

**Work Related Stress: How to prevent,
assess and tackle the risk at European scale**

Work-related stress risk assessment: best practices

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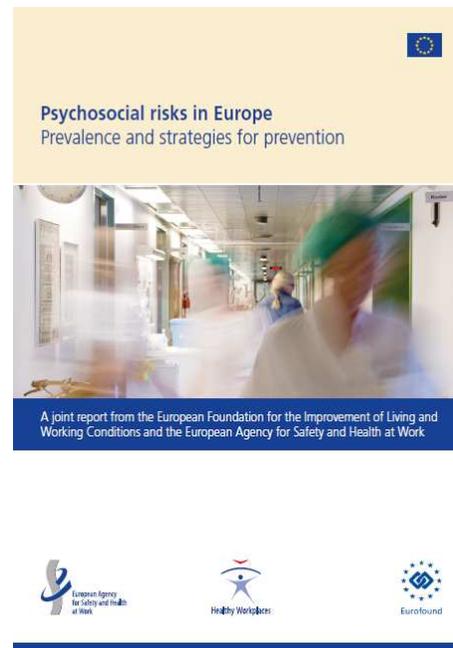
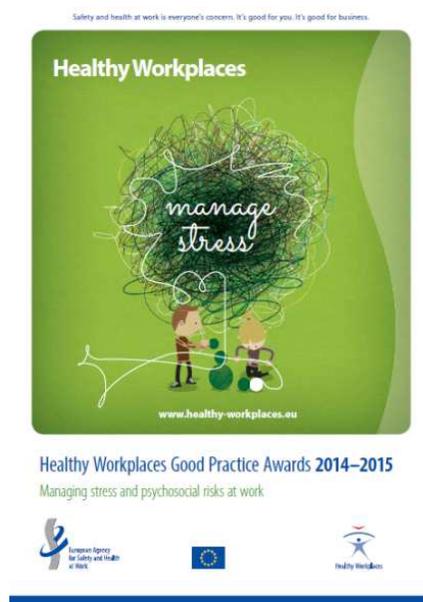
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Recent sources about good practices in work-related stress management



About 50 scientific papers in the last 5 years, and institutional documents and websites have been consulted

Levels of psychosocial risk management interventions

- **Primary-level interventions** attempt to tackle the source of the work-related problem or stressor
 - *i.e.: an improvement in ergonomics or a change in organisation*
- **Secondary-level interventions** attempt to strengthen employees' ability to cope with exposure to these stressors, or to reverse, reduce or slow the progression of the situation
 - *i.e.: training about stress management*
- **Tertiary level interventions** offer remedial support for the problems that have already been caused by psychosocial risks
 - *i.e.: Employee assistance program*

Some positive points in nowadays practices

- **Practices** in work-related stress management are nowadays **enough advanced and various**
- There's a **good balance** among primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention
- A lot of **experiences and researches are available**
- Main **limit** today is in the **organisational cultures** (awareness, values) and it's not «technical» (tools, methods)

Some possible improvements in nowadays practices (1 or 3)

- Most interventions have been conducted in large organisations
- **What about SME?**
- A large part of the companies are SME

Some possible improvements in nowadays practices (2 of 3)

- Most interventions are concerned in risk reduction, there are few cases in which **risk assessment** have been presented or studied in-depth
- Risk assessment is **very often based only on subjective perceptions** of risk
- An **objective assessment is often considered weak** but in fact **a true consideration of it is missing** in the good practices and in the scientific debate, there are only superficial and questionable practices

