

# DRIVERS AND BARRIERS FOR PARTICIPATIVE PREVENTION PROCESSES ON PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS TO ACHIEVE CHANGES IN WORKING CONDITIONS

## ITALIAN CASES REPORT

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## 1. COUNTRY SUMMARY

### 1.1 Background

After the first implementation of the EU Directive 89/391/EEC through the Legislative Decree 626/94, in 2008 Italy renewed its regulatory framework for health and safety at work with the enforcement of the Legislative Decree 81/08, which stated the obligation to assess work-related stress risk – among all others – in companies.

In November 2010, the Permanent Consultative Commission for Occupational Health and Safety developed methodological guidelines which rely on the following principles:

1. brevity and simplicity;
2. method that should work for all types of organization;
3. application to groups of workers homogeneously exposed to work-related stress;
4. enhancement of responsibilities and faculties of OSH professionals and workers.

The document released by the Consultative Commission is aimed at illustrating a “methodological path for employers which represents the minimum level of implementation of the risk assessment for employers”, leaving space for a more structured approach based on the specific needs and critical issues at company level.

The Consultative Commission stated that the evaluation of risks associated with work-related stress is part and parcel of risk assessment and that the employer has the obligation to perform it in cooperation with OSH professionals, and also with employees or their representatives.

According the Italian legislation, workers’ representatives are elected directly among the employees with permanent contract. They might be unionized (as in most cases) or not, according to the level of internal unionization of each company: if unions are represented at company level, they will suggest the candidates and one or more of them (according to company size) will be elected by workers; if the company does not have internal union representatives, workers willing to engage as OH&S workers’ rep can propose themselves as candidates and, one of them will be elected by their co-workers. After the OH&S worker’s reps are elected, employers appoints them, which means only a sort of administrative ratification of

the decision taken by workers; their names must be communicated to the National Insurance for Work Accidents (INAIL).

According to the Legislative Decree 81/08, among others, workers' reps have specific duties related to risk assessment and management activities. In particular, during the risk assessment process they must be consulted on the identification, planning, carrying out and evaluation of workplace prevention activities; he receives the documentation on risk assessment and the preventive measures on all risks present at the workplace (dangerous substances, machineries, work organization, etc.); they promote the identification, drawing up and accomplishment of appropriate preventive measures to protect workers' health. They can also warn the employer about new risks detected during their work and are entitled to appeal to the competent authorities whenever they consider that preventive and protective measures implemented by the employer do not serve the purpose of safety and health at work.

Finally, always according to the law, workers' reps must receive specific training on their rights and duties and on risk assessment, prevention and management. These training courses must be provided and paid by the employer.

Always according to the Consultative Commission indications, the assessment process must be performed not on a single worker but on homogeneous groups of workers exposed to same kind of psychosocial risk factors, meaning that the employer must group together workers that have similar characteristics. Criteria for the identification of the homogenous groups can be based on Area/Department of assignment, specific job work activities with recognized risk exposure (e.g. call centre, front office etc.) as well as occupational and socio-demographic characteristics such as their sex, age, nationality, type of contract, or any other criteria (e.g., shifts, special jobs, etc.) identifying specific and common risk factor(s) for employees.

The Consultative Commission methodology is divided into two main phases:

1. the *preliminary assessment*, which includes the analysis of objective risk indicators associated with work-related stress, under three headings:
  - a. sentinel events;

- b. work content factors;
- c. work context factors.

In this phase, checklists can be used, also calling on some employees and their representatives.

If no work-related stress risk factors are found in this preliminary assessment, results are included on the risk evaluation report and a monitoring plan is developed.

If some risks factors have emerged from the preliminary assessment, appropriate corrective interventions are to be planned and adopted; if these prove inadequate, the second phase should start.

2. the *deeper assessment*, which includes an in-depth assessment focusing on the homogeneous groups of workers found to be exposed to work-related stress risks in the preliminary assessment. In this phase, workers' perceptions of work content and work context factors are measured with different tools, such as questionnaires, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. In small companies (up to 5 workers), the employer can organize meetings during which employees can identify solutions and assess their effectiveness.

Aside from regulatory issues, we must also consider the Italian bargaining system to better understand the relationship between the health and safety management and the negotiation of many aspects of work organization which have an impact on working conditions. In this system, it is also important to consider that the Health and Safety Representative can be proposed by Unions when they are represented at company level.

The Italian system of industrial relations presents a high level of voluntarism in the private sector, while in the public sector most of its aspects are ruled by the law. The 1948 Constitutional provisions concerning the registration of trade unions and the attribution of bargaining capacity at sector level in proportion of the number of members, the legal regulation of the right to strike and workers' rights to participate in company decision-making, have never been implemented. The State should not interfere with the autonomous and volunteer activities and self-regulation of social partners, which mutually decided to recognize

each other. Nevertheless, as a result of the spectacular increase of union power after the ‘hot Autumn’ of 1969, with the Workers’ Statute (Law no. 300, 1970) legislation came into being in order to strengthen union rights in the workplace, promoting indirectly the role of company-level bargaining.

