

Impact case study (REF3)

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| Institution: University of Nottingham | | |
| Unit of Assessment: UoA4 | | |
| Title of case study: Transforming worldwide policy and practice to prevent psychosocial risks at work and work-related stress | | |
| Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2001-2018 | | |
| Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: | | |
| Name(s): Professor Stavroula Leka | Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Work, Health & Policy | Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2001 - September 2020 |
| Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 st August 2013 to 31 st December 2020 | | |
| Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No | | |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact Professor Stavroula Leka's research on preventing psychosocial risks at work and work-related stress has driven the development of policy initiatives worldwide. The development of the European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management (PRIMA-EF) was adopted by the 193 World Health Organization member states, and used by the International Labour Organization, the International Standardization Organization, national standards bodies in Denmark, Canada and the United Kingdom, and national agencies in Europe and Australia. The adoption of PRIMA-EF led to the development of international and national policy guidance, and enabled international organisations to implement practical approaches for the prevention of work-related stress and the promotion of mental health in the workplace.</p> | | |
| <p>2. Underpinning research The negative health and economic impacts of psychosocial risks at work are well established. These risks, which include harassment and bullying at work impact both employees and organisations through the consequences of work-related stress and poor mental health. Work-related stress has been estimated to account for 37% of all work-related ill health and 45% of all working days lost due to ill health in the United Kingdom (UK). It affects 1 in 4 European workers with an estimated cost of 3-4% of GDP in the EU.</p> | | |
| <p>What is PRIMA-EF? Having highlighted work-related stress as a major challenge for occupational health and safety, Professor Stavroula Leka, Director of the University's Centre for Organisational Health and Development, a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre in Occupational Health, and Dr Aditya Jain at Nottingham University Business School conducted research which led to the development of the European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management (PRIMA-EF), a best practice framework for the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace, which was launched in 2008 [R1] [G1-G7]. This framework provides evidence-based guidance, key indicators and interventions to promote best practice in preventing work-related stress and managing psychosocial risks for employers and policy-makers.</p> | | |
| <p>The policy-oriented research that informed the development of this best practice framework for psychosocial risk management was funded by various bodies and has received in excess of 2,000,000 euro in competitive funding [G1-G7]. The origins of the work lie in research on the management of psychosocial risks and work-related stress that was funded by Swedish Trade Unions (2004-2006) [G1] and the European Commission (2006-2009) [G2]. PRIMA-EF was incorporated into WHO global guidance in 2008 when it also became part of the WHO's Healthy Workplaces Framework, which is a global initiative to promote healthy work environments that prevent negative impacts of work-related risks to their workers and communities.</p> | | |
| <p>Research leading to the development of PRIMA-EF PRIMA-EF was an extensive interdisciplinary project, involving several studies led by Professor Leka and Dr Jain. This included a comprehensive review of policy level interventions for psychosocial risk management in the workplace [R2], stakeholder interviews and social partner (employers' associations and trade unions) surveys and expert workshops to investigate current knowledge among European stakeholders of regulation on psychosocial risk factors [R3] and business benefits on managing psychosocial risks [R4]. This body of research concluded that a gap between policy and practice existed and further evaluation of existing and new regulatory</p> | | |

and voluntary policy initiatives was needed to bridge this gap. It was also noted that work-related psychosocial risk management could enhance organisational performance and social sustainability. This research culminated in the development of PRIMA-EF which provides guidance on the development of evidence-based policies and implementation of best practices, to manage work-related psychosocial risks and promote employee health and wellbeing and effective organisational performance [R1].

Research after the development of PRIMA-EF

Further studies between 2009-2018 using policy analysis and evaluation were used to review European best practice approaches in psychosocial risk management. A review of voluntary standards on occupational health highlighted a lack of specific guidance on preventing stress and psychosocial risks in the workplace within European Union member states [R5]. On the basis of this review, Professor Leka and Dr Jain subsequently presented the case for fostering responsible organisational practices by developing a voluntary standard for psychosocial risk management. They authored and led the development of the first standard for the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace in 2011 for the British Standards Institution (BSI), known as the Publicly Available Specification 1010 (PAS1010) [R6].

Further research demonstrated that poor psychosocial risk management acts as a barrier to innovation at an organisational, country and EU level, highlighting the importance of psychosocial risk management for EU-wide innovation performance [R7].

