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▶ **Enhancing social
dialogue towards
a culture of safety
and health**

What have we learned from
the COVID-19 crisis?

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**WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY
AND HEALTH AT WORK 2022**

REPORT

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*Enhancing social dialogue towards a culture of safety and health:
What have we learned from the COVID-19 crisis?*

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▶ **Enhancing social dialogue towards a culture of safety and health**

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▶ Contents

▶ Introduction	1
▶ 1. Why is it important to voice concerns around safety and health at work?	7
1.1 What is social dialogue?	7
1.2 Participation and consultation at the core of ILO standards on OSH	11
▶ 2. At the national level: the role of the social partners in building a preventative safety and health culture	13
2.1 Implementing effective policy and regulatory frameworks on OSH through social dialogue	13
2.2 Ensuring consultation and collaboration through a functioning tripartite body	18
2.3 Activities of the social partners	22
▶ 3. At the workplace level: employer and worker cooperation for effective OSH management	29
3.1 Ensuring safe and healthy working environments: the roles of employers, workers and workers' OSH representatives	29
3.2 Establishing effective cooperation in the workplace: the key role of joint OSH committees	36
3.3 Promoting OSH management systems and a positive OSH culture, built on social dialogue	38
▶ 4. Strengthening social dialogue to promote OSH during crises and beyond	49
▶ Bibliography	52
▶ Annex: Resources and tools	56

► Table of Figures

Box 1. The benefits of a positive OSH culture	3
Box 2. The various forms of social dialogue	8
Box 3. The various forms of social dialogue	10
Box 4. The European Economic and Social Committee adopted the exploratory opinion: Social dialogue as a tool to promote health and safety at work (SOC/703)	14
Box 5. Tripartite OSH bodies and social dialogue in six countries of Latin America	21
Box 6. Prevention pays!	30
Box 7. Basic OSH rights and responsibilities	31
Box 8. Rights and powers of workers' OSH representatives	34
Box 9. Building a strong and positive OSH culture at the workplace level	40
Box 10. The social partners encourage COVID-19 risk assessments in Indonesia for MSMEs and the hospitality industry	44
Box 11. The ILO participatory action-oriented training approach (PAOT)	45
Box 12. Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient: the centrality of social dialogue to protect all workers.	51
Figure 1. Workers reporting safety issues to employers: a global picture	32
Figure 2. Enhancing OSH culture in the construction industry in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China	39
Figure 3. ILO-OSH 2001 Guidelines: Workers' participation in all the OSH-MS elements	43



► Introduction

Around **2.9 million workers die every year** due to occupational accidents and diseases and at least **402 million people suffer from non-fatal occupational injuries**¹.

Examining 41 pairs of specific risk factors and health outcomes, the WHO/ILO Joint Estimates indicate that **work-related diseases were responsible for 81 per cent of all work-related deaths**, with deaths due to occupational injuries accounting for the remaining 19 per cent of work-related deaths². The occupational risk factor with the largest number of attributable deaths was exposure to long working hours (resulting in 745,000 related deaths), followed by exposure to particulate matter, gases and fumes – resulting in 450,000 deaths.³

Not only do occupational injuries and illness cause immeasurable human suffering to victims and their families, they also entail major economic losses for enterprises and economies as a whole – which may be measured in terms of health care costs, compensation costs, production losses, reduced work capacity and lower workforce participation. Occupational accidents and diseases are estimated to contribute to **5.4 per cent of annual global gross domestic product (GDP)** lost.⁴ Less tangible costs contribute towards broadening the economic impact; these include presenteeism (working with less effectiveness), productivity losses associated with permanent impairment, and staff-turnover costs (i.e., loss of skilled staff) (Tomba et al., 2021).

Over 300 million workers interviewed from 142 countries stated that they feel they cannot report safety issues to their employers without fear of punishment. This lack of reporting can lead to serious preventable injuries due to fear.⁵ Conversely, workplaces with higher worker engagement, reported 64% fewer safety incidents and 58% fewer hospitalizations. (Harter et al., 2020).

Giving appropriate priority to the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases and providing adequate investments in occupational safety and health (OSH) will contribute to sustainable economies, thereby ensuring a healthy workforce and supporting productive enterprises.

To this end, it is essential to create a **preventative safety and health culture**, as defined by the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187):

A culture in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where governments, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the principle of prevention is accorded the highest priority.

To promote a preventative safety and health culture, actions are needed at both the workplace and national levels.

At the **national level**, it is vital that the government as a whole, involving all the relevant ministries, commits to building and maintaining such a preventative safety and health culture, ensuring that workers' health and safety are considered a priority in the national agenda. Adequate means and resources need to be allocated to increase a general awareness of OSH, a knowledge of hazards and risks, and an understanding of their prevention and control.

1 Non-fatal accidents were defined as those resulting in more than four days of absence from work. Data from the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH).

2 See WHO/ILO : [WHO/ILO joint estimates of the work-related burden of disease and injury, 2006-2016 : global monitoring report](#) (2021).

3 See WHO/ILO : [WHO/ILO joint estimates of the work-related burden of disease and injury, 2006-2016](#) (2021).

4 Data from ICOH.

5 See [Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll 2019](#).

Meaningful social dialogue and tripartite national commitment constitute the cornerstone for such a preventative safety and health culture, whose role is to foster lasting improvements in safety and health at work.

Through social dialogue, the tripartite constituents actively participate in all phases of the OSH decision-making processes. These range from developing and revising OSH policy and regulatory frameworks to address persistent and new OSH challenges, to promoting compliance mechanisms at the workplace level. In fact, social dialogue not only contributes towards improving the quality of OSH policies and strategies, it also plays a vital role in building ownership and commitment, thereby paving the way for their rapid and more effective implementation.

*Action at the **workplace level** is also essential to foster a preventative safety and health culture. This presupposes compliance with OSH regulations and the introduction of OSH management systems, together with a culture change to achieve a positive OSH culture.*

The integration of OSH management systems into the business's general management structure is key to controlling risk and reducing work-related accidents and diseases, as it promotes a preventative and proactive approach to OSH, based on continuous improvements. Any measures implemented with this approach contribute not only towards improving OSH performance but also other aspects that reflect the business's productivity.

However, to ensure its effectiveness, *the implementation of an OSH management system needs to be supported by a positive OSH culture, in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is valued and promoted by both the management and workers. Such a culture is built on the principle of inclusion, whereby all parties are meaningfully involved in the ongoing improvement of safety and health conditions in the workplace.*

In workplaces with a strong positive OSH culture, workers feel comfortable raising concerns about possible OSH risks or hazards in the workplace, and management is proactive about collaborating with them to find appropriate, effective and sustainable solutions. This process requires open communication and dialogue built on trust and mutual respect.

Recent data support the positive impact of establishing a collaborative OSH culture at the workplace, in terms of reducing work-related accidents and diseases.

According to The *Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll*, the probability that workers might suffer a serious injury at work is strongly correlated to their opinion that they cannot freely report safety issues to their employers.

Conversely, workplaces with arrangements to ensure workers' participation reveal improved OSH management practices, better OSH performance, reduced accidents and injuries rates – and ultimately higher productivity (Walters et al., 2012).

Box 1. The benefits of a positive OSH culture

Even if there is not one single definition of “workplace OSH culture” (or safety culture), it may be described as the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour that can determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organization’s health and safety management system (Health and Safety Commission, 1993).

An OSH culture has psychological, behavioural, and situational components. The psychological component consists of shared values, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs that drive decisions and behaviours regarding safety; the behavioural component may be defined as the methods regarding safety in the workplace; and the situational component as the policies, procedures, regulations, organizational structures, and management systems related to safety (Kim et al., 2016).

A positive OSH culture is characterized by different elements.

First and foremost, OSH should be considered and clearly communicated as a value and be integrated into every aspect of the enterprise’s dealings.

Leadership is the highly visible commitment to OSH by employers and top management, and is key to developing a positive OSH culture. Workers’ perceptions of senior managers’ attitudes and behaviours in relation to OSH will form the basis for their safety behaviour, and hence the enterprise’s OSH performance. While positive OSH attitudes at the top management level are essential for a positive OSH culture, it is vital that these attitudes be transmitted to subordinates so that they might accurately perceive them. Communication (particularly, frequent and open contact between managers and workers) therefore plays an important role in developing a positive OSH culture and attaining good OSH performance (Parker et al, 2006).

To create and enhance a positive OSH culture, OSH training and information should be provided to all workers so that they can actively participate in actions to improve safety. Workers should learn from insight and intuition rather than incidents, and change their ways of thinking and acting by sharing their experiences and addressing shared problems (Kim et al., 2016).

Enhancing a positive OSH culture in the workplace significantly contributes to reducing work-related accidents and diseases, as well as to improving workers’ well-being and morale. Healthier and happier workers will, in turn, contribute to improved business productivity, quality and profitability.



During the past two years, the **COVID-19 pandemic** has posed many new challenges to OSH.

All the actors in the world of work have been exposed to the risk of infection with the novel coronavirus, as well as to new and emerging risks correlated with the emergency and the newly adopted work practices and procedures.

Social dialogue has played a vital role in addressing the complex situation of the COVID-19 pandemic at all levels, from the national to the workplace level. Throughout the crisis, those governments who prioritized the active participation of employers' and workers' organizations in OSH governance have been able to collectively develop and implement emergency laws, policies and interventions.⁶ Such regulations had then to be adequately implemented at the workplace level. Workers' participation and engagement, through joint OSH committees and workers OSH representatives, have been key in promoting compliance, as well as in designing and applying suitable and effective measures to eliminate hazards or minimize risks that are adapted to the workplace and workers' needs.

In 2022, scenario planning would seem to indicate that the world will henceforth be coping with different realities, with some countries continuing to face the COVID-19 crisis while others will be starting to live in a post-COVID era.

In both of these scenarios, the mechanisms for participating in the governance of this common problem, as well as other OSH issues, will continue to be essential for containing occupational injuries and diseases – both at the national and workplace level.

⁶ See ILO: [COVID-19 and social dialogue](#).



What is this report about?

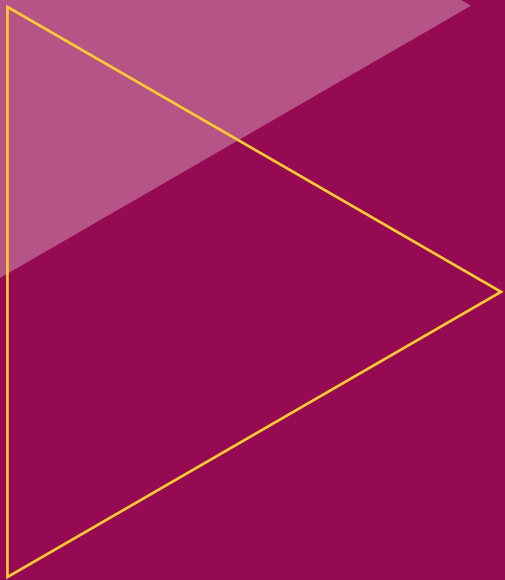
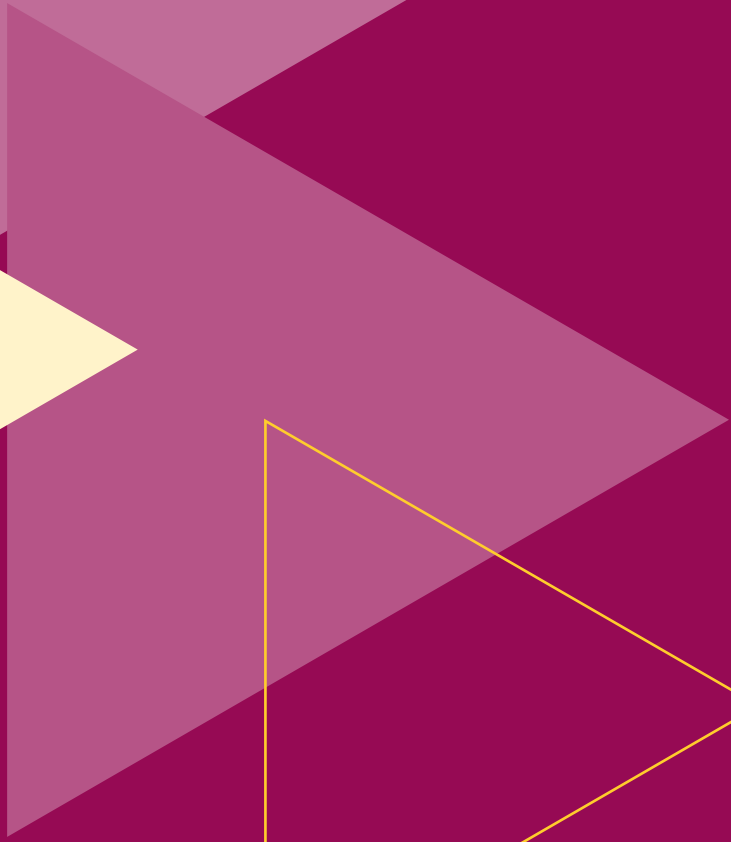
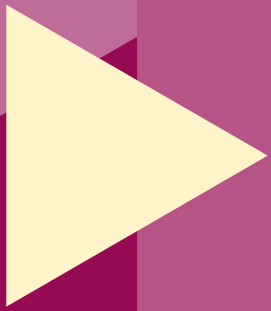
This report calls for the promotion of a preventative culture on OSH based on participation and social dialogue. It provides examples from the COVID-19 pandemic to highlight the way in which social dialogue has contributed towards tackling unforeseen OSH challenges and protecting the safety and health of workers – while supporting the survival and business continuity of enterprises.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of social dialogue and highlights how it has been one of the founding principles of the ILO since its foundation. It is reflected in ILO standards, including on OSH, where the cooperation of workers and employers and their organizations is considered a prerequisite for promoting safety and health at work.

Chapter 2 describes the role of the social partners in OSH governance at the national level, as key actors in building a preventative safety and health culture. This implies tripartite consultation and collaboration in the design and implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks. Such processes can be ensured through an efficient tripartite body. This chapter also illustrates the various types of activities that the social partners can jointly develop to promote compliance with OSH requirements and to improve OSH conditions, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 3 focuses on the cooperation between employers and workers at the workplace level to ensure a safe and healthy working environment. It describes the responsibilities of employers and the rights and duties of workers and workers' representatives on OSH, as well as the key role of joint OSH committees in promoting cooperation in the workplace on OSH issues. It also examines the importance of social dialogue and workers' participation to ensure the implementation of a sound OSH management system and a positive OSH culture.

Finally, **Chapter 4** calls for strengthening social dialogue to promote OSH during the current COVID-19 pandemic and future crises.





▷ Why is it important to voice concerns around safety and health at work?

1.1 What is social dialogue?

Social dialogue refers to all types of negotiation and consultation, or simply the exchange of information between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.⁷ It is a key tool in the governance of work, for the promotion of sustainable economic growth and social justice.

Social dialogue may be informal or institutionalized, and often includes both. It can take place at different levels (international, national, regional, local or workplace). It may involve the social partners in different economic sectors, within a single sector or in a single company or group of companies.

Social dialogue may take different forms (see box 2).

⁷ See ILO: Social Dialogue > Finding a common voice (2002).

Box 2. The various forms of social dialogue

Social dialogue can exist as a **tripartite process**,⁸ with the government (Ministry of Labour and/or other Ministries concerned) as an official party to the dialogue.

When dealing with issues beyond the world of work, the dialogue often involves other actors⁹ representing specific concerns and interests of the civil society. This may take the form of a “**tripartite plus**” process.¹⁰ Experts may also be involved in such processes, both as members or for consultative purposes.

Social dialogue can also consist of **bipartite relations**,¹¹ which only exist between labour and management (or employers’ and workers’ organizations) – with or without government involvement. Bipartite social dialogue includes collective bargaining and workplace cooperation.

