

# Conceptualisation of work-related psychosocial risks: first insights from a scoping review

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## Outline

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- Scoping review: Research Questions
- Methods and Analysis
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  - Study inclusion and exclusion criteria
  - Data extraction and synthesis
- Preliminary findings
- Next steps and Conclusion

# Context

- Terminology and typologies in relation to work-related psychosocial risks (PSR) have evolved over the years with researcher attempts to capture the impact of employment and working conditions on health, safety and well-being and organisational outcomes.
- Overall, there are numerous theories and models of work-related PSR, conceptual definitions and terminology, validated questionnaires, and frameworks for risk assessment but concurrently, there is 'no consensus' on a definitive list of PSR.
- In addition, legislation regarding the risks varies across the EU Member States leaving workers unequally protected with large variations across countries (Cefaliello, 2021; Jain et al., 2022), and the evidence base is mixed in relation to the effectiveness of various prevention approaches.
- Confusion among policy makers, practitioners, social partners, even researchers!

# Psychosocial work environment - definitions

Joint ILO/WHO Committee on Occupational Health report: “Psychosocial factors at work refer to interactions between and among work environment, job content, organisational conditions and workers' capacities, needs, culture, personal extra-job considerations that may, through perceptions and experience, influence health, work performance and job satisfaction” (ILO, 1986, p.3).

- **Psychosocial factors:** aspects of work organization, design and management that include, among others, work demands, the availability of organizational support, rewards, and interpersonal relationships in the workplace.
- **Psychosocial hazards:** aspects of work organization, design and management that have the potential to cause harm (e.g. unrealistic job demands, lack of role clarity, lack of organizational support, harassment and bullying in the workplace) on individual health and safety, on organizations (e.g. sickness absence, reduced productivity, human error) and on society (e.g. increased disability pensions, healthcare costs, etc.)
- **Psychosocial risks:** potential of psychosocial hazards to cause harm

# Dimensions of the psychosocial work environment 1

<b>Job content</b>	Lack of variety or short work cycles, fragmented or meaningless work, under use of skills, high uncertainty, continuous exposure to people through work	Meaningful work, appropriate use of skills, work retaining employee interest and engagement, appropriate support
<b>Workload &amp; work pace</b>	Work overload or under load, machine pacing, high levels of time pressure, continually subject to deadlines	Appropriate level of workload, appropriate work pace, sensible and achievable deadlines
<b>Work schedule</b>	Shift working (especially irregular), night shifts, inflexible work schedules, unpredictable hours, long or unsociable hours	Sensible shifts and reasonable working hours to maintain work-life balance, flexible working practices
<b>Control</b>	Low participation in decision making, lack of control over workload, pacing, shift working	Participation in decision making, control at work
<b>Environment &amp; equipment</b>	Inadequate equipment availability, suitability or maintenance; poor environmental conditions such as lack of space, poor lighting, excessive noise	Good physical working conditions according to good practice guidance

# Dimensions of the psychosocial work environment 2

<b>Organizational culture &amp; function</b>	Poor communication, low levels of support for problem solving and personal development, lack of definition of, or agreement on, organizational objectives	Clear organizational objectives, appropriate support for problem solving and personal development, good communication processes
<b>Interpersonal relationships at work</b>	Social or physical isolation, poor relationships with superiors, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support, harassment, violence	Good relationships at work, teamwork, social support, appropriate policies and procedures to deal with conflicts
<b>Role in organization</b>	Role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility for people	Clear roles and responsibilities, appropriate support to meet objectives
<b>Career development</b>	Career stagnation and uncertainty, under promotion or over promotion, poor pay, job insecurity, low social value to work	Appropriate career prospects & development matching skills & performance, effort reward balance, valuable/meaningful work, job security
<b>Home-work interface</b>	Conflicting demands of work and home, low support at home, dual career problems	Work-life balance, supportive organizational policies and practices to achieve 'life balance'