There is no Italian law regulating one of the cornerstones of any industrial relations system: a mechanism that establishes how to measure and decide upon union representation to sign agreements to be extended erga omnes. The exception here is the public sector, where since the late ‘90s a law for the selection of representative unions entitled to bargain (Legislative Decree no. 296/1997 and 165/2001, art. 43) came into force. Unions need to pass a threshold of 5 per cent consensus to take part in national collective bargaining, whereas a final agreement is binding if signed by unions representing at least 51 per cent of the relevant workforce. These thresholds are calculated as a weighted average between votes and members.

There is no right to employees’ collective representation in enterprises with less than 15 workers per unit of production. Beyond that threshold, on request of the workers and/or unions’ delegates, there is instead an employer duty to allow the establishment of a unitary trade union representative body.

After a tripartite social agreement of July 1993, this body (called RSU – Rappresentanza sindacale unitaria) is elected by all the employees for 2/3 and nominated by the unions which signed the industry-wide agreement applied into the workplace. During the decades, this body has been dominated, de facto, by the three main historical trade unions confederations CGIL, CISL, and UIL.

The percentage of employees covered by workplace representatives is estimated in around 66% of employees, above EU-25 average (around 50% according to the Dublin’s Foundation comparative reports).

Since the milestone framework agreement (Protocol) of 23 July 1993, Italian collective bargaining is based on a two-tier system, with on the one hand national-sector collective labour agreements (Contratti Collettivi Nazionali di Lavoro, CCNL), and on the other hand decentralized collective agreements at company or territorial level if companies are too small and unions too weak -- like in agriculture, construction, retail, tourism, and in many craft industries. Sector bargaining is the core of the system. Thanks to about 400 national industry-wide agreements, wage-earners of all possible branches and companies have their own agreement. The number of these agreements reflects the fragmentation of employers' associations, which are more numerous than in most European countries. They are associated according to size (large, small and medium) and typology (private, cooperatives, and crafts). In the mid-'90s the organizations of public companies, (very influential until the '80s), were absorbed into the largest private employers' association: Confindustria.

The second level of collective bargaining is not compulsory: social partners can negotiate at that level but are not obliged to. In practice, it depends on the presence of work councils and on the power relations in each firm or plant whether meaningful negotiations may take place. Second-level agreements are almost completely absent in small enterprises.

Finally, considering the relationship between the recent international crisis and the social dialogue, in the framework of a recent ILO research project on industrial relations in a number of European countries the analysis of the Italian case (Pedersini and Regini, 2013) underlines two basic trends: a) the absence of any significant revitalization of social consultation and rather the reinforcement of the trends towards a weaker role of tripartite dialogue in the discussion of economic and social policies, with the abandonment of any commitment to reach an agreement with the social partners on measures and interventions; b) lacking the macro-level tool of social consultation, adjustment moves to the micro-level of the firms, where collective bargaining can, under certain circumstances, play a significant role.

## 1.2 Features of psychosocial risk prevention participative processes.

Italy selected three different enterprises, considering sector and size: two in private sector and one in public; one big national company and two medium local companies.

Among these companies the study highlighted common points and divergences related to different aspects of the psychosocial risks assessment and management.

### Common points:

- All three companies have a well-structured prevention system in which the employer, managers, health and safety managers, workers' representatives and occupational physicians are actively involved in the occupational risk assessment and management.
- In fact, in all the three cases presented, working groups composed of the above mentioned parties have been created to elaborate a strategy of psychosocial risk assessment, develop an action plan, discuss results of the assessment and agree on preventive measures to be put in place. With special reference to the psychosocial risks all the companies carried out the risk assessment according to National law and guide lines.
- In the preliminary assessment all the companies used the check-list developed by INAIL for the work-related stress risk assessment.
- All the companies carried out the in-depth assessment regardless of the results of the preliminary assessment, which in some cases did not make it compulsory. With specific reference to the workers' rep, in all cases this figure has actively been involved in the risk assessment procedures, playing also a crucial role in the case of Cernusco sul Naviglio Municipality where the workers' rep facilitated the development of the in-depth assessment which, in the beginning, was not well accepted by the target group.
- Risk assessment highlighted some critical issues in all three companies:
  - relation with clients and customers in Telecom Italia (call-centre employees) and in the Cernusco sul Naviglio Municipality (police officers and nursery employees)

- working time organization in Telecom Italia (call-centre employees and on field technicians) and in the CAM Spa.