In 2014, Professor Leka investigated the effect of psychosocial risks in a Norwegian Oil and Gas company, which adopted the PRIMA-EF framework and adhered to good practice according to PAS1010 [R8]. Using a psychosocial risk indicator (PRI), Professor Leka measured the relationship between the PRI and hydrocarbon leaks, in comparison to offshore platform technical characteristics, over a two-year period. This study concluded that only the PRI score indicating a poorer psychosocial work environment, was reliably associated with hydrocarbon leaks, demonstrating the importance of psychosocial risk management not only for health and wellbeing but also for safety.

3. References to the research

Research

[R1] Leka, S., & Kortum, E. (2008). A European framework to address psychosocial risks. *Journal of Occupational Health*, 50(3), 294-296. DOI: [10.1539/joh.M6004](https://doi.org/10.1539/joh.M6004)

[R2] Leka, S., Jain, A., Zwetsloot, G., & Cox, T. (2010). Policy-level interventions and work-related psychosocial risk management in the European Union. *Work & Stress*, 24(3), 298-307. DOI: [10.1080/02678373.2010.519918](https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2010.519918)

[R3] Ertel, M., Stijljanow, U., Iavicoli, S., Natali, E., Jain, A., & Leka, S. (2010). European social dialogue on psychosocial risks at work: benefits and challenges. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 16(2), 169-183. DOI: [10.1177/0959680110364830](https://doi.org/10.1177/0959680110364830)

[R4] Jain, A., Leka, S., & Zwetsloot, G. (2011). Corporate social responsibility and psychosocial risk management in Europe. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 101(4), 619-63. DOI: [10.1007/s10551-011-0742-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0742-z)

[R5] Leka, S., Jain, A., Iavicoli, S., & Di Tecco, C. (2015). An evaluation of the policy context on psychosocial risks and mental health in the workplace in the European Union: Achievements, challenges and the future. *Biomed Research International*. 213089. DOI: [10.1155/2015/213089](https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/213089)

[R6] Leka, S., Jain, A., Widerszal-Bazyl, M., Żolnierczyk-Zreda, D., & Zwetsloot, G. (2011). Developing a standard for psychosocial risk management: PAS1010. *Safety Science*, 49(7), 1047-1057. DOI: [10.1016/j.ssci.2011.02.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2011.02.003)

[R7] Dediú, V., Leka, S., & Jain, A. (2018). Job demands, job resources and innovative work behaviour: A European Union Study. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 27(3), 310-323. DOI: [10.1080/1359432X.2018.1444604](https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2018.1444604)

[R8] Bergh, L.I.V., Hinna, S., Leka, S., & Jain, A. (2014). Developing a performance indicator for psychosocial risk in the oil and gas industry. *Safety Science*, 62, 98-106. DOI: [10.1016/j.ssci.2013.08.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2013.08.005)

Key grant details

| <i>Funding body</i> | <i>Investigators</i> | <i>Title</i> | <i>Dates</i> | <i>Amount</i> |
|---|----------------------|---|--------------|---|
| G1. SALTSA (Swedish Trade Unions & National Institute for Working Life) | Leka | Towards the development of a psychosocial risk management framework | 2004–2006 | GBP41,500 |
| G2. European Commission (EC) 6 th Framework Programme for Research (FP6) | Leka | Psychosocial risk management: European framework (PRIMA-EF) | 2006-2009 | EUR750,000 (GBP183,617 to University of Nottingham (UoN)) |
| G3. European Agency for Safety & Health at Work | Leka | European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks | 2007–2009 | EUR99,000 |
| G4. EC Lifelong Learning Programme | Leka & Jain | Psychosocial risk management – Education and training in Europe | 2009-2011 | EUR330,000 (GBP120,173 to UoN) |
| G5. European Agency for Safety & Health at Work | Leka & Jain | Drivers, barriers and needs of European enterprises for the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace | 2010–2012 | EUR79,000 (GBP34,458 to UoN) |
| G6. SESI (Brazilian Social Security Association for Industry) | Leka & Jain | Adapting the European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management in the Brazilian context | 2011-2012 | GBP40,437 |
| G7. EC PROGRESS Programme | Leka & Jain | Mental health policy in Europe: Evaluation and recommendations | 2013-2014 | EUR336,326 (GBP42,740 to UoN) |

4. Details of the impact

PRIMA-EF guidelines were developed through a series of consultations and workshops with key stakeholders and were subsequently incorporated into WHO global guidance in **2008 [A]**. PRIMA-EF was widely disseminated through activities promoted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and WHO, and included into the Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health for the period **2008-17**, which was adopted unanimously by 193 WHO Member States **[A, B]**. As a result, policy makers in all WHO regions have been using the best practice framework to tackle psychosocial risks and develop healthy workplaces. The BSI standard, developed on the basis of PRIMA-EF **[R6]**, informed the development of the Canadian National Standard for psychological health and safety in the workplace in **January 2013 [C]**.

