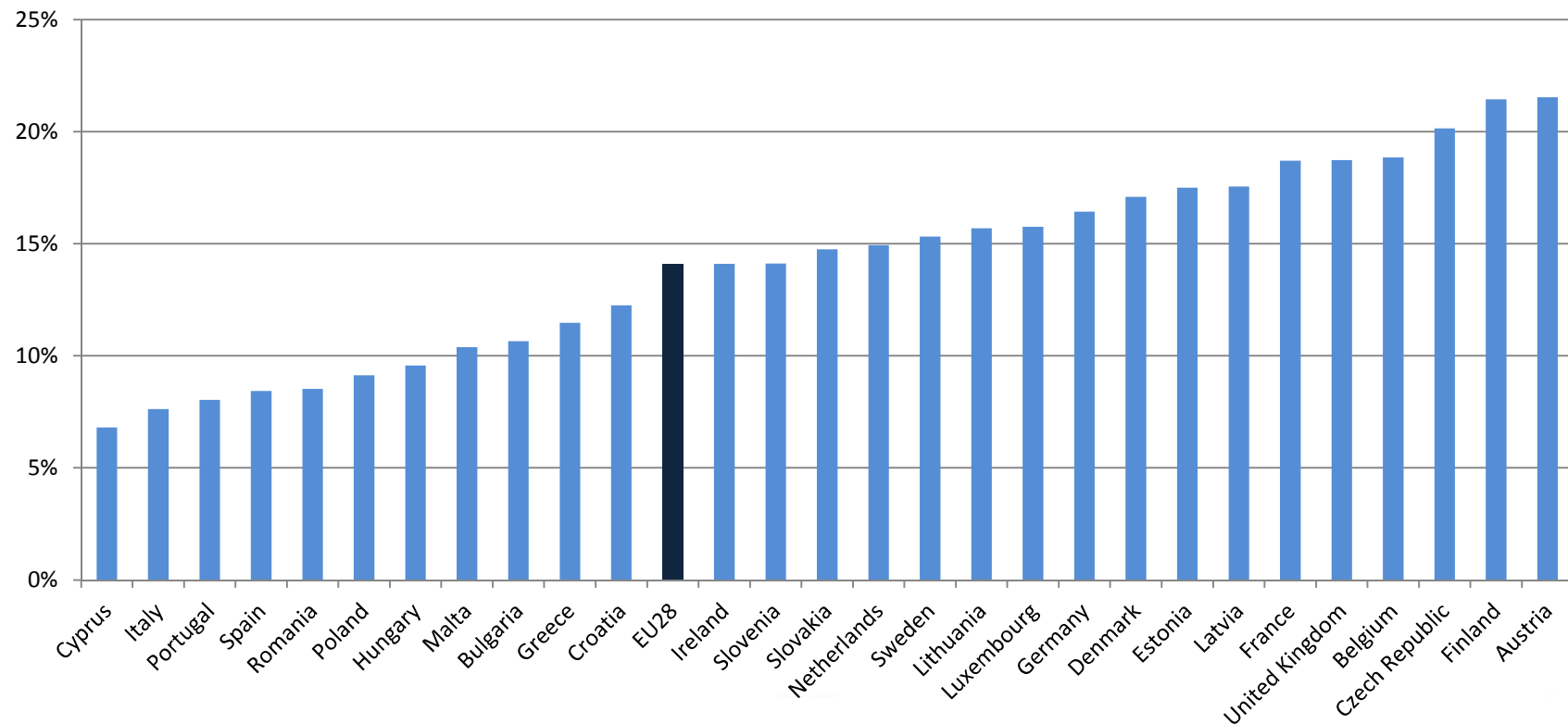
### Work intensity and Job autonomy (EWCS2010) EU28=100