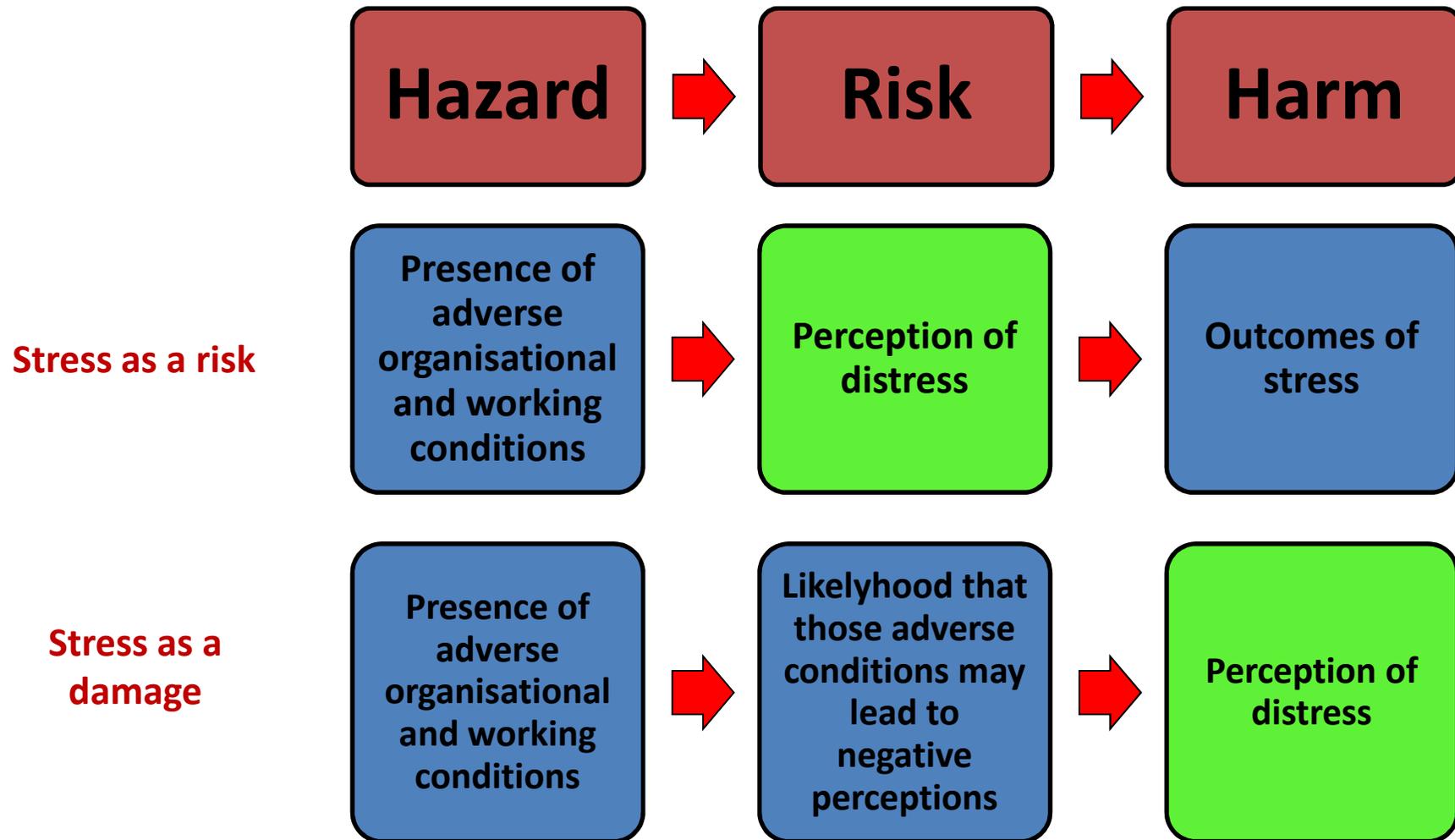
Some possible improvements in nowadays practices (3 of 3)

- **Ergonomics is almost totally absent** by all interventions in risk assessment and risk reduction
- Ergonomics is only used as a tool for some improvements in the workplaces
- In fact that science is almost absent in the debate about risk assessment