Influencing policy in Canada

In **2014**, the translation of PRIMA-EF into the Canadian National Standard led to the implementation of psychosocial risk management strategies across Canadian organisations **[C]**. In a case study research project (2014-2017), 40 organisations were reviewed to evaluate subsequent implementation of the Standard **[D]**. Uptake of psychosocial risk management strategies within organisations increased from 55% in **2014** to 72% in **2017** as a result of the Standard **[D, page 10]**. To enact the Standard, Canadian organisations implemented workplace policies to protect against psychosocial risks, enhanced employee mental health knowledge, and conducted mental health training for managers. The Nova Scotia Health Authority with a workforce of more than 40,000 members incorporated the Canadian Standard into their operations, by improving data collection methods and increasing supportive practices to improve psychosocial health and safety **[D, page 16]**. Another participating organisation stated: *“Implementing [the Standard] has helped us keep mental health top of mind in everything we do. It is no longer an afterthought. It is now woven into all our considerations and decisions. It is now just how we operate.” [D, page 27]*.

Influencing international policy

The development of the PAS1010 and the Canadian Standard raised awareness of the importance of managing psychosocial risks in the workplace. This provided a platform to initiate discussions on forming international guidance in this area. In **2018**, Professor Leka led the development of a joint proposal, based on PAS1010 by BSI and Canadian national Standard together with the Canadian Standardisation Authority that was put to the International Standardization Organisation (ISO) to develop an international guidance standard on psychological health and safety in the workplace (ISO 45003) [C]. The guideline proposal was approved through a majority voting process across the member countries of the occupational health and safety management committee (ISO TC/283) and work on the development of the ISO standard is underway, led by Professor Leka who was appointed as co-convenor of the Working Group to develop ISO 45003 [E]. The standard is being developed through a vigorous process of consultations, involving both the public and standardisation bodies in over 70 countries [C]. The guidance standard is expected to be launched in the summer of 2021. ISO 45003 will be the **first international standard** dealing with psychological health and safety in the workplace, providing guidelines to manage psychosocial risks. In **2020**, the ILO incorporated PRIMA-EF and the PAS1010 into new guidance on managing psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic which is currently being promoted widely [F, page 9].

Influencing policy in Europe

Professor Leka's PRIMA-EF research and standardisation work has informed the development of a new psychosocial risk management standard in Denmark [G]. The PAS1010 and agreed development of the ISO45003 provided a platform for the establishment of the Danish national standard in **2017**. Representatives from the National Standardisation body stated that PAS1010 and the research carried out by Stavroula Leka "*was used as an essential basis and starting point as well as great inspiration for the specific political decisions and research initiatives*" [G]. Policy initiatives formed include targets to reduce the proportion of employees who are mentally overloaded by 20% by the end of **2020** across all Danish organisations, compared with 2011 figures.

PRIMA-EF has also been used to develop policies and tools in Ireland. In **2017**, the Irish Health and Safety Authority (HSA) launched the freely available 'Work Positive' online tool to help companies manage work-related stress and improve employees' well-being. The Work Positive tool is aligned with PRIMA-EF and is used as a key indicator to evaluate both policy and practice [H, I]. The tool helps to identify where stress is associated with hazardous work, and thereby informing rehabilitative measures to improve health and safety at work. Over 5,000 registrations have occurred for the tool since the launch, and it is used by Irish organisations such as the Prison Service, the Ambulance Service, and the Red Cross [I].

Professor Leka has worked with initial PRIMA-EF collaborators from Italy, Dr Iavicoli and Dr Di Tecco, to develop a national approach in Italy to address psychosocial risks in the workplace. This policy was informed by PRIMA-EF and implemented across Italy through the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL) [J]. The Italian approach was evaluated in **2014** [K], and was found to result in better psychosocial risk management in Italian organisations. As a result of the policy, the number of Italian companies creating provisions and adopting procedures to deal with work-related stress **more than doubled** [K]. Moreover, provisions for bullying, harassment, and violence at work **more than tripled** in companies in **2014**, in comparison to before the policy in 2009. The use of procedures to deal with work-related stress in Italy was reported to be higher than the EU average [K]. In 2017, INAIL's methodology was described as 'the most used method to assess and manage psychosocial risks' by Italian enterprises and, 'in **October 2020**, more than 8000 enterprises resulted registered into INAIL's web platform and 180,000 questionnaires filled in' [J].