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

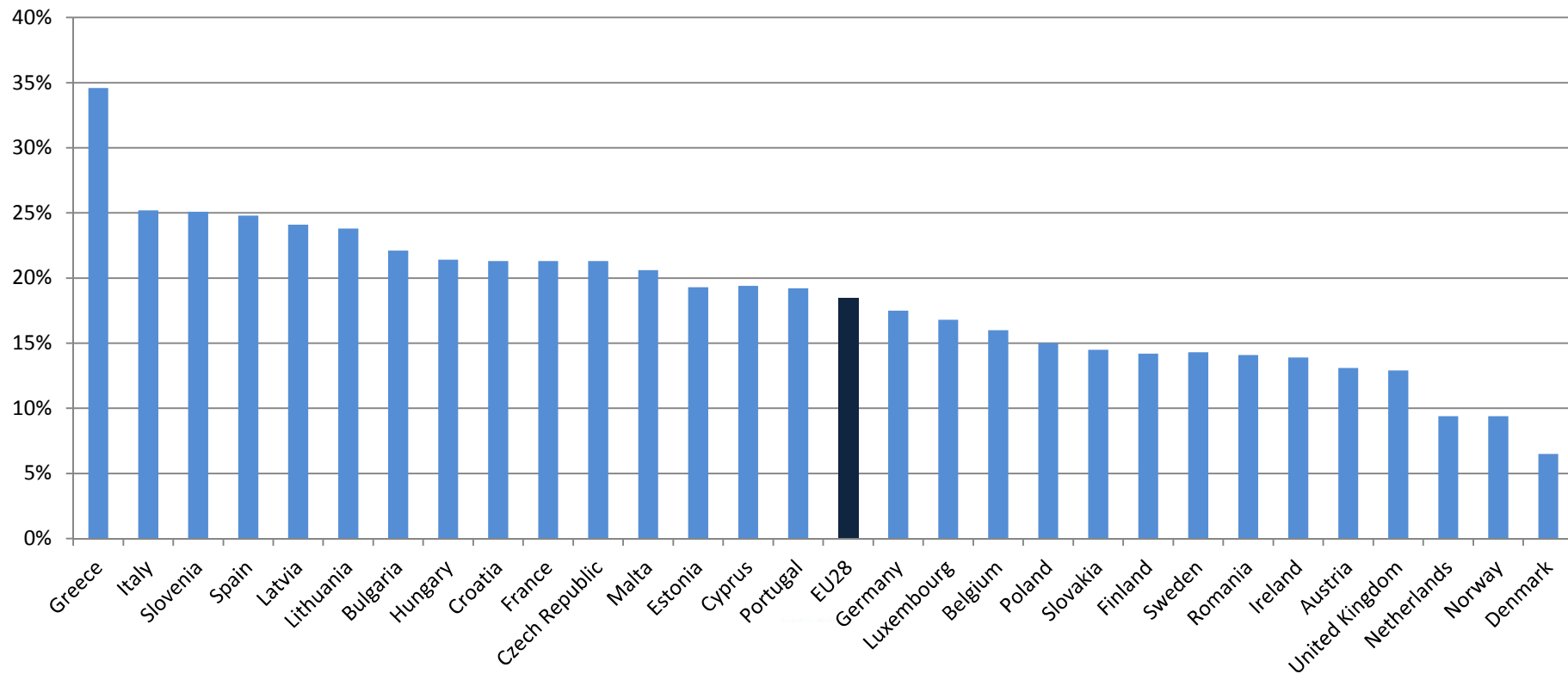
### Percentage of workers experiencing “adverse social behaviour” (violence and harassment) by country (EWCS2010)



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Poor “work-life balance” (EWCS2010)



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Differences between groups of workers

- Working conditions of workers are determined by the occupation and the economic sector
- Main **gender** differences are related to working time and career prospects
- **Age** differences are mainly related to the level of job insecurity (employability), work intensity and career prospects (better for young workers)

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Some **recent trends**:

- Physical violence is decreasing while harassment remains stable.
- Increase in job insecurity (mainly in Baltic countries and southern Europe)
- Reduction of employees working long hours
- No significant increase in work intensity, except in workplaces affected by the crisis (IE, UK, ES)



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### **How can we achieve the health and satisfaction of workers (therefore making work sustainable)?**

- Avoiding high levels of work intensity
- Consideration of the relevance of violence and harassment
- Improving work-life balance
- Reducing job insecurity
- Providing tools to cope with difficulties relating to job content
- Recognition of the complexity of factors playing a role
- Gender
- EU2020 and sustainability of work