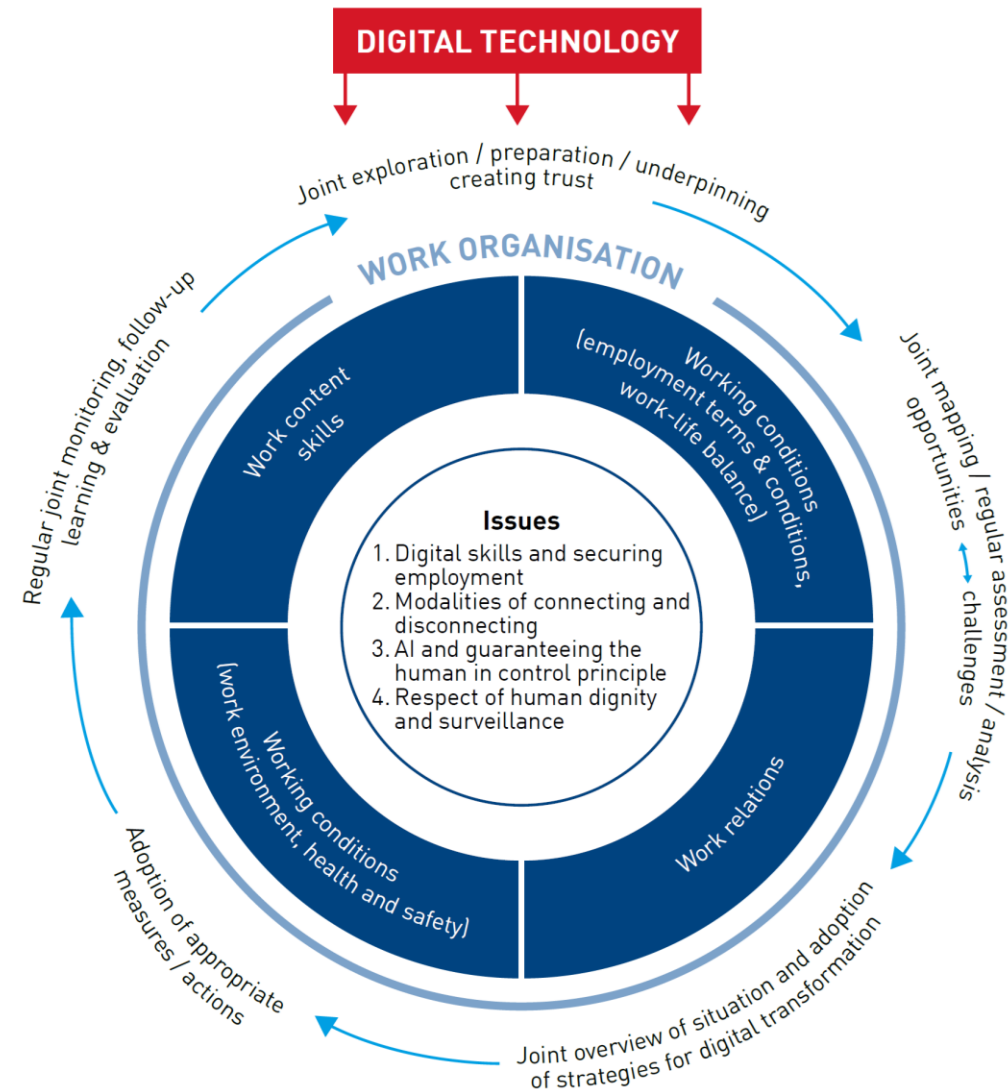
# ISO 45003 categorises psychosocial hazards along three dimensions



- Aspects of how work is organized
  - Roles and expectations
  - Job control and autonomy
  - Job demands
  - Organizational change management
  - Remote and isolated work
  - Workload and work pace
  - Working hours and schedule
  - Job insecurity and precarious work
- Social factors at work
  - Interpersonal relationships
  - Leadership
  - Organizational/workgroup culture
  - Recognition and reward
  - Career development
  - Support
  - Supervision
  - Civility and respect
  - Work-life balance
  - Violence at work
- Work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks:
  - inadequate equipment availability, suitability, reliability, maintenance or repair
  - poor workplace conditions such as lack of space, poor lighting and excessive noise
  - lack of the necessary tools, equipment or other resources to complete work tasks
  - working in extreme conditions or situations, such as very high or low temperatures, or at height
  - working in unstable environments such as conflict zones

