



Eurofound

Psychosocial risks in the workplace in Slovenia



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Abbreviations

AFTUS	Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia
CAPI	Computer-assisted personal interviews
ESSS	Economic and Social Council of Slovenia
ETUCE	European Trade Union Committee for Education
EU-OSHA	European Agency for Safety and Health and Work
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions
EU27	27 Member States of the European Union
EWCS	European Working Conditions Survey
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MoLFSA	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (Slovenia)
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Co-operative Development
SORS	Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia
UEM	Office for Equal Opportunities (Slovenia)
ZSSS	Union of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia

Contents

Psychosocial risks at work and impact of the crisis	1
Working conditions and psychosocial risks at work	5
Relevant data from the fifth EWCS	9
Special module on psychological and health risks at work in Slovenia	13
Conclusions	21
Bibliography	23

Psychosocial risks at work and impact of the crisis

Definition of psychosocial risks at the workplace

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) reports on recent empirical data that show that European workers increasingly suffer mental health difficulties related to their work. EU-OSHA defines stress as individuals' perception of 'an imbalance between the demands made of them and the resources they have available to cope with those demands'. It mentions the following main causes of work-related stress and other work-related mental health problems: lack of control over work; unsuitable demands being made of workers; lack of support from colleagues and management; a poor match between workers and their work; conflict between roles within and outside of the workplace; and poor relationships, including the presence of psychological or physical violence at a workplace. The last factor includes harassment and bullying in the workplace, physical and verbal abuse in the workplace, threats of violence and different forms of discrimination. EU-OSHA's definitions of different forms of psychosocial risks are available at <http://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/stress> and The European Foundation for Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) defines work-related stress as 'a pattern of reactions that occurs when workers are presented with work demands that are not matched to their knowledge, skills or abilities, and which challenge their ability to cope' (Eurofound, 2004). This mismatch may relate to different pressures or demands regarding time constraints, the amount or difficulty of work, as well as physical or emotional demands of work.

According to EU-OSHA, the term physical violence covers insults, threats or physical aggression. It can come from inside or outside an organisation and is more likely to occur in jobs that involve working with the public, handling money or working alone. EU-OSHA considers it to be one of the most serious occupational hazards.

EU-OSHA defines harassment (also known as bullying, mobbing, or psychological violence) as 'repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees, aimed at victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening [the] harassed person'. It could involve verbal, physical attacks and subtle acts such as social isolation, attacking a person's dignity, professional capability, private life, physical features, race, gender or sexual orientation.

Leyman (1996) developed five categories of harassment and mobbing, or bullying, in the workplace. Most studies on this subject use this classification system. The five categories are:

- conduct detrimental to self-expression and communication;
- conducts that cause limitation and prevention of social contacts;
- behaviours and practices that harm the victim's reputation;
- attacks on the quality of work and quality of life;
- attacks on health (Tkalec, 2001; Robnik; and Milanovič, 2008).

Research findings point to the negative effects of work-related stress and psychosocial risks on individuals (EU-OSHA, 2009, Eurofound, 2010). It also highlights the high cost for companies and countries in a wider sense, as work-related stress affects productivity (through absenteeism and presenteeism).

The fifth European Working Condition Survey covered a number of indicators of psychosocial risks, which can be grouped into six dimensions. These are: high demands and work intensity; emotional demands; lack of autonomy; ethical conflicts; poor social relationships; and job and work insecurity (Eurofound, 2012, p.5). This complex phenomenon was investigated through questions dealing with a wide range of topics. They included: work intensity; worker's autonomy; work demands; (long) working hours; cognitive demands; work-life balance; emotional demands (including contact with people, emotional involvement in the work, consequences of mistakes); social relationships at work; value conflict; work dissatisfaction; employment insecurity; lack of career prospects; violence; and harassment and bullying. Furthermore, the module prepared for Slovenia by the Slovenian government in 2010 deepened the investigation with more questions on some of these issues, particularly on inappropriate behaviour in the workplace.

Psychosocial risks at the workplace comprise an important topic of interest for the International Labour Organisation (ILO); the focus is on prevention, taking into account their interface with living conditions (ILO, 2011).

Labour market in Slovenia: impact of the economic crisis

The consequences of the recession affected Slovenia later than some other countries; labour market indicators only began to deteriorate in the first half of 2009 and continue to fall. The forecasts of economic recovery expect the effects of the crisis, evident throughout 2011 and 2012, will only give way to some improvements in 2013. Eurostat data on employment rates (15-64 years) show that in 2010, the male employment rate was 69.6% and the female rate was at 62.6%. Both rates mark a decrease since 2009, when 71% men and 63.8% women aged 15-64 years were in employment. However, female labour market participation in Slovenia is still quite high with respect to the EU27 average (58.2% in 2010), while the rate for men is just slightly below the EU27 average (70.1% in 2010). Slovenia has a considerably lower gender employment gap (7%) than the EU27 average (11.9%). It also has one of the lowest gender pay gaps (4.4%), when compared with EU countries. However, the employment rate for older people (those aged 55-64 years) is low and a significant gender difference exists regarding employment figures for the older population; 45.4% of men aged 55-64 years are employed, compared to 24.5% for women in this age group.

According to Eurostat data, between 2008 and 2010 the male unemployment rate in Slovenia grew by 4.6%, from 3.5% in 2008 Q2, to 8.1% in 2010 Q4. The female unemployment rate, by contrast, only increased by 2.8% – it grew from 5% in 2008 Q2 to 7.8% in 2010 Q4. The gender unemployment gap, which was at 1.5% in 2008 Q2, thus decreased to 0.3% in 2010 Q4.