Collective bargaining is at the heart of social dialogue and consists of: *all negotiations which take place between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers’ organisations, on the one hand, and one or more workers’ organisations, on the other, for: (a) determining working conditions and terms of employment; and/or (b) regulating relations between employers and workers; and/or (c) regulating relations between employers or their organisations and a workers’ organisation or workers’ organisations.*¹² Collective bargaining may take place at different levels, including national, sectoral, local and workplace levels.

Workplace cooperation may take a variety of forms – ranging from information sharing¹³ to consultation¹⁴ or joint decision-making¹⁵. By building trust and confidence between workers and management, workplace cooperation fosters the improvement of working conditions and the working environment. It contributes to a more motivated and productive workforce and more competitive and profitable enterprises, improving enterprise performance from every standpoint.



8 Tripartism is defined in the ILO Thesaurus as: *the interaction of government, employers and workers (through their representatives) as equal and independent partners to seek solutions to issues of common concern*. It refers to institutions, mechanisms and processes for consultation, negotiation and joint decision-making, depending on arrangements agreed between the parties involved.

9 Examples of such actors include: associations representing the family, women’s and gender equality issues, youth, minority and underprivileged groups, persons with disabilities, farmers’ organizations, small businesses, the crafts sector, consumer organizations and environmental organizations.

10 The [resolution concerning tripartism and social dialogue](#), adopted by the ILO Governing Body in 2002 at its 285th Session, acknowledges the potential of collaborating with civil society: *Emphasizing that the social partners are open to dialogue and that they work in the field with NGOs that share the same values and objectives and pursue them in a constructive manner; recognizing the potential for the International Labour Office to collaborate with civil society following appropriate consultations with the tripartite constituents (...).*

11 Bipartite social dialogue is when two parties – one or more employers and/or one or more employers’ organizations, and one or more workers’ organizations – exchange information, consult each other or negotiate together, without government intervention.

12 See ILO: [Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 \(No. 154\)](#), art. 2.

13 Information sharing includes both one-way and two-way communication. One-way communication is the most basic form of workplace cooperation; there is no dialogue and interaction between workers and managers is passive rather than active. In two-way communication, information is provided by managers but workers are given the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and seek clarifications. See ILO: [Guide on Social Dialogue and Workplace Cooperation: An Overview](#) (2008).

14 Consultation is a process whereby information is shared and discussed; however one party (usually the management) retains the right to make a decision based on the discussion and advice provided. See ILO: [Guide on Social Dialogue and Workplace Cooperation: An Overview](#) (2008).

15 Joint decision-making involves discussion and interaction between managers and workers, which results in a binding decision. See ILO: [Guide on Social Dialogue and Workplace Cooperation: An Overview](#) (2008).

Social dialogue can only function effectively if the fundamental principles and rights at work, including freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, are respected. Preconditions for successful social dialogue also include free, independent, strong and representative workers' and employers' organizations with the required technical capacity and access to information, together with trust, commitment and respect by the governments for the autonomy of the social partners and social dialogue outcomes.¹⁶

In a context of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is vital to turn to these participatory processes. Dialogue among actors with different interests, perspectives and views is the most effective way of reconciling competing interests and building trust in – and commitment to – policies, strategies and specific measures that will work in practice for the broad benefit of society, in times of crisis and beyond.

¹⁶ See ILO: [Social Dialogue](#).

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Box 3. The various forms of social dialogue

Since its creation in 1919, social dialogue has been one of the founding principles of the ILO.

Employers, workers and governments take part in all discussions and decision-making on international labour matters, with a view to establishing “universal and lasting peace” and promoting social justice and decent work for all. This tripartite structure is a feature of the ILO, making it unique within the United Nations system.

Social dialogue is embedded in the ILO Constitution and in almost all international labour standards, as it is perceived as a key method to achieve sustainable decisions and peaceful workplace relations.

In 1976, the ILO adopted a specific Convention that promotes tripartism, namely the [Tripartite Consultation \(International Labour Standards\) Convention, 1976 \(No. 144\)](#). It requires effective consultation between the government, employers’ and workers’ organisations at each stage of the standards-related activities of the ILO on matters ranging from the setting of the agenda of the International Labour Conference, the ratification of international labour standards, the supervision of the application of standards, to the denunciation of ratified Conventions.

With the adoption of the ILO [Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#) in 1998, all ILO Member States have the obligation, arising from their membership of the Organization, to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work contained in the eight fundamental Conventions – which include the right of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. The [Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 \(No. 87\)](#) recognizes the right of workers and employers to freely establish and join organizations of their own choosing, and states that the public authorities should refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede its lawful exercise. This Convention is complemented by the [Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 \(No. 98\)](#), which provides for the establishment of measures to ensure respect for the right to organize and encourage the development of collective bargaining.

Another related standard is the [Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 \(No. 154\)](#), which defines the parties to collective bargaining and the purpose of the negotiations.

A number of Recommendations provide further guidance on the promotion of social dialogue at different levels. These include the [Collective Agreements Recommendation, 1951 \(No. 91\)](#); the [Co-operation at the Level of the Undertaking Recommendation, 1952 \(No. 94\)](#); the [Consultation \(Industrial and National Levels\) Recommendation, 1960 \(No. 113\)](#); the [Communications within the Undertaking Recommendation, 1967 \(No.129\)](#); the [Examination of Grievances Recommendation, 1967 \(No. 130\)](#); the [Tripartite Consultation \(Activities of the ILO\) Recommendation, 1976 \(No.152\)](#); and the [Collective Bargaining Recommendation, 1981 \(No. 163\)](#).

The relevance of social dialogue to building up social cohesion and a productive economy has been reiterated in ILO landmark declarations, such as the ILO [Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization \(2008\)](#)¹⁷ and the ILO [Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work \(2019\)](#)¹⁸.

Social dialogue is also key in crisis response, as clearly shown by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, one of the most recent ILO standards, the [Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 \(No. 205\)](#), outlines a strategic approach to crisis response, which should promote safe and decent working conditions through social dialogue.



17 The ILO [Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization](#), adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2008, expresses the conviction that: in a world of growing interdependence and complexity and the internationalization of production.... social dialogue and the practice of tripartism between governments and the representative organizations of workers and employers within and across borders are now more relevant to achieving solutions and to building up social cohesion and the rule of law through, among other means, international labour standards.

18 The ILO [Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work](#), adopted by the 108th (Centenary) International Labour Conference in 2019, recognizes that: social dialogue contributes to the overall cohesion of societies and is crucial for a well-functioning and productive economy.

► 1.2 Participation and consultation at the core of ILO standards on OSH

Social dialogue, including the right for the social partners to submit proposals, to be consulted and to participate in decision making on national OSH developments, is a prerequisite for solid national OSH systems and effective preventive measures at the workplace, as emphasized in the ILO core standards on OSH.

The [Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#) requires that the most representative organizations of employers and workers be consulted on the formulation, implementation and periodical review of a coherent national policy on OSH (Art. 4.1). Such a policy shall promote the communication and cooperation at the levels of the working group and the undertaking and at all other appropriate levels up to and including the national level (Art.5(d)). The policy shall also indicate the respective OSH functions and responsibilities of the public authorities, employers, workers and others, taking account both of the complementary character of such responsibilities and of national conditions and practice (Art. 6).

At the workplace level, Convention No. 155 stipulates that cooperation between management and workers and/or their representatives shall be an essential element of organizational and other measures on OSH (Art. 20). It calls for the establishment of the arrangements needed to enable workers and their representatives to cooperate with employers in the field of OSH (Art. 19 (a, b)), to provide adequate information and training (Art. 19 (c, d)) and to allow workers or their representatives and, as the case may be, their representative organisations in an undertaking to enquire into, and be consulted by the employer on, all aspects of OSH associated with their work (Art. 19 (e)).

Convention No. 155 is complemented by the [Protocol of 2002 to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(P155\)](#), which incorporates specific provisions for the establishment and periodical review of requirements and procedures for the recording and notification of occupational accidents, occupational diseases and, as appropriate, dangerous occurrences, commuting accidents and suspected cases of occupational diseases. Such requirements and procedures shall be defined in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers (Art. 2).

The [Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 \(No. 161\)](#) requires consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers to formulate, implement and periodically review a coherent national policy on occupational health services (Art. 2). The Convention also calls for the employer, the workers and their representatives to cooperate and participate in the implementation of the organizational and other measures relating to occupational health services on an equitable basis (Art. 8).

The [Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 \(No. 187\)](#) aims at promoting a national preventative safety and health culture, through the establishment of a national framework for continuous OSH improvement. It emphasizes the role of social dialogue in building such a culture of prevention on OSH:

...the term a national preventative safety and health culture refers to a culture in which the right to a safe and healthy working environment is respected at all levels, where government, employers and workers actively participate in securing a safe and healthy working environment through a system of defined rights, responsibilities and duties, and where the principle of prevention is accorded the highest priority (Art. 1(d)).

Convention No. 187 requires tripartite consultations on the formulation, implementation and periodical review of a coherent national policy on OSH (Arts. 2(1) and 3); the establishment, maintenance, progressive development and periodical review of a national system for OSH (Art. 4); and the formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and periodical review of a national programme on OSH (Art. 5).

Convention No. 187 also provides that the national OSH system shall include – among others – arrangements to promote, at the level of the undertaking, cooperation between management, workers and their representatives as an essential element of workplace-related prevention measures (Art. 4.2(d)).



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Reiterating the commitment to create a national preventative safety and health culture: the Seoul Declaration (2008) and the Istanbul Declaration (2011)

The goal of Convention No. 187 to promote a national preventative safety and health culture was endorsed by the *Seoul Declaration*¹⁹ at the 18th World Congress on Safety and Health at Work in 2008, and by the *Istanbul Declaration*²⁰ of 2011.

The high-level signatories of the Seoul Declaration acknowledged that: *promoting high levels of safety and health at work is the responsibility of society as a whole, and all members of society must contribute to achieving this goal by ensuring that priority is given to occupational safety and health in national agendas and by building and maintaining a national preventative safety and health culture.*

The adoption of the Istanbul Declaration by 33 ministers on the occasion of the Summit of Ministers of Labour for a Preventative Culture on 11 September 2011 was another important milestone in the recognition of the importance of employers and workers being actively involved in prevention and compliance.

¹⁹ See: [Seoul Declaration on Safety and Health at Work](#).

²⁰ See [Istanbul Declaration on Safety and Health at Work](#).



- ▷ At the national level: the role of the social partners in building a preventative safety and health culture

2.1 Implementing effective policy and regulatory frameworks on OSH through social dialogue

Creating a sound culture of prevention in OSH requires the participation of employers' and workers' organizations in the governance of safety and health at work, starting with the adoption, implementation and revision of policy and regulatory frameworks to address new or persistent OSH challenges.

The tripartite partners may have different interests and perspectives, which can often make their relationship prone to conflict. However, tripartite consultation and discussion may contribute towards an improvement in communication and lead to a better understanding of any concerns and constraints they might have. Such processes may pave the way for joint and agreed actions and for the development of a collaborative rather than confrontational culture for addressing OSH problems.

Strong coordination among all the stakeholders is required to define common goals, priorities, objectives and targets for strengthening the OSH national system, bringing about a more efficient use of the available resources.

As already mentioned, both the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) call for the adoption of a coherent **national OSH policy** aimed at preventing occupational accidents and diseases, by minimizing, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment.

Such a policy should be built through tripartite consultation and discussion, as this confers legitimacy. Furthermore, it is more likely to be supported and implemented if the employers and workers, through their respective organizations, have participated in its design. It should at least include the government's commitment to the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases; the main principles guiding national action on OSH; the spheres of action on OSH; and the functions and responsibilities of the main stakeholders (for instance, the relevant public authorities, employers and workers and their organizations), while also recognizing the complementary character of those responsibilities.

Box 4. The European Economic and Social Committee adopted the exploratory opinion: Social dialogue as a tool to promote health and safety at work (SOC/703)²¹

At its 566th plenary session, held on 19 and 20 January 2022, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted the opinion: Social dialogue as a tool to promote health and safety at work.

In this exploratory opinion requested by the French Presidency of the EU, the EESC sees social dialogue (SD) as instrumental in achieving the three key objectives: anticipating and managing change in the world of work brought about by the green, digital and demographic transitions; improving prevention of workplace accidents and work-related illnesses; and being prepared for any potential future health crises.

The Committee recognizes that the pandemic is an opportunity to create a new collective ability to tackle future crises and mitigate their impact on OSH. The recovery plan should make it possible to strengthen the role of the social partners in the Member States where they have the least influence.

The EESC calls for a culture of prevention to be developed; this should involve training the parties involved in the social dialogue, raising awareness of emerging risks and bolstering and disseminating the resources available

The EESC also considers that agreements between the social partners shall be implemented in the Member States and asks the Commission to discuss with the social partners the implementation of autonomous agreements and the process of joint request for Council decision, respecting the autonomy of the social partners and following the procedure of article 155 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).



A **comprehensive and functional regulatory framework** is required to implement OSH policy and programmes adequately.²² This should cover all workers and address all OSH-related risks to which workers may be exposed, irrespective of what type of job they do, the industry in which they work, or any other circumstances.

When developing OSH legislation, the integration of social dialogue at various levels favours the sustainability and enforcement of such laws, even when they are complex.

²¹ See European Economic and Social Committee: [Social dialogue as a tool to promote health and safety at work](#) (2022).

²² An effective OSH regulatory framework can be built on the basis of a single overarching OSH Act defining the basic OSH rights and covering all workers and all branches of economic activity. To complement the OSH Act, the regulatory framework might also include laws and regulations (covering specific sectors or hazards and defining the mandatory minimum standards and objectives for hazard control, safe levels, training, etc.); codes of practice and technical standards (complementing the law by providing more specific guidance to employers and workers on how to comply with the law); and collective bargaining agreements (resulting from negotiations between employers and workers and their respective organizations).

While social dialogue is always valuable, it assumes an even more important role in times of crises, when quick reactions are necessary to identify often difficult solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has correlated with an increase in tripartite social dialogue to develop common policies and strategies.

A global survey of trade unions found that 83 per cent reported adopting social dialogue in response to the pandemic, with approximately 89 per cent stating that they had engaged in tripartite consultations²³. According to another global study, in 59 per cent of the 133 countries surveyed, tripartite dialogue took place in response to the COVID-19 crisis, with one of the priority areas for negotiation being occupational safety and health measures.²⁴

A comparative analysis of policies developed through social dialogue in 19 countries found that, especially during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a great deal of cooperation among the social partners on the rapid creation of health and safety measures to address the new risks (Brandl, 2021).

Bipartite agreements between employers' and workers' representatives, or tripartite agreements also involving the government, have been achieved with a view to mitigating the risk of contamination in the workplace. Respondents in a global survey of trade unions noted that COVID-19 increased the impact of occupational safety and health on their collective bargaining agendas, with OSH comprising a large proportion of agreements.²⁵

Both tripartite and bipartite agreements focused on various fields of action, ranging from requirements for risk assessment or telework arrangements to provisions on systematic testing. Many countries have engaged in social dialogue on the proof of vaccination being a prerequisite for employment or entering the physical workplace.²⁶

The collaboration between and among the actors in the world of work has been essential in ensuring that the measures put in place were acceptable to and supported by employers and workers – and were therefore more likely to be effectively implemented in practice.



- In Austria, the social partners negotiated an agreement on systematic testing in the workplace for particular sectors that faced an increased risk of viral transmission, such as the retail sector (WKO, 2021).
- France adopted a bipartite agreement focused on strengthening prevention regarding OSH. Among other areas of focus, the agreement included issues such as psychosocial risks and new hazards associated with novel technologies²⁷. The social partners in France also created a national interprofessional agreement on telework in November 2020, which provides a framework for ensuring safe and healthy telework and complements existing regulations.²⁸
- In Panama, tripartite dialogue resulted in an agreement on the implementation of a recently adopted law on telework. This regulation set out the voluntary nature of teleworking, the right to disconnect and other workers' rights.²⁹ The agreement also included requirements on establishing bipartite OSH committees in order to conduct risk assessments at the workplace in the context of COVID-19.