**Psychosocial risks:** Combination of the likelihood of occurrence of exposure to work-related hazard(s) of a psychosocial nature and the severity of injury and ill-health that can be caused by these hazards

## DIGITALISATION PARTNERSHIP PROCESS



# European Social Partner Autonomous Framework Agreement on Digitalisation

This framework agreement aims to:

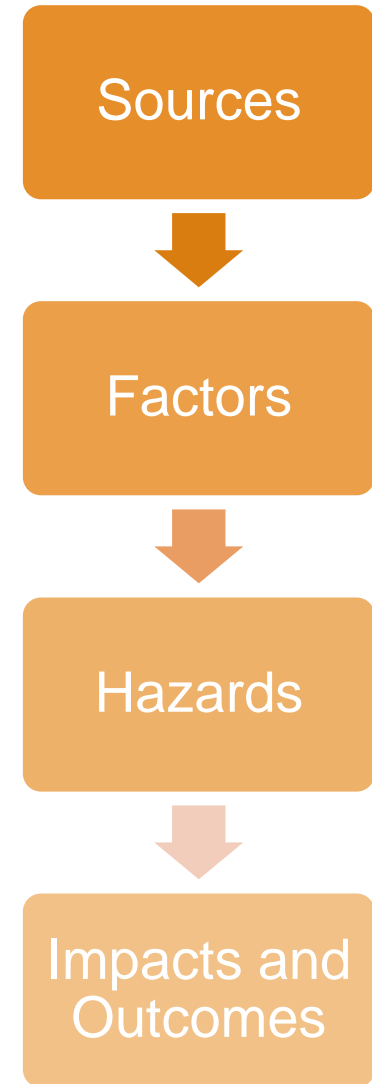
- Raise awareness and improve understanding of employers, workers and their representatives of the opportunities and challenges in the world of work resulting from the digital transformation;
- Provide an action-oriented framework to encourage, guide and assist employers, workers and their representatives in devising measures and actions aimed at reaping these opportunities and dealing with the challenges, whilst taking into account existing initiatives, practices and collective agreements;
- Encourage a partnership approach between employers, workers and their representatives;
- Support development of a human-oriented approach to integration of digital technology in the world of work, to support/assist workers and enhance productivity;
- Development of a human-oriented approach to integration of digital technology in the world of work, to support/assist workers and enhance productivity.

Source: EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS (2020)