**Divergences:**

- The in-depth assessment was carried out using different tools in all the companies (questionnaires, focus groups, in-depth interviews, observational investigation).

It is clear that the different characteristics of each company involved in the study have an impact on the implementation of the process, especially in the in-depth phase, when tailored interventions are required.

### **1.3 Barriers and drivers for the participative psychosocial risk prevention process to change working conditions.**

According to the results of the three case studies and the discussion during the national workshop barriers and drivers can be divided into institutional and company level.

**Barriers**

At institutional level, even if the National Advisory Committee set out specific guide lines for the assessment and management of work-related stress, a structured national monitoring system is still missing. Consequently monitoring activities are in charge of regional authorities with relevant differences between regions.

This fragmented monitoring system has a negative impact not only among different companies but even within companies such as Telecom Italia Spa which has several units located in many different regions.

Further differences exist at regional level also in the institutional supporting system. As an example in Telecom Italia case there has been a continuous collaboration with the Regional Centre for work-related stress hosted by the workplace safety and prevention service of the

local public health system (SPRESAL, ASL Roma C). The other two companies instead did not receive any kind of institutional support and developed their assessment process with the support of internal experts and advisors.

Again some divergences can be found in the kind and frequency of controls carried out in different Regions as well as in the sanction system.

Considering that 90% of the Italian productive system is represented by micro (<10 employees) and small enterprises (10-49 employees), the methodological approaches developed until now do not appear to fit completely the needs of this kind of companies, being tailored on larger enterprises (medium and large). The fact is that psychosocial risk assessment is compulsory for all companies, not depending on their size, but methodologies and tools that have been developed until now to help companies in achieving this goal are not perfectly fitting with the effective situation and the real needs of small and especially micro enterprises.

Furthermore, even if these issues did not appear to affect the three companies selected for the case studies, it must be considered that in the Italian context, at company level there is a lack of awareness on psychosocial risks both among managers and workers. This depends on different factors: first of all physical risks are considered more dangerous and, thus, receive more attention than psychosocial ones. Secondly, issues like job security or career progression are considered more relevant than the possible impact of working conditions on individual health. Also, the differences in workers' cultural background linked to presence of high number of migrants can have a negative impact in the perception of psychosocial risks. In addition, in many cases there is a lack of specific training on psychosocial risks.

Finally, during the national workshop discussion it has been highlighted that uncertainties linked to the sanction system represent a strong barrier to get over the minimum legal requirements, refraining companies from implementing not compulsory activities that could anyway improve working conditions.

## **Drivers**

Institutional support from National health system, university as well as from professional associations and unions can help companies to better cope with the entire process of psychosocial risks assessment and management.

At company level the main driver for the implementation of psychosocial risk assessment and management resulted to be participative approach. In this sense, the creation of working groups that met repeatedly to organize, plan, carry out and evaluate the risk assessment activities facilitated the success of the whole process, making it run quite smoothly and allowing the achievement of the expected results (identification of risk factors, where present, and implementation of measures/interventions, if needed). Also workers have been involved in the process providing their point of view, both directly (i.e. questionnaires, in-depth interviews, focus groups, etc.) and through their representatives.

The opportunity to use different evaluation tools, as required by regulations, allows companies to find the best solutions for the in-depth risk assessment according to the results of the preliminary assessment, as well as to the specific work content and context.

Another powerful driver is the creation of an internal working group (as it happened in Telecom Italia) for a continuous monitoring of the psychosocial work environment to spot any change in the work organization and to drive interventions.

## **1.4 Recommendations for the participative psychosocial risk assessment process to change working conditions**

Following the work-related stress risk assessment each company recommended specific interventions to improve working conditions for the homogeneous professional groups at risk. Basically, recommendations have focused on training, communication and on the organization of work (i.e.: shifts and working schedules).

Generally speaking, the experiences carried out in the three case studies presented show that the direct and active involvement of as many participants as possible in psychosocial risk assessment and management (creation of working groups repeatedly meeting to plan and carry out the risk assessment and continuously monitoring working conditions to evaluate and improve risk management activities) allow to consider this kind of approach as a good model of participative process, that would deserve a widespread diffusion.

The national workshop allowed a productive discussion among the case studies representatives and national experts which led to the identification of a number of general recommendations to improve the participative psychosocial risk assessment process.

- reducing regional fragmentation in monitoring, sanction system and support by harmonizing the different practices through a national institutional intervention.
- Adapting methodologies and tools to the workplace characteristics, also by strengthening the social dialogue and specific agreements at company level.
- developing specific tools tailored on the work activities at higher risk, i.e. front-office and call-centre tasks.
- raising awareness among employers and managers about the relationship between the improvement of working conditions (including psychosocial aspects) and productivity.
- improving skills and competences of the parties engaged in the OSH System.
- conducting an analysis of the work organization to reveal the critical aspects of work prior to developing interventions on individuals.
- anticipating changes to overcome skills mismatch.

