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*Empowering occupational health and safety for sustainable development
in the Western Balkans*

INCLUSIVE OHSafety

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18th September 2025

Funded by the financial assistance of the Western Balkans Fund (Grant contract PN – 7 – 291). The contents are the sole responsibility of the beneficiary and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the WBF.



Creating working conditions that protect people's health, safety, and dignity while ensuring that the organization can thrive in the long term.

It's about ensuring that every worker can stay healthy, motivated, and employable throughout their career.

If you had to define 'sustainability at work' in one sentence, what would it mean to you?

A workplace that balances productivity with human well-being.

Sustainability at work connects environmental responsibility with social justice, safe workplaces, fair pay, inclusion, and respect for life.

Sustainability at work means using resources (human, environmental, and economic) responsibly, so that both workers and the business can grow without harm.

OHS as a driver for social inclusion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55OXIC2f2w>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOwdIHUVBGE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f12Cu3fPiFw>

How can OHS promote participation of:

- **Older workers**
- **Women**
- **Persons with disabilities**

What strategies are evidence-based and measurable?

Why social inclusion is essential to sustainable workplaces?

**Prevents
discriminatory
practices (e.g.,
job
segregation).**

**Inclusive OHS
policies reduce
risks for
marginalized
groups;**

**Increases
psychosocial
safety and
reduces mental
health
disparities;**

**Enables
equitable
access to safe
working
environments;**

Strategic approaches

Targeted programs for older workers (e.g., ergonomic redesign, health check-ups) reduce early retirement;

Gender-specific risk assessment frameworks recommended by EU-OSHA;

LLWI (Later Life Workplace Index): benchmarks age-inclusive practices (domains: organizational climate, health management, flexibility, inclusion, development).

- Gender and disability inclusion - risk is not biologically or socially neutral.
- Persons with disabilities - multiple, layered forms of risk, ranging from access barriers to lack of tailored training, or stigmatization.
- Women and LGBTQ+ workers are more frequently exposed to bullying and workplace microaggressions, which can lead to increased anxiety and absenteeism.
- **Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ) or the WHO's "Healthy Workplace" model**, tailored with sensitivity to identity-based vulnerabilities.

Outcomes and benefits

Inclusive OHS increases retention and productivity -companies with multigenerational teams report better innovation outcomes;

Inclusive policies could boost GDP per capita by 19% over the next 30 years.

Enhances reputation, reduces turnover, and increases legal compliance

Up to 30% lower absenteeism;

Higher levels of employee engagement and loyalty;

A positive employer brand, which strengthens recruitment and customer trust;

Measurable improvement in innovation capacity, particularly in diverse teams.

Outcomes and benefits of inclusive health and safety policies

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) - disability-inclusive enterprises report better retention rates, reduced litigation risks, and greater access to new markets.
- McKinsey (2020) - organizations with higher gender and ethnic diversity in leadership are 25% more likely to outperform their peers financially.



Outcomes and benefits of inclusive health and safety policies (risk management perspective)

- Occupational injuries and illnesses cost the EU economy over €476 billion annually (EU-OSHA estimate)
- Failing to accommodate diverse worker needs - legal penalties, compensation claims, and reputational damage.
- Ignoring gender or disability-based risks - violate EU Directives (e.g., Equal Treatment in Employment, Workplace Safety Framework Directive).
- Companies that invest in **accessible training, inclusive ergonomics, flexible job design, and multigenerational engagement** demonstrate stronger social responsibility.
- Inclusive practices **mitigate the impacts of demographic shifts, reduce hiring and retraining costs, and support corporate sustainability goals, including the Social dimension of ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) frameworks and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

Recommended literature

OECD, 2020 – Age-Inclusive Workforce

Outlines key statistics and policy pathways

Wilckens et al., *Validation of LLWI*

Comprehensive tool for organizational benchmarking

EU-OSHA – Gender and Risk Assessment

Guidance for gender-sensitive OHS planning

Gender equality, disability accommodation and support for older workers

Aging workforce

Trends and challenges

- Global and EU Estimates (2025): Workers aged 55+ make up about 23–27% of the total labor force, depending on the country.
- European Union (Eurostat projection): In 2025, the 55–64 age group is expected to represent around 20–22% of the workforce, while those 65+ (who are still working) add another 3–5%, totaling up to 25–27% in many EU countries.
- United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics): In 2025, adults aged 55 and older are projected to account for approximately 25.2% of the labor force.

Key Trends Driving This:

- ✓ Rising retirement age due to pension reforms and life expectancy;
- ✓ Skill shortages leading to retention of older workers;
- ✓ Greater emphasis on age-inclusive workplaces and flexible work options.

Common challenges: chronic conditions, cognitive/motor decline.

NEED FOR TARGETED ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT STRATEGIES.

Intersection of age and disability

Disability \neq Aging, but often overlap.

Older adults may not identify as disabled.

Low self-disclosure and help-seeking behavior among older workers.

Gendered experiences of disability

Women with disabilities face:

- ✓ Higher violence rates
- ✓ Greater care burdens
- ✓ Underdiagnosed conditions
- Only 13% hold tertiary education (EU).

Inclusive education, accessible workplaces, targeted support services

Inclusive education, accessible workplaces, targeted support services

- RELEVANT SDGs

SDG 4 – Quality Education

Target 4.5: Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities.

Target 4.A: Build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability- and gender-sensitive.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres.

Target 5.4: Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services and social protection.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

Target 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Target 8.8: Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities

Target 10.2: Empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, or other status.

Target 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome.