Increases in the rates of both male and female unemployment in Slovenia were higher than the EU27 average. Data show that during a recession, women are less likely to lose their jobs than men, as male dominated sectors are the first affected by an economic crisis. On the other hand, a smaller number of unemployed women obtain a new job (Kanjuro Mrčela, 2009). The number of both men and women who were unemployed for more than 24 months increased considerably between 2009 Q4 and 2010 Q4. For men, this went from 11.1% to 25.3%, while for women the rise was smaller, going from 13.9% to 20.5%. In the last quarter of 2010, more unemployed women (54.4%) than men (48.1%) found a new job in less than 12 months.

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 2010 Q4 showed that, as in previous years, the unemployment rate in Slovenia was highest among those aged 15-24 years. The total rate for this group was 15.6%, with a slightly lower rate for men (15.1%) than for women (16.4%). This gap of 1.3% reflected a considerable shift since 2009 Q4, when it was 3.3% in favour of women (SORS, 2011).

Eurostat data show that during the crisis (from 2008 Q2 to 2010 Q4), part-time employment in Slovenia increased for both men and women. The increase of 2.7% for women was higher than that of 1% for men. However, the levels of male part-time employment (6.3%) and especially of female part-time employment (10.3%) are lower than EU27 averages (at 7.1% for men and 30.7% for women). From 2007 to 2010, the number of those engaged in involuntary part-time employment also increased; this comprised an increase of 2.3% for men and 1.2% for women. In 2010, 6.7% of men were engaged in involuntary part-time employment in Slovenia; this is significantly lower than the EU27 average. While the increase in female involuntary employment in Slovenia during the crisis equals that of the EU27 average, the actual rate (8.1% in 2010) remains significantly lower than the average EU27 rate (24%). On average, more men than women in the EU27 Members States reported experiencing involuntary part-time employment. In Slovenia, the reverse was found; there, more women reported involuntary part-time employment.

Before the economic crisis, temporary employment in Slovenia was higher than the EU27 average. Despite a slight decrease, of 0.1% for men and 0.8% for women, the Slovenian rate remained higher in 2010 Q4 for both men (at 14.9%) and women (at 19.2%). The temporary employment rate for women in Slovenia is thus considerably higher than the corresponding EU27 average rate for women, as well as the rate for men in Slovenia. That is worth noting, as most of the recent inflows into unemployment are due to temporary employment contracts ending (IMAD, 2011).

Eurostat data on in-work risk of poverty show that measures undertaken to amortise the impact of the crisis were relatively successful: the share of employed persons with income below the risk of poverty threshold was 4.8% in 2006, increased to 5.1% in 2008, before dropping to 4.8% in 2009. That share is considerably lower than EU27 average of 8.4%. Data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also show that Slovenia compares well with other countries concerning the combat of poverty and income inequality – Slovenia has the lowest income inequality rate in the OECD and the ninth lowest relative income poverty rate, at 7.8% (OECD, 2011). According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) (2011c), the risk of poverty rate in 2009 was 12%. SORS (2011a) data also show that the at-risk-of-poverty rate is highest for older women. In 2009, about a quarter of women aged 65 years and over were living below the poverty threshold.

The recession did not impact on wages in 2010; in that year, decreases from 2009 average gross wages only occurred in the fields of public administration and defence (0.6%), compulsory social protection (0.6%) and health and social security (0.3%). The highest increases occurred in manufacturing (9%) and agriculture and hunting, forestry and fishery (5.8%), mostly because of the loss of employment for lower wage workers (Pajnikihar and Cegljar Ključevšek, 2011).

Working conditions and psychosocial risks at work

This section presents the findings of recent analysis regarding certain aspects of working conditions in Slovenia. It also deals with psychological and health risks in the workplace. The topics of work-related stress, mobbing and harassment at work became the focus of academic and public interest in the last decade (Tkalec, 2001, Černigoj Sadar, 2002, Industrijska demokracija, 2006, Robnik and Milanovič, 2008). At the same time, legislative changes and certain activities of different public institutions, trade unions and other actors aimed to recognise and deal with some psychological and health risks in the workplace.

Recent surveys and other relevant analysis

In 2009, the EU-OSHA released the results of a pan-European opinion poll on safety and health at work. According to its findings, Slovenian citizens are concerned that the economic crisis may adversely affect workplace health and safety. Although respondents feel they are well informed about health and safety at work, they believe that ill health is often caused by work and that health and safety has deteriorated in the past five years. This view was held by a much bigger proportion of respondents in Slovenia (55%) than in the EU27 on average (32%). Moreover, in Slovenia 81% respondents expected that the global economic crisis will lead to a deterioration in health and safety conditions at work in their country, compared to an average of 61% among the EU27 Member States.

The survey revealed gender differences regarding perceived bad influences on health: 52% of female survey participants in Slovenia responded that a great deal of ill health is caused by work, compared with 42% of male respondents. A significantly higher proportion of men (41%) than women (28%) believe that health and safety at work has improved in Slovenia over the past five years. More women (86%) than men (76%) in Slovenia think that health and safety conditions at work might further deteriorate due to the economic crisis (Mrčela, 2010).

The European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks in 2009 (Cockburn, 2010) included 529 managers and 78 employee representatives from Slovenia. It reported that in Slovenia, 90% of workplaces are regularly assessed regarding health and safety standards; that is higher than the average figure for the EU27 Member States. Furthermore, 75% establishments in Slovenia compared to 36% in the EU27 contract out their health and safety risk assessment to external providers. Data regarding respondents from Slovenia showed that 83% establishments had a written occupational safety and health (OSH) policy, established management system or action plan on health and safety. This was considered to be an indicator of management commitment or the degree to which OSH is integrated in general management rather than being regarded as a technical 'add-on'. Concerning the 'new' psychosocial risks such as stress, violence and harassment, the survey showed that the highest level of concern of Slovenian respondents occurred regarding work-related stress. A very low level of concern was found for violence and harassment or bullying. Less than 20% of organisations in Slovenia (compared to 26% of those in the EU as a whole) have procedures in place to deal with stress. Slovenian workers in more than 70% of organisations are informed about whom to address in case of work-related psychosocial problems; this is higher than the EU average. The survey showed that, as in other EU countries, the main reasons for addressing health and safety issues, including psychosocial risks in Slovenian organisations, are: legal obligations; employee requests; client requirements; staff retention; absenteeism; labour inspectorate pressure; and productivity/performance. In total, 27% of Slovenian organisations have a health and safety representative; they give a generally positive picture but are not so involved in implementation and follow-up.