## **1.5 Relationships between the characteristics of the participative process and working conditions changes**

In the three case studies the participative process resulted in a bottom-up approach with an effective involvement of the workers' representatives not only in the risk assessment activities but also in the definition and administration of the interventions.

Considering that the participative process is a permanently ongoing practice, it can reduce conflicts between management and workers facilitating the affirmation of a cooperative approach.

A broad workers' involvement is certainly one of the most important aspects of the participative approach: in fact the improvement of the quality of work (in terms of working content and context, job satisfaction, relationships, etc.) can contribute to increase their sense of belonging also with a positive impact on the company's productivity.

## 2. CENTRO ANALISI DI MONZA Spa

The study on CAM Spa was conducted by collecting data through two methods:

1. A checklist filled in by the company for the collection of some objective data about the company's structure and composition as well as about the assessment and management of work-related stress risk process;
2. Semi-structured interviews to the Company Physician and the Workers' Representative for Safety involved in the assessment and management process.

### 2.1 Background

The Centro Analisi di Monza Spa (CAM Spa) is a private company operating in the Human Health and Social Work Activities activity sector (NACE Q). The company has 204 employees including white collars and medical staff, divided in three different areas (e.g. Diagnostic Area, Laboratories and External Centres).

Work activity is organized by shifts (7.30 – 21.00 Mon through Fri; 7.30 – 12.30 Sat; Closed on Sunday) with specific objectives set for each organizational section. The national contract for the specific sector is recognized to all workers while the structure of salaries is fixed according to contract with a variable ratio associated to the achievement of individual objectives.

The distribution by posts of the labour force includes 6 Managers; 20 executives and 178 employees.

154 (75.5%) workers are females and 50 (24.5%) are males.

Over 61% of workers of both sexes are in the age segment 30-49 years.

Regarding organizational tenure, 24.0% of workers are in this company from 0 to 9 years, 29.9% from 10 to 19 years, 36.3% from 20 to 29 and the remaining 9.8% have over 30 years of labour continuity.

All employees are Italian nationals, except for two females, from Albania and Mexico.

Regarding Health and Safety Organization, an expert Occupational Physician works in the company, the Health & Safety Manager has been appointed by the employer and 2 Workers' safety reps have been elected by employees. It is worth noting that when the assessment and management procedures of work-related stress risk were carried out, the company had less than 200 employees, thus, according to the provisions set by the Italian Legislative Decree no. 81/08 on Occupational Health and Safety, only one workers' safety rep was required. In this case, unions are not represented in the company, thus, according to Italian system of workers' reps appointment they have been directly elected by the employees.

## **2.2 Psychosocial risk prevention participative process**

The study was aimed at collecting in depth information on the phases related to the whole risk assessment and management processes, to the findings obtained by the company as well as the presence of a participative process in the psychosocial risk prevention.

In particular, we focused on:

- The main reasons driving the assessment and management process;
- The assessment of work-related stress risks (how it was conducted; which procedure and tools were used; who was involved; findings);
- Preventive measures, actions for improvement, monitoring;
- Participation process (involvement of workers' health and safety representatives, presence of conflicts, employees' involvement);
- Main drivers and barriers of the whole assessment and management process.

The CAM Spa developed the assessment and management of work-related stress risk in the last 3 years for two main reasons: 1) the legal requirements set by the Legislative Decree 81/2008, which imposed on employers the obligation to assess work-related stress in companies; 2) a recent change in the organizational structure due to the enlargement of the company.

The risk assessment process involved all employees divided into homogenous groups of workers on the basis of the company's structure, namely a homogenous group for each area. As a preliminary step, an assessment group was established including the employer, a manager in charge of the Health and Safety processes, the Health & Safety Manager, the Company Physician as well as one workers' safety rep, ensuring the active participation of occupational health professionals as specified by the Italian regulation, each one supporting assessment activities according to their specific competencies. The assessment group was actively involved in each assessment phase with the following tasks:

1. preliminary phase: planning of each assessment step, identifying homogenous groups of workers on the basis of organizational structure, developing a communication strategy to inform employees;
2. preliminary assessment: compiling the checklist for each homogenous group;
3. In-depth assessment: taking part in the focus groups with employees.

