

LITERATURE REVIEW ON WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK PREVENTION

Laia Ollé-Espluga
María Menéndez
Joan Benach Rovira

Brussels, 15-16th October 2014



Aims of the review

- To **identify** main **drivers and barriers** for worker representatives' participation and involvement in preventive actions.
- To **review** the **impact** of workplace representative participation in promoting health and safety at work, and in reducing psychosocial exposures.

Methods

Scoping review:

- Scientific literature
- Grey literature: books, reports

From Eurofound, EU-OSHA, World Health Organization, International Labor Organization, International Commission on Occupational Health, and from E-IMPRO partners.

Double focus: findings referred to **psychosocial risk prevention** and **occupational health and safety**.

Methods

Psychosocial risk prevention

Sources:

- PubMed and Social Science Citation Index
- Grey literature

Occupational health and safety

Sources:

- PubMed, ABI/INFORM, PsycINFO, CSA Sociological Abstracts, JSTOR
- Grey literature

Period: 2003-2013

Period: 2008-2013 (previous years covered by the EPSARE project: 202 documents)

Language limits: English, Spanish, French



493 → **106** documents reviewed



893 → **18** documents reviewed

**Effectiveness of worker
representatives' participation**

Occupational health and safety

Impact on **health and safety management**:

- better compliance with regulatory standards (e.g., having a documented occupational health and safety policy, or use of personal protective equipments)
- higher degrees of health and safety information and awareness among workers.

Psychosocial risk prevention

Impact on **reduction of exposures at source:**

- work redesign;
- variations in the working time;
- chance or purchase of new working equipments;
- improvement of communication.

Positive effect on **workers' health:**

- physical outcomes (work-related musculoskeletal disorders);
- factors affecting mental health;
- or burnout and absenteeism.

Drivers and barriers

Drivers

- **Regulatory framework.**
- **Senior and middle management commitment**, facilitated by:
 - underlying motivations tied to work organisation interventions (e.g. to tackle absenteeism);
 - labour relations fostering social dialogue;
 - labour management practices facilitating a fair and democratic work organisation.

Drivers

- **Workers' support** to interventions and to representatives.

- **Request by workers or workers' representatives**, fostered by unions' support and influenced by:
 - the existence of worker representative participation;
 - the amount of rights and resources ;
 - the extent of safety representatives' coverage;
 - knowledge activism and training.

Barriers

- **Lack of technical support, guidance and resources** (management and worker representatives).
- **Lack of commitment** from senior and middle management.
- **Organisational restructuring.**

Barriers

- **Constrained collective power** of workers' representatives.
- **Understanding of psychosocial risks** influenced by an excessive focus on the individual-based personality issue instead of prevention at source.
- **Lack of workers' commitment** to health and safety interventions.
- **Lack of workers' support** to worker representatives.

Final remarks

- Little details concerning the **role of worker representatives**.

- Reviewed literature has a strong focus on:
 - factors related to **management**.
 - **decontextualised elements** (scientific literature).

- Avenues for future research:
 - employment precariousness and representative participation in occupational health;
 - the way occupational health and safety representatives' participation is developed.

Thanks