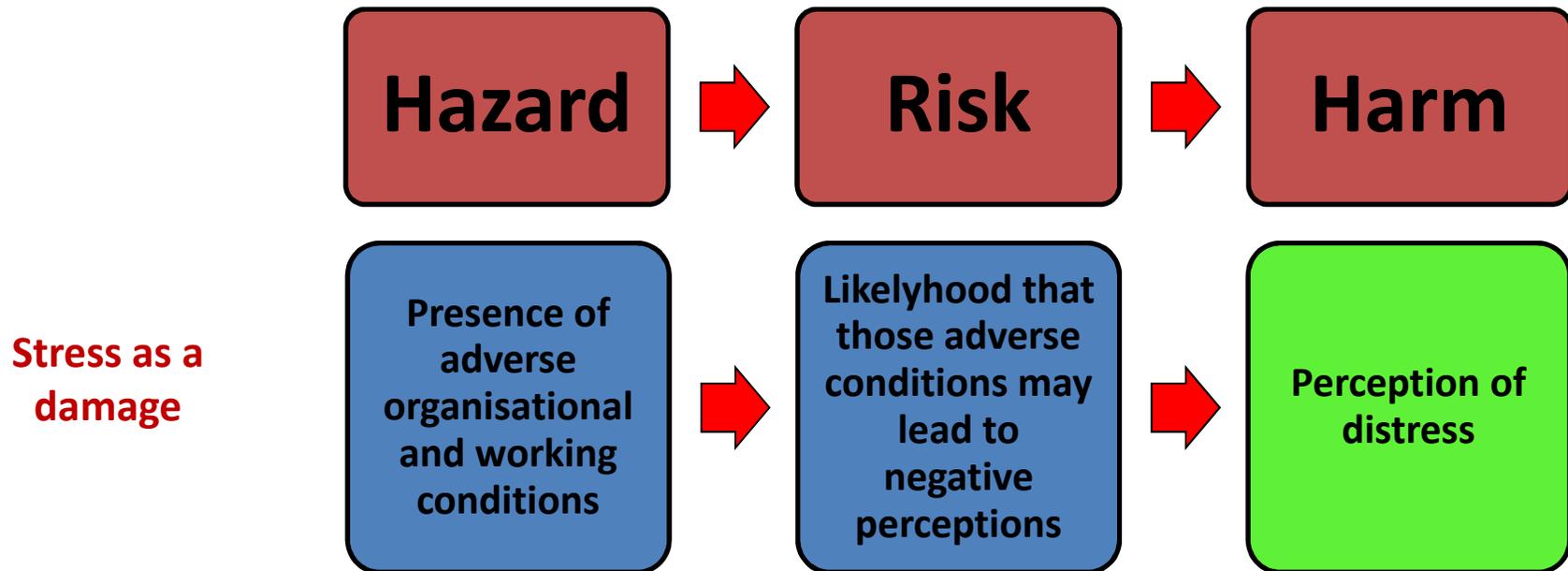
Some issues deserving improvements

- Expliciting and clarifying the **relationships among hazard, risk and harm** when talking of stress
- Keeping into account the **contribution of ergonomics** in the process of stress risk evaluation and risk reduction

Two complementary points of view about work-related stress risk



Two complementary points of view about work-related stress risk



“Those aspects of work design, and the organisation and management of work, and their social and organisational contexts, which have the potential for causing psychological or physical harm”
(Cox et al., in Clarke e Cooper, 2004, pag. 3).

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity
(WHO)

The contribution of Ergonomics

What is Ergonomics?

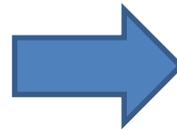
It is the **scientific discipline** concerned with the understanding of the **interactions** among **human** and **other elements of a system**, and the **profession** that applies theory, principles, data and methods to design in order to optimize human **well-being** and overall **system performance**

(International Ergonomics Association)

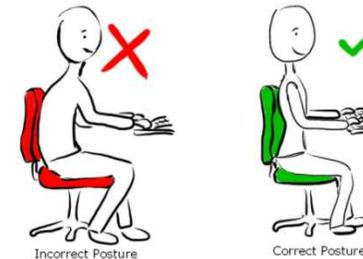
Ergonomics: a gradual deterioration

From this definition ...

- understanding of the **interactions** among **human** and **other elements of a system**
- design in order to optimize human **well-being** and overall **system performance**



... to only this (at 90%)



What went wrong?
Where's all the rest?

Case history: Hydac Italia



- German **multinational company, present in Italy** in the field of hydraulics, electronic control technology, solenoid technology and other
- About **90 employees** (salespersons, warehousemen, administration; there's not production in Italy)
- In **2011 a first work-related stress risk assessment** was performed (using objective and subjective methods)
- In **2014** it was updated with a **new analysis**

Analysis of the organisation and of the job conditions



17 different homogeneous groups
(same activity = same group)