The assessment process was conducted with the support of an Occupational Psychologist internal to the company and, according to the Italian law requirements, it had the following steps:

1. A preliminary assessment aimed to analyze the objective risk indicators of work-related stress under three main headings: sentinel events, work content and work context factors (e.g. absences from work, turnover rate, injuries, workload, role, relationships, work-home conflict). At this stage, the checklist provided by the INAIL's methodological proposal for the assessment and management of work-related stress was used.
2. An in depth assessment on the psychosocial context and content factors through 3 focus groups, each one involving two Area managers and the Workers' Representative as planned by the assessment group. Focus groups were conducted by the Company Physician with the support of an internal Occupational Psychologist. Each focus group lasted around half day. .

Assessment findings reported a 'not relevant' risk for work-related stress in all homogenous groups involved. According to the Italian law, this means that targeted interventions weren't either necessary or compulsory. Nevertheless, the company decided to set an organizational

intervention on work-shifts, since some concerns and proposals on this issue raised during the focus groups involving the Area managers and the Workers' Rep. No conflict in the intervention planning emerged among the Area managers, OSH professionals and management and this action was welcomed by employees and of course by their representative.

### **2.3 Drivers and barriers**

Overall, the participative approach has been considered as the main driver for an effective management of psychosocial risks by interviewed.

The inclusion in focus groups of workers' safety reps and area managers (who are also employees) proved to be the main driver in the whole process. In fact, regardless of the results of the preliminary assessment (reporting a non-relevant risk in all the homogeneous groups), the discussion that took place in the focus groups brought to a rearrangement work-shifts, which represented an improvement of working conditions.

The main barrier was considered to be the high level of undefined risk assessment procedures, which are not tailored to companies' characteristics such as specific sector needs, size, etc. As an example, in this case the duration of the entire process (e.g. organization of focus groups and meetings to discuss intervention proposals and their implementation) was regarded as a time-consuming task, but at the same time also necessary for the success of the risk assessment procedure. For this reason, the company is studying further ways to involve employees in the assessment and ensure their participation, such as self-reporting questionnaires.

### **2.4 Recommendations for the participative psychosocial risk assessment process to change working conditions**

The development of a complete procedure of risk assessment with the involvement of all the OSH actors, including workers and their reps' seems to be the best way to reach a broad-base agreement between all the parties involved with a high level of acceptance of the interventions

proposed and their effective implementation.

## **2.5 Relation between characteristics of the participatory process and working conditions changes**

In the case of CAM S.p.A a participative process of risk assessment and management of work-related stress has been carried out with the active involvement of the workers' safety reps.

During the in-depth assessment phase of the risk assessment, where workers themselves and their representative were involved in the focus groups along with the company's Area managers, emerged a clear indication to develop a corrective intervention on shift work regardless of the absence of significant risks revealed by the preliminary assessment.

The participative approach led to the implementation of action for improvement on the basis of employees' proposals.

## 3. CERNUSCO SUL NAVIGLIOMUNICIPALITY

The study on Cernusco sul Naviglio Municipality was conducted by collecting data through three methods:

1. A checklist compiled by the company for the collection of some objective data about the company's structure and workforce composition as well as about the assessment and management of work-related stress risk process, enclosing some relevant documentation such as psychosocial risks assessment report;
2. Data collection from the City Hall website (<http://www.comune.cernuscosulnaviglio.mi.it/>), containing all organizational structure information and details, as suggested by the company itself.
3. Semi-structured interviews with the Human Resource Manager, the Company Physician and the Workers' Representative for Safety (representing CGIL) involved in the assessment and management process.

### 3.1 Background

The Cernusco sul Naviglio Municipality is a public company operating in the Administrative and Support service activities sector (NACE N). The company has 182 employees including managers, white collars and blue collars belonging to three main Areas: Technical, Financial and Services.

63.7% of the employees are females and 36.3% are males.

Over 64.3% of workers of both sexes are in the age segment 40 - 54 years.

Regarding the organizational tenure, 27.5% of employees have worked in this company from 0 - 10 years, 35.2% from 11 to 20 years, 22.0% from 21 to 30 years. The remaining 15.4% of employees have over 31 years of labour continuity.

All employees are Italian nationals.

### 3.2 Psychosocial risk prevention participative process

The study aimed at collecting in-depth information on the phases related to the full risk assessment and management processes, their findings, as well as the presence of a

participative process in psychosocial risk prevention.

In particular, the project focused on:

- Main reasons that drive the assessment and management process;
- The assessment of work-related stress risks (how it was conducted, which procedure and tools were used; who was involved; findings);
- Preventive measures, actions for improvement, monitoring;
- Participation process (involvement of workers' safety reps, conflicts, employees' involvement);
- Main drivers and barriers of the whole assessment and management process.

The main reasons that drove the Cernusco sul Naviglio Municipality to carry out the assessment and management of work-related stress risk in the last 3 years were:

1. the legal requirements following the content of Legislative Decree 81/2008 which states the obligation to assess work-related stress in companies;
2. the increased awareness about the impacts of work-related stress on workers' health after the Italian Legislative Decree no. 81/08 on Occupational Health and Safety was enforced.