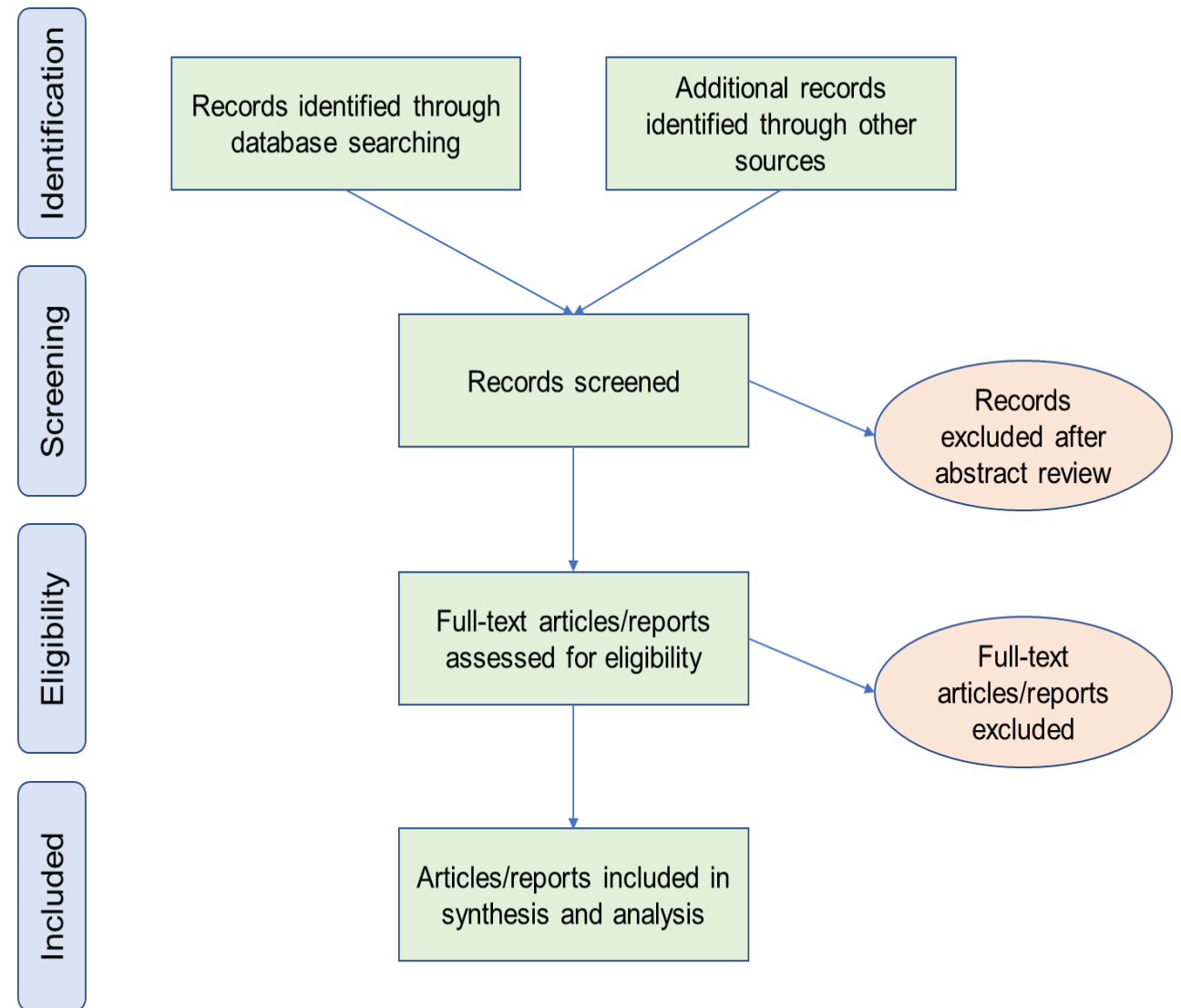
# Scoping Review – Research Questions

- Within this context, this scoping review aims to examine and provide clarity on how the multidimensional concept of work-related PSR is conceptualised in the literature.
- It will review and categorise existing evidence on work-related PSR using an established methodology in order to construct a conceptual typology of work-related PSR with different components: Sources (e.g., aspects related to work organisation, and working and employment conditions); Factors (e.g., job security, work-life balance); Hazards (e.g., job insecurity, work-life conflict) and; Impacts and outcomes.
- The scoping review aims to answer the following research questions:
  1. How are work-related PSR defined in the literature?
  2. What dimensions of work-related PSR are identified in the literature?
  3. What are the impacts/outcomes of exposure to work-related psychosocial factors?



# Methods and Analysis

- The review carried out using a systematic search strategy covering both the academic and grey literature (so as to include key guidance documents and reports). Papers and reports published until May 2023.
- Articles and reports that have been published in English in a reputable journal (peer-reviewed); or the information provider is a 'credible source'; and the identity of the 'owner(s)' of the site and/or authors of the paper/report is clear; the information is original, will be selected based on defined inclusion criteria based on relevance and quality.
- Addressing the review aim to identify and describe terminology and definitions, this search will allow in determining how the term is being used, where it originated from and what other terms and definitions are used in association with it.



**PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of the literature selection process**

# Example keywords being used in the search

**Sources:** employment conditions, economic conditions, inclusive labour markets, digitalisation, automation, technology, aging, diversity, psychosocial safety climate, etc.

**Factors:** organisational culture, job design, job content, workload, work pace, work schedule, control, environment & equipment, interpersonal relationships at work, role in organization, career development, home-work interface, etc.