23 See ILO: [COVID-19 and recovery: The role of trade unions in building forward better](#) (2021).

24 See ILO: [A global trend analysis on the role of trade unions in times of COVID-19: A summary of key findings](#) (2021).

25 See ILO: [COVID-19, collective bargaining and social dialogue: A report on behalf of ILO ACTRAV](#) (2021).

26 See ILO: [COVID-19, collective bargaining and social dialogue](#) (2021).

27 See: [Accord national interprofessionnel pour une prévention renforcée et une offre renouvelée en matière de santé au travail et conditions de travail](#) (2021).

28 See International Organisation of Employers (IOE): [French social partners sign a new interprofessional agreement on telework](#) (2021).

29 See IOE: [Panama: outcomes of the tripartite Dialogue for Labour Economy and Development, including the regulation on telework](#) (2021).



- ▶ In Singapore, changes to the rules on vaccination took place after consultations and discussions with the tripartite partners. As a result of these talks, the authorities decided that workers would require vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 to be present at the worksite.³⁰
- ▶ In South Africa, tripartite discussions were held to amend measures targeting the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces. Discussions with the social partners resulted in requirements for employers to undertake a risk assessment of the workplace before workers returned to work and to create a plan for their return to work.³¹

Tripartite dialogue at the national level has sometimes been followed up by further consultation and bipartite or tripartite agreements at the regional or sectoral level, so that they might be adapted to the specific context. Regional adjustments may take into account the local rate of COVID-19 infection, which can require specific containment measures. Marked differences also exist between sectors, both in terms of risks and the measures to be adopted.



- ▶ In Finland, trade unions and employers' organizations worked closely with the government to develop measures for the tourism and restaurant sectors.³²
- ▶ In Italy, the social partners in the banking sector created detailed rules on telework, which outlined the right to privacy and the right to disconnect.³³
- ▶ In Mexico, dialogue between workers' representatives in the education sector and the Ministry of Education focused on issues such as the regulation of teleworking and the provision of training for teachers on technological matters related to COVID-19.³⁴ Furthermore, the tripartite OSH Council and the Mexican Institute for Social Protection published up to 17 checklists for a safe return to work in different sectors.
- ▶ The tripartite partners in Singapore agreed upon *Safe Management Measures*, which were mandatory for employers to be able to operate during COVID-19; they also included additional requirements at the sectoral level. Sector-specific requirements covered an extensive number of sectors, ranging from aviation, to arts and culture and land transportation.³⁵ In particular, social dialogue was central to efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 among seafarers. Measures to protect workers were introduced by the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union, the Singapore Organisation of Seamen, the International Maritime Employers' Council, the Singapore Shipping Association, and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.³⁶
- ▶ In Sweden, collective bargaining resulted in personal protective equipment (PPE) being supplied at most schools in the country.³⁷

The role of the social partners does not end with the formulation of norms; they are key actors in the initiatives, schemes and activities to **promote, monitor and enforce** compliance with relevant OSH laws and regulations at the workplace.

³⁰ See K. Yufeng: [From Jan 15, unvaccinated workers not allowed to return to workplace even with negative pre-event test](#) (2021).

³¹ Department of Health, South Africa (2020).

³² See ILO: [COVID-19, Collective bargaining and social dialogue: A report on behalf of ILO ACTRAV](#) (2021).

³³ See ITUC: [ITUC Legal Guide - Telework](#) (2020).

³⁴ See: ["Mexico: COVID-19 issues feature in SNTE demands"](#), in Education International (2021).

³⁵ See the webpage of GoBusiness Singapore: [Sector-Specific Requirements](#).

³⁶ See Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore: [COVID-19 Protocol on Crew Change and Repatriation of Seafarers](#) (2020).

³⁷ See ILO: [COVID-19, collective bargaining and social dialogue: A report on behalf of ILO ACTRAV](#) (2021).

Having a strong labour inspection system in place is a prerequisite for giving effect to OSH regulations, identifying cases of non-compliance, helping to rectify them, and preventing new cases. In this regard, the collaboration between the labour inspectorate and employers' and workers' organizations is key.³⁸ The promotion of such collaboration should be facilitated by the organization of conferences or joint committees, or similar bodies, where representatives of the labour inspectorate may discuss issues concerning the enforcement of labour legislation and workers' safety and health with the representatives of employers' and workers' organizations themselves.³⁹



- In the autumn of 2021, the tripartite partners in Iraq met with the ILO to discuss improving conditions at work in the areas of labour inspection and OSH.⁴⁰ The discussions centred on challenges resulting from the pandemic, as well as more long-term priorities. One of the goals of the project and dialogue was to strengthen labour inspection with a view to promoting decent work. Consultations also included a session on developing a National Employment Policy to improve OSH in workplaces and increase job creation.
- In Madagascar, the labour inspectorate, in collaboration with the Madagascar Export Processing Companies and Partners' Association (*Groupement des Entreprises Franches et Partenaires*, GEFP), implemented a strategic plan on workplace compliance and the response to COVID-19 in textile enterprises. One hundred and thirteen companies (around 63,900 workers) received support from the labour inspectorate (awareness, training, advice) to ensure the implementation of prevention measures and stop the spread of COVID-19 at the workplace. In addition to the labour inspectorate, other actors such as the occupational medical services, the national social security fund, the Ministries in charge of agriculture and public health, and cotton farms' cooperatives, have participated in the implementation of this strategic plan. Furthermore, the labour inspectorate, the National Institute of Labour (INTra) and occupational health services have collaborated with the Malagasy Labour Conference (CTM) to develop and implement a training programme on OSH and COVID-19 for workers' organizations. From August to December 2021, 402 workers' representatives from several sectors (textile, mining, construction, agri-food, etc.) were trained in COVID-19 prevention and response measures at the workplace.⁴¹

Other mechanisms can also complement labour inspection activities and contribute strongly to compliance with OSH standards. These include advisory services, codes of conduct, contractual requirements, awareness-raising and incentives. These mechanisms can have a particularly strong impact when developed jointly by employers' and workers' organizations, or through multi-stakeholder initiatives, thus ensuring that they are appropriate and relevant.



- In Belgium, tripartite dialogue between the social partners and the policy unit of the Ministry for Employment resulted in a detailed guide on combatting the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. This tool, which can be adapted to various sectors, emphasizes the key importance of social dialogue at the enterprise level to safely restart business operations.⁴²

38 According to the [Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 \(No. 81\)](#): the competent authority shall make appropriate arrangements to promote collaboration between officials of the labour inspectorate and employers and workers or their organisations (Art. 5(b)).

39 See ILO: [Labour Inspection Recommendation, 1947 \(No. 81\)](#), Para. 6.

40 See ILO: [Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and social partners meet with ILO to discuss joint activities to advance decent work in Iraq, with support of the European Union](#) (2021).

41 See ILO: [Renforcer les capacités d'intervention des travailleurs en matière de sécurité et de santé au travail pour bâtir une culture de prévention à Madagascar](#) (2021).

42 See ILO: [ILO Brief: Social dialogue on occupational safety and health in the COVID-19 context. Ensuring a safe return to work - practical examples](#) (2020).

Throughout the pandemic, the scope of dialogue was also expanded to explore **collaboration between the labour sector and the public health sector**, as COVID-19 has been a concern for workers and the general public alike. Workplaces have a role to play in the overall mitigation of community spread, as they are settings where people often gather in close proximity to each other.



- In the Philippines, a tripartite national level dialogue on *Public health – labour collaboration on the prevention of COVID-19 at and through the workplace* provided an opportunity for the authorities to explain the benefits of emergency volunteer workers, as well as to inform workers liable to be infected by COVID-19 of available social protection measures. It planned the establishment of an interdisciplinary knowledge management system, which would harness available epidemiological, labour inspection, social protection and international best practice data, with a view to continuously monitoring risks at the workplace and further guiding OSH policies and programmes.⁴³

► 2.2 Ensuring consultation and collaboration through a functioning tripartite body

Convention No. 187 calls for the establishment, where appropriate, of a national tripartite advisory body, or bodies, addressing OSH issues (Art. 4(3)(a)). Such tripartite OSH bodies (also named councils or committees) have been set up in a number of countries. They provide a forum where parties may regularly meet and discuss about safety and health at work, ensuring consultation on relevant OSH issues and a periodic review of OSH policies and programmes.

Tripartite OSH bodies are also sometimes established at regional/local level, in particular in federal States or decentralized countries, as well as at sectoral level, to assess the issues and coordinate action in certain especially hazardous industries (i.e., agriculture, construction and mining).



- In Mexico, the OSH National Advisory Committee (*Comisión Consultiva Nacional de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo*, COCONASST) contributes to the design of the national OSH policy, proposes reforms and improvements to OSH laws and regulations, and identifies and recommends preventative measures to reduce risks in the workplace.⁴⁴ It is led by the Secretariat of Labour and Social Welfare, and includes the same number of representatives of governmental institutions, employers' organizations and workers' organizations. The national committee is complemented by a local tripartite body in each state - the State Consultative Commission on Safety and Health at Work (*Comisión Consultiva Estatal de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo*) - which is chaired by the Head of the Government of the Federal District and composed of tripartite representatives.

⁴³ Information provided by the ILO Country Office for the Philippines (CO-Manila).

⁴⁴ Mexico: Ley Federal del Trabajo, art. 512-A, 512-B.



- ▶ In Peru, the National Council for Safety and Health at Work (*Consejo Nacional de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo*, CONSSAT) is a tripartite advisory body of the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion, defined by law as the highest instance of social dialogue and consultation on OSH issues. The National Council is complemented by Regional Councils for Safety and Health at Work, which are tripartite bodies that promote regional coordination and support the Regional Directorates of Labour and Employment Promotion. Currently, there are 26 Regional Councils, which approve their regional OSH programme and draw up their own internal operating regulations.⁴⁵

National tripartite OSH bodies are usually composed of government representatives (Ministry of Labour and other relevant ministries and institutions), as well as representative employers' and workers' organizations. In many countries, the tripartite composition is expanded to involve - on a permanent or ad hoc basis - representatives of additional institutions, for example OSH associations and academic institutions.



- ▶ In Argentina, the Permanent Consultative Committee of the Law on Occupational Hazards (*Comité Consultivo Permanente de la Ley sobre Riesgos del Trabajo*) is the national tripartite body dealing with OSH. The Committee may order the constitution of technical commissions to deal with issues that require a detailed analysis or information from third parties. The experts integrated into these commissions are appointed by the Committee upon the proposal of its government, employer or worker members.⁴⁶
- ▶ In Brazil, the tripartite body for social dialogue on OSH is the Permanent Joint Tripartite Commission (*Comissão Tripartite Paritária Permanente*, CTPP), established within the Ministry of Labour, with the aim of participating in the process of reviewing or drafting the occupational health and safety regulations. The CTPP is made up of eighteen representatives: six representing the federal executive branch; six representing the employers; and six representing the workers. In addition, it is possible to invite a maximum of six specialists and/or representatives of other bodies or international organizations to participate in the meetings of the CTPP, the thematic commissions and the working groups that deal with specific OSH issues; however, they do not have the right to vote.⁴⁷

The functions of these bodies vary considerably from country to country, ranging from a consultative role to a decision-making role in the definition of national policies, priorities, and action plans, as well as in the drafting of laws and regulations.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Bueno, P.; Alvarez, P.: *Diálogo social tripartito en seguridad y salud en el trabajo. Marcos regulatorios, avances y desafíos en seis países de América Latina* (ILO, 2022).

⁴⁶ Bueno, P.; Alvarez, P.: *Diálogo social tripartito en seguridad y salud en el trabajo. Marcos regulatorios, avances y desafíos en seis países de América Latina* (ILO, 2022).

⁴⁷ Bueno, P.; Alvarez, P.: *Diálogo social tripartito en seguridad y salud en el trabajo. Marcos regulatorios, avances y desafíos en seis países de América Latina* (ILO, 2022).

⁴⁸ To have a global overview of the national tripartite OSH committees, commissions, councils or similar bodies, consult the ILO LEGOSH database, section 8: *Consultation, collaboration and co-operation with workers and their representatives*.



- The National OSH Working Group in Cuba is entrusted with: (1) preparing and proposing national strategies, based on OSH guidelines and evaluations undertaken by the government; (2) assessing the status of OSH in the various organizations and regions; (3) informing the higher organs of the state and the government on the implementation of OSH guidelines; (4) conducting comprehensive visits to institutions in order to check the status of implementation of prevention programmes and compliance strategies; (5) convening bodies to meetings to inform them about the implementation of strategies and guidelines that each of them has approved, and about the reduction of occupational accidents and diseases; and (6) requesting the review of OSH policy and legislation.⁴⁹
- In Italy, the Standing Advisory Commission for Safety and Health at Work is entrusted with: examining the implementation problems of OSH legislation and submitting proposals for the development and improvement of existing legislation; advising on the annual OSH plans; setting up promotion activities and preventative actions; validating good practices on OSH; preparing annual reports on the implementation of OSH standards and their possible development; developing standardized procedures of risk assessment; establishing criteria for the development of a qualification system of enterprises and self-employed persons; promoting collective agreements and codes of conduct (adopted on a voluntary basis), which guide employers and workers on ways to improve the levels of protection defined by law; evaluating the problems related to the implementation of OHS EU directives and international conventions; promoting the gender perspective in relation to risk assessment and preventive measures; indicating models of OSH organization and management; developing criteria for the qualification of OSH trainings; developing standardized procedures for the preparation of the risk assessment report; and developing the necessary information to assess the risk of work-related stress.⁵⁰
- In Kenya, the role of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health is to advise the Minister on (a) the formulation and development of a national OSH policy framework; (b) legislative proposals on OSH, including ways and means to give effect to ILO Conventions, and other international conventions and instruments relating to occupational safety, health, compensation and rehabilitation services; (c) strategic means of promoting the best practices in OSH; (d) the establishment, maintenance and development of a safety and health preventative culture; (e) the reviewing of the provisions of the OSH Act, rules and regulations, standards, and industry codes of practice; (f) the statistical analysis of work-related deaths and injuries; and (g) any other matters affecting OSH, which it considers may contribute towards improving the quality of working life in Kenya. In addition, the Council can formulate and publish standards, specifications or other forms of guidance with a view to assisting employers, employees and other users maintain appropriate standards of OSH.⁵¹
- In Oman, the tasks of the National OSH Committee include: (a) drafting a OSH national plan, including proposals regarding OSH policies in the private sector, and promoting OSH awareness among employers and workers; (b) investigating serious work accidents with the purpose of identifying effective control measures; (c) coordinating between the Ministry of Manpower and other ministries, the private sector and other concerned parties, with a view to implementing programmes in the field of OSH; (d) disseminating good OSH practices; (e) promoting research and studies in OSH; (f) promoting employers' and workers' participation in the field of OSH and in the successful implementation of OSH programmes; (g) exchanging experience with associations, committees and other parties working in the field of OSH; (h) advising on OSH legislation; (i) organizing meetings for the purpose of discussing OSH matters; (j) cooperating with Arab and international organizations concerned with OSH.⁵²

49 Cuba: Resolución núm. 39/2007 sobre Bases Generales de la Seguridad y Salud en el trabajo. (§§ 9-10).

50 Italy: Consolidated Safety Legislative Decree No. 81/2008 (Consolidated Act on health and safety at work).0

51 Kenya: Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2007 (Act No. 15 of 2007) (Cap. 514). (Arts. 27 and 29).

52 Oman: Decision 368/2007 on the composition of the committee on OSH (Article 2).

Box 5. Tripartite OSH bodies and social dialogue in six countries of Latin America

The ILO technical report on tripartite social dialogue on OSH and the regulatory frameworks, progress and challenges in six countries of Latin America ([Diálogo social tripartito en seguridad y salud en el trabajo. Marcos regulatorios, avances y desafíos en seis países de América Latina](#)) describes the existing regulatory framework of the tripartite OSH bodies in these countries (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay). It describes the outstanding results achieved as a result of tripartite social dialogue on OSH in each country, and contains an overview of the areas in which they are currently working – as well as a mention of their future challenges.