The risk assessment process involved all employees divided in 6 homogenous groups on the basis of their role: clerical workers, clerical workers with desk functions, technicians, blue-collar workers, Children's nurseries employees, police officers. According to Italian regulation, the assessment process has the following steps:

1. A preliminary assessment aimed at analyzing the objective risk indicators of work-related stress under three main headings: sentinel events, work content and work context factors (e.g. absence from work, turnover rate, injuries, workload, role, relationships, and work-home conflicts). At this stage, the checklist provided in the INAIL's methodological proposal for the assessment and management of work-related stress was used. Findings revealed an overall non-significant level of work-related stress risks. Nevertheless, some concerns emerged for groups of nursery employees and police officers, whose high level indicators suggested moving to an in-depth

assessment. In particular, the most critical situation was reported in the group of police officers, due to an increase in conflicts between co-workers and in request for assignment change. Thus the company decided to directly move to an in-depth assessment to make an improved description of risks.

2. The in-depth assessment included the answering of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) questionnaire by the employees. The choice of an adult personality and psychopathology questionnaire, instead of a more specific questionnaire focusing on psychosocial context and content factors was associated with the characteristics of the conflicts (cases of harassment) and with the fact that police officers regularly carry fire arms at work.

As a preliminary step an assessment group was established. The group included the employer, the Health & Safety Manager, the Company Physician, a Workers' Safety Representative and the Human Resources Manager, ensuring the active participation of occupational health professionals as specified by Italian regulation, each one supporting the assessment activities according their specific competencies. The assessment group was actively involved in each assessment phase with the following tasks:

1. preliminary phase: planning of each assessment step, identifying homogenous groups of workers on the basis of organizational structure, developing a communication strategy to inform employees;
2. preliminary assessment: compiling the checklist for each homogenous group;
3. In-depth assessment, during which the Workers' Rep had a specific facilitating role in its development, something that initially was not well accepted by the target group.

The preliminary risk assessment showed a non-relevant risk for all the homogenous groups except for the police officers (medium risk). An in-depth assessment was carried out through the administration of a validated questionnaire.

Actually, during this phase some conflicts on the choice of instruments to be used emerged between management and workers, due to the nature of the questionnaire (aimed at evaluating individual personality and psychopathology). The main problem was the lack of

information on the tool's characteristics and functions, but this was overcome thanks to the facilitating role played by the workers' rep who explained workers the reasons for this choice.

In the end, all instances were accepted thanks to the mediating role of the workers' safety representative, the collaboration and consultation with the company physicians and the involvement of the Regional Preventive Office, consulted to have a complete comprehension of the whole process.

Since the findings of the in-depth assessment reported a 'non-relevant' risk of work-related stress in the target group, no preventive interventions were implemented according to Italian legal dispositions. However, a two-year monitoring was planned to verify the evolution of work-related stress risks; also an individual level intervention was set up on specific workers, which included the temporary suspension of license for the use of fire arms for officers involved in the conflicts.

### **3.3 Drivers and barriers**

All interviewees pointed at the participative model as the main driver for a comprehensive and effective risk assessment process. In particular, the participation and the active role played by the workers' representative were considered the real added value of the process thanks to his engagement in explaining to employees the meaning and the content of the in-depth evaluation proposed. On the contrary, lack of information and training were considered the main barriers to the risk assessment in general. Lack of awareness of psychosocial risks prevalence at the workplace and of their impact on workers' health also represented a barrier to the process, in the view of the workers' representative.

### **3.4 Recommendations for the participative psychosocial risk assessment process to change working conditions**

The involvement of the largest possible number of the company's OSH parties (Health & Safety

Managers, Company Physicians, Workers' Reps) and, eventually, of external experts from Local/Regional prevention offices proved to be the best solution for the implementation of a comprehensive risk assessment process. In this specific case, the inclusion of the representative resulted of crucial importance for the development and the success of the whole process.

Training and information activities on psychosocial risks, their impact on workers' health, possible interventions and their effects on work organization should also be strengthened at all levels.

### **3.5 Relations between characteristics of the participatory process and working conditions changes**

In this specific case, any change of working conditions was introduced following the psychosocial risk assessment.

It must be highlighted the importance of the participatory approach and the strong commitment of the workers' representatives in improving employees' compliance with the process and their acceptance of actions aimed at assessing and monitoring the levels of work-related stress risk factors at the workplace.