The second pan-European opinion poll on safety and health at work, carried out in 36 European countries between October 2011 and January 2012 (EU-OSHA, 2012), showed that 85% of respondents in Slovenia expect that job-related stress will increase in Slovenia over the next five years, of whom 58% expect it to 'increase a lot'. This is higher than the EU average: corresponding figures are 77% and 49% respectively. Women (87%) and the middle-age group (87%)

are more likely than men (82%) and younger respondents (79%) to think that job related stress will increase in the next five years.

The Slovenian public think that good health and safety practices play an important role in economic competitiveness. In total, 86% of Slovenian respondents agreed with this, in line with the EU average. However, only 35% of Slovenians 'strongly agree' with this statement, compared with the EU average of 56%. The majority (91%) of respondents in Slovenia think that good health and safety practices are important when raising the retirement age. Although most Slovenian workers (66%) are confident that a health and safety problem would be addressed in their workplace, a sizeable minority (31%) are not confident. The survey showed that the Slovenian public feels more informed about health and safety in the workplace compared to other countries in Europe: 73% of Slovenians feel well informed compared with 67% of Europeans on average. (This marks an improvement since 2009, when only 61% of Slovenians felt that they were informed regarding safety and health risks at their workplace.)

Some analyses show that the fear and insecurity of employees during the economic crisis is often followed by a lower sick leave rate. However, research by the Slovenian Institute of Public Health established a positive correlation between health absenteeism and a company in crisis. The research, carried out in three companies (tobacco, textiles and leather sectors), showed that planned downsizing and bankruptcy triggered an increase in the sick leave rate (Mrčela, 2011a). These results obtained on a small sample indicate that the correlation between absenteeism, presenteeism and conditions at work needs further analysis.

There is some discrepancy between statistical data that do not show a drastic deterioration of the labour market indicators in Slovenia, and the attitudes, opinions and fears of men and women. That could be the reason why, after a long-lasting public discussion, some labour market legislation (regarding the regulation of non-standard employment and grey economy) and pension reform planned by government were rejected in June 2011 in public referendums; people feared their entitlements were being curbed.

The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (AFTUS) is Slovenia's largest trade union association. It issued a report in 2010 on the position of a vulnerable group of workers in the Slovenian labour market – migrant workers employed in the male-dominated construction sector. The report disclosed that it is not uncommon for employers not to give a work contract to foreign workers, thus diminishing their chances of protecting their rights or even learning about them in the first place. It also stated that foreign workers who have work permits and who could be employed on an open-ended contract are often employed on a fixed-term contract basis. It highlighted the poor living facilities for migrant workers and the lack of formal regulation in this area. It also reported on the rise in the number of breaches of labour laws governing the employment and working conditions of foreign workers: 318 such breaches were recorded in 2008 and 340 in 2009 (Mrčela, 2011). Regulations concerning migrant workers have been changed since the AFTUS's report; for examples rules have been introduced on minimal standards regarding the housing of migrant workers who work in the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 71/11).

Mrčela (2010a) reports on research and studies of work-related stress and other health-related risks in the Slovenian workplace conducted during the last decade and which provide some information on the extent, reasons and outcomes of different health risks for Slovenian workers.

Data was collected in 2007 by the Statistical Office of Slovenia via an ad hoc module of the 2007 Labour Force Survey on accidents at work and work-related health problems. It found that 40% of persons in employment reported that they were subject to mental pressures at work: of these, 80% reported experiencing time pressure or work overload and almost 20% said they were exposed to harassment or bullying.

A survey on mobbing in Slovenia was carried out by the Institute of Occupational, Traffic and Sports Medicine in 2008 on a representative sample of 1,355 respondents of all ages; a 60% response rate was achieved, giving a final sample size of 823 respondents. It showed that 10.4% of all respondents were at least occasionally exposed to mobbing in their workplace and that 1.5% were subject to mobbing more often – on a daily basis or several times a week. Many more respondents (18.8%) reported they had witnessed mobbing in their workplace, indicating that mobbing is more widespread in Slovenia than might be concluded based on the number of workers who declared themselves victims of mobbing. More women reported that they had been exposed to mobbing than men: among those who reported that they had been victims of mobbing in the six months prior to the survey, 62.8% were women and 37.2% were men.

In 2008, the Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia conducted a survey of work-related stress among teachers. Based on a survey carried out by the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), the study aimed to assess the level of stress among teachers as well as to find out the causes and consequences of teachers' work-related stress. Analysis of data collected from 900 school teachers and 776 pre-school teachers showed that a large majority of Slovenian teachers (84%) perceived their profession as being very or exceedingly stressful. Teachers reported on the most important stressors and ranked them in the following sequence: relationships among employees; lack of parental support; additional workload; teaching; unacceptable pupils' behaviour; bad school management; and harassment. The survey pointed to some mental health issues experienced by teachers who reported work-related stress; these included problems with concentration, a relative loss of interest in everyday activities and burnout.