Job-related factors

6 different factors, for each
homogeneous group of workers

Factors in the organisational context

12 factors, shared by all the
homogeneous groups of workers

1 company

A benchmarking-based method

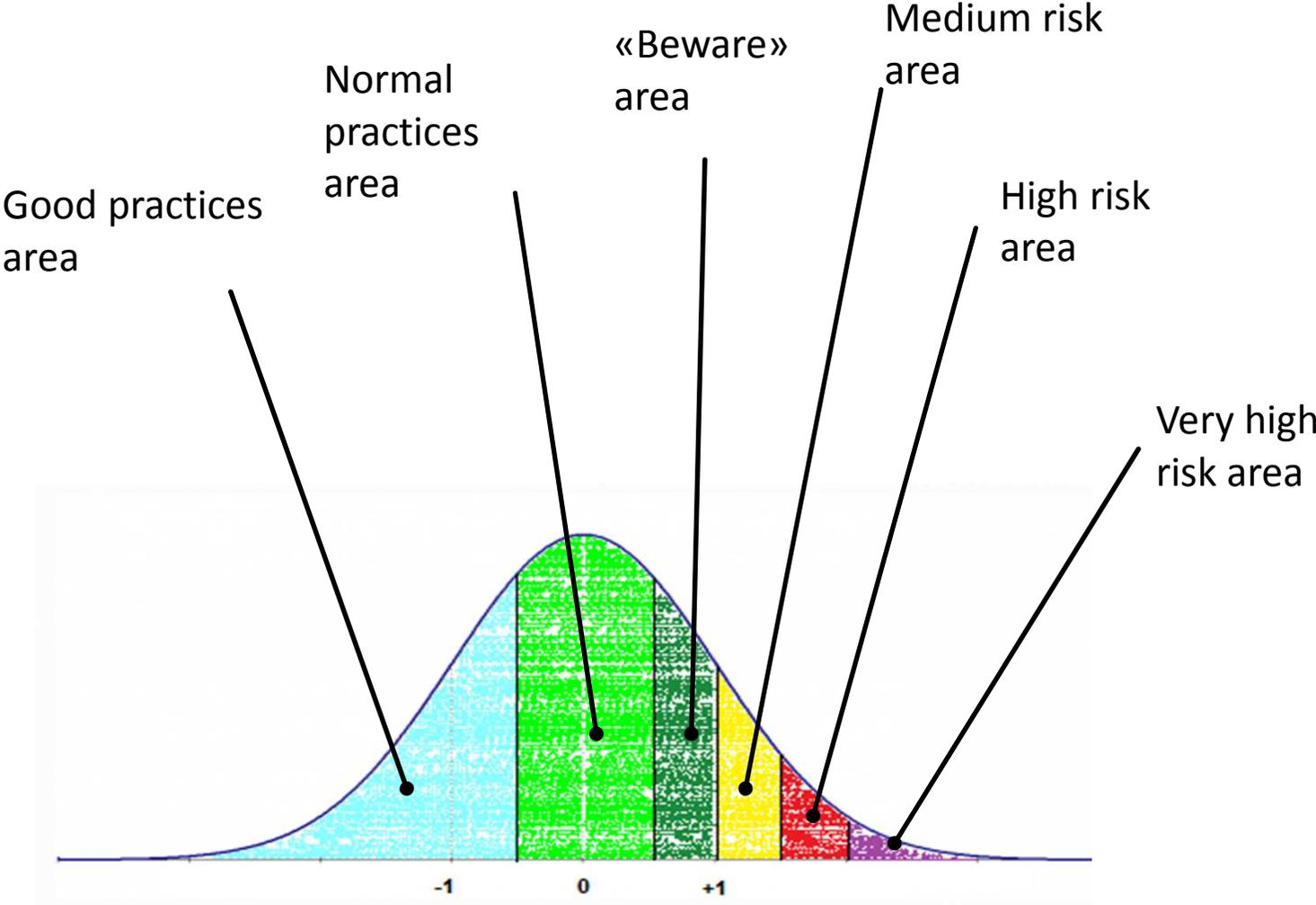
- The assessment of the working conditions is easier and more effective comparing each group with a sample of other companies used as a benchmark
- The sample as a benchmark:
 - 37 companies, 740 homogeneous groups (activities)
 - the number of employees in the 37 companies is about 16.000
 - Italian companies (mainly in the North of Italy)
 - different business sectors (chemical, engineering and telecoms, glass, food, tourism, retail, energy, garbage collection, goldsmith, mechanical, commerce, printing, ...)
 - sized from a few employees up to 6000 employees; mainly medium and large companies
- Interventions were realised in the period 2009-2014

Objective or subjective data

- The difference between objective or subjective data has to be discussed
- In every organisational or ergonomic analysis data can be collected:
 - ✓ in the more possible descriptive and objective way
 - ✓ with the participation of several players (from management to workers)
 - ✓ with the support and the method brought by an expert