## 4. TELECOM ITALIA SPA

### 4.1 Background and methods

Telecom Italia Group is an Italian telecommunications company which provides landline services, mobile line and DSL services (NACE 61.10). It is listed in the Borsa Italiana (Italian Stock Market) and it was founded in 1994. Telecom Italia Group has 65,623 employees, 53,155 of them are in Italy (36.9% are women and 63.1% are men). Telecom Italia Spa is part of Telecom Italia Group, it is based in Milan, it has 44,381 workers in Italy (women are over 30%) in 63 local units.

**Professions in Telecom Italia Spa**

Professions	Males	Females	Total
Executive Managers	575	102	677
Supervisors	2,287	819	3,106
Clerical workers	28,519	11,999	40,518
Apprentices	60	20	80
Total	31,441	12,940	44,381

*Source: Telecom Italia Spa official documents*

The Health and Safety Management System respects and improves the national laws on health and safety and it is organized as follows:

- 1 Health, Safety and Environmental(HSE) Manager;
- Prevention and Protection System with 4 local areas;
- 108 Health and Safety Workers' Representatives (HSRs) in 17 local areas;

- National Bilateral Body on H&S with 6 members: 3 employers' representatives and 3 union representatives (SLC-CGIL, FISTel-CISL, UILCOM-UIL);
- 4 Local Bilateral Body on H&S with 12 members each-one: 6 employers' representatives and 6 union representatives (SLC-CGIL, FISTel-CISL, UILCOM-UIL);
- 1 occupational physician (coordinator) assisted by 20 external occupational doctors at local level.

The study on Telecom Italia Spa was conducted by collecting data by two methods:

1. A checklist filled in by the company for the collection of some objective data about the company's structure and composition as well as about the assessment and management of work-related stress risk process;
2. Semi-structured interviews to: Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) National Manager; "People Value" National Manager (Human Resource); 3 union representatives of the National Bilateral Body on H&S; 1 Local Health and Safety Workers' Representatives.

This study focused on the Telecom work-related stress prevention participative process, especially considering the psychosocial risk assessment which consists of a general survey with 2 preliminary investigations followed by an in-depth survey.

## 4.2 Psychosocial risk prevention participative process

### 4.2.1 General survey

**First preliminary investigation** on work-related stress carried out between December 2010 and April 2011. In compliance with national laws<sup>1</sup>, preliminary investigation analyzed data on all work-force considering 12 homogenous groups, and it was carried out by 12 working groups composed of: people-value office (human resource office), HSE office, managers, HSRs.

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<sup>1</sup> Art. 28, comma 1bis del D.Lgs 81/2008.

Findings showed the presence of a “medium” risk in *Customer Care Consumer*, *Customer Care Business*, *on field technicians of Open Access* and of a “borderline” risk (between low and medium) in *Technicians of Customer Care* and *Other activities in Customer Care*. Observing Italian regulation, adding interventions on health and safety are compulsory in presence of a medium or high risk, so the company proposed several actions especially in the field of communication and information.

**Second preliminary investigation** carried out between October and November 2012 focusing on “medium” and “borderline” risk working areas. INAIL Check List was the methodology used in this investigation and this check list was partially changed to be adapted to the specific workplace. Final findings highlighted the presence of a “medium” risk among workers in *Customer Care Consumer Mobile* and *on field technicians of Open Access* and a “borderline risk” among workers in *Customer Care Consumer Landline*. Thus, a new investigation was planned for these 3 working groups.

#### **4.2.2 In-depth survey: “Accompagniamo il cambiamento” (“Support the change”)**

In September 2013, following the preliminary investigations, Telecom carried out an in-depth analysis on the 3 at-risk groups: *Customer Care Consumer Mobile*, *Customer Care Consumer Landline*, *On field technicians of Open Access*.

This in-depth analysis - “Accompagniamo il cambiamento” (“Support the change”) –is carried out by a research team and a pilot committee.

Research team is composed of “Tor Vergata” University in Rome and BSD Company (led by Prof. Sebastiano Bagnara) with the support of the Regional Centre for work-related stress hosted by the workplace safety and prevention service of the local public health system (SPRESAL, ASL Roma C).

Pilot Committee is composed by: the Research Team (“Tor Vergata” University in Rome, BSD Company), Health Safety & Environment Office, Occupational Doctor Coordinator, 3 manager of People Value Office, Manager of People Caring & Communication, Line Manager of Caring Services and Open Access, and all the members of the National Bilateral Body on H&S.

Moreover, at the very beginning of this project a specialized working group on health and

safety was created to develop and support work-related stress management. This “focal point” is named “Team Bambù” and members have been selected by an open call to all the Telecom staff. Actually, Team Bambù is composed by 12 members, most part of them are workers with an educational background in psychology and sociology working as employees in the offices.

The survey used several tools:

*a) In-depth interviews.*

The survey started by in-depth interviews to the national and local managers of People Value, Caring Services and Open Access Areas.