In 2009, the Office for Equal Opportunities (UEM) prepared an analysis of the measures taken by employers concerning their obligation to provide a working environment free from sexual harassment and other forms of harassment. Drawing on a sample of Slovenian employers from 132 organisations ranging in size, industry, and across different services, they found that the majority of employers still did not have any measures aimed at achieving a harassment-free working environment. One third of employers adopted a special internal document declaring the prohibition of sexual and other forms of harassment and mobbing at workplace. A further 15% implemented other relevant measures for the protection of workers from sexual and other forms of harassment and mobbing. These included: an ombudsman; occasional articles on web pages; informing and awareness raising at regular weekly and monthly meetings; informing and awareness raising through trade union and workers' councils; brochures on the subject and the inclusion of basic regulations in internal journals; workshops; and the nomination of a committee for the prevention and alleviation of discrimination, harassment and bullying.

Please note that the subjective nature of personal evaluation should be taken into account in the interpretation of all results presented in this section.

Legislative context and activities of relevant actors

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia, specifically the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, (MoLFSA) devoted some attention to both research and the prevention of psychological and health-related risks through the promotion of healthy workplaces. In 2002, MoLFSA published a booklet on work-related stress that provides information on how to recognise the symptoms of stress, reactions to stress, and risk assessment, as well as advice on how to cope with work-related stress.

Trade unions and other workers' associations were also active in the promotion of healthier workplaces. In late 2004, the Union of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia (ZSSS) proposed the conclusion of a national collective agreement on stress-related risk assessment. This was proposed in order to enable the implementation of the framework agreement on work-related stress signed by the EU-level cross-industry social partners on 8 October 2004. Some collective agreements in Slovenia – for banks and savings banks – include provisions relating to psychological harassment in the workplace.

The joint report of the Slovenian social partners on the implementation of the European Framework agreement on work-related stress in Slovenia describes the work of the stress agreement ad hoc group of the Economic and Social Council established in 2008 that translated the agreement into Slovenian but failed to coordinate the draft of the national stress agreement.

The report outlines the main reservations regarding the implementation of the national stress agreement in Slovenia. One was the fear among employer organisations that the definition of work-related stress (as opposed to non-work-related stress) was not sufficient and could cause abuse. Another was fear of the considerable financial burden related to the obligatory work-related risk assessment; a voluntary system was proposed instead for cases where indicators show high levels of work-related stress. The report states that numerous Slovenian employers already carry out systematic and regular anti-stress management.

The report on the implementation of the European framework agreement on work-related stress in Slovenia (MoLFSA, 2010) concludes that in spite of the lack of a tripartite social partners' national agreement, or other such document, the terms of the agreement can be met. This is because the existing legal framework and a number of ongoing activities enable its realisation. The report states that all social partners share an awareness of the importance of the topic of work-related stress. This was proven when they signed the 2007-2009 social agreement, in which they agreed to strive to implement the social partners' agreements at European level regarding the management of work-related stress and psychological harassment at the workplace.

In 2007, an amendment to the Employment Relationships Act prohibited sexual and other forms of harassment at the workplace. That legislative change upgraded the legislative framework concerning health and safety at work (comprising the Law on Safety and Health at Work, 1999, and the Resolution on the National Programme on Health and Safety at work, 2003). It brought the framework in line with the Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work that was signed at European level on 26 April 2007.

Article 5 of the Health and Safety at Work Act stipulates the obligation of employers to secure the safety and health of workers at the workplace. Article 11 of the same Act guarantees workers' right to a safe and healthy working environment. Articles 23 (risk of third-party violence) and 24 (violence, mobbing, harassment, psychosocial risks) stipulate further obligations on employers. For example, workplace design and equipment should reduce the risk of violence. Procedures should be developed to manage violence at workplaces where there is a higher risk of third-party violence. Procedures should be planned and measures adopted to prevent, eliminate and manage cases of violence, mobbing, harassment and other forms of psychosocial risks at the workplace that can pose a threat to workers' health.

Rules regarding the preparation of the mandatory statement on safety at work and risk assessment stipulate that employers have to take into account psychological factors and work organisation, although work-related stress is not explicitly mentioned.

Relevant data from the fifth EWCS

Findings presented here include data from the fifth EWCS for Slovenia and mean results from this EU survey for the EU27 Member States. These data were obtained from work personnel who self-reported on their working conditions and psychosocial risks at the workplace. The results therefore comprise subjective opinions and could reflect the 'healthy worker effect' connected to the specifics of the observed samples.

Working hours and satisfaction with working conditions

On average, more workers in Slovenia than in the EU27 Member States work over 70 hours per week. A large gender difference occurs, in both EU27 and Slovenia, among those who work such long hours (paid and unpaid). This disparity is considerably higher in Slovenia than in EU27 Member States as a whole: in Slovenia, 41% of women work more than 70 hours per week compared with 17% of men.

Table 1: *Workers who work more than 70 hours per week (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	28.1	21.7
Male	17.3	13.5
Female	41.0	31.5

Source: Eurofound, 2012 (unpaid and paid work index)

The share of those who are reporting that their working hours do not fit family/outside work life very well or not at all (Table 2) is much higher in Slovenia than on average in the EU27 Member States. There are considerably more men than women who are not satisfied with the fit of their working hours and family/outside work life.

Table 2: *Working hours fit family/'outside work life' not very well-not well at all (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	25.1	18.5
Male	28.8	20.6
Female	20.7	15.8

Source: Eurofound, 2012

As many as 42.9% of respondents in Slovenia reported that they suffered from overall fatigue in the previous 12 months. This group represented almost half of women (47.9%) and 38.6% of men.

Compared to others in EU27, Slovenian workers are less satisfied with working conditions: a considerably smaller proportion of them are very satisfied with working conditions in Slovenia and a much higher proportion are not satisfied with their working conditions. In contrast with the EU27 average, women in Slovenia reported greater dissatisfaction and less high satisfaction when compared to men.