The study highlights the importance of comprehensive and up-to-date regulatory frameworks on social dialogue on OSH, including internal operating regulations, to facilitate its smooth functioning, and it clearly demonstrates how tripartite social dialogue on OSH in these countries remained very active during the pandemic. Although some of the items of discussion focused on prevention from COVID-19 at the workplace, others covered issues such as chemicals, heat stress, psychosocial risks - including violence - national OSH policies and programmes, and promotional campaigns.

The report highlights the opportunities that have arisen for OSH as a consequence of the pandemic and the role that tripartite social dialogue can play in this area.



The role of tripartite OSH bodies in building consensus and bolstering cooperation between the main OSH actors becomes crucial in times of crisis and emergencies, in order to ensure that appropriate and sustainable action is taken. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these tripartite OSH bodies countries have taken part in the decision-making process at the national level; they have also been involved in the definition of lockdown and restriction measures, return to work strategies, and other instructions or guidance to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.



- In Congo, the National Consultative Labour committee reviewed draft legislation on teleworking.⁵³
- Honduras, prompted by the urgency of the crisis, reactivated its tripartite National Commission for Workers' Health, with the aim of updating OSH legislation and its national OSH profile and programme to include issues of emerging importance such as psychosocial risks and hazards related to COVID-19.⁵⁴
- In Guatemala, the National Commission for Occupational Health and Safety, the tripartite body specialized in OSH, took the initiative to meet virtually during the first months of 2020 to propose OSH mechanisms and reduce the consequences of COVID-19 in workplaces. The tripartite discussions resulted in the basis for the Government Agreement 79-2020 entitled: *Complementary regulations to the occupational health and safety regulation for the prevention and control of SARS COV2 outbreaks at workplaces*.⁵⁵ These regulations included provisions on physical distancing in the workplace, the use of hand sanitizer, mask wearing and maximum limits on capacity.

53 See ILO: [ILO Brief: Social dialogue one year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic: Spotlight on outcomes](#) (2021).

54 See ILO: [ILO Brief: Social dialogue one year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (2021).

55 Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Guatemala: [Acuerdo Gubernativo No. 79-2020](#), 14 June 2020.



- ▶ In the Philippines, the national tripartite structures dealing with OSH (the Tripartite Executive Committee and the National Tripartite Industry Council) were involved in the design and implementation of guidelines to ensure the quality of ventilation in workplaces and public transport in the prevention and control of the spread of COVID-19.⁵⁶
- ▶ In Paraguay, the Tripartite Labour Consultative Council validated some framework OSH protocols for essential sectors of the economy, which were developed in accordance with ILO guidelines for a safe and healthy return to work in times of COVID-19.⁵⁷
- ▶ The National Tripartite Advisory Council (NTAC) in Trinidad and Tobago held discussions to develop national guidelines for mitigating the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.⁵⁸
- ▶ In March 2020, the Tripartite National Council on Occupational Safety and Health (CONASSET) in Uruguay regulated the guidelines for the formulation of COVID-19 protocols that should be agreed on a bipartite basis in companies.⁵⁹ In April 2021, the council adopted a resolution urging all workers and employers to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and to comply strictly with protocols to prevent the spread of the virus.⁶⁰

▶ 2.3 Activities of the social partners

The provision of information and technical assistance are critical components of effective OSH systems. Poor compliance with OSH regulations may often be attributed to a lack of knowledge about regulations and a lack of awareness about OSH risks and measures of prevention and protection.

Awareness raising and information initiatives are key to positively influencing employers' and workers' attitudes towards OSH compliance and creating a more preventative culture.

In this context, social dialogue is of valuable support in the dissemination of information on OSH, particularly in times of crisis. Employers' and workers' organizations are uniquely positioned to facilitate the communication with employers and workers about known and emerging risks, as they are well aware of the way in which these risks affect them. In addition to providing information, training and advice, employers' and workers' organizations can also encourage the exchange of experiences and bolster collaboration between themselves.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the social partners in many countries have been very active in collaborating with governments and in supporting their members to implement measures in the workplace for preventing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19, producing guidance materials, trainings and other resources.

⁵⁶ Philippines, Department of Labour and Employment: [Labor Advisory No. 03-21 Guidelines on the Administration of COVID-19 Vaccines in the Workplaces \(2021\)](#).

⁵⁷ See: [Medidas laborales aplicadas en la pandemia](#).

⁵⁸ See ILO: [Leading business in times of Covid crisis. Analysis of the activities of employer and business membership organizations in the COVID-19 pandemic and what comes next \(ILO, ACT/EMP, 2021\)](#).

⁵⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Uruguay: [Resolución 54/020 de 19 de marzo \(2020\)](#).

⁶⁰ See Conasset (Uruguay): [El Connasset exhorta a vacunarse y cumplir estrictamente los protocolos de prevención del COVID-19](#).



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- In the Philippines, virtual tripartite meetings were held in response to the COVID-19 crisis. These meetings discussed the health impacts of COVID-19 on workers and resulted in guidelines on OSH in the workplace.⁶¹
- Employers' and business membership organizations in countries such as Georgia, Moldova, Barbados, Costa Rica and Dominican Republic customized the ACT/EMP *Safe Return to Work* guide to be relevant to their local situation and provided it to their members.⁶²
- In Argentina, the social partners in the construction industry produced a joint "Covid-19 protocol of practical recommendations", which included recommendations on physical distancing, entry protocol and other mitigation strategies.⁶³
- Cooperation between the social partners in Belgium resulted in a "Generic guide for combatting the spread of Covid-19 at work", which is adaptable to different sectors and emphasizes the importance of social dialogue at the enterprise level.⁶⁴
- The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) developed, in consultation with workers' organizations and the employers, free online training that began in winter 2021. These courses are aimed at helping workplaces and workers stay safe during COVID-19 and providing guidance on a safe return to work.⁶⁵

61 See ILO: [ILO Brief: Social dialogue on occupational safety and health in the COVID-19 context, ensuring a safe return to work - practical examples](#) (2020).

62 See ILO: [Leading business in times of Covid crisis. Analysis of the activities of employer and business membership organizations in the COVID-19 pandemic and what comes next \(ACT/EMP, 2021\)](#).

63 See UOCRA: [Protocolo de recomendaciones practicas COVID-19](#) (2021).

64 See ILO [ILO Brief: Social dialogue on occupational safety and health in the COVID-19 context, ensuring a safe return to work - practical examples](#) (2020).

65 See Government of Canada: [Online courses provide guidance on safe return to work during COVID-19 pandemic](#) (2021)



- ▶ In Finland, the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) provided guidance on COVID-19 OSH in the workplace, examining mitigation measures to reduce the spread of the virus at work and establishing guidelines for ensuring safe transportation.⁶⁶
- ▶ The International Federation of Domestic Workers (IFDW), as well as 29 domestic workers' unions and organizations from 15 Latin American countries, adapted, with ILO support, the *ILO Guidelines on Safety and Health at Work against COVID-19 for employers and domestic workers*.⁶⁷
- ▶ In Luxembourg, employers' organizations focused on the manufacturing sector (FEDIL and STI) created a guide for employers that provided information on PPE, physical distancing, teleworking and a range of other OSH measures.⁶⁸
- ▶ In Australia, the National COVID-19 Coordination Commission established an Industrial Relations Working Group with representatives from government, employers and workers, with the goal of helping businesses continue operations while ensuring safety for their workers and customers.⁶⁹

To help slow the spread of COVID-19, people have often been asked to work from home. In many countries, the social partners have provided materials to help employers and workers implement effective teleworking practices.



- ▶ The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) developed guidance materials for employers to support the health and mental well-being of workers during teleworking, including work life balance.⁷⁰
- ▶ The Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC), a body representing a number of unions and workers in Australia, produced guidance materials for teleworking that provided information on the duties of employers, the way to respond if a worker was injured at home, the fatigue resulting from online meetings - and how to address it.⁷¹

Social distancing policies, mandatory lockdowns, isolation periods, and the anxiety of being ill – coupled with the suspension of productive activity, the loss of income and fear for the future – have all had an impact on the mental health of people in the world of work. In a number of countries, employers' and workers' organizations have developed tools to assess and manage the increased psychosocial risks during the pandemic (including violence and harassment), with a view to promoting mental health and well-being.

⁶⁶ See: [Confederation of Finnish Industries](#) (2022).

⁶⁷ International Federation of Domestic Workers (IFDW): [Guía de orientaciones de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo frente a la COVID-19 para personas empleadoras y trabajadoras del hogar](#).

⁶⁸ See FEDIL: [Guide to Good Practice](#) (2022).

⁶⁹ See ILO: [Good practice in workplaces against COVID-19](#) (2021).

⁷⁰ See International Organisation of Employers (IOE): [IOE Guidance on teleworking in the times of Covid-19](#) (2020).

⁷¹ See VTHC: [Teleworking – or working from home](#) (2021).



- ▶ The Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP) developed, with the support of the ILO, a brief guide on psychosocial risks at work, which includes an assessment tool and specific modules on violence and the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.⁷²
- ▶ The Prince's Responsible Business Network (United Kingdom) created a *Mental health for employers toolkit*, which helps employers assess their workforce's mental well-being and champion positive health.⁷³

During lockdowns and mandatory work from home arrangements, some workers have found themselves at increased risk of domestic violence, as they were confined with their violent family members – which affected both their psychological and physical health.



- ▶ The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) provides resources for victims, as well as information for co-workers to assess the situation if they suspect their colleague is in danger.

Awareness-raising campaigns are an effective way of disseminating essential information and making employers, workers and communities familiar with their rights and responsibilities in the field of OSH. Such campaigns can have a stronger impact when jointly designed and implemented by employers' and workers' organizations.

Awareness-raising campaigns are of particular importance during a crisis, when the situation evolves rapidly – as do the rules and protocols to be applied in the workplace.

As access to vaccines increased in many parts of the world, the social partners were key in raising vaccine awareness amongst their members – and some even assisted in the vaccine rollout with on-site vaccination clinics.



- ▶ The Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) led a successful vaccination campaign for workers, which helped facilitate vaccination through primary health care clinics.⁷⁴ The campaign raised workers' awareness of the benefits of vaccination, helping sway many of those who had been initially hesitant. As a result, garment sector workers had double the vaccination rates of the national average.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the social partners have been particularly vocal on the importance of raising awareness not only of the risk of COVID-19, but also of the other risks, such as psychosocial risks – including violence and harassment.

72 COHEP and ILO: [Guia breve sobre los riesgos psicosociales en el trabajo](#)

73 See Business in the Community (BITC): [Mental health for employers toolkit](#) (2021).

74 See Industrial: [Union campaign pays off as Covid-19 vaccination rates hit 74% in South Africa's garment sector](#) (2021).



- In view of the violence and harassment fuelled by the pandemic, Education International created a toolkit to be used by unions around the world to campaign in support of the recently adopted Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and its accompanying Recommendation (No. 206).⁷⁵ The toolkit contained resources that trade unions might use to combat violence and harassment.
- The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted a webinar on Convention No. 190, which included speakers from the government, as well as from employers' and workers' organizations, to examine ongoing action to prevent and address violence and harassment.⁷⁶
- In Nicaragua, the Senior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) launched a campaign entitled "If COVID-19 does not discriminate, neither should you". This campaign included webinars and platforms for exchanging best practices amongst stakeholders.⁷⁷

Employers' and workers' organizations can also cooperate in **OSH research**. Their participation in the governance of OSH knowledge agencies, institutions and organizations is key to ensuring that the outcomes of OSH knowledge development efforts meet priority workplace needs. The social partners are sometimes directly involved in the administrative boards of such institutions⁷⁸.



- In France, the French National Research and Safety Institute for the Prevention of Occupational Accidents and Diseases (INRS)⁷⁹ is managed by a board consisting equally of workers' and employers' representatives, allowing it to remain impartial.

The social partners' participation is particularly crucial in the **collection of data and information on OSH**, which are essential for developing informed policies, laws and regulations, strategies and other measures in this area. This holds particularly true for situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies, when governments – in consultation with the social partners – need to regularly assess the situation and make informed, evidence-based decisions.

Surveys and studies, both general and by sector, may be carried out to ascertain employers' and workers' opinions on critical aspects of the organization and implementation of preventative measures in enterprises. In this context, employers' and workers' organizations can play a critical role, collecting data about their members' perceptions and experiences.

⁷⁵ See Education International: [Global trade union movement launches toolkit in campaign to eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work](#).(2021).

⁷⁶ See Belize Chamber of Commerce: [Webinar on the Violence and Harassment Convention No. 190](#) (2021).

⁷⁷ See: [COSEP](#) webpage.

⁷⁸ A survey undertaken by the ILO, with the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea, found that 20 per cent of OSH knowledge agencies had bipartite representatives on their administrative boards. For more information see the webpage of the ILO project: [Modernizing International Networking in Occupational Safety and Health](#).

⁷⁹ See INRS : [Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité pour la prévention des accidents du travail et des maladies professionnelles](#).



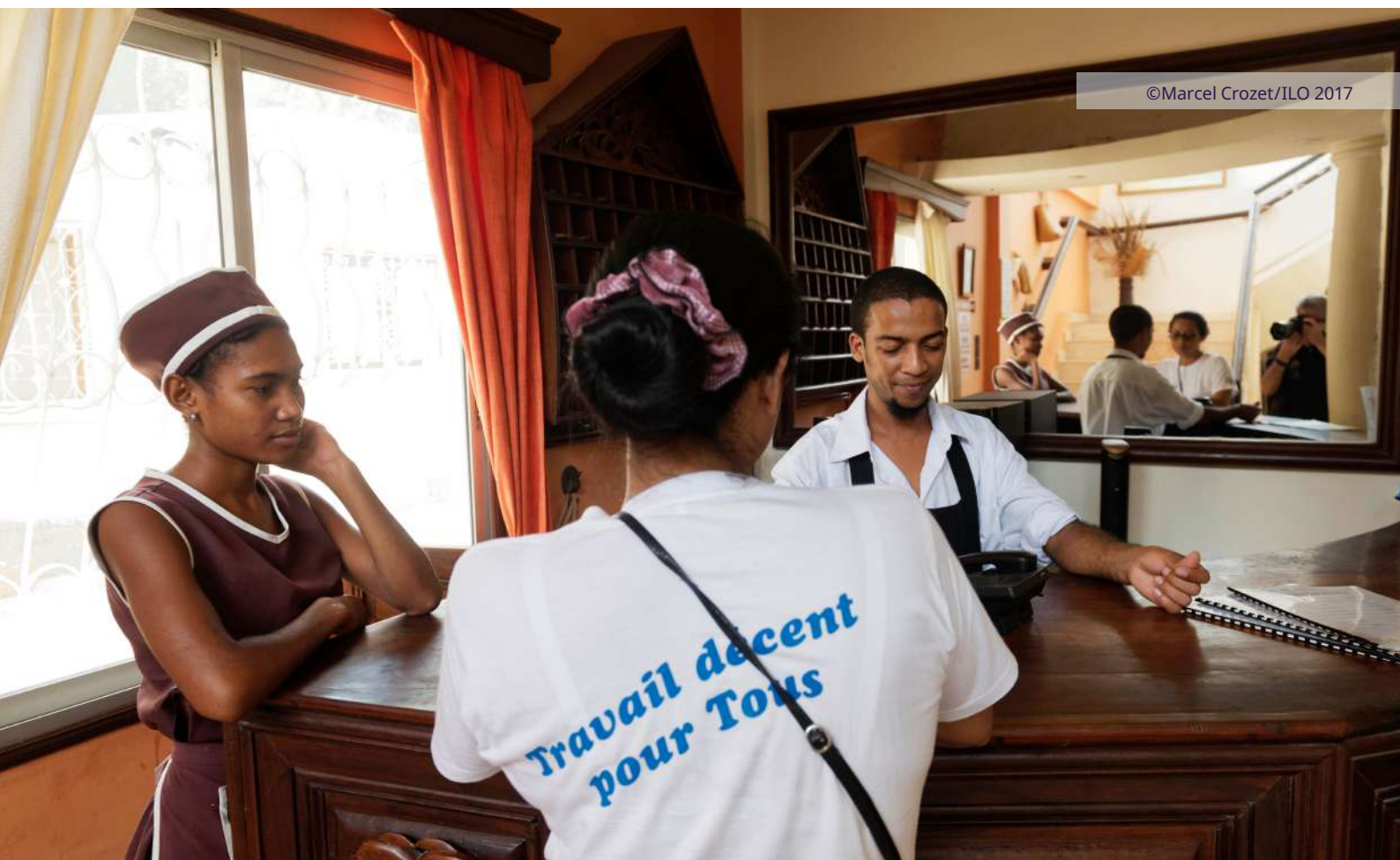
- ▶ The ILO and the IOE produced a joint global survey of employer and business membership organizations (EMBOs) to examine the impacts and responses to COVID-19. The survey identified the need of EMBOs to receive more guidance on teleworking policies, as well as ways to implement government requirements for mitigating the risk of the virus in the workplace.⁸⁰
- ▶ The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) surveyed 148 trade unions in 107 countries to collect data on workplace safety measures and workers' experiences during the pandemic. This survey identified gaps in access to safe workplaces and global concern about the provision of PPE.⁸¹
- ▶ A survey by the RMT bus workers' union in the United Kingdom revealed the workers' apprehension that COVID-19 safety measures were not adequately enforced in the public transport sector, thus putting their own health and safety at risk.⁸²
- ▶ In Norway, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO) conducted surveys among their member enterprises to see how they had been affected by COVID-19 and related measures.⁸³

80 See ILO/IOE: [A global survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside impacts and responses to COVID-19](#) (2020).