**Hazards:** lack of variety or short work cycles, uncertainty, heavy/excessive workload, high emotional demands, high demands, work overload or under load, time pressure, shift work, inflexible work schedules, long working hours, low participation in decision making, job strain, effort-reward imbalance, inadequate equipment availability, lack of control, job insecurity, bullying, harassment, mobbing, offensive behaviours, work-related violence, poor environmental conditions, poor communication, psychosocial, social or physical isolation, interpersonal conflict, lack of social support, role ambiguity, role conflict, poor pay, job insecurity etc.

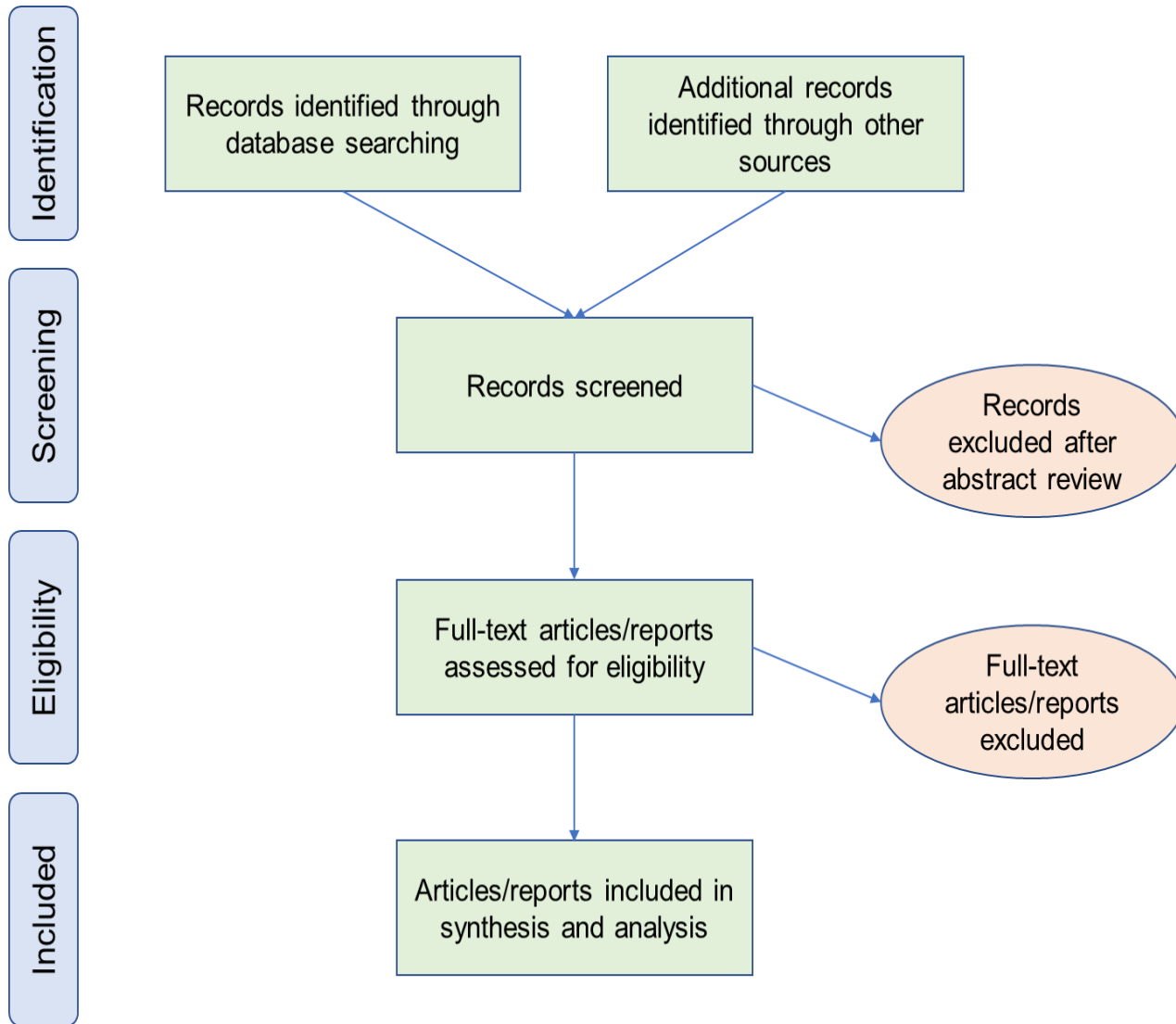
**Impacts/Outcomes:** work-related stress, burnout, anxiety, distress, depression, emotional, fatigue, lower back pain, musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), heart disease, coronary heart diseases (CHD), cardiovascular diseases (CVD), common mental disorders (CMDs), psychological ill-health, well-being, engagement, job satisfaction, innovation, sickness absence, presenteeism etc.