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# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Policy at EU level

- Framework Directive (89/391) on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work
- Social Partners Framework Agreement on Work-related Stress, 2004
- Social Partners Framework Agreement on Violence and Harassment at Work, 2007
- Multisectoral and sectoral agreements
- SLIC inspection campaign, 2012

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### **Social dialogue and role of social partners**

- Social dialogue and improvement of working conditions
- Framework agreements
- Joint efforts through collective agreements or based on / influencing national legislation (e.g. Belgium, France, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, UK)
- Others more widespread: guidelines, declarations, conferences or web-based tools

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### France

#### Social context and agreements

- 2008 national interprofessional agreement on stress
- Speed-up of bargaining process influenced by suicides
- Issues of work organisation and subjective factors
- 2013 agreement on restructuring
- 2013 social partner agreement and branch-level agreements (prevention, awareness and support)

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### **Legislation, labour inspection & other governmental approaches**

- Some keep the text very broad, no specific mention of psychosocial risks
- Some generally mention the need to take psychosocial risks into account, but do not specify how exactly
- Obligation to do a psychosocial risk assessment included
- Possibility to include psychosocial expert/psychologist
- Definition of stress and psychosocial risks included in legislation
- Broader framework, approach supported by other actions

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### **Austria: Legislation & non-binding guidance from the ministry**

- 2013 legislation change: psychosocial risks as a possible source of harm included in the legislation.
- Aspects to be covered: design of tasks, working environment & work organisation
- guidance from the ministry on how to approach these aspects.
- Certain part of the risk assessment can be done by psychologist
- Free support from the national accident insurance for work can be requested

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## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

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# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Psychosocial aspects tackled in ESENER

#### 1. Management of psychosocial risks

- Level of concern, measures taken, procedures in place

#### 2. Key drivers and barriers

- Why are there appropriate measures and procedures in some workplaces, but not others?

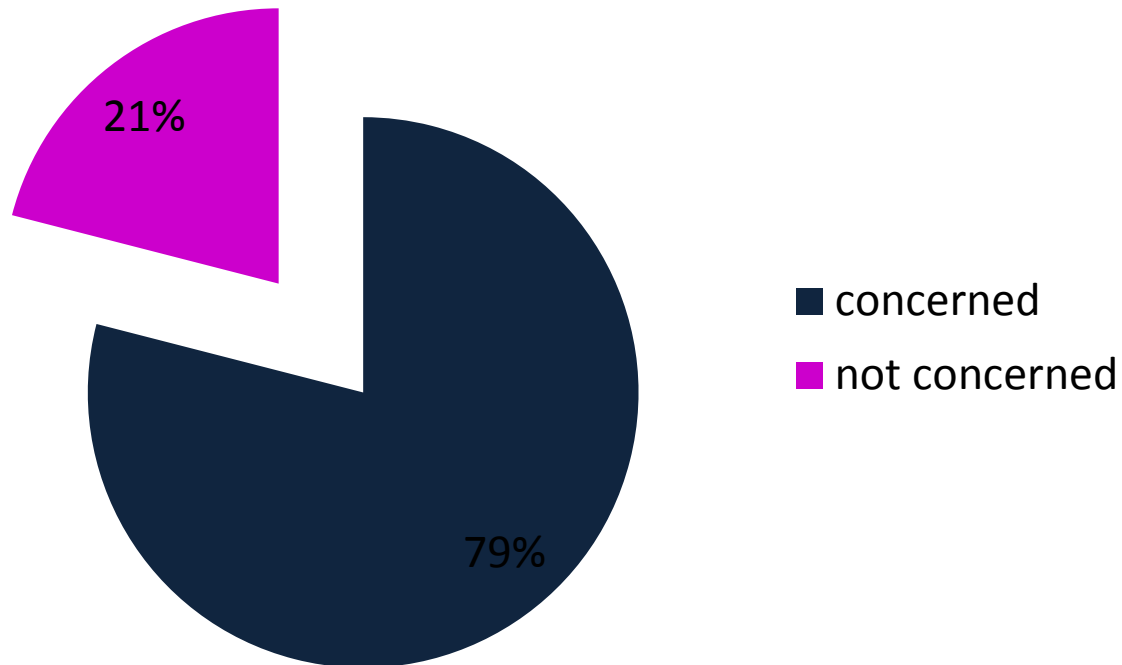
#### 3. Workers' participation and psychosocial risk management