81 See ITUC: [ITUC Global COVID-19 Survey: Global gaps in adequate provision of PPE and preparation of safe workplaces to protect workers from the spread of Covid-19 in spotlight](#) (2020).

82 See RMT: [RMT bus worker survey reveals "wild west approach"](#) (2021).

83 See ILO: [Leading business in times of Covid crisis. Analysis of the activities of employer and business membership organizations in the COVID-19 pandemic and what comes next, ACT/EMP](#) (2021).







▷ At the workplace level: employer and worker cooperation for effective OSH management

3.1 Ensuring safe and healthy working environments: the roles of employers, workers and workers' OSH representatives

In most countries, modern OSH regulations define a system of duties and rights for employers and workers, placing the main responsibility for the protection of workers' safety and health on the employer. Workers are entitled to know, participate in and be consulted on decisions taken with regard to these OSH conditions. Their cooperation is an essential element for implementing OSH measures, as stated in both Conventions Nos. 155 and No. 187.⁸⁴

Employers are responsible for ensuring safe and healthy working environments and conditions, including compliance with the OSH requirements in accordance with national laws and regulations. They are entrusted with the assessment of work-related hazards and risks and their management, pursuant to their adoption of the relevant preventative and control measures.

Employers must also see to it that workers and their representatives are consulted, informed, and trained on all aspects of occupational safety and health (OSH), including emergency arrangements, associated with their work. They shall ensure that workers understand the risks involved in their work and the relevance of the preventative and control measures being taken.

Employers' organizations and business associations play a key role in helping employers to fulfil their duties, by providing information and guidance materials on effective ways of engaging workers in OSH issues, including the provision of successful communication and efficient training.

⁸⁴ See ILO: *Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)*, Art. 20; *Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)*, Art. 4.2(d).

Box 6. Prevention pays!

Although employers primarily improve their OSH measures to meet their statutory requirements and fulfil their social and ethical responsibilities towards their workers, there is no denying that they reap an economic benefit from investing in the prevention of occupational accidents and diseases.

It is well established that occupational accidents and diseases are bad for productivity. The direct costs they can entail for enterprises are related to the disruption to their business and ongoing lost production from a worker's absence, the ensuing insurance and compensation costs, and a possible increase in insurance premiums, fines or legal proceedings following an accident or case of ill health. In addition, any damaged equipment might have to be replaced or repaired. Furthermore, the indirect costs for enterprises – usually harder to quantify – are estimated to be much greater than the direct costs. These might include costs associated with the absence of the injured worker (replacement, overtime, loss of production, reorganization of work), an additional loss of working hours other than those resulting from the injury itself (repairs and cleaning, helping the injured, first-aid, interruption of work), a lower motivation to work and workforce morale, increased absenteeism and presenteeism – and last but not least a loss of reputation and negative public relations.⁸⁵

It should be stressed, however, that providing safe and healthy working conditions actually makes enterprises more productive. The traditional attitude, which considered that any improvements to workplace health and safety represented an additional financial burden, is gradually being replaced by one that views workers' health, safety and well-being as an integral component of an enterprise's economic sustainability and organizational development. A growing number of successful enterprises have shown that it is possible to combine workers' well-being and enterprises' profitability in a balanced way - by linking OSH with managerial and developmental issues through OSH management systems.

In many countries, enterprises have started to pay more attention to prevention, realizing that investing in OSH brings economic and social benefits contributing to efficiency, productivity and competitiveness.

A study from DGUV on the international return on prevention for enterprises⁸⁶ shows that expenditure on OSH is an investment that "pays off", with a Return on Prevention (ROP) estimated at 2.2. In particular, the three most significant benefits were found to be added value generated by increased employee motivation and satisfaction; added value generated by a better corporate image; and cost savings through prevention of disruptions.



Workers and their representatives should actively participate in the development and implementation of preventive and control measures by cooperating with their employer. This gives them the right to be adequately informed about the occupational hazards and risks inherent in their tasks, so that they might take care of their own safety and health and that of others.

Workers are an important source of OSH information. They have first-hand knowledge of the problems involved in work practices and procedures and can provide valuable advice about risks and possible solutions. They can offer their knowledge on: defects in the machinery, plants, or furniture; difficulties caused by the design and/or layout of work equipment; the type, frequency and seriousness of incidents or near-misses that occur; and the impact of OSH management programmes.

⁸⁵ See ILO: *SafeDay -World Day for Safety and Health at Work* (2015).

⁸⁶ DGUV: *DGUV Report 1/2013e: Calculating the international return on prevention for companies: Costs and benefits of investments in occupational safety and health* (2015).

Box 7. Basic OSH rights and responsibilities

The [Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#), and its accompanying [Recommendation \(No. 164\)](#), define the basic OSH rights and responsibilities of workers and employers that should be included in national legislation. All of these are also essential in the prevention and mitigation of the negative safety and health effects of pandemics such as COVID-19 in the world of work.

EMPLOYERS

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers are required to:

- ▶ ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplaces, machinery, equipment and processes
- ▶ under their control are safe and without risk to health (C. 155, Art. 16(1));
- ▶ ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the chemical, physical and biological substances and agents under their control are without risk to health when the appropriate measures of protection are taken (C. 155, Art. 16(2));
- ▶ provide, where necessary, adequate protective clothing and protective equipment to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, risk of accidents or of adverse effects on health (C. 155, Art. 16(3)); such personal protective clothing and equipment should be provided, without any cost to the worker (R. 164, Para. 10(e));
- ▶ provide, where necessary, for measures to deal with emergencies and accidents, including adequate first-aid arrangements (C. 155, Art. 18);
- ▶ ensure that there are arrangements in place in which workers and their representatives are consulted, informed, and trained on OSH associated with their work (C. 155, Art. 19(c-d)).

WORKERS AND THEIR REPRESENTATIVES

RIGHTS

Workers are entitled to:

- ▶ receive adequate information and be given training in OSH (C. 155, Art. 19(c-d)).
- ▶ enquire into – and be consulted by the employer on – all aspects of OSH associated with their work (C. 155, Art. 19(e)).
- ▶ remove themselves from a work situation which they have reasonable justification to believe presents an imminent and serious danger to their life or health, without undue consequences (C. 155, Art.13).

RESPONSIBILITIES

Workers are required to:

- ▶ cooperate with the employer in the field of OSH (C.155, Art. 19(a-b));
- ▶ take reasonable care for their own safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work (R. 164, Para.16 (a));
- ▶ comply with instructions given for their own safety and health and those of others (R. 164, Para.16 (b));
- ▶ use safety devices and protective equipment correctly and not render them inoperative (R. 164, Para.16(c));
- ▶ report forthwith to their immediate supervisor any situation, which they have reason to believe could present a hazard and which they cannot themselves correct (R. 164, Para.16 (d));
- ▶ report any accident or injury to health, which arises in the course of or in connection with work (R. 164, Para.16 (e)).



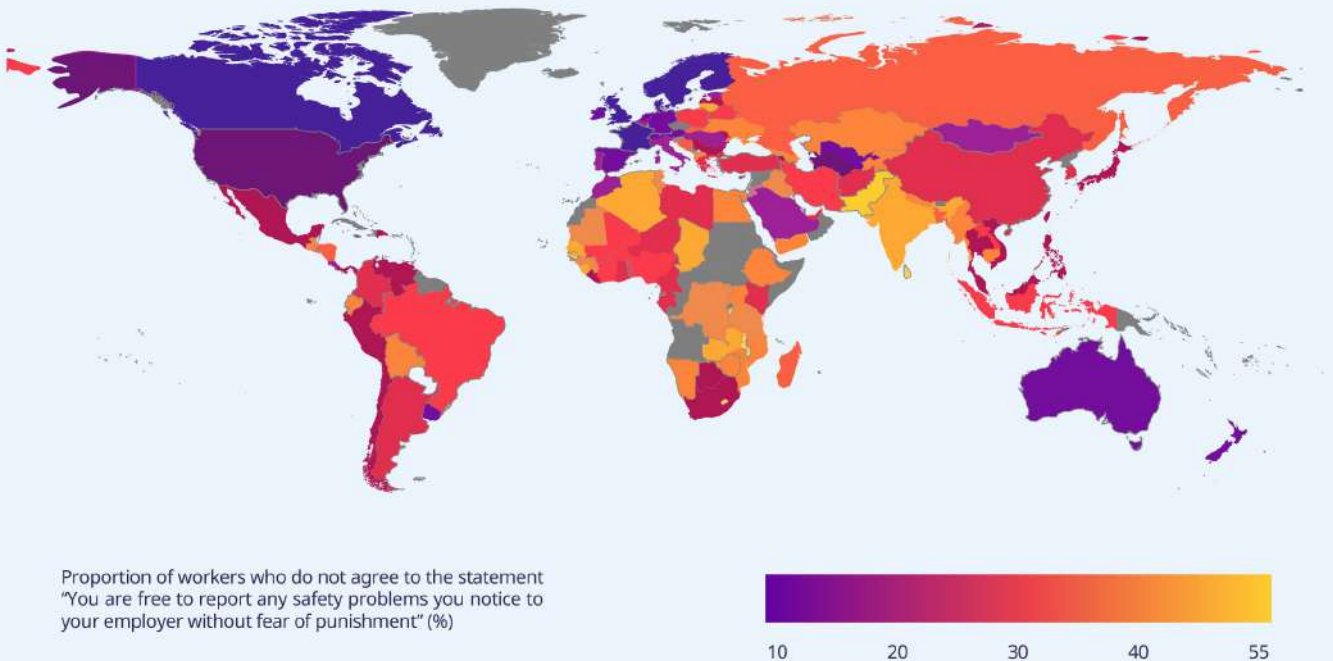
Evidence shows that participative arrangements in the workplace are associated with improved OSH management practices, better OSH performance, reduced accidents and injuries rates, and ultimately higher productivity (Walters et al., 2012).

It has been observed that creating a positive OSH culture while promoting worker engagement reduces the risk of accidents, with workplaces with higher worker engagement reporting 64 per cent fewer safety incidents and 58 per cent fewer hospitalizations (Harter et al., 2020).

Open communication between workers and management about safety concerns has also proven to be a key driver in improving a positive OSH culture in an enterprise (Aburumman et al., 2019).

► **Figure 1. Workers reporting safety issues to employers: a global picture**

A meaningful bipartite discussion at the workplace is paramount to establishing a preventive OSH culture. However, according to the *Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll 2019* conducted by Gallup in 142 countries, over 300 million workers feel that they cannot report safety issues to their employers without fear of punishment. This absence of discussion is a serious safety and health risk at the workplace. It was found that the injury rate due to fire increased by over 40 per cent in establishments where workers fear to report safety issues - followed by a 23 per cent increase to exposure to chemicals or biological substances, compared to establishments where workers feel free to reports any safety problems without being penalized.



Workers' OSH representatives play a critical role in ensuring workers' participation and facilitating cooperation between employers/management and workers, while establishing a culture of OSH prevention in the workplace.

Evidence shows a positive relationship between the engagement of workers' representatives on OSH in the workplace and better OSH performance (Lloyd-Williams et al., 2012; Biggins and Phillips, 1991; Biggins et al., 1991; Gaines and Biggins, 1992; Warren-Langford et al., 1993; Biggins and Holland, 1995). Workplaces that have worker representation in the area of OSH are more likely to display management commitment to health and safety and to have preventive measures in place for both general OSH and psychosocial risks (Lloyd-Williams, et al., 2012).

The key functions of workers' representatives in the area of OSH may – under OSH legislation – include:

- ▶ representing workers in all matters relating to OSH;
- ▶ monitoring the measures taken by employers or other relevant duty holders to meet their OSH and employment injury social security responsibilities;
- ▶ investigating OSH issues raised by workers;
- ▶ inquiring into any potential risk to workers' safety and health that arises from the work of the undertaking;
- ▶ making representations to management on matters that affect the safety and health of workers;
- ▶ collaborating with and assisting the primary duty holder to address any work-related risks at the undertaking concerned;
- ▶ promoting and encouraging the cooperation of workers in complying with regulations on preventing occupational risks;
- ▶ participating and representing workers in decision-making processes regarding OSH; and
- ▶ investigating occupational accidents and diseases, as well as near misses.⁸⁷

Workers' representatives should have the rights and powers they need to perform their functions and duties, as stipulated in the relevant ILO standards.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ See ILO: *Support Kit for Developing Occupational Safety and Health Legislation*, Section 5 (2022).

⁸⁸ *Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135); Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155); Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176); Workers' Representatives Recommendation, 1971 (No. 143); Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation (No. 164).*



Box 8. Rights and powers of workers' OSH representatives



Facilities. Facilities in the undertaking shall be afforded to workers' representatives as may be appropriate in order to enable them to carry out their functions promptly and efficiently (C. 135, Art. 2; R. 143, Para. 9).



Time off. Workers' representatives in the undertaking should be afforded the necessary time off from work, without loss of pay or social and fringe benefits, for carrying out their representation functions in the undertaking (R. 143, Para 10(1), 11(1)), as well as for attending trade union meetings, training courses, seminars, congresses and conferences (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(i)).



Information. There shall be arrangements at the level of the undertaking under which representatives of workers are given adequate information on measures taken by the employer to secure OSH and may consult their representative organizations about such information provided they do not disclose commercial secrets (C. 155, Art. 19(c)). Workers' OSH representatives should be given adequate information on safety and health matters, enabled to examine factors affecting safety and health, and encouraged to propose measures on the subject (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(a)).



Training at no cost. There shall be arrangements at the level of the undertaking under which workers and their representatives in the undertaking are given appropriate training in occupational safety and health (C. 155, Art. 19(d)). Occupational safety and health measures shall not involve any expenditure for the workers (C. 155, Art. 21).



Access to workplaces and workers. Workers' OSH representatives in the undertaking should have access to all parts of the workplace and be able to communicate with the workers on safety and health matters during working hours at the workplace (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(f)).



Access to management. Workers' OSH representatives should be granted without undue delay access to the management of the undertaking and to management representatives empowered to take decisions, as may be necessary for the proper exercise of their functions (R. 143, Para. 13).



Cooperation with the employer. There shall be arrangements at the level of the undertaking under which representatives of workers in the undertaking cooperate with the employer in the field of occupational safety and health (C. 155, Arts 19(b), 20). The measures taken to facilitate cooperation should include, where appropriate and necessary, the appointment, in accordance with national practice, of workers' safety delegates, of workers' safety and health committees, and/or of joint safety and health committees; in joint safety and health committees, workers should have at least equal representation with employers' representatives (R. 164, Para. 12(1)).



