

## SLIC 2012 Campaign on psychosocial risks – Country report I

### Finland

#### 1. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

##### 1.1. National legislation

The Finnish OSH Act (738/2002) requires all employers to identify hazards and risk factors, and assess their consequences to the employees' health and safety. If employers do not have adequate expertise for identifying and assessing risk factors, they must use external experts. Under the Occupational Health Care Act (1383/2001), employers must arrange occupational health care at their own expense. The occupational health care provider has an important function in assisting the employer in carrying out risk assessments. A workplace survey by the occupational health care service provides a basis for the assessments of risks.

Based on the risk assessment, the employer must establish an occupational safety and health policy which incorporates the need to develop working conditions. The OSH Act requires the employer to take the necessary measures to reduce risks. The Act also imposes obligations on the employer to continuously and systematically monitor the work environment, the work climate and the safety of work practices. Furthermore, the Act includes special provisions relating to psychosocial risks, for instance avoiding and reducing workloads, threat of violence and harassment.

##### 1.2. Campaign goals or indicators

A national project plan for the campaign was set up and approved by each Occupational Safety and Health Division in January 2012. According to the project plan a minimum of 200 campaign inspections were to be carried out. The objective of the inspections was to strengthen workplaces' own psychosocial risk management capabilities and to ensure that the psychosocial risk factors have been identified and assessed and that efficient practices are in place to reduce risks.

The campaign inspections were linked to the 2012 performance targets agreed for the OSH Divisions. These targets are based on the framework agreement for 2012 - 2015 between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the OSH Divisions. A central goal during the framework period is to extend work careers by reducing harmful workload. One of the central targets for OSH inspections is accordingly to ensure that workplaces have efficient practices for identifying and assessing workload factors, including psychosocial factors, and implementing necessary measures to reduce risks.

##### 1.3. Sectors inspected

The campaign was primarily focused on the health and social sector. The campaign was also a part of a large scale inspection project in the municipal sector. The inspections in the municipal project were mainly directed to the health and social sector and schools. At the discretion of the OSH Divisions inspections were also carried out in some other sectors, for instance the restaurant sector and public administration.

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#### 1.4. SLIC inspection tools and methods

From the toolkit Finland chose *Guidance - inspection of psychosocial risks at work*. By means of these four main questions it was assessed if there were efficient practices to manage psychosocial risks at the workplace.

In addition, Finland chose the *Questionnaire* as a tool for the campaign inspections. The purpose of using the questionnaire was to make interaction during the inspection easier as shortcomings emerge in the questionnaire for discussion. As a result the questionnaire provides support for the inspector in determining whether the psychosocial risk management at the workplace functions in practice, in other words, if the risks have been assessed extensively and whether the actions are sufficient.

#### 1.5. National tools

The four main questions were adjusted to the content of Finland's national performance targets and their assessment criteria. Based on the national assessment criteria inspectors monitored how psychosocial risks had been taken into account in the statutory risk assessment at the workplace; if adequate measures for reducing the psychosocial risks had been taken as a result of the risk assessment; and if the employer had ensured continuous monitoring. The report is accompanied by the national assessment criteria for the inspection of workload factors (appendix 1). The inspections also included monitoring the content and functioning of the occupational health care services, because occupational health care in Finland is an important expert institution in identifying psychosocial workload factors and assessing and controlling their health effects.

The Finnish tool Questionnaire has been used in Finland for several years as a part of an OSH inspection related to OSH management practices. In the campaign the *Questionnaire* was, if possible, carried out using the Webropol application enabling the employees to answer the questionnaire on the Internet before the inspection. Before the campaign the Webropol application had been used only in one OSH Division but along with the campaign it was taken into use in each Division.

During 2012 methods for monitoring psychosocial workload were developed in the OSH administration and valuable experience and knowledge for this development work was acquired through the campaign. Experiences of the SLIC campaign were utilised especially in the drafting of the national guidelines for inspection of psychosocial workload. In connection with the data collection for the campaign, the inspectors participating in the campaign inspections were advised to give feedback on the questions that possibly remained unclear during the inspections of psychosocial risks and on the conditions for which they perhaps wished further guidance in the inspection guidelines. The purpose of the new inspection guidelines is to harmonise the monitoring of psychosocial risks and improve the quality of OSH inspections.

#### 1.6. Number of labour inspectors

The total number of inspectors in Finland is about 350. About 60 inspectors have competence on psychosocial risks. About 35 inspectors took actively part in the campaign.

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### 1.7. Training

All inspectors carrying out campaign inspections were invited to a training day in February. An internal website was set up to provide step by step guidance to the inspectors on how to conduct a campaign inspection and how to report the results. For each Division a contact person was designated to support the inspectors.

### 1.8. National evaluation or follow-up

A specific follow-up of the SLIC campaign inspections is not planned. However, compliance with the written advice and improvement notices issued during the inspections will be monitored afterwards in connection with other enforcement activities in the divisions.

The National Project Leader has followed the advancement of the campaign in cooperation with the contact persons of the OSH Divisions. The campaign results have been evaluated regularly and experiences have been utilised when developing enforcement activities. The campaign results will also be utilised in training during 2013. In addition, the campaign results and experiences will be utilised in the national performance guidance when activities are planned and inspections are targeted.

### 1.9. Development of national information materials

A press release about the campaign was distributed to the media and to the workplaces in February 2012.