Table 3: *Workers who are very satisfied with their working conditions (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	13.5	25.0
Male	14.3	24.1
Female	12.6	26.1

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Table 4: *Workers who are not satisfied with their working conditions (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	25.8	15.7
Male	24.7	15.7
Female	27.0	15.6

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Job insecurity and ‘presenteeism’ among Slovenian workers

Job insecurity seems to be much higher in Slovenia than in EU27 on average. More than a quarter of both men and women in Slovenia are afraid of losing their jobs in the next six months. More men in Slovenia than on average in EU27 think that it will be easy to find a similar job if they lose their job. Conversely, the proportion of women in Slovenia who share this view is lower than the EU27 average.

Table 5: *Workers who are afraid of losing their job in the next six months (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	27.0	16.4
Male	27.4	16.5
Female	26.5	16.3

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Table 6: *Workers who feel it would be easy to find a new job, if they became unemployed (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	34.6	31.9
Male	38.6	31.2
Female	29.9	32.7

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Workers in Slovenia are much more likely to attend work regardless of their health than workers in the EU27 Member States, on average. As much as 63.1% of women and 55.9% of men in Slovenia report presenteeism. In addition, a higher proportion of workers in Slovenia were not on sick leave in the past 12 months than found in EU27.

Table 7: *Workers who worked over the past 12 months when they were sick (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	59.2	39.2
Male	55.9	37.8
Female	63.1	41.0

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Table 8: *Workers who had no sick leave over the past 12 months (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	60.7	56.9
Male	61.6	58.6
Female	59.7	54.8

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Perceived impact on health and work sustainability

Almost half of men and 40% of women in Slovenia estimate that their work affects their health in a mainly negative way. Compared to the EU27 average, considerably more Slovenian men and almost twice the proportion of women estimate that their work affects their health in a mainly negative way. Much smaller (15%) is the share of Slovenian workers who think that their work affects their health in a mainly positive way. However, the share of Slovenian respondents who think so is twice that of the EU27 average (7.3%).

A third of women and as much as 40.6% of men in Slovenia think that their health and safety are at risk at work. These figures are considerably higher than the average EU27 results.

 Table 9: *Workers who think that their work has a mainly negative effect on their health (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	44.5	25.0
Male	48.4	27.4
Female	40.0	22.0

Source: Eurofound, 2012

 Table 10: *Workers who think that their work has a mainly positive effect on their health*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	15.0	7.3
Male	14.1	7.7
Female	16.0	7.3

Source: Eurofound, 2012

 Table 11: *Workers who think that their health and safety are at risk because of work (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	37.2	24.2
Male	40.6	28.7
Female	33.2	18.8

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Considering the above results, it is no surprise that only a quarter of workers in Slovenia compared to 58.7% workers in the EU27 Member States estimate that they will be able to do the same job at 60 years. The share of women (21.5%) who think that they will be able to do the same job at 60 years is considerably lower than the share of men (28.9%). These results should be considered in the context of expectations regarding retirement age, which are based on an existing

legislative framework that allows for early retirement age, especially for women. Nevertheless, intensity of work reported by Slovenian respondents certainly also affects the desirability of working in older age, and estimated ability to do so.

Table 12: *Workers who think they will be able to do the same job at 60 years (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Total	25.6	58.7
Male	28.9	59.0
Female	21.5	58.3

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Verbal abuse, discrimination, threats and humiliating behaviour

Only a small share of workers in Slovenia (1.5%) reported experiences of physical violence at work. However, it should be noted that recently there were several cases of violent robberies of post offices, petrol pumps and jeweller's shops in Slovenia. Some employees were injured and suffer from posttraumatic stress; two of them lost their lives. These cases are not only criminal offences but involve threats with violence and violence at the workplace. They therefore require the special attention of employers as OSH issues.

A greater number reported different forms of psychological violence or abuse: 8.5% verbal abuse; 6.8% discrimination; 6.6% threats and humiliating behaviour; and 4.8% bullying or harassment. Differences between Slovenian and EU27 results are not big; Slovenian respondents were less likely to report verbal abuse but more likely to report threats and humiliating behaviour. Regarding the other forms of psychological violence, any differences between the two samples were less than 1%. Small differences also occur between men and women.

Table 13: *Workers experiencing different forms of violence and abuse at work (%)*

	Slovenia	EU27
Physical violence at work (in the last 12 months)		
Total	1.5	1.9
Male	1.9	2.0
Female	1.0	1.7
Bullying/harassment at work (in the last 12 months)		
Total	4.8	4.1
Male	4.6	3.9
Female	5.0	4.4
Verbal abuse at work (in the last month)		
Total	8.5	10.8
Male	8.0	10.8
Female	9.1	10.7
Threats and humiliating behaviour at work (in the last month)		
Total	6.6	5.0
Male	6.6	4.9
Female	6.6	5.1
Discrimination (index) (in the last 12 months)		
Total	6.8	6.2
Male	7.3	5.6
Female	6.1	6.9

Source: Eurofound, 2012

Special module on psychological and health risks at work in Slovenia

Eurofound commissioned the 2010 wave of the EWCS in Slovenia. The sample size for Slovenia was increased and an extra module added at the request of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. Eurofound provided the standard EWCS questionnaire and managed the study within its international survey framework. Gallup (2010) reports that the data was obtained in Slovenia through the face-to-face, computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) carried out between 1 February and 13 May 2010. The survey was implemented by VALICON in Slovenia, and coordinated by Gallup Europe in Brussels and Budapest. Overall, 1,404 interviews were conducted among persons in employment. The documented response rate of the Slovenian EWCS was 41%.

The standard EWCS questionnaire covered several aspects of working conditions, including physical environment, workplace design, working hours, work organisation and social relationships in the workplace. The Slovenian special module explored experiences of mobbing, harassment and bullying at the workplace. Response to questions in the extra module was optional and the majority of respondents (i.e. 1,221 out of 1,404) agreed to complete them (Gallup, 2010).