Influencing policy in Australia

In Australia, the PRIMA-EF guidelines were influential in informing the development of the Australian Workplace Barometer. The Australian Workplace Barometer (AWB) is a representative employee survey that provides an overview concerning Australian work

conditions, workplace health, and productivity across Australia, which is being promoted by SafeWork Australia. The scientific lead of the AWB has stated that *'expertise in conducting the AWB has been translated to advice for international researchers and policy makers, informing the development of the New Zealand Workplace Barometer and Norway's national surveillance system'* [L]. Furthermore, PRIMA-EF guidelines supported the practical applications of the development of a new tool, the Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC), which is being used as a key indicator to evaluate both policy and practice in Australia, for example in the state of Victoria (over 100,000 employees) [L, M].

Influencing organisational practice

The work carried out by Professor Leka in the PRIMA-EF and subsequent projects have also had a direct impact at the company level within Equinor. This is a Norwegian oil and gas company, which has 21,000 employees in 36 countries. In 2013, Equinor began to adopt the PRIMA-EF framework and adhere to good practice according to PAS1010 [N].

A psychosocial risk indicator was also developed on the basis of PRIMA-EF, which was subsequently shown to be the most reliable indicator in predicting hydrocarbon leaks (near misses of major accidents). The psychosocial risk indicator that was developed by Equinor on the basis of PRIMA-EF has also been adopted as part of their corporate culture and is now completed by all employees on an annual basis [O]. The HR lead at Equinor said in 2020 *'This work has not only benefitted us as a company in promoting employee wellbeing and a positive work environment but also help improve organisational performance'* [O]. PRIMA-EF is now implemented as corporate best practice and is valid globally across all business levels.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Collated evidence: WHO website displaying PRIMA-EF guidance, WHO website metadata, 2008 WHO guidance, PRIMA-EF website, *Improving Workers' Health* report (2016), *Healthy workplaces: a model for action* (2010).

[B] WHO, Implementation of the Global Plan of Action of Workers' Health in the European Region: Report of the Sixth Meeting of European Network of WHO Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health (Madrid, 14-16 October 2008), p. 56 demonstrates Professor Leka's involvement and pp. 9, 10, 17 demonstrate PRIMA-EF's inclusion.

[C] Testimonial from Lead Standards Development Manager, BSI Group, December 2020

[D] Canadian Mental Health Commission Case study research project, Standards review 2014-2017

[E] International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) – Occupational health and safety management systems committee contacts, Available on request,

<https://committee.iso.org/sites/tc283/home/contact.html>

[F] International Labour Organization, Managing work-related psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_748638.pdf

[G] Testimonial from Standardisation bodies in Denmark, August 2019

[H] Irish Work Positive online tool <https://oiraproject.eu/en/news/work-positive-online-tool-manage-workplace-stress-launched-irat-member>

[I] Testimonial from Organisational Inspector, Irish Health & Safety Authority, November 2020

[J] Testimonial from Director of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Epidemiology and Hygiene, INAIL, December 2020

[K] Di Tecco, C., Jain, A., Valenti, A., Iavicoli, S., & Leka, S. (2017). An evaluation of the impact of a policy-level intervention to address psychosocial risks on organisational action in Italy. *Safety Science*, 100(1), 103-109. DOI: [10.1016/j.ssci.2017.05.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2017.05.015)

[L] Potter, R., Dollard, M., Owen, M., O'Keeffe, V., Bailey, T., & Leka, S. (2017). Assessing a national work health and safety policy intervention using the psychosocial safety climate framework. *Safety Science*, 100(1), 91-102. DOI: [10.1016/j.ssci.2017.05.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssci.2017.05.011)

[M] Testimonial from Director, PSC Observatory, University of South Australia, November 2020

[N] Bergh, L.I.V., Ringstad, A.J., Leka, S., & Zwetsloot, G. (2014). Psychosocial risks and hydrocarbon leaks: An exploration of their relationship in the Norwegian oil and gas industry. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 84, 824-830. DOI: [10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.09.040](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.09.040)

[O] Testimonial from HR lead, Equinor, December 2020