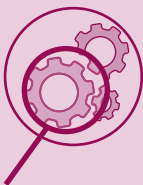
Enquires and consultation. There shall be arrangements at the level of the undertaking under which workers or their representatives and, as the case may be, their representative organizations in an undertaking are enabled to enquire into, and are consulted by the employer on, all aspects of OSH associated with their work (C. 155, Art. 19(e)). Workers' OSH representatives should be consulted when major new safety and health measures are envisaged and before they are carried out, and seek to obtain the support of the workers for such measures; be consulted in planning alterations of work processes, work content or organization of work, which may have safety or health implications for the workers (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(b),(e)).



Participation in decision-making. Workers' OSH representatives should be able to contribute to the decision-making process at the level of the undertaking regarding matters of safety and health; and be able to contribute to negotiations in the undertaking on occupational safety and health matters (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(e),(h)).



Posting notice and distribute union's material. Workers' representatives acting on behalf of a trade union should be authorized to post trade union notices on the premises of the undertaking in a place or places agreed on with the management and to which the workers have easy access (R. 143, Para. 15(1)). The management should permit workers' representatives acting on behalf of a trade union to distribute news sheets, pamphlets, publications and other documents of the union among the workers of the undertaking (R. 143, Para. 15 (2)).



Access to labour inspectors. Workers' OSH representatives should be free to contact labour inspectors (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(g)).



Access to external expertise. Workers' OSH representatives should have recourse to specialists to advise on particular safety and health problems (R. 164, Para. 12(2)(j)).



In a context of crisis, workers' OSH representatives are vital in fostering cooperation to promote a safe and healthy working environment – for the benefit of both workers and employers. According to one United Kingdom study, workplaces that already had union safety and health representatives before the COVID-19 pandemic were more likely to have carried out risk assessments during this time (Moore et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 crisis, workers' organizations have developed guidance and training materials to support workers' OSH representatives in performing their functions in this difficult situation.



- In the Philippines, a group of workers' organizations, consisting of representatives from trade unions and informal sector representatives, met together to explore the role of workers' organizations in monitoring the implementation of OSH plans - especially in microenterprises and informal businesses. This action was taken subsequent to an ILO training on COVID-19 prevention using the PAOT approach. Through social dialogue at the local level, workers' organizations and their respective union members may cooperate with local government public health workers on monitoring workplace safety and health. The trade unions can also engage the private sector, through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects, in widening outreach to help micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises establish a culture of OSH at the workplace.⁸⁹

► 3.2 Establishing effective cooperation in the workplace: the key role of joint OSH committees

Joint OSH committees enable workers and employers to work together in a coordinated way to address OSH issues in the workplace. The [Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 2006 \(No. 197\)](#) advocates the establishment of such joint committees at the level of the workplace to promote a national preventative safety and health culture (Para. 5(f)).

A joint OSH committee may be defined as a bipartite body composed of an equal number of workers' and employers' representatives,⁹⁰ which is established at the workplace and is assigned to various functions intended to ensure cooperation between the employers and workers so as to achieve and maintain safe and healthy working conditions and a sound working environment.

The establishment of joint OSH committees is mandatory in many countries,⁹¹ although this is often contingent upon the size of the enterprise. In some countries, the law may require the establishment of such a committee in smaller enterprises upon the request of a worker.

⁸⁹ ILO Meeting with workers Organizations via Zoom. Minutes of the Meeting. 17 November 2021.

⁹⁰ See [Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 \(No. 164\)](#), Para. 12 (1).

⁹¹ See the ILO database: [LEGOSH, theme 8.6, "Joint OSH Committee"](#).



- ▶ In Norway, OSH committees are mandatory in undertakings with more than 50 employees and must also be established in undertakings with 20–50 employees - upon the request of any of the parties at the undertaking or at the discretion of the Labour Inspection Authority.⁹²

When the establishment of a joint OSH committee is mandatory, the national law may specify its composition, which usually depends on the size of the undertaking. In some countries, legislation requires OSH committees to have an OSH practitioner as a member.



- ▶ In Thailand, OSH committees are required to have one safety officer as a member, in addition to employers' and workers' representatives.⁹³

In countries where national OSH legislation does not regulate joint OSH committees, collective agreements may assume this function.



- ▶ An agreement between the Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF) and a group of unions in Sri Lanka established provisions for bipartite health committees in garment factories in order to address COVID-19-related OSH risks and improve safety and health.⁹⁴

The functions, rights and powers of OSH committees may differ from country to country; however, they are often the same or similar to those of workers' representatives. However, it goes without saying that these committees may have a higher number of statutory and complex tasks than those of individual workers' representatives, because they have considerably more human resources and capacity.

Tasks that may be assigned to such committees include monitoring the implementation of policy programmes for hazard prevention; conducting workers' training on OSH; contributing to OSH record keeping; and monitoring data relating to accidents, injuries and hazards.

Even if there are many ways in which employers and workers may cooperate in the workplace in fulfilling OSH requirements, joint OSH committees have proven to be one of the most successful ones.⁹⁵

During the COVID-19 crisis, joint OSH committees have had a critical role to play in responding to OSH concerns. Indeed, they are well positioned to identify situations of potential exposure to COVID-19, assess risks and develop exposure control and mitigation plans.

⁹² See LOVDATA (Norway): [Working Environment Act No. 62, 2005, section 7-1](#).

⁹³ See ILO Natlex: [Thailand. Ministerial Regulation Prescribing Standards for the Administration and Management of Occupational Safety, Health and Environment, No. B.#. 2549, 2006, clause 23](#).

⁹⁴ See IndustriALL (Sri Lanka): [Unions in Sri Lanka sign landmark agreement in global apparel supply chain](#) (2021).

⁹⁵ See the factsheet on [Joint Health Committees](#) developed for the 2015 World Day for Safety and Health at Work (ILO, 2015).



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▶ 3.3 Promoting OSH management systems and a positive OSH culture, built on social dialogue

To effectively control OSH risks, prevent occupational accidents and diseases - and thus improve productivity - employers should establish a sound OSH management system as an integral part of their overall business management.⁹⁶

OSH management systems are a logical and useful tool for the continual improvement of OSH performance within an organization. They include a set of actions and processes that establish, monitor and evaluate the organization's efforts to keep workers safe and healthy, and comply with national laws.

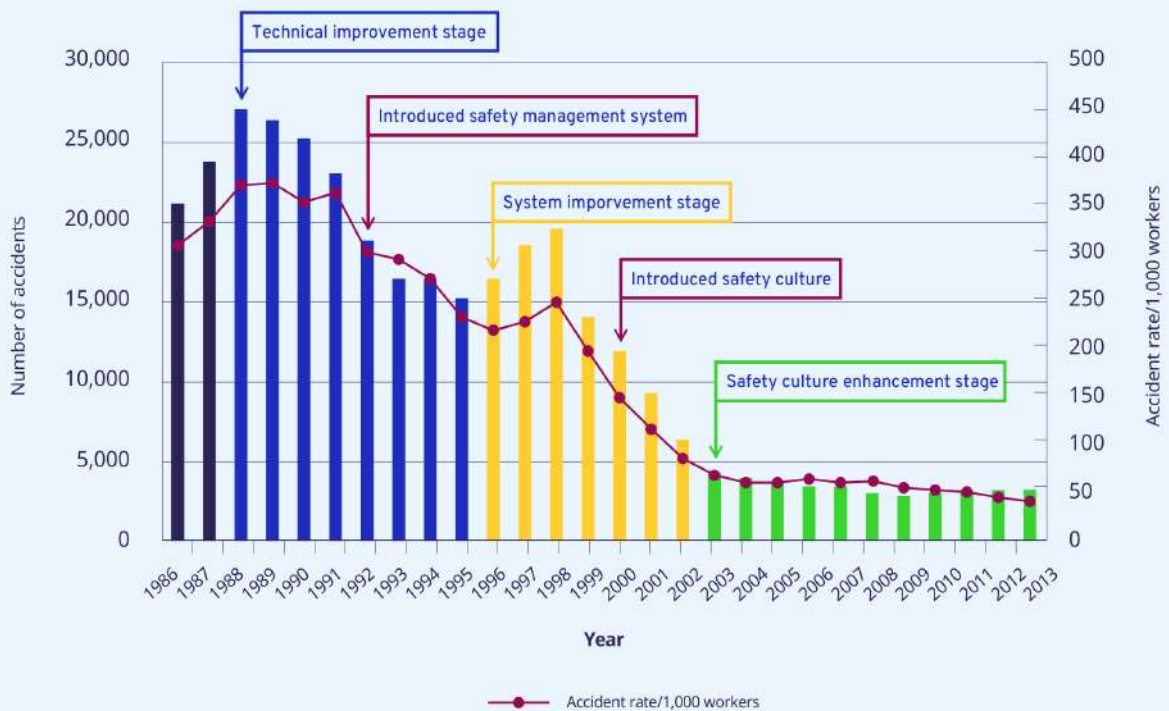
Key elements for their successful application include ensuring both management's commitment and the active participation of workers in their joint implementation. In addition, an OSH management system is only effective when it is accompanied by a positive OSH culture in the workplace (Hale and Hovden, 1998). Such an OSH culture should not be something separate from - or in addition to - an organizational culture, but constitute an integrated part of it.

⁹⁶ The application of OSH management systems varies in the different countries, ranging from legal requirements to voluntary use.

► **Figure 2.** Enhancing OSH culture in the construction industry in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China

From 1986 to 2013, there was a decrease in the incidence of occupational injuries and diseases in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, China, thanks to the implementation of various OSH actions.

Technology and OSH management systems have made great strides in creating a safer world but, as this figure shows, the introduction and enhancement of a safety culture within the workplace can markedly reduce the number of accidents.



Source: Kim et al., 2016.

Box 9. Building a strong and positive OSH culture at the workplace level

A **positive OSH culture** is one in which management and workers value the right to a safe and healthy working environment and actively participate towards this end. It is built on open communication and dialogue between workers and employers, where workers feel comfortable sharing their thoughts about incidents and concerns.

Leadership and commitment to OSH by employers and senior management are crucial to creating a positive OSH culture. In fact, the perception of senior managers' attitudes and behaviours in relation to OSH will form the basis for the OSH behaviour of workers, and thus the OSH performance of the enterprise (Clarke, 1999).

Seven core values have been identified as important for the development of a positive OSH culture (Van Scheppingen et al.):



Social involvement



Participation



Justice



Resilience and flexibility



Trust



Development and growth



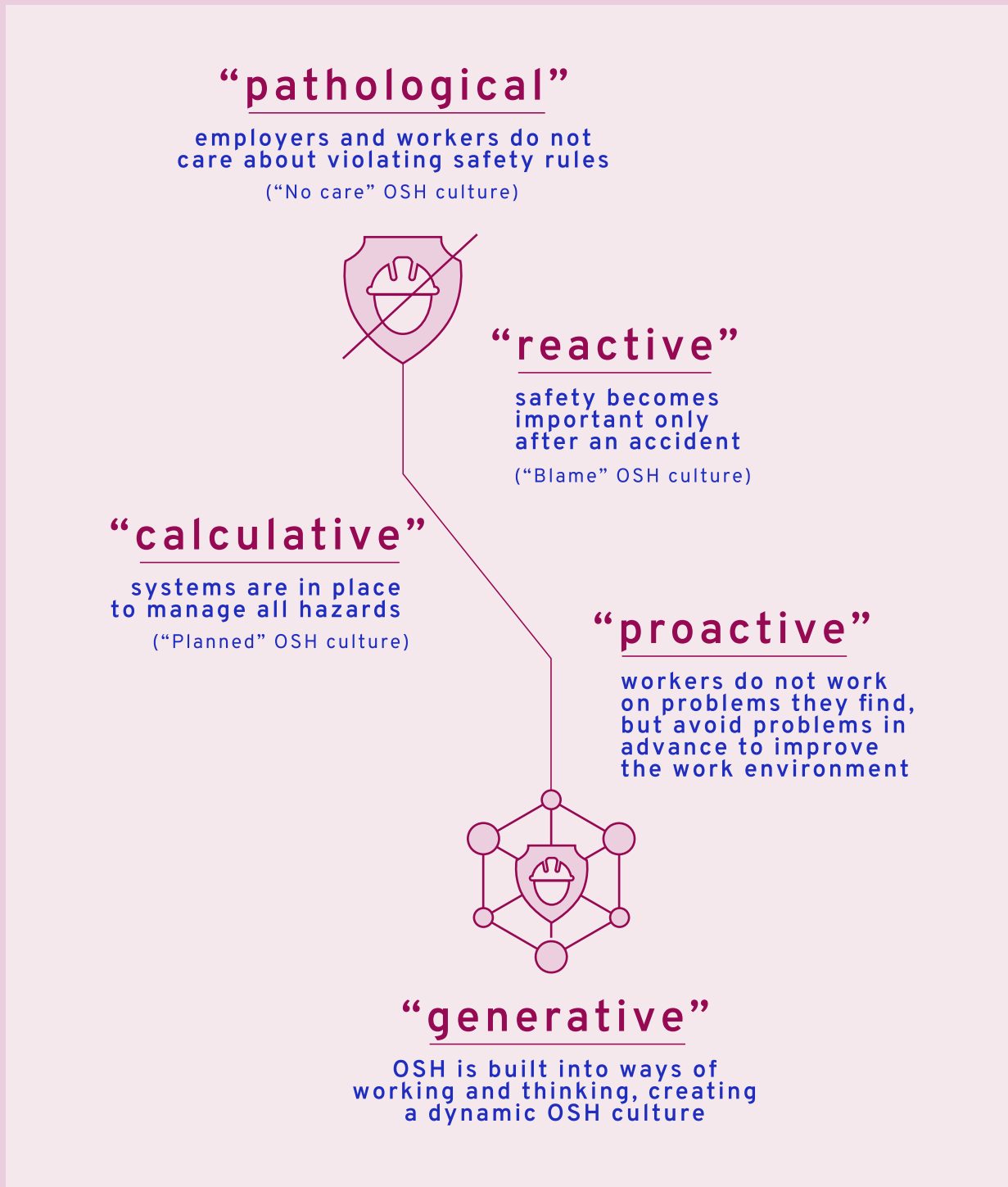
Sustainability

Each of these core values is important for the development of a positive OSH culture, and each can have a direct and indirect influence on OSH. At the same time, they also contribute to the business success of an enterprise.

Enterprises with a positive OSH culture:

- have a safety information system that collects, analyses and disseminates information from incidents and near misses, as well as from regular proactive checks on the system;
- have a reporting culture where people are prepared to report their errors, mistakes and violations;
- have a culture of trust where people are encouraged and even rewarded to provide essential safety-related information, but also in which it is clear where the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is drawn;
- are flexible, in terms of the ability to reconfigure the organizational structure in the face of a dynamic and demanding task environment;
- have the willingness and competence to draw the right conclusions from its safety system, and are willing to implement reform when it is required (Reason, 1997).