In addition to the campaign flyer, existing brochures published by the OSH administration were distributed to the workplaces during the campaign inspections:

- risk assessment ([hyperlink](#)),
- risk of violence ([hyperlink](#)),
- inappropriate treatment at work ([hyperlink](#)) and
- managing working hours ([hyperlink](#)).

### 1.10. Development of a national campaign website

Information about the campaign was placed on the website of the Occupational Safety and Health administration <http://www.tyosuojelu.fi/fi/valvontahankkeet2012>.

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## 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE CAMPAIGN

### 2.1. Usefulness of background material

The campaign's background material was used especially in the planning of the training day.

The campaign material was also used in the OSH administration in developing inspection guidelines for monitoring psychosocial risks. The background material was useful for example when defining what is meant by psychosocial workload factors in OSH inspection and what kind of measures the employer can take to avoid or reduce psychosocial risks.

### 2.2. Usefulness of the inspection tools (toolkit)

Some of the tools were interesting as such but applying them directly was not found purposeful because they were not based on Finnish legislation. Thus, in Finland the content of the campaign consisted of the four main questions, because they were easiest to integrate with the national performance targets and with the existing assessment criteria based on legislation.

The inspectors perceived the *Questionnaire* useful as an inspection tool, because it gave an overall picture of the personnel's opinions of their working conditions. The inspector was able to more carefully monitor the circumstances which, according to the results of the questionnaire, needed attention. The Questionnaire also made interaction between the inspector and those present at the inspection easier as shortcomings emerged in the inquiry for discussion. In addition, the results of the questionnaire functioned as criteria and support for the inspector in determining whether the risks had been assessed extensively and whether the actions taken were sufficient. The questionnaire also worked well in connection with follow-up inspections, as the results indicated how workplace conditions had developed.

### 2.3. Usefulness of the project flyer

The inspectors found the campaign flyer oversimplified and differing from the terminology of Finnish legislation. The flyer was not found to be useful for workplaces, because it did not clearly tell what the Finnish law requires of the employer.

### 2.4. Usefulness of the project website

The campaign's web pages were regularly used by the National Project Leader, who disseminated the material further.

### 2.5. Description of good examples

The results of the questionnaire have been well received by workplaces especially as the result in Finland contains comparative information from the sector in question. The values for the sector are always included in the inspection report. Employers are interested in the level of their own workplace and in comparative information on other workplaces. The results encourage them to promote safety and health at work so as to reach an above-average placing, preferably among the best. Several workplaces have asked whether they can use the method for their own purposes.

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## 2.6. The inspectors' overall experiences of the campaign

Irrespective of the SLIC campaign, special attention would have been paid to monitoring psychosocial risks in Finnish workplaces in 2012, and thus the campaign inspections did not differ from the OSH inspection carried out according to the performance targets. However, the inspectors found the campaign current, necessary and positive and an effective booster for inspection work.

The campaign has also improved information exchange between the OSH Divisions, because it has required cooperation and common approaches. In those Divisions where monitoring psychosocial risks had not been an established practice the campaign was perceived as an opportunity to develop competence on psychosocial risks.

By means of the campaign data collection it has also been defined on which questions further training is needed. Inspectors have been uncertain how to judge when a risk assessment can be considered adequately comprehensive and how to assess whether the measures taken to reduce harmful psychosocial workload are adequate. An initial analysis of inspection reports has also shown that the ways of expressing observations made during inspections and obligations to employers in inspection reports differ from one OSH Division to another.

## 2.7. The employers' experiences of the campaign

The campaign has been well received by workplaces. Most employers have shown a great interest and have perceived the inspection as a support for their psychosocial risk management. The campaign was perceived less significant in the workplaces which had established practices for assessment and management psychosocial risks.

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### 3. EVALUATION

	5 very much	4 somewhat	3 undecided	2 not really	1 not at all
Did the campaign influence the national priorities?				x	
Did the campaign induce measures in the enterprises?		x			
Did the campaign contribute to the OSH management and prevention culture in enterprises?		x			
Did the campaign contribute to inform employers and workers?			x		
Did the campaign induce an increase in adequate risk assessments?		x			
Did the campaign improve the national OSH infrastructure?			x		
Did the campaign stimulate enforcement in SME:s and high risk sectors?				x	
Did the exchange of information with other member states stimulate national development?		x			

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Appendix 1

<p><b>Guidance – inspection of psychosocial risks at work</b></p>	<p>National assessment criteria 2012 - 2015</p>
<p>A Has the employer made a risk assessment on psychosocial risks?</p>	<p><b>Identifying and assessing risk factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The employer has identified workload factors related to work and working conditions.</li> <li>▪ The health effects of identified workload factors have been assessed.</li> <li>▪ The analysis and assessment are adequately comprehensive, systematic and verifiable.</li> <li>▪ When necessary, the employer has consulted an expert, e.g. occupational health care.</li> </ul>
<p>B What psychosocial risks have been considered?</p>	
<p>C How did the employer make the risk assessment</p>	
<p>D What actions have been taken after the risk assessment?</p>	<p><b>Implementing measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On the basis of the risk assessment adequate measures have been taken to eliminate or reduce the identified health-hazardous workload factors.</li> <li>▪ The employees are capable of following the instructions and procedures the employer has provided for preventing and avoiding harmful strain.</li> <li>▪ The supervisors are capable of identifying and dealing with harmful strain.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Continuous monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The condition of the work community and the safety of the work practices are monitored systematically.</li> <li>▪ Existing efficient practices to notice harmful strain early enough.</li> <li>▪ Exchange of information between the workplace and occupational health care to prevent harmful strain.</li> </ul>