These data were analysed with regard to general labour market features; special attention was paid to correlations of results with characteristics of respondents (such as age, gender, occupation and sector of work) and their working conditions (such as working time, intensity of work, job satisfaction and some other). A relatively small sample did not allow more detailed analysis of the data, especially in relation to the above mentioned, more structured variables such as occupation and work sector. Thus, the analysis is focused more on the gender differences among the Slovenian workers.

Overwork, excessive monitoring, exposure to shouting and rumours

The special module of the fifth EWCS provided information from adverse workplace environments that involve psychological and health risks for the persons affected. Respondents indicated the frequency of their experience in the last six months on the five point scale (1-never, 2-occasionally, 3-monthly, 4-weekly, 5-daily). The table below shows the proportion of respondents who reported experiencing a range of negative experiences, by gender. It also presents the proportion who reported encountering each experience more than occasionally.

Table 14: *Negative experiences at work – indicators of harassment and bullying*

Experiences	Respondents who had the experience, by gender (%)			Respondents who had the experience more often than Occasionally/ weekly +daily (%)
	Total	Male	Female	
Having limited access to information that affected my performance	25.4	26.6	24.0	6.4/4.4
Being laughed at for my work	11.8	14.1	9.1	1.2/0.5
Being given tasks that were below my abilities	24.2	26.7	21.3	4.4/3.2
Rumours about me and people talking behind my back	21.5	21.3	21.7	3.1/1.5
Being overlooked, excluded or isolated	6.6	7.6	5.5	0.5/0.1
Being insulted or called names because of personal life, religion nationality and similar	5.1	5.3	4.9	0.9/0.5
Being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger	22.1	22.2	22.0	3.8/1.9
Being a victim of intimidation, e.g. being pushed aside, someone blocking my way or entering my personal space	2.9	2.7	3.2	0.3/0.3
Being constantly reminded of a mistake I had made or an attempt at work in which I had failed	10.9	12.5	8.9	1.4/0.6
My personal opinion and my views were never taken into consideration	26.1	27.9	24.1	3.9/2.1
Being over-controlled or over-monitored at work	16.1	17.1	15.0	3.8/2.4
Being pressured into not asking for one of my legal entitlements or rights (sick leave, holiday, etc.)	13	12.3	13.9	2.8/1.3
Being given more work than I could handle	33.1	34.4	31.6	6.9/3.9
Thinking that that my superiors have boycotted my promotion on many occasions	13.1	13.4	12.7	2.5/1.0
Being a victim of physical threats or physical violence	1.7	1.6	1.8	0.3/0

Note: Concerning Leyman’s definition two conditions are required for systematically conducted harassment behaviour to be declared as mobbing: frequency (at least once a week) and incidence over time (at least six month (Robnik and Milanovič, 2008).

Source: *Gallup, 2010*

It should be noted that almost all experiences were reported by a relatively small number of respondents. Most respondents estimated that such experiences occurred occasionally. Almost all experiences were reported by more men than women. Those aged 25-39 years were more likely than other age groups to report negative experiences; more than half of those who did so were in this age group. Respondents working in the following sectors were more likely to report certain negative experiences:

- Transport (being laughed at, exposure to shouting or unjustified anger, being reminded of a mistake one had made, personal opinion never taken into consideration and being over-controlled);
- Construction (being given a task below one’s abilities, being a victim of intimidation and being a victim of physical threats or violence);
- Public administration (experiencing rumours, being overlooked, excluded or isolated, and superiors boycotting promotion);
- Health (being insulted because of personal circumstances and being pressured not to ask for legal entitlements); and
- Financial services (having limited access to information and being given more work than one could handle).

A third of respondents said they were given more work than they could handle. This was reported by a slightly higher proportion of men (34.4%) than women (31.6%). The finding confirms previously presented results on high intensity work experienced by Slovenian respondents. It is also more common among those aged 25-54 years than other age groups. It was reported by more than 30% of respondents employed in construction, transport, public administration and health and as many as 40% of those employed in industry and financial services. But it was highest among clerks, at 41.7%.

Just over one quarter respondents (26.1%) reported that their personal opinions and views were never taken into consideration at work. Almost the same proportion (25.4%) stated that they had limited access to information at work, which affected their performance. Both experiences were reported by more men than women and by more workers in the age group 25-39 years than those in other age groups.

More than a fifth of respondents reported that they were given tasks below their abilities (24.2%), exposed to shouting or unjustified anger (22.1%), or subjected to rumours about them (21.5%). The first experience was reported by more men than women while no gender differences occurred for the other two. All three experiences were reported by more workers aged 25-39 years than those in other age groups.

More than one tenth of respondents reported being over-controlled at work (16.1%), being pressured not to ask for one's legal entitlements (13%), thinking that superiors had boycotted their promotion (13%) and being laughed at, at work (11.8%). More men than women reported these experiences, with the exception of being pressured not to ask for their legal entitlements, which was experienced by a greater proportion of women. A larger share of the youngest respondents (15-24 years) reported being over-controlled at work (21.3% compared to 10.3% of those aged 55 years and over). A total of 14.5% of those aged 25-39 years reported being pressured not to ask for their legal entitlements, a higher proportion than found in other age groups. They were also more likely to report being laughed at when at work (at 15.1%). An equal proportion (14%) of those aged 25-39 years and those in the oldest age category reported that their superiors had boycotted their promotion.

A total of 6.6% reported being overlooked, excluded and isolated, while 5.1% reported experiencing rumours about themselves and others talking behind their back. More men than women reported these negative experiences. The youngest respondents were more likely to report such incidents than those in other age groups.

The two least frequently cited experiences related to physical threats or violence: being a victim of intimidation (2.9%) and being a victim of physical threats or violence (1.7%). More women than men reported these two experiences.

Analysed data suggest that respondents mostly experience behaviours that are detrimental to self-expression and communication and to the quality of work. Two out of five experienced harassment or bullying behaviours, as defined by Leyman (see above).