There are different stages of development of OSH culture (Kim et al., 2016):



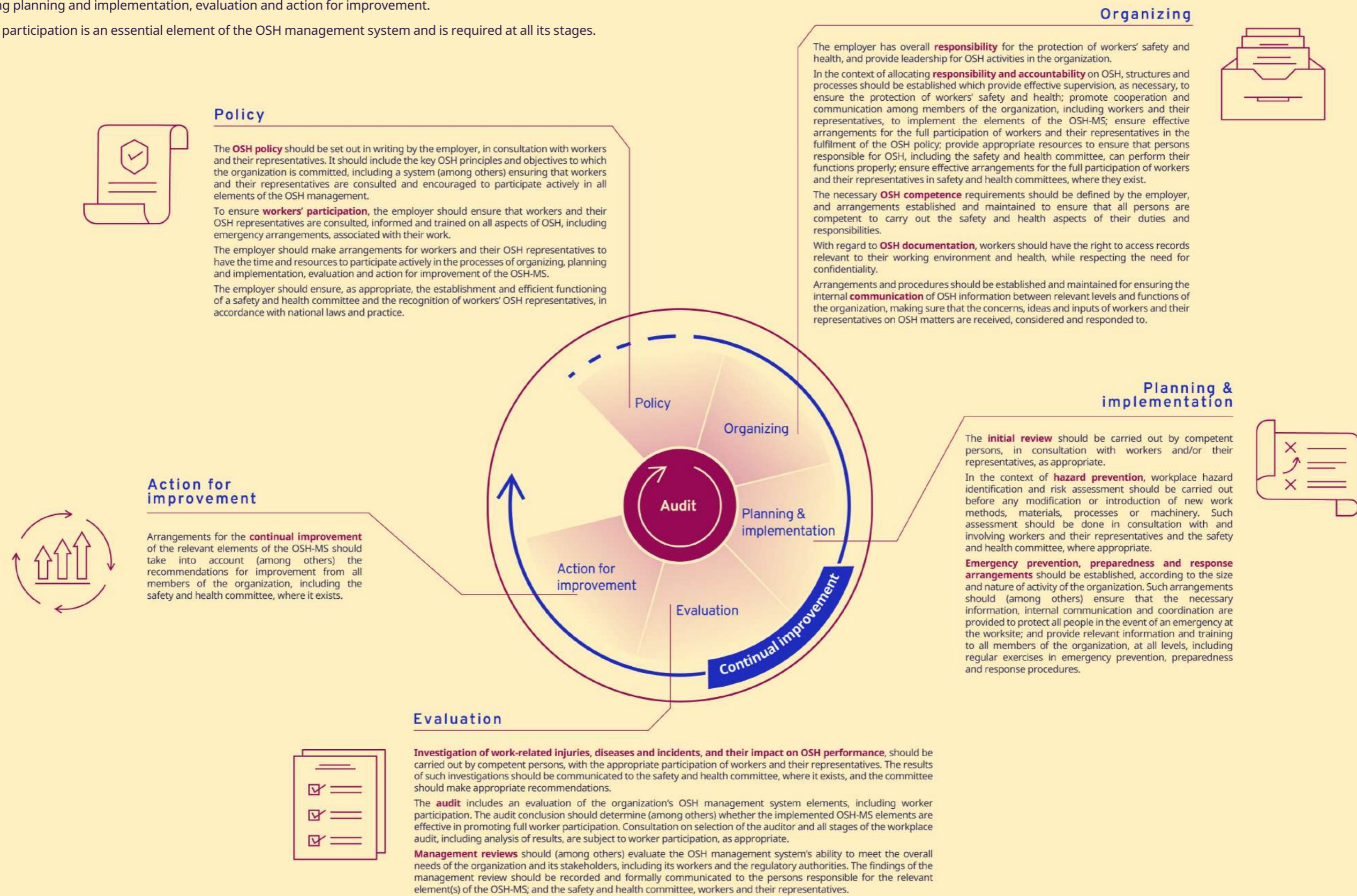
Through well-managed organizational changes, built on the foundation of social dialogue, enterprises may transform toward a positive OSH culture.



The ILO Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001) have been developed according to internationally agreed principles defined by the ILO's tripartite constituents with the purpose of achieving continual improvement in OSH performance. They state that appropriate arrangements should be made for the establishment of an OSH-management system, which should contain the following key elements: policy, organizing planning and implementation, evaluation and action for improvement.

Workers' participation is an essential element of the OSH management system and is required at all its stages.

► **Figure 3. ILO-OSH 2001 Guidelines: Workers' participation in all the OSH-MS elements**



Policy

The **OSH policy** should be set out in writing by the employer, in consultation with workers and their representatives. It should include the key OSH principles and objectives to which the organization is committed, including a system (among others) ensuring that workers and their representatives are consulted and encouraged to participate actively in all elements of the OSH management.

To ensure **workers' participation**, the employer should ensure that workers and their OSH representatives are consulted, informed and trained on all aspects of OSH, including emergency arrangements, associated with their work.

The employer should make arrangements for workers and their OSH representatives to have the time and resources to participate actively in the processes of organizing, planning and implementation, evaluation and action for improvement of the OSH-MS.

The employer should ensure, as appropriate, the establishment and efficient functioning of a safety and health committee and the recognition of workers' OSH representatives, in accordance with national laws and practice.

Organizing

The employer has overall **responsibility** for the protection of workers' safety and health, and provide leadership for OSH activities in the organization.

In the context of allocating **responsibility and accountability** on OSH, structures and processes should be established which provide effective supervision, as necessary, to ensure the protection of workers' safety and health; promote cooperation and communication among members of the organization, including workers and their representatives, to implement the elements of the OSH-MS; ensure effective arrangements for the full participation of workers and their representatives in the fulfilment of the OSH policy; provide appropriate resources to ensure that persons responsible for OSH, including the safety and health committee, can perform their functions properly; ensure effective arrangements for the full participation of workers and their representatives in safety and health committees, where they exist.

The necessary **OSH competence** requirements should be defined by the employer, and arrangements established and maintained to ensure that all persons are competent to carry out the safety and health aspects of their duties and responsibilities.

With regard to **OSH documentation**, workers should have the right to access records relevant to their working environment and health, while respecting the need for confidentiality.

Arrangements and procedures should be established and maintained for ensuring the internal **communication** of OSH information between relevant levels and functions of the organization, making sure that the concerns, ideas and inputs of workers and their representatives on OSH matters are received, considered and responded to.

Planning & implementation

The **initial review** should be carried out by competent persons, in consultation with workers and/or their representatives, as appropriate.

In the context of **hazard prevention**, workplace hazard identification and risk assessment should be carried out before any modification or introduction of new work methods, materials, processes or machinery. Such assessment should be done in consultation with and involving workers and their representatives and the safety and health committee, where appropriate.

Emergency prevention, preparedness and response arrangements should be established, according to the size and nature of activity of the organization. Such arrangements should (among others) ensure that the necessary information, internal communication and coordination are provided to protect all people in the event of an emergency at the worksite; and provide relevant information and training to all members of the organization, at all levels, including regular exercises in emergency prevention, preparedness and response procedures.

Evaluation

Investigation of work-related injuries, diseases and incidents, and their impact on OSH performance, should be carried out by competent persons, with the appropriate participation of workers and their representatives. The results of such investigations should be communicated to the safety and health committee, where it exists, and the committee should make appropriate recommendations.

The **audit** includes an evaluation of the organization's OSH management system elements, including worker participation. The audit conclusion should determine (among others) whether the implemented OSH-MS elements are effective in promoting full worker participation. Consultation on selection of the auditor and all stages of the workplace audit, including analysis of results, are subject to worker participation, as appropriate.

Management reviews should (among others) evaluate the OSH management system's ability to meet the overall needs of the organization and its stakeholders, including its workers and the regulatory authorities. The findings of the management review should be recorded and formally communicated to the persons responsible for the relevant element(s) of the OSH-MS; and the safety and health committee, workers and their representatives.

Action for improvement

Arrangements for the **continual improvement** of the relevant elements of the OSH-MS should take into account (among others) the recommendations for improvement from all members of the organization, including the safety and health committee, where it exists.

As part of OSH management, employers should identify the hazards and control the risks in their workplace. To do this they need to think about what might cause harm to workers and others, and decide whether they are doing enough to prevent this situation. This process is known as **risk assessment**. Risk assessment is about identifying hazards, evaluating the associated risks, and taking sensible and proportionate measures to control such risks.⁹⁷

A well-conducted workplace risk assessment will contribute to the protection of workers' health and well-being, and will also benefit businesses through a better organization of working practices - potentially increasing productivity. The ILO has developed a number of tools to support employers, workers and their representatives in the risk assessment process, which contain a number of simple and logical steps they should follow.⁹⁸

Box 10. The social partners encourage COVID-19 risk assessments in Indonesia for MSMEs and the hospitality industry⁹⁹

During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all enterprises have been impacted and suffered losses. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and the hospitality industry are among some of the enterprises that have been hardest hit by the pandemic and its effects.

Two employers' organizations in Indonesia, the Indonesian Employers' Association (Apindo) and the Indonesian Hotels and Restaurants' Association (PHRI), are, in partnership with the ILO, encouraging their enterprise members in Jakarta to take advantage of a free COVID-19 risk assessment service based on the Indonesian national guidelines for operating safely during the pandemic. The free risk assessment project also includes advice from OSH doctors, who can advise enterprises on steps to take following their risk assessment. Furthermore, the Ministry of Manpower and various trade union confederations are included as key partners in the project's development and implementation.

The risk assessment service has been provided free of charge to over 1,500 workplaces across Indonesia.



Employers should ensure that workers and/or their representatives are fully involved in the risk assessment process. They will have useful information about how the work is done – and this will help make the risk assessment more thorough and effective.

⁹⁷ According to the ILO-OSH 2001 Guidelines: Preventive and protective measures should be implemented in the following order of priority: (a) eliminate the hazard/risk; (b) control the hazard/risk at source, through the use of engineering controls or organizational measures; (c) minimize the hazard/risk by the design of safe work systems, which include administrative control measures; and (d) where residual hazards/risks cannot be controlled by collective measures, the employer should provide for appropriate personal protective equipment, including clothing, at no cost, and should implement measures to ensure its use and maintenance (Section 3.10.1).

⁹⁸ See ILO: [A 5 step guide for employers, workers and their representatives on conducting workplace risk assessments](#) (2013).

⁹⁹ See ILO: [Press Release: ILO, Apindo and PHRI to enhance COVID-19 prevention measures in hospitality industry and SMEs](#); and the webpage of the ILO Project: [Enhancing COVID-19 prevention at and through workplaces: Job creation through business re-opening and continuation](#).

Box 11. The ILO participatory action-oriented training approach (PAOT)¹⁰⁰

The participatory action-oriented training (PAOT) methodology was originally developed in the 1980s to disseminate good practices and solutions for helping overcome the constraints typically experienced by grassroots organizations - such as a low budget, limited managerial capacity and limited logistic means.

Over the years, the ILO has developed a series of training programmes using the PAOT approach, in which employers, managers and workers - including farmers - are empowered and supported to improve OSH, working conditions and productivity. Based on a self-assessment conducted by walking through the workplace and using PAOT action checklists, participants can identify OSH priorities and develop creative and practical ideas, using locally available resources.

The “participatory approach” emphasizes the need for the participation of both the employers’ and workers’ organizations to ensure the continuous improvement of OSH conditions and productivity. PAOT includes several techniques encouraging mutual advice and collaboration between employers and workers and their representatives - but also among the different enterprises. Benchmarking, meeting and discussing with others or visiting their working environment provide broader perspectives.



Workers’ engagement in OSH issues is particularly relevant during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as new hazards and risks might arise as a result of the situation and in the light of newly adopted measures. The active participation of workers and their representatives in any decision-making contributes to the adoption of sustainable and appropriate solutions, and results in a stronger commitment to the decisions taken.

¹⁰⁰ See the [ILO participatory action-oriented training approach \(PAOT\) platform](#)





- ▶ In Canada, workers' representatives worked together with employers to create COVID-19 mitigation plans, including screening processes and contact tracing.¹⁰¹
- ▶ In Sri Lanka, workers and employers in two tea plantation estates in Kalutara and Ratnapura engaged in a joint OSH training. Participants identified areas for OSH improvement in the tea processing factory and plantation farm that they visited.¹⁰²
- ▶ A United Kingdom-based software company *Sage* created a live anonymous poll for workers to report observations regarding pandemic OSH plans (Galinsky, 2022).
- ▶ The HSE in Ireland produced guidance stressing how essential it was to consult with workers at every stage of implementing COVID-19 measures in the workplace. It also underlined the need to appoint a COVID-19 Lead Worker Representative to assist in implementing and communicating COVID-19 measures.¹⁰³
- ▶ In India, the Kerala State government and the ILO organized online training for the mitigation of COVID-19 risks in the workplace. This training was utilized by several enterprises, with workers and employers working together to develop ideas for improvements in their respective workplaces.¹⁰⁴
- ▶ *Panasonic Manufacturing Indonesia* created a task force for addressing COVID-19 in the workplace, which coordinated with the government and involved management and workers.¹⁰⁵

ILO tools to protect workers' safety and health during the Covid-19 crisis

The ILO produced a number of tools to support employers and workers in managing OSH risks during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

[Anticipate, prepare and respond to crises – Invest now in resilient occupational safety and health systems](#) (World Day for Safety and Health at Work Report, April 2021);

[Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 at work: Action checklist](#) (April 2020);

[In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring safety and health at work](#) (World Day for Safety and Health at Work Report, April 2020);

[A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic – Policy Brief](#) (May 2020);

[A Safe Return to Work: Ten Action Points](#) (May 2020);

[Managing work-related psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (June 2020);

[Practical Guide on Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond](#) (July 2020);

[COVID-19 and health facilities: Checklist of measures to be taken in health facilities](#) (July 2020);

[Hand hygiene at the workplace: an essential occupational safety and health prevention and control measure against COVID-19 – Briefing Note](#) (September 2020); and

[Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 at work for small and medium-sized enterprises: Action Checklist and Follow-up](#) (August 2020)

[ILO/WHO Preventing and mitigating COVID-19 at work, policy brief](#) (May 2021)

101 See Government of Ontario: [COVID-19 and workplace health and safety](#) (2020)/

102 Information provided by the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team (DWT) for South Asia and Country Office for India (DWT/CO-New Delhi)

103 See HSE Ireland: [Work safely – arrangements for COVID-19](#) (2021).

104 See ILO: [Good practice in workplaces against COVID-19](#) (2021).

105 See ILO: [Good practice in workplaces against COVID-19](#) (2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to **work from home** has been posing considerable challenges to ensure safe and healthy working conditions, for which both employers and workers were not always prepared physically, mentally or infrastructure-wise. According to a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), 71 per cent of employers were struggling to adjust to remote work; 65 per cent of employers stated that maintaining employee morale had been a challenge; and more than one third of employers were facing difficulties with company culture, employee productivity and annual leave regulation.¹⁰⁶ A survey of 1,000 workers in the United States found that four out of five workers found it difficult to “disconnect” in the evening after work, with 45 per cent saying that they felt their mental health was worse while teleworking (Westfall, 2020).

Even though it may be difficult for employers to carry out traditional risk assessments at a worker's home, it remains the employers' responsibility to check that:

- ▶ the work can be safely performed from home – this may imply adjustments to the tasks, if needed.
- ▶ workers have the right equipment and tools to work safely at home, including the required protective or safety equipment, where applicable;
- ▶ workers have the relevant information, instruction, supervision and training, including measures to deal with emergencies;
- ▶ reasonable accommodations are made for workers with disabilities in relation to the work they are required to perform from home;
- ▶ arrangements are made to protect workers' physical and mental health and well-being.

In this context, the cooperation between employers and people who are working from home is of clear importance. Workers should be able to regularly communicate their concerns and the challenges experienced with the newly adopted policies and guidelines to their employers.



- ▶ A study by *WorldatWork* found that communication between employers and employees regarding OSH issues had increased while working from home during the pandemic, with 88 per cent of employers stating that they had increased their safety and health-related communications with their workers (*WorldatWork*, 2020).
- ▶ *Mercury Systems*, a multinational aerospace company with workers around the world, has surveyed its workers regularly during COVID-19-induced teleworking, to identify areas of concern for workers and receive feedback (Galinsky, 2022).
- ▶ A joint technical brief produced by the ILO and WHO examines the healthy benefits and risks of telework. It provides policy suggestions for addressing the risks incurred, and examines the roles of governments, employers, workers and workplace health services¹⁰⁷.

In conclusion, building a culture of prevention on OSH at the workplace level - based on a sound OSH management system capable of facing new challenges and emergencies - requires the full engagement and participation of both employers and workers. Appropriate and sustainable OSH measures can only be successfully designed and implemented through dialogue based on mutual trust and cooperation.

¹⁰⁶ See SHRM: [Remote Work](#) (2022).

