



Mental health at work: priorities and key insights from international research

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Examples of risks to mental health from outside the workplace

Socio-economic

- The economy and labour market
 - Threat of and state of unemployment
 - Type of job contract
 - Job security
 - Reductions in availability of services
 - Income
- Geography
- Legislation
 - Labour
 - Welfare
 - OSH



OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

Precarious work and mental health

Precarious work and mental health
(Exploratory opinion requested by the Spanish Presidency)

SOC/745

Rapporteur: José Antonio MORENO DIAZ

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EN

The positive impacts of work on mental health and wellbeing

Work is good for both mental and physical health.

Research consistently shows that good-quality work—work with positive and supportive characteristics—can promote and protect overall wellbeing.

Key aspects of working life that are known to enhance mental health and wellbeing include:

- Being valued at work
- Having meaningful work
- Being able to make decisions on issues that affect you
- Being adequately trained for the work that you do
- Having the resources you need to do the work
- Having a job that is well designed, i.e. not overloaded
- Having work that is well organised in terms of work schedules and time off

Momentum of this research

Quality Jobs Act (expected late 2026)
The Commission has already launched the first phase of social partner consultation on a legislative initiative to improve job quality.

Topics under discussion include:

- occupational safety and health
- psychosocial risks
- algorithmic management and AI in the workplace
- work–life balance
- enforcement of labour standards

These are all areas with strong mental-health implications.



Mental health in the European workplace: evidence-based strategies for supporting workers

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

A review of good workplace practices to support individuals experiencing mental health problems

Research Review



European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

Guidance for workplaces on how to support individuals experiencing mental health problems



POLICY BRIEF



HOW WORKPLACES CAN SUPPORT WORKERS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Introduction

Mental health problems are very common and are a leading cause of disability — before the COVID-19 pandemic they affected about 84 million people across the EU,¹ and mental health has worsened since the pandemic according to the WHO² and EU-OSHA³ and Eurofound surveys.⁴ In addition to personal suffering, mental health problems have financial implications for our society. Work can impact mental health. 'Stress, depression or anxiety' is the second most common type of work-related health problem in the EU,⁵ with nearly 45% of workers reporting facing risk factors for their mental wellbeing at work. EU-OSHA's OSH Pulse survey 2022 shows that 27% of workers experience stress, anxiety or depression caused or made worse by work.⁶

There is considerable stigma around mental health and those experiencing mental health problems too often face exclusion from work, despite mental health problems being so common. On the other hand, good quality work is good for health. With the right accommodations, many workers experiencing mental health problems can continue to work. These accommodations are often simple and low-cost.

EU policy

EU directives require employers to assess and prevent risks to workers,⁷ including psychosocial risks; this includes protecting 'particularly sensitive risk groups' against the dangers that specifically affect them. Employers are also obliged to make reasonable accommodations for workers with disabilities, including workers with mental health-related disabilities.⁸

In 2023, the European Commission adopted a 'comprehensive approach to mental health' that is prevention-oriented and supports its aim of tackling mental health challenges in Europe.⁹ It includes a focus on preventing work-related psychosocial risks and supporting people experiencing mental health problems to continue working and when returning to work after a period of sickness absence. In 2022, the Commission launched a Disability Employment Package,¹⁰ the aims of which include ensuring reasonable accommodations at work and retaining persons with disabilities in employment.

Background to this policy brief

In 2023, EU-OSHA commissioned a project on working with mental health problems, covering both work-related and non-work-related mental health problems. This resulted in a report¹¹ covering background research

¹ See: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/health_qjanoe_eur-2018-en.pdf?expires=1712829006&id=id&anonname=guest&checksum=53ACAD0E6CC07E988E167AE27418657E

² See: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/mental-health/#:~:text=5%20December%202023,-The%20state%20of%20mental%20health%20in%20the%20EU,in%20the%20EU%2017,3%25>

³ EU-OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Mental health at work after the COVID pandemic*, 2024. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/mental-health-work-after-covid-pandemic>

⁴ Eurofound et al., *Living, working and COVID-19 (Update April 2021) – Mental health and trust decline across EU as pandemic enters another year*, 2021. <https://data.europa.eu/dg1/10.2806/76802>

⁵ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-reports/-/ks-11-21-007>

⁶ See: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/facts-and-figures/osh-pulse-occupational-safety-and-health-post-pandemic-workplaces>

⁷ See: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/legislation/directives/the-osh-framework-directive/1>

⁸ See: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/legislation/directives/council-directive-2000-78-ec>

⁹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on A Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health COM (2023) 298. [com_2023_298_1_act_en.pdf](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/comm/2023/298/1/act/en.pdf)

¹⁰ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?tid=1567&langId=en>

¹¹ EU-OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *A review of good workplace practices to support individuals experiencing mental health problems*, 2024. Available at: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/user/inlindestination/en/publications/review-good-workplaces>

Policy recommendations

- Develop and implement national strategies on mental health in the workplace across all EU Member States.
- Prospect legislation should prefer to psychosocial risks and mental health in the workplace in concrete and specific terms.
- Greater cooperation between public health bodies and workplaces
- Integrate mental-health promotion and psychosocial-risk management into all EU, national and regional labour and workplace policies.
- Improve recognition and compensation systems for work-related mental disorders across Europe.
- Prioritise prevention, early intervention and supportive environments, giving employers, workers and social partners clear guidance and tools.
- Support training and awareness-raising initiatives on mental health at work, including the impact of precarious employment on wellbeing.

STUDY

Requested by the EMPL Committee



Minimum health and safety requirements for the protection of mental health in the workplace



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Key landmark dates

ILO World Day for Safety and Health at Work on 28 April 2026

Good psychosocial working environments: A pathway to thriving workers and strong organization

In October 2026, **EU-OSHA** will launch its new campaign 2026-2028 under the slogan "**Together for mental health at work - Preventing psychosocial risks at work**". The aim is to raise awareness of psychosocial risks in the workplace and systematically promote prevention.