Psychosocial predictors of accommodation

Key factors:

- ✓ Workplace support
- ✓ Knowledge of **European Disability Strategy for 2021–2030** and **Employment Equality Directive (Directive 2000/78/EC)**
- ✓ Work goals

EUROPEAN DISABILITY STRATEGY F 2021–2030

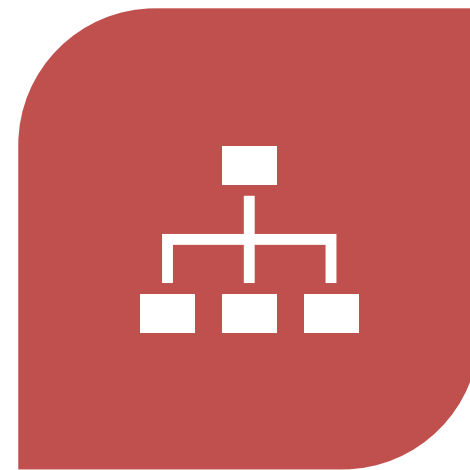
- **Promoting inclusive workplaces**
- **Enhancing access to vocational education and lifelong learning**
- **Strengthening enforcement of anti-discrimination laws**

Employment Equality Directive (Directive 2000/78/EC)

- **Prohibits discrimination** on the basis of disability (as well as age, religion, and sexual orientation) in **employment and occupation**.
- Requires employers to provide **reasonable accommodation**, unless it imposes a **disproportionate burden** on the organization.

Disability acceptance predicts accommodation receipt, not request.

Fostering inclusion isn't just about policy. It's about culture, communication, and trust.



**ISO 45001 PROMOTES PARTICIPATION
AND RISK-BASED THINKING.**



**PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS INCLUDE STIGMA,
DISCRIMINATION, AND INFLEXIBLE
WORK ENVIRONMENTS.**

Inclusive risk assessments

Include diverse workers in safety processes.

Recognize gender- and age-specific risks.

Examples:

- PPE fit for women;
- ergonomic adjustments for aging.

USEFUL DOCs:

- ISO 45001
- ILO's Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems
- WHO's Healthy Workplaces model

Flexible work hours

Health screenings for older employees

Confidential accommodation systems

Anti-harassment and dignity policies

Some useful videos

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpMEHs5MQBQ>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KldS_rykudM
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHGo2-7OaMQ>

Creating fair and inclusive workplaces

Redesigning work through OHS
strategies – Decision-Making
Matrix Presentation

Objective of the Assignment: To identify and evaluate 3–5 workplace interventions that improve health, dignity, and inclusion of workers in the proposed Case studies.

Assignment instructions

- Complete the ***Decision-Making Matrix*** (see next slide)
- Prepare to present it in 5 minute presentation
- Recommend the best intervention(s)
- Participate actively in discussion
- Do not read a written essay
- Present practical OHS decisions and justify them clearly

**Intervention /
Measure**

Example:
Adjustable
workstation

**Main
Purpose**

Reduce
physical
strain

**What
problem
does it
solve?**

Heavy lifting
causes knee
and hand
pain

**What positive
effect does it
have on the
worker?**

Less
discomfort,
easier
movement

**Why is it a
good choice in
this case?**

Improves
comfort
without
changing role

- You are the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) adviser in a mid-sized health service organization.
- The warehouse supports hospital operations by receiving, storing, and distributing medical supplies and equipment. One of the employees, a 60-year-old male warehouse operative, has worked in this role for over 20 years. His job includes:
 - ✓ Manual handling of boxes weighing up to 20–25 kg;
 - ✓ Repetitive lifting, bending, and twisting when stocking shelves;
 - ✓ Prolonged standing and walking in the warehouse;
 - ✓ Occasional work in cold storage areas

Recently, he has begun experiencing chronic arthritis pain in his knees and hands. The pain intensifies during heavy lifting and long periods on his feet, particularly at the end of shifts. He has taken several short sick leaves and has informally mentioned discomfort to his supervisor, but:

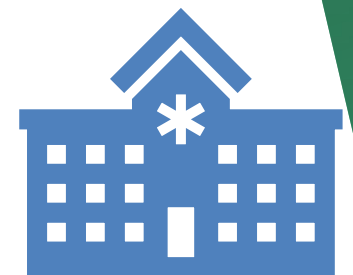
- ✓ He has not formally disclosed a disability;
- ✓ There is no medical documentation on record;
- ✓ He is concerned about being seen as less capable;
- ✓ He fears that requesting accommodations may harm his job security.

Scenario 2

- You are the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) advisor in a regional general hospital employing more than 500 workers. The hospital relies heavily on digital and physical documentation to ensure accuracy in patient care and compliance with legal obligations.
- One of the administrative employees, a 55-year-old woman, has been working for the last 15 years as a patient records coordinator. Her daily responsibilities include:
 - ✓ Reviewing and updating patient records in the electronic system;
 - ✓ Organizing printed forms and medical files;
 - ✓ Working with small-font text for extended periods;
 - ✓ Coordinating document requests from clinical units;
 - ✓ Managing secure data in compliance with privacy requirements.

Over the past year, she has been experiencing progressive vision impairment due to a degenerative eye condition. Although she has not officially disclosed a disability or requested assistance, coworkers have noticed:

- ✓ She avoids long computer-based tasks due to eye strain;
- ✓ She takes longer to read printed documents;
- ✓ She frequently adjusts lighting and screen settings;
- ✓ She appears anxious about declining performance.



Submission instructions

- Submit your responses as ppt (Slide 26)
- Use inclusive and professional language
- Deadline:

Thank you for your attention