



Contribution towards the Roadmap for the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work (2021-2027) – ensure workers’ safety and health in every aspect related to changing realities of work, including mental wellbeing.

November 2020

The **EU Mental Health Alliance for Work and Employment**ⁱ welcomes the European Commission’s proposal for the new EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work (OHS) (2021-2027) as a necessary step in improving the working conditions across the EU.

While we understand that this Roadmap is a first step of a broader consultation, we regret seeing **no reference made to psychosocial factors behind work-related illnesses**. Mental health of workers across different categories requires protection especially in realities of the changing world of work (e.g. platform workers, gig economy). **Good mental health and wellbeing at work is fundamental to ensure quality of life for every worker – and their family – as well as positive economic outcomes for society as a whole.**

In a world where costs related to occupational mental health challenges are substantialⁱⁱ and constantly increasingⁱⁱⁱ, **a vision for a Stronger Social Europe calls for constant improvements towards safer and healthier work for all, and this must include progress in the psychosocial dimension.**

The costs speak for themselves: more than a third of work-related morbidity and mortality is attributed to mental illness, 6% of EU GDP (240 billion EUR/year) are lost in labour market costs (lower employment and productivity), with further 57 billion EUR/year spent on sick leaves and unemployment insurance. **Only by firmly placing psychosocial aspects of work at heart of the new EU OHS Framework for the years to come, real and tangible benefits would be felt by workers across Europe.**

Such orientations are **particularly relevant in light of the current pandemic, which has added new risks due to changed ways of working, rapid uptake of new (digital) technologies**, to the more traditional ones, such as exposure to dangerous substances and risk of accidents at work. The COVID-19 context is likely to increase mental strain on current and future workforce. Yet, the groups who will face particularly severe consequences will be the low-paid and low-quality jobs workers, as well as disadvantaged groups such as women, youth, migrants, older workers, people with chronic diseases or disabilities. Moreover, **we can expect mental health problems among essential and frontline worker categories key to the fight against the crisis, such as teachers, health and social care workers.**

We recommend the new EU OSH Framework to:

- ✓ Steer **Member States to address mental health and psychosocial risks in their national OSH strategies**, including adequate resource allocation for preventative actions with specific focus on the high risk groups
- ✓ Lay out an explicit role for the EU Steering Group on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention to **offer additional support towards ensuring high protection of mental health due to the changing nature of work**
- ✓ **Embed the new EU OSH Framework into the rights-based approach** (guided by the Action Plan for the implementation of the EPSR) to reforms of national occupational health policies with the support from the Recovery and Resilience plans
- ✓ **Include occupational psychosocial health and safety indicators in the Social Scoreboard**
- ✓ Promote a more **integrated approach to address occupational mental health challenges through various sectors**, services and settings, including community-based
- ✓ Encourage **trade unions and employers to increase their efforts and understanding of mental health and workplace** links to prevent and provide people with mental health problems with the right support to enter or remain in employment
- ✓ Support European **companies addressing psychosocial risks in their operational guidelines**
- ✓ Support **addressing psychosocial risks in collective bargaining** and in debates on ethics in digital transition and artificial intelligence
- ✓ Explore options to **further elaborate on the introduction of relevant legal instruments** (e.g. EU Directive) on addressing psychosocial risks at workplaces

ⁱ See <https://eumhalliance.com/meet-the-alliance-members/>

ⁱⁱ EU/OECD (2018). Health at a Glance: Europe 2018. State of health in the EU cycle. https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/state/docs/2018_healthatglance_rep_en.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ EU-OSHA (2017). Estimating the cost of work-related accidents and ill-health: An analysis of European data sources. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/estimating-cost-work-related-accidents-and-ill-health-analysis/view>