- Formal or direct participation, impact and resources

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Managers' concern about work-related stress



**Time pressure**

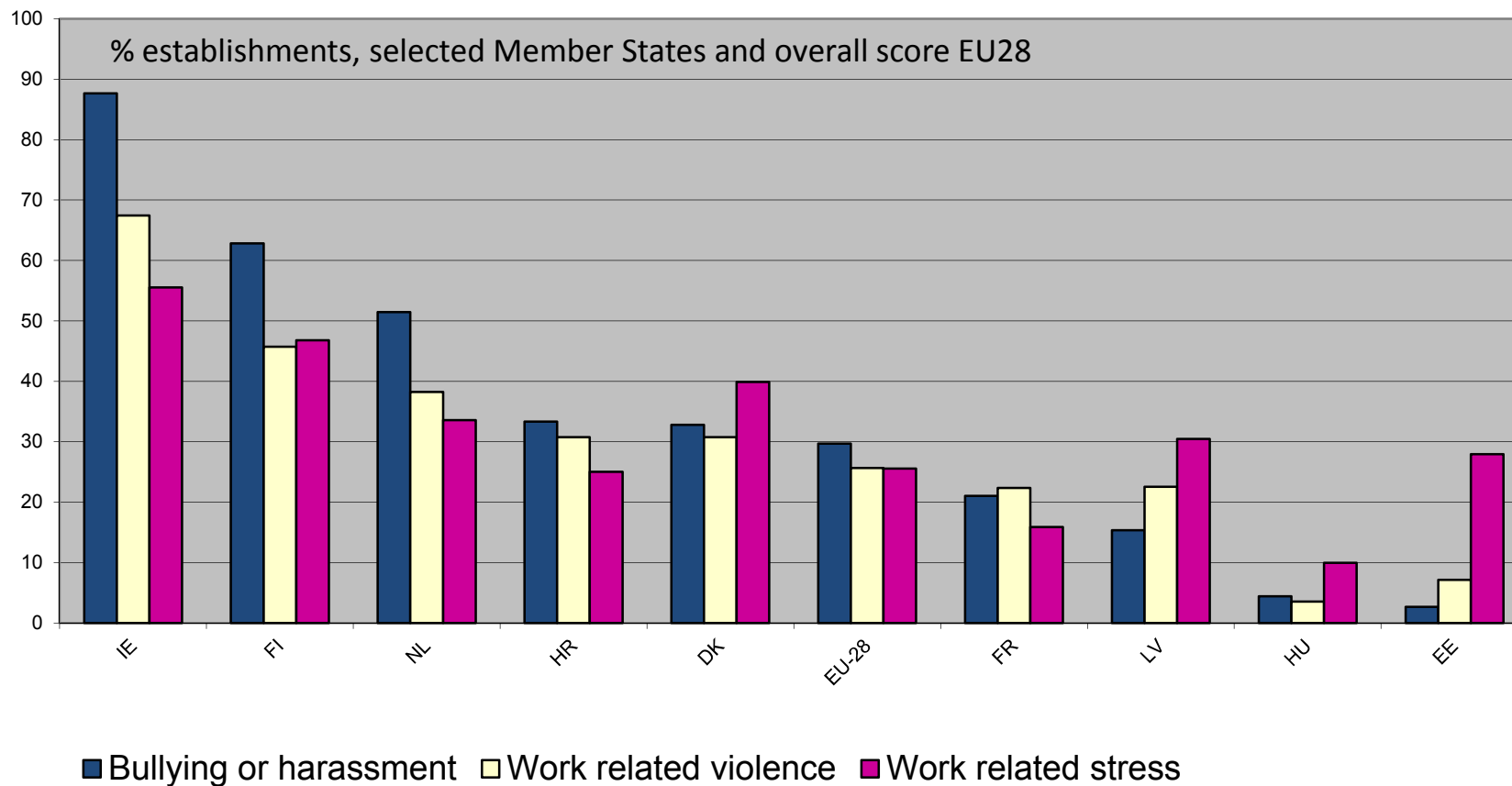


**Difficult customers**

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Procedures implemented to deal work-related stress



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Drivers

- **Good general OSH management and reported concern for work-related stress**
- **The main drivers reported by managers:**
  - Requests from employees
  - Desire to reduce absenteeism
  - Legal obligations



"I've called this meeting to discuss absenteeism."