Exposure to psychological violence

Psychological violence is defined as a hostile action that is performed systematically by one or more persons and is targeted at another person with the aim of discrediting, humiliating or isolating that person so as to eventually make them leave their job. It was experienced by one tenth of respondents, and by slightly more women than men.

Table 15: Respondents experiencing exposure to psychological violence (%)

	Total	Male	Female
No	89.3	89.9	88.7
Yes, but rarely	3.6	2.5	5.1
Yes, occasionally	5.4	6.4	4.2
Yes, several times a month	1.0	0.9	1.1
Yes, several times a week	0.3	0.5	0.1
Yes, almost every day	0.4	0	0.8
Yes total	10.7	10.3	11.3

Source: Gallup, 2010

Age had no great impact here. The lowest incidence was found among those aged 15-24 years, at 9%, while the highest was found among those aged 40-54 years, at 11.6%. Bigger differences were found in relation to sector and employment type. No one employed in the armed forces reported psychological violence and only 5.4% respondents working in agriculture did so. By contrast, 18.5% of those working in the health sector reported this experience, as did 14.5% of technicians and associated professionals, 12.7% of service workers and shop and sales market workers and 12.2% of craft and related trades workers. Those who experienced psychological violence also reported that this had been the case for a period of long duration. A majority of 66.8% of this subgroup reported experiencing psychological violence for more than one year and 39.5% reported experiencing it for more than two years. Among those who reported psychological violence, more men (73.1%) than women (60.1%) said that it had been lasting for more than a year, while 43.7% of men and 35% women reported that it had been lasting more than two years.

Exposure to psychological violence was found to be correlated with the following negative experiences at work: being given more work than one could handle; one's personal opinions and views being never taken into consideration; being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger; and rumours and being over-controlled at work.

Experiences of nervousness, sleep disorders and muscle tension

Table 16 below presents findings regarding 23 physical and mental health problems. The three most commonly cited ones were nervousness (45.8%), sleep disorders (28.5%) and muscle tension (28.3%). More women than men reported experiencing each of the 23 problems, and in most cases, the gender difference is considerable. For example, more than twice as many women reported experiencing migraine, fits of anxiety, bouts of crying, fears with no motive, and a feeling of inferiority.

Table 16: Respondents experiencing physical or mental health problems (%)

Physical or mental health problem	Total	Male	Female
Gastritis	8.0	6.3	10.0
Migraine	12.6	7.5	18.6
Fits of anxiety	11.5	7.6	16.2
Demoralisation	12.9	12.8	13.1
Nausea/vomiting	9.5	6.7	12.6
Sleep disorders	28.5	23.6	34.1
Bouts of crying	7.1	1.4	13.7
Heartburn	11.5	8.8	14.6
Tachycardia	16.6	13.6	20.3
Panic attacks	5.8	4.0	7.9
Muscle tension	28.3	27.5	29.2
Nervousness	45.8	43.7	48.4
Crises of depression	10.1	8.5	12.0
Impression that you have become more aggressive	12.7	12.5	12.9
Feeling of apathy	10.4	8.7	12.2
Fears with no motive	8.7	5.6	12.2
Difficulties when interacting with other people	6.3	5.4	7.2
Excessive insecurity	7.2	6.6	7.8
Feeling of inferiority	7.7	4.8	10.9
Problem with memory	13.0	10.2	16.2
Groundless feeling of guilt	6.6	5.2	8.3
Inability to maintain attention	13.5	12.8	14.5
Thoughts, illusionary images or dreams related to critical moments at the workplace	11.8	11.4	12.3

Source: Gallup, 2010

Respondents aged 40-55 years were more likely to report many of these health problems than those in other age categories; examples here include migraine, bouts of crying, tachycardia, muscle tension, nervousness, crises of depression, and feeling apathetic or a lack of initiative. Those aged 25-39 years were more likely to report other health problems, such as nausea/vomiting, the impression of becoming more aggressive; difficulties when interacting with other people, feelings of inferiority, and groundless feelings of guilt. A higher proportion of those working in health services reported experiencing most of these health problems (16 out of a total 23) than found in any other sector. Other sectors in which certain problems were more likely to be reported include financial services (migraine, demoralisation, problems with memory, nervousness); transport (sleep disorder/insomnia, muscle tension, nervousness, distractibility); public administration (tachycardia, groundless feelings of guilt, thoughts, images or dreams related to critical moments at the workplace); education (problem with memory); and agriculture and construction (muscle tension).

Respondents were asked to consider whether the health problems they suffered in the last few months were caused or made worse by their work. With only one exception (problems with memory), the majority of respondents reported that health problems they experienced were caused or made worse at their workplace. With few exceptions (demoralisation, panic attacks, problems with memory, thoughts, images or dreams related to critical moments at the workplace), more men than women held their work responsible for their health problems.

Further analysis was carried out on the three health problems that were experienced by the highest number of respondents: nervousness, sleep disorders and muscle tension. Statistical analysis revealed correlations between these three health problems and certain aspects of work: experience of stress; opinion that one's health and safety are at risk because of work; opinion that work affects health; estimation of being able to do the same job at 60 years; satisfaction with working conditions; number of working hours; dealing with costumers, passengers, patients, pupils; handling angry clients or patients; working at high speed; and working to tight deadlines. Analysis also sought to identify any correlation that may exist between these health problems and the seven most often reported negative experiences at work: being given more work than one could handle; experience of one's personal opinions and views never being taken into consideration; having limited access to information that affects one's performance; being given tasks below one's abilities; being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger; rumours and being over-controlled at work; and exposure to psychological violence.

All obtained correlations are relatively low or negligible, but some of them are statistically significant. Here we will present only those statistically significant correlations that could be labelled as weak (between +/- .2 and .4).

