



12 June 2026

Joint statement on psychosocial risks in the workplace

*Employers and business representatives call upon the European Parliament to **reject the legislative annex of the INL report “2026/2023 Psychosocial risks, stress and mental health at work”** as it would introduce overly prescriptive and disproportionate obligations that go far beyond what is reasonable or effective to address psychosocial risks in the workplace.*

Ensuring safe and healthy working environments for all workers is a core priority for European employers and an essential component of well-functioning labour markets. European employers therefore fully support the objective of preventing psychosocial risks and protecting mental health at work. The concern is not with the objective, but with the **proposed call for a directive, which is not the right instrument to achieve effective outcomes.**

As evidenced by the [Conclusions of the EU OSH Stocktaking Summit](#), which were adopted in Stockholm on 16 May 2023, as well as the European Commission’s 2024 “[Peer Review on Legislative and enforcement approaches to address psychosocial risks at work in the Member States](#)”, the **current European regulatory framework, with the Framework Directive on safety and health at work 89/391/EEC at its core as well as its 24 daughter directives, is fit for purpose to address issues related to psychosocial risks at work.** Against this background, it is of concern that the INL report proposes a highly administrative and prescriptive legislative approach at a time when reducing unnecessary regulatory and reporting burdens for companies is rightly a key priority at European level.

The draft INL itself acknowledges the considerable diversity across Member States regarding the prevalence of psychosocial risks, labour market structures, national regulatory systems, social partner agreements and implementation practices. This diversity demonstrates that a **one-size-fits-all European legislative approach would neither reflect workplace realities nor provide the flexibility necessary** to ensure effective implementation across sectors and Member States. The social partners at the European and national level have a strong commitment to addressing issues related to psychosocial risks in the workplace by negotiating agreements, joint statements, guidelines and practical tools tailored to the realities of different sectors, workplaces and national circumstances¹.

¹ See [BusinessEurope's policy orientation note on mental health at work](#) for key examples.

Psychosocial risks are by nature complex, multifactorial and influenced by a wide range of professional, social and individual factors. Addressing these risks therefore requires a balanced approach based on **shared responsibility between employers and workers**, in line with Article 13 of the OSH Framework Directive. It is important to recognise the limitations of what employers can reasonably control, particularly given that individuals may react differently to similar situations and circumstances over time. Evidence from experimental and longitudinal studies indicates that individual stress mindsets of workers furthermore strongly influence how psychosocial risks are appraised as well as play a causal role in shaping responses to psychosocial load and their related health outcomes. This important reflection is also acknowledged and underlined by the European cross-sectoral social partners in their report on the [Implementation of the European Autonomous Framework Agreement on Work-related Stress](#), which states that “*diversity of the workforce is an important consideration when tackling problems of work-related stress*” and that “*different individuals can react differently to similar situations and the same individual can react differently to similar situations at different times of his/her life*”.

Moreover, there is currently no universally recognised scientific methodology capable of establishing clear threshold levels for psychosocial risks or **objectively determining causal links between specific workplace factors and mental health outcomes**. Existing research methodologies often rely heavily on self-reported perceptions and surveys, without sufficiently establishing objective and measurable causal relationships with occupational settings. This makes it particularly difficult to define harmonised regulatory obligations at EU level without creating significant legal uncertainty and disproportionate compliance burdens for employers.

Evidence from certain Member States further suggests that increasingly strict and detailed legal obligations alone do not necessarily lead to better mental health outcomes at work. What is needed instead is **stronger support for the effective implementation and enforcement of the existing legal framework**, accompanied by practical guidance, awareness-raising, exchange of good practices and strengthened social dialogue. This is of particular importance for SME's, who risk facing a growing burden of administrative obligations, documentation requirements, action plans, and reporting duties. Many enterprises lack dedicated HR, legal, or compliance departments to handle these demands, meaning that seemingly minor obligations can quickly translate into significant time, cost, and bureaucratic pressure. For SMEs, prevention works best when obligations are clear, proportionate and embedded within existing systems. A stand-alone directive risks duplicating existing obligations. Overly complex or fragmented requirements can reduce effectiveness on the ground.

Finally, European employers underline the **positive role that quality work plays for mental health** and social inclusion. Work contributes significantly to personal well-being, financial security and social participation, while labour market inactivity is consistently associated with poorer mental health outcomes². Work furthermore

² See Sterud T, Lunde L-K, Berg R, et al. *Occup Environ Med* 2025; 82: 343–353.

strengthens mental health by creating self-affirmation and recognition as well as by structuring everyday life.

In light of the above, European employers urge Members of the European Parliament to **support a balanced, evidence-based and practical approach that avoids unnecessary legislative complexity and administrative burdens, particularly for SMEs**, which represent the overwhelming majority of European businesses. Any future EU initiative in this area should focus on:

- improving the implementation and enforcement of the existing OSH acquis;
- compiling good practices on what is already being done but also critically assessing the effectiveness of different national approaches already in place;
- developing practical and non-binding guidelines at EU level through the targeted involvement of the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at work, following up on the work performed by the dedicated tripartite Working Party on Psychosocial risks and mental health at work;
- promoting social partner dialogue at the appropriate level;
- regularly evaluating the effectiveness and practical impact of existing measures before considering additional legislation.

For these reasons, the European employers' organisations call on Members of the European Parliament to **reject the legislative annex of the INL report in its entirety as well as any other request for additional legislation and put forward a non-legislative initiative. In order to ensure legislative certainty, regulatory coherence and business competitiveness, the non-legislative approach should aim at minimum to remove the most problematic provisions**, including those:

- disregarding the principle of shared responsibility between employers and workers;
- Going beyond the remit of OSH and/or already regulated by other legislative instruments (articles 6(2), 7, 13, 14 and 16);
- a priori defining certain elements as psychosocial risks (articles 3 and 5)
- creating unnecessarily complex administrative and procedural requirements, including through annual action plans (article 6);
- introducing a legal presumption and reversing the burden of proof (article 18);

A balanced and effective European approach to mental health at work must ensure high standards of occupational health and safety while avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy and preserving the flexibility needed to address psychosocial risks effectively across different sectors, workplaces and national systems.