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Barriers

- **Lack of technical support and guidance and lack of expertise**
- **Lack of resources**
  - higher number of measures in place than those not reporting this barrier
- **Sensitivity of the issue**
  - more measures in place than those not reporting this barrier

### Conclusion:

**Reported barriers very much depend on the different stages of the companies implementing psychosocial risk management**

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Worker participation

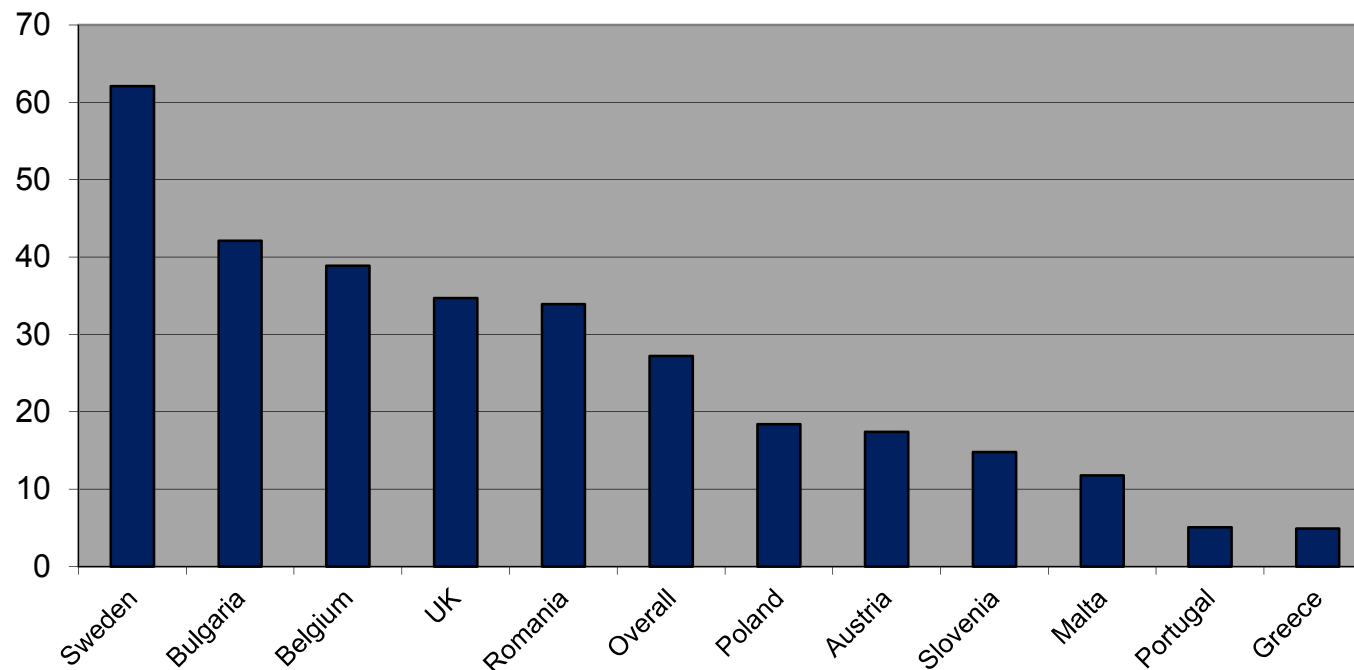
- **Workplaces that have formal worker representation are more likely:**
  - to report management commitment to safety and health
  - to have preventive measures in place for both general OSH and psychosocial risks
  - to involve employees (consultation and participation) in the process of OSH and psychosocial risk management
- **Workplaces that have formal worker representation and a high level of management commitment to OSH are more likely to report that their organisation's OSH and psychosocial risk management are effective**