*b) In-depth survey by 3 structured questionnaires on a random representative sample of above 2,300 workers (chosen by their professional and regional distribution from a total of 13,500 employees).*

An in-depth survey carried out on a sample of workers at risk: 1,100 workers in call centres, 1,000 on field technicians and 200 workers involved in other at-risk professions. Research team used 3 questionnaires to evaluate the individual risk perception and the opportunity to improve health conditions: GHQ, General Health Questionnaire; HSE, Health and Safety Executive questionnaire; “ad hoc” questionnaire.

*c) Observational research during working activities by the members of the “Team Bambù”*

Team Bambù members observed the at-risk working activities to identify critical points.

*d) 12 focus groups in two sessions*

Research team carried out two sessions of focus groups: the goal of the first session was to identify work-related risks; the goal of the second session was to identify proposals and recommendations. Each focus group involved 8 workers (exactly, the same workers in first and second session).

Health and Safety Workers’ Representatives (HSRs) at company level with the support of the National Bilateral Body on H&S has been involved in all the phases of the project: they provided suggestions for the methodology and supported workers’ involvement. They also participated in the analysis of the findings and are actually involved in the definition of the proposals. Research Team (“Tor Vergata” University in Rome, BSD Company) was the leader for methodological issues but all the members of the Pilot Committee have been involved in all the phases with their contributions.

### 4.3 Main results

The results of the risk assessment, as well as the interviews show the relation between psychosocial health risk and many aspects of the work organization (for workers in the professional groups with “medium” or “borderline” risk) especially considering the critical points usually associated with stress: lack of training on H&S, job-skills mismatch, work isolation due to the individualization of tasks, work-charge and high pressure, lack in control on the performance goals.

Considering the interventions to improve health and safety it seems that they regard many aspects of work organization and the company planned to improve working conditions by a strategy based on 4 steps:

- a. assessment
- b. participation
- c. development
- d. support

Actually, intervention actions are under discussion at national level by the pilot committee and in the next months they will organize a specific strategy. However, some intervening actions are ongoing, as training and communication activities.

### 4.4 Barriers and drivers in the participative psychosocial risk prevention process to change working conditions

Our interviews as well as the analysis of documentation show that the risk assessment in Telecom has some (few) barriers and some (many) drivers. We observed that company the staff tried to cope with the barriers investing on the drivers.

#### **Barriers**

- a) *Lack of awareness and culture.* Usually psychosocial risks are not considered by workers because there are more important issues (i.e., wage, professional career).
- b) *Lack of definition in regulation.* Italian laws on work-related stress assessment are not so specific regarding the methodology and there are different interpretations by local institutions. This is a serious problem for a national company with workplaces located

in several regions.

- c) *Financial resources*. Usually the in-depth analysis is expensive.

### **Drivers**

- a) *Participation*. Psychosocial risk prevention process is characterized by a high level of participation by all agents involved in risk assessment: managers, unions, workers, occupational physicians, experts.
- b) *Culture and specialization*. Project is aimed spreading preventive culture (health and safety) in the labour force. Moreover, there is a high specialization of participants in risk assessment, especially with the creation of an internal team (Team Bambù).
- c) *Continuous risk assessment*. Risk assessment is considered a continuous process and not a temporary activity.
- d) *Expert support*. External experts have been involved in risk assessment as specialized support.
- e) *Multiple methodologies adapted to the workplace*. The project used several methodologies (questionnaires, focus groups, observatory research, interviews) and this methodology has been adapted to the specific workplace.
- f) *Financial resources*. Company invests economic resources in this project to improve work organization and quality of services.

## **4.5 Relationship between characteristics of the participatory process and working conditions changes**

Considering the general health & safety management, Telecom adopts a wide participative approach, also for the work-related stress assessment. This approach is based on the representative and a direct workers' participation.

- a) *Representative participation*. Both national and local union representatives support the projects and they have a voice on the whole risk assessment, from the preliminary survey to the identification of solutions. The network of health and safety workers' representatives and national and local bilateral body is really important to prevent risks

in a big company because it needs to coordinate a general strategy but, at the same time, it needs to consider the specific problems of a professional group or a territory.

b) *Direct participation.* Workers are directly involved in the assessment through several tools: questionnaires, focus groups, observatory research and in the identification of preventive measures (focus groups) During the feed-back, most workers and unionists expressed positive comments about the risk assessment and reported that survey findings are consistent with their subjective risk evaluation.

Also, a specialized staff of workers is created (Team bamboo) to support risk assessment tasks.

In conclusion, in Telecom the participatory approach is based on these dimensions:

- a strong representation and direct workers' participation
- a network able to assess risks through the whole production process
- specialization and training for representatives and workers involved in risk assessment
- opportunity to have a continuous dialogue with the management and all the other stakeholders.