A weak, but statistically significant correlation exists between nervousness and: stress (.375); the opinion that one's health and safety are at risk because of work (.234); perceiving one's job to involve working at very high speed (.212), and perceiving one's job to involve working to tight deadlines (.192). It was negatively correlated with satisfaction with working conditions (-.229). This experience is also weakly correlated with being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger, being given more work than one could handle and exposure to psychological violence.

Experience of sleep disorders is weakly correlated with stress at work (.216), and the opinion that one's health and safety are at risk because of work (.197). It is negatively correlated with satisfaction with working conditions (-.255). This experience is also correlated with being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger, being over-controlled at work and exposure to psychological violence.

Finally, a weak but statistically significant correlation was found between muscle tension and the opinion that one's health and safety are at risk because of work (.325), stress (.255), and perceiving one's job to involve working at very high speed (.227). It was negatively correlated with satisfaction with working conditions (-.293). Muscle tension is also correlated with being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger, rumours and psychological violence.

No significant correlation was found between psychological or physical health problems and absenteeism, presenteeism or the number of hours worked in the main job. A weak, statistically significant, positive correlation exists between all three health problems (nervousness, sleep disorder and muscle tension) and stress at work, and the opinion that one's health and safety are at risk because of work. They are negatively correlated with satisfaction with working conditions.

Fatigue and stress

As stated earlier, 42.9% of respondents to the fifth EWCS in Slovenia (38.6% men and 47.9% women) reported that they had suffered from overall fatigue in the last 12 months. In addition, 10.1% of respondents (7.7% men and 12.9% women) reported that they had suffered from depression or anxiety in the last 12 months. No correlation was found between the experience of depression or anxiety and health problems reported in the special module. However, a weak positive correlation was found between both depression and anxiety, and overall fatigue (.274), while a negative correlation emerged with satisfaction with working conditions (-.228). Experience of overall fatigue is correlated with the experience of being given more work than one could handle. It is also correlated with sleeping disorders, muscle tension and nervousness.

Table 17: *Workers who experience stress in their work (%)*

	Total	Male	Female
Always	7.7	8.8	6.5
Most of the time	12.8	12.5	13.2
Sometimes	41.8	39.4	44.7
Rarely	16.5	16.6	16.3
Never	21.1	22.7	19.3
Total responding sometimes – never	78.9	77.3	80.7

Source: *Gallup, 2010*

Experience of stress was more often reported by those aged 25-39 years (82.2%) and 40-54 years (80.8%) than by those in the youngest (69.9%) and the oldest (69.1%) age categories. The highest incidence of reported stress occurred in three sectors: education (89.1%), public administration (87.3%) and financial services (86.6%). Regarding occupation type, the highest incidence was found among professionals, at 91%.

Experience of stress is weakly to moderately correlated with the following:

- rumours and people talking behind one's back;
- being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger;
- being given more work than one could handle;
- personal opinion and views never being taken into consideration;
- being over-controlled or over-monitored at work;
- opinion that work adversely affects health;
- dissatisfaction with working conditions;
- high number of working hours;
- handling angry clients or patients;
- working at high speed; and
- working to tight deadlines.

Stress is also weakly to moderately correlated with having a sleep disorder, muscle tension and nervousness.

Being given more work than one could handle is weakly correlated with the experiences of stress, muscle tension and nervousness. It is also correlated with the perception that health and safety are at risk at work.

A weak, negative correlation was found between satisfaction with working conditions and the following experiences: being given more work than one could handle; personal opinion and views never being taken into consideration, rumours and people talking behind one's back; being exposed to shouting or unjustified anger; and being over-controlled or over-monitored at work. It is also correlated with prospects of losing one's job over the next six months.

Conclusions

Data presented in this report support and complement previous analyses on quality of working life in Slovenia, which indicated increasing work intensity in Slovenian companies over the last decade (Svetlik and Ilič, 2006; Kanjuo Mrčela and Ignjatović, 2006). Since the beginning of this century, economic factors and the conditions of work in Slovenia have worsened because of the processes of privatisation, restructuring and competitive pressures on international markets (Svetlik, 2006; Kanjuo Mrčela and Ignjatović, 2006). More recently, working conditions have been affected by the economic crisis. Data from the fourth EWCS (Eurofound, 2007) highlighted this trend of increasing work intensity in Slovenia. This is still visible in the data on working conditions and psychological and health risk in the working environment in Slovenia obtained in 2010.

Compared to the average EU27 worker, those in Slovenia report working more hours (especially women), being less satisfied with working conditions, experiencing higher job insecurity, as well as more presenteeism and less absenteeism. The majority of respondents in Slovenia reported experiencing stress at work (78.9%) and more than 40% said they experienced overall fatigue.

No great differences emerged regarding different forms of psychological violence or abuse in Slovenia compared to the EU27 average. Slovenian workers reported lower levels of verbal abuse but higher levels of threats and humiliating behaviour. Less difference is found regarding discrimination and bullying or harassment.

Based on data obtained by the special module it can be concluded that among indicators of harassment and bullying at the workplace, respondents mostly reported negative experiences that related to too much work and badly organised work. They were less likely to report experiences of psychological violence, physical violence even less so.

Exposure to psychological violence was experienced by one tenth of respondents, affecting slightly more women than men. The most commonly reported health and psychological problems were: nervousness, sleep disorders and muscle tension.

This analysis could be used in framing efforts to improve working conditions in Slovenia, both at the level of legislative framework and the management and organisation of work in Slovenian workplaces. The findings suggest that Slovenian companies should improve their methods of human resource management and strive to create a more constructive and worker-friendly environment. For example, they should seek to use workers' full potential and to provide them with good quality information. They should seek to improve working conditions and thus reduce exhaustion and stress levels in the workforce. One tenth of respondents reported experiencing psychological violence and this experience was correlated with being given too much work or work that is badly organised. Companies could decide to treat this area as a priority.

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