# Study inclusion and exclusion criteria

- Automatic and manual searches of citations being conducted to identify and remove duplicate references. Full texts will then be retrieved, and document screening will be carried out on Endnote.
- As the primary objectives of this scoping review concerns the conceptualisation of work-related PSR, their dimensions and the impacts/outcomes of exposure to work-related psychosocial factors, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research will be considered.
- The research must have been conducted in a work-related context. No studies will be excluded based on sector, location of work, as well as the nature and type of employment contract.
- The quality criteria will only be applied for studies on impact/outcomes (only systematic reviews, meta-analysis, studies using longitudinal designs, and large representative samples will be included). Given the scope and complexity of this review, it may not be possible to use these approaches directly, however GRADE CerQual (Confidence in the Evidence from Reviews of Qualitative research) (Lewin et al., 2018) to assess confidence in the findings of qualitative evidence, and AMSTAR II (Assessing the Methodological Quality of Systematic Reviews tool (Shea et al. 2017), will be used to ascertain study quality.

# Data extraction and synthesis

- Search is iterative and checks are built into the process to ensure that the inclusion/exclusion criteria are being implemented consistently.
- Feedback from the Advisory Board. Discussion at this workshop will provide further input into the selection of studies and ascertain their appropriateness.
- Descriptive statistics will include frequency counts of nominal variables and relative frequency distribution of nominal variables. The review will be used to carry out a conceptual analysis and extended content analysis.
- The conceptual analysis will lead to the development of a 'typology of work-related PSR' with different components: – Sources – Factors – Hazards – Impacts and outcomes. The content level analysis will extend the conceptual analysis by assessing relationships between the identified factors (co-factors, mitigating factors); and examining that break down the factors into specific hazards.



**PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of the literature selection process**

## Preliminary findings

- Initial search focused on the term ‘psychosocial factors at work’.
- Over 168,376 search results.
- These include over 3,800 systematic reviews, and 16,600 review studies
- Identification of studies still ongoing. The final sample of documents will be imported into NVivo for data extraction and analysis.

# Next Steps and Conclusion

- The protocol summarises the procedure for the scoping review which aims to examine the conceptualisation of work-related PSR, their dimensions and the impacts/outcomes of exposure to work-related psychosocial factors in current literature.
- The findings will be used to inform the development of draft typology and visualisation of work-related psychosocial risks with different components (sources – factors – hazards – impacts/outcomes).
- The draft typology and visualisation will be presented to ETUI and expert advisory committee in Dec 2023, and then subject to two validation exercises.
- **Discussion today is key**

# Questions for working group 1

## **I. Work-related psychosocial risks terminology: awareness, understanding and challenges in practice: 13:30 – 15:00 (last 40 minutes for reporting back in plenary)**

- *In this working group session we want to discuss our understanding of the conceptualization(s) of work-related psychosocial risks as presented in the interim report*
- Key questions - In your view:
  1. Is the conceptualization of work-related PSR as presented in the report clear and understandable, and useful in practice?
  2. Is it comprehensive and general enough to cover all sectors, companies and professions?
  3. What are the challenges related to the conceptualization / the terminology used?



# Questions for working group 2

## **II. Addressing practical needs of key stakeholders through a robust conceptualization of work-related psychosocial risks: 15.30 – 17.00 (last 40 minutes for reporting back in plenary)**

- *In this working group session, we want to jump from the understanding of the problem to possible solutions. What road do we have to go to get there?*
- Key questions - In your view:
  1. What do you need to get the problem of work-related psychosocial risks solved?
  2. How can the project help?

# Thank You!!!

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