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### General and specialist OSH worker representation & high management commitment to OSH

% establishments, selected Member States and overall score EU28



# Psychosocial risks in Europe

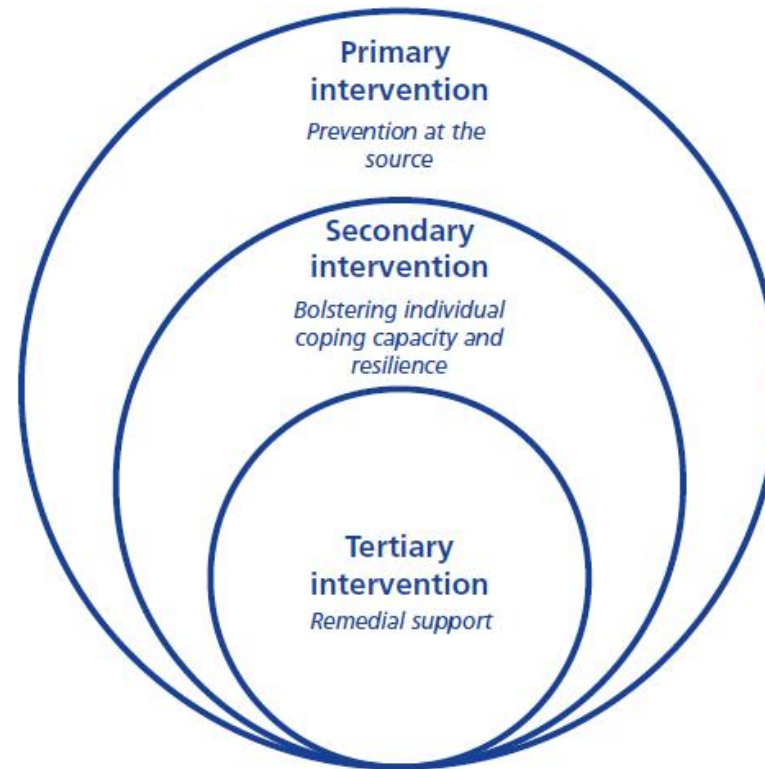
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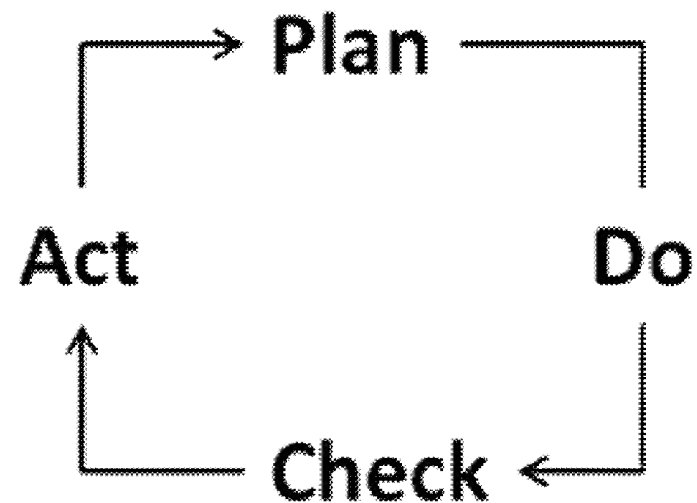


**Holistic prevention  
&  
multilevel interventions**

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Workplace interventions: procedures, measures and processes



Source: Adapted from WHO, 2010a

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# Psychosocial risks in Europe

## Prevalence and strategies for prevention

### Conclusions:

- **Differences between countries, sectors, size of companies, groups of workers, etc.**
- **Guidance and support needed**
  - Readiness for change
  - Effective interventions
  - Information on resources
- **Worker participation and management commitment crucial**
- **Social Dialogue – also on sectoral level**
- **Legislation and non-binding guidance**
- **Successful approaches as models**

# Psychosocial risks in Europe

Prevalence and strategies for prevention

Thank you!