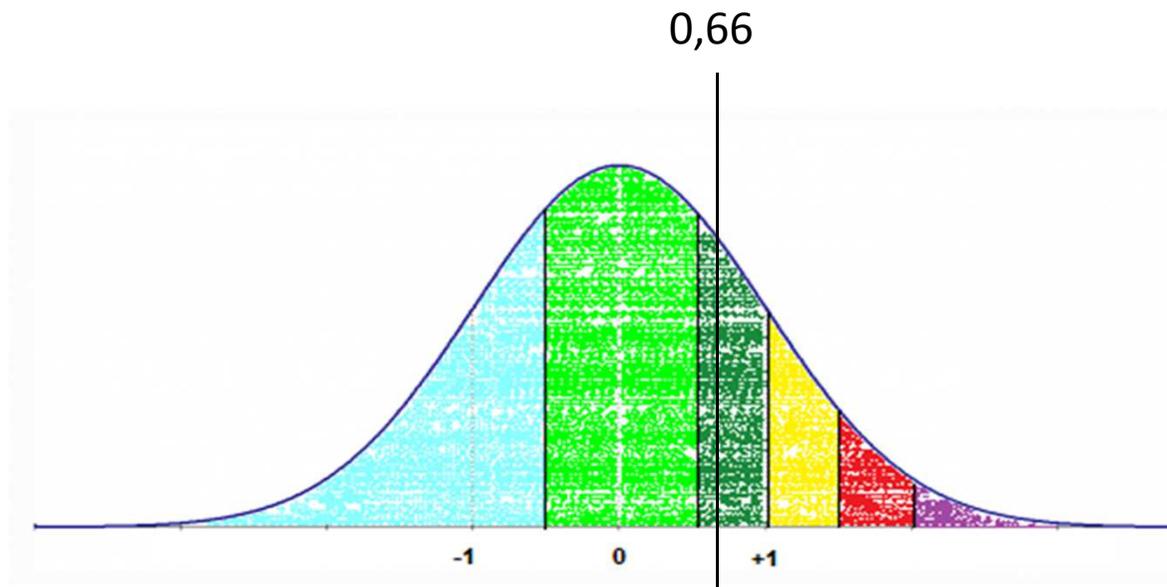
- The analysis is based on the description made by well informed persons as witnesses (involved in the analysis through structured interviews)
- Data and indexes obtained are compared against the benchmarking sample previously analysed

Comparing against a benchmark



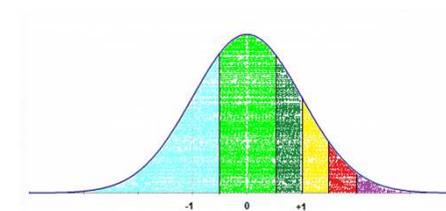
Example: an organisational factor

Quality of the training processes in the organisation



Exposure levels to organisational factors

12 organisational factors	Exposure level
Organisational structure	Green
Organisational culture	Yellow
Decision processes / Participation	Red
Internal communication	Yellow
Training	Green
Development, career opportunities	Light Green
Autonomy in decisions, control	Light Green
Interpersonal relationships	Red
Work-family relationship	Light Blue
Change management	Light Green
Appraisal	Yellow
Task design	Light Green

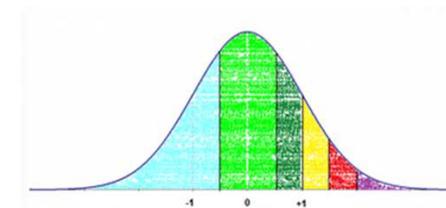


Exposure levels to job-related factors

6 Job-related factors	Exposure levels
Job place and environment	Light blue
Organisation of the workstation	Purple
Methods for performing the task	Bright green
Use of tools and equipments	Bright green
Mental charge	Light blue
Organisational and social aspects (specifically task-related)	Light blue

Job-related factors for the homogeneous group:

- **Goods reception (warehouse)**



Actions undertaken after the risk assessment

- Some actions have been taken for improving organisational factors
- An specific project for improving the ergonomics in the warehouse (from the physical, cognitive and organisational points of view) has been realised. The project saw a strong participation of the workforce. About 20 improvement actions have been defined

Conclusions

- It is possible to talk of **good practices** when a **good risk assessment** is performed
- The risk assessment needs to include an **objective analysis** of the job and of the organisation, and not only the perceptions of stress
- The analysis has to be done with a **participative process**, and possibly having a **benchmark** against which to compare the results

Thank you !



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