¹⁰⁷ See WHO/ILO: [Healthy and Safe Telework](#) (2022).





▷ Strengthening social dialogue to promote OSH during crises and beyond

As we all know, we are living in unprecedented times across the globe, where every country is still experiencing the devastating and far-reaching impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This situation and its consequences are expected to persist for many months - and even years to come.

In addition to the tragic loss of life and damage to human health and communities, the pandemic has had devastating effects on the world of work. It has led to increased unemployment, underemployment, inactivity and informality; reduced labour and business income, resulting in enterprise closures and bankruptcies, particularly in the case of small enterprises; new challenges in OSH and safety and fundamental rights at work; and disrupted supply chains, with wide-ranging implications for the workers involved. As a result of all these factors, the pandemic has exacerbated poverty as well as gender, economic and social inequality.

There are probably very few workers worldwide who can say that they have not been affected by COVID-19. The pandemic has exposed workers and people in the world of work to the risk of infection with the novel coronavirus, as well as to new and emerging risks related to long-term health effects correlated with this emergency and the newly adopted work practices and procedures. For instance, psychosocial risks are becoming of increasing concern, as they may affect both workers and employers in many different sectors and occupations.

As pointed out throughout this report, country responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have shown the importance of the participation of social partners in the governance of safety and health at work. We must carry this lesson with us to exit this crisis and help us face any future crises that might lie ahead, constantly striving to reduce OSH risks and prevent work-related accidents and diseases outside of the context of a crisis.

From the beginning of the crisis, governments of many countries have involved the social partners in the national discussion to identify appropriate policies and strategies to protect people in the world of work from the novel coronavirus and other related risks. The social partners' participation in the decision-making process has clearly improved the quality of policies and strategies, thanks to their in-depth knowledge of the needs and realities of companies and workers. This social dialogue has also built the social partners' ownership and commitment to the adopted policies, thus facilitating their rapid and effective implementation.¹⁰⁸ In many countries, it has resulted in the adoption of legal requirements, including regulations, technical standards and/or collective agreements, covering different areas – from measures to prevent and deal with cases of COVID-19 in the workplace to telework arrangements.

Collaboration and dialogue with other relevant stakeholders, such as partnerships with public health and emergency services actors on issues of common concern, have proven to be vital during the COVID-19 pandemic. As COVID-19 has been a source of worry for workers and the general public alike, its response has required a coordinated response. Given that workplaces are settings where people often gather in close proximity, many public health measures have specifically targeted them by implementing mandatory teleworking and measures such as masking. In addition, many national vaccine campaigns have included priority access to vaccines for certain groups of workers particularly at risk for infection, such as those in healthcare and emergency responders.¹⁰⁹

Vaccination campaigns among workers in general have been key to increasing the overall community uptake of the vaccine, and reducing community spread and clusters of infections in the workplace. In this area, employers and occupational physicians have been able to partner with local public health officials to organize onsite vaccinations. The involvement of workers' representatives has been essential in providing information to workers about vaccination, informing them on the logistics of vaccination rollouts, and encouraging uptake.

As the world continues to adapt and respond to the continually evolving situation, this close partnership and collaboration between the public health authorities and OSH actors – including the social partners – will remain critical in guaranteeing that appropriate measures are taken to safeguard workers and the community. Expanding this dialogue will be crucial toward strengthening OSH systems at all levels so that they are prepared to respond to the safety and health needs of workers in cases of future unforeseen events and emergencies.

Throughout the pandemic, employers' and workers' organizations have also been key in ensuring effective and coordinated communication and information to promote compliance, and contributed to the subsequent adoption of adequate OSH measures at the workplace. Indeed, the social partners have developed awareness-raising campaigns, as well as information and training materials. When jointly designed and realized, such initiatives may have a stronger impact.

Effective collaboration between employers and workers at the workplace level is the cornerstone of a sound OSH management system – and vital for safety and health at work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces have needed to adopt new procedures and measures to prevent contagion and mitigate other risks that arise, including due to changes in working arrangements. Workers' participation and engagement, through joint OSH committees or workers OSH representatives, can contribute to the design of suitable and effective measures, adapted to the workplace and workers' needs, as well as to their successful implementation.

108 See ILO: [ILO Policy Brief: the need for social dialogue in addressing the COVID-19 crisis](#) (May 2020).

109 According to the Oxford Covid policy tracker (available [here](#)) from the University of Oxford, the top three priority categories in the official vaccination plans of 167 countries were most often older people, the clinically vulnerable and frontline healthcare workers.

Box 12. Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient: the centrality of social dialogue to protect all workers.

At the International Labour Conference in June 2021, Government, Employers' and Workers delegates from 181 countries unanimously adopted the ***Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient.***

The Global Call to Action commits countries to work for an economic and social recovery from the crisis, promoting decent work and addressing inequalities.

It targets four key areas:

- Inclusive economic growth and employment
- Protection of all workers
- Universal social protection
- Social dialogue

The *Call to Action* highlights the need to provide all workers with adequate protection, and reinforces respect for international labour standards, including those on OSH. It also calls for ensuring that workers at a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 - and those at greater risk of negative health impacts, such as healthcare workers and all other frontline workers, including those working transnationally - have access to vaccines, personal protective equipment, training, testing and psychosocial support, and that they are adequately remunerated and protected at work, including against excessive workloads.

Recognizing that safe and healthy working conditions are fundamental to decent work, the *Call to Action* asks countries to strengthen occupational safety and health measures by cooperating with public institutions, private enterprises, employers, workers and their representatives on the provision of tailored practical guidance; support for risk management; the introduction of appropriate control and emergency preparedness measures; measures to prevent new outbreaks or other occupational risks; and compliance with health measures and other COVID-19- based rules and regulation.

It also calls upon countries to introduce, utilize and adapt teleworking and other new work arrangements so as to retain jobs and expand decent work opportunities through, among other means, regulation, social dialogue, collective bargaining, workplace cooperation and efforts to reduce disparities in digital access, respecting international labour standards and privacy and promoting data protection and work-life balance.

The Call to Action recognizes the role that social dialogue, both bipartite and tripartite, has played in the immediate response to the COVID-19 pandemic in many countries and sectors and its importance to support delivery of the outcomes it sets out, including through governments consulting with social partners on designing and implementing national recovery plans and policies addressing the need for retention and creation of decent jobs, business continuity, and investment in priority sectors and areas.



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► Annex: Resources and tools

Selected ILO tools on COVID-19

Title	Description	Link
Anticipate, prepare and respond to crises: Invest now in resilient occupational safety and health systems	This report examines elements of a strong and resilient OSH system. It provides examples from the COVID-19 pandemic to highlight the way in which OSH systems can build strength following a crisis. <i>The annex of this report contains resources from international organizations, governments, employers and workers organizations.</i>	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_780927/lang--en/index.htm
In the face of a pandemic: Ensuring Safety and Health at Work	This reports discusses the role of OSH during the COVID-19 crisis. <i>The annex of the report includes resources from international organizations, governments, employers and workers organizations.</i>	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/events-training/events-meetings/world-day-safety-health-at-work/WCMS_742463/lang--en/index.htm
A global survey of employer and business membership organizations: Inside impacts and responses to COVID-19	This survey conducted by the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) examines the demands and challenges faced by employer and business membership organizations including factors related to OSH.	https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_749379/lang--en/index.htm
A quick reference guide to common COVID-19 policy responses	This reference guide developed by ILO ACT/EMP discusses common policy measures in response to the pandemic that affect businesses directly or indirectly including a section on enhancing safety and health at work.	https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_754728/lang--en/index.htm
COVID-19 and Recovery: The role of Trade Unions in Building Forward Better	This issue of the International Journal of Labour Research published by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) explores strategies for workers and their organizations to shape COVID-19 response policies.	https://www.ilo.org/actrav/international-journal-labour-research/2021/WCMS_806895/lang--en/index.htm
COVID-19, Collective Bargaining and Social Dialogue	This report developed by ACTRAV attempts to shed light on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the process and outcomes of collective bargaining in particular and social dialogue more generally. It is based upon the responses of more than 200 trade union officials to an online global survey carried out between March and May of 2021 and includes the insights of frontline union negotiators who were subjected to in-depth interviews by the authors.	https://www.ilo.org/actrav/pubs/WCMS_828623/lang--en/index.htm
COVID-19 and the world of work	This web portal provides resources and news on how COVID-19 is affecting the world of work.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/lang--en/index.htm
COVID-19 and the world of work: Country policy responses	This database compiles country policy responses to COVID-19 and is updated regularly, including policies on OSH.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/regionalcountry/countryresponses/lang--en/index.htm

Digitalize, adapt and innovate: Challenges and opportunities for trade unions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and the recovery period	This article explores the emerging challenges for workers' organizations that intersect with digital technology deficits at national level and growing informalization, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.	https://www.ilo.org/actrav/pubs/WCMS_810066/lang--en/index.htm
ILO Standards and COVID-19 (coronavirus)	This FAQ document provides key provisions of international labour standards relevant to the evolving COVID-19 outbreak.	https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_739937/lang--en/index.htm
Needs assessment survey: The impact of COVID-19 on enterprises	This survey tool developed by ACT/EMP helps employers and business membership organizations evaluate priorities and challenges of enterprises during the pandemic including questions about health risks.	https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_752426/lang--en/index.htm
A 10-step tool for a safe and healthy return to work in times of COVID	This tool recommends steps for a safe reopening of workplaces during the pandemic.	https://www.ilo.org/americas/publicaciones/WCMS_745881/lang--en/index.htm
Enterprise survey tool: Assessing training needs resulting from COVID-19	This tool developed by ACT/EMP can be used by employer and business membership organizations to assess training needs, including those focused on OSH.	https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_751610/lang--en/index.htm
Preventing and mitigating COVID-19 at work: Policy Brief	This brief provides practical guidance for national and local authorities, as well as employers and workers, on the implementation of measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.	https://www.ilo.org/safework/WCMS_793047/lang--en/index.htm
Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work ACTION CHECKLIST	This tool offers a simple and collaborative approach to assess COVID-19 risks as a step to take measures to protect the safety and health of workers.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-andhealth-at-work/resourceslibrary/publications/WCMS_741813/lang--en/index.htm
A safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic: Policy Brief	This guidance note aims to assist governments and employers' and workers' organizations in developing national policy guidance for a phased and safe return to work.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_745549/lang--en/index.htm
Safe return to work: Guide for employers on COVID-19 prevention	This guide developed by ACT/EMP provides recommendations for OSH practices on COVID-19 prevention, mental health and safe returns to work.	https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_744033/lang--en/index.htm
Safe Return to Work: Ten Action Points	This tool provides a list of preventive action measures that employer, workers and other parties can take toward healthy returns to work.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-andhealth-at-work/resourceslibrary/publications/WCMS_745541/lang--en/index.htm
Social Dialogue, Skills and COVID-19	This publication discusses the importance and role of social dialogue during management of the COVID-19 pandemic, including training and considerations for occupational safety and health.	https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_758550/lang--en/index.htm
Trade union membership dynamics amidst COVID-19: Does social dialogue matter?	This article for the International Journal of Labour Research examines the role of social dialogue in reshaping recovery and proposes policy interventions.	https://www.ilo.org/actrav/pubs/WCMS_810048/lang--en/index.htm

The New Training Package on Essentials in Occupational Safety and Health (EOSH)	This training tool developed by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC-ILO) includes modules on creating a safety and health culture at work, including sections on emergency responses and a dedicated section on COVID-19. Available for a fee.	https://www.itcilo.org/projects/new-trainingpackage-essentialsoccupational-safety-andhealth-eosh
Managing work-related psychosocial risks during the COVID-19 pandemic	This document outlines actions that workplaces can take to mitigate the psychosocial risks during the pandemic. The annex of this document also includes many resources on COVID-19 and mental health.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_748638/lang-en/index.htm

Selected ILO Tools on Social Dialogue and OSH

Title	Description	Link
Analysis of the activities of employer and business membership organizations in the COVID-19 pandemic and what comes next	This report developed by ACT/EMP looks at how employer and business member organizations contributed to delivering crucial services during the COVID-19 crisis.	https://www.ilo.org/actemp/publications/WCMS_766658/lang-en/index.htm
Diálogo social tripartito en seguridad y salud en el trabajo. Marcos regulatorios, avances y desafíos en seis países de América Latina	This report examines the key role of tripartite specialized bodies in promoting national policies and programmes on OSH during challenges such as the pandemic. <i>Only available in Spanish.</i>	wcms_836584.pdf (ilo.org)
Handbook for Joint Safety and health Committees in the English-Speaking Caribbean	This handbook discusses the implementation of joint responsibility systems at the workplace level regarding OSH.	https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-port_of_spain/documents/publication/wcms_224326.pdf
Improving Occupational safety and health in the global coffee value chain in Honduras: Drivers and constraints	As part of a project on the coffee value chain in Honduras funded by the Vision Zero Fund (VZF) with resources provided by the European Commission, a study was conducted to identify the drivers and constraints affecting OSH and to recommend a number of interventions based on social dialogue.	https://www.ilo.org/sanjose/WCMS_759585/lang-en/index.htm
National Tripartite Social Dialogue: An ILO guide for improving governance	This guide discusses strategies for improving tripartite dialogue at the national level.	wcms_231193.pdf (ilo.org)
The Future of Work: Trade Unions in Transformation	This issue of the International Journal of Labour Research published by ACTRAV examines the transformations of trade unions in the move toward the future of work and discusses the importance of OSH during these changes.	https://www.ilo.org/actrav/international-journal-labour-research/WCMS_731147/lang-en/index.htm
Using Health and Safety Committees at Work	This training module developed by ITC-ILO provides trainees with background information on the role and function of health and safety committees.	Using health and Safety Committees at Work (itcilo.org)

Selected ILO tools on workplace OSH management

Title	Description	Link
OSH MS 2001	This guide provides information on occupational safety and health management systems.	https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@safework/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_107727.pdf
A 5-step guide for employers, workers and their representatives on conducting workplace risk assessments	This guide aims to help employers, workers and their representatives assess safety and health risks in the workplace.	https://www.ilo.org/safework/info/publications/WCMS_232886/lang--en/index.htm
ILO training package on development of a national programme of occupational safety and health	This training module examines the need to enhance OSH governance by improving OSH policies, systems, programmes and action plans.	wcms_215356.pdf (ilo.org)
Participatory Action-Oriented Training (PAOT)	PAOT is a practical method of stimulating and supporting workplace initiatives in grassroots workplace relying on self-help voluntary actions. This webpage provides links to more specific resources related to PAOT.	https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/training/WCMS_736031/lang--en/index.htm
Training Package on Workplace Risk Assessment and Management for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises	This training package on risk assessment and management at the workplace gives information for employers at SMEs to improve safety and health in their workplaces.	wcms_215344.pdf (ilo.org)

Other selected tools to promote workplace cooperation on OSH

Title	Author	Description	Link
Guía del comité o supervisor de seguridad y salud en el trabajo	Ministerio de Trabajo y Promoción del Empleo (Peru)	The guide explain in a practical way the provisions OSH that are provided in the current national regulations, in relation to the Committee or Supervisor of Safety and Health at Work. <i>Available only in Spanish</i>	guia_de_comite_SST (www.gob.pe)
Guía de buena practicas para Comites de Seguridad y Salud (CSS)	Instituto Sindical de Trabajo, Ambiente y Salud (Istas), Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social (Spain)	The guide aims to provide a tool to improve the implementation of joint OSH committee in the workplace and their effectiveness.	http://istas.net/descargas/GUIA_DE_BUENAS_PRACTICAS_05_6.pdf
Industrial Relations	International Organization of Employers	This website provides resources on industrial relations, including those related to OSH.	https://www.ioe-emp.org/policy-priorities/industrial-relations

Involvement of social partners in policymaking during the COVID-19 outbreak	Eurofound	This paper examines how social dialogue can be effective for addressing crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic.	https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2021/involvement-of-social-partners-in-policymaking-during-the-covid-19-outbreak
Manual Guía Para la estructuración y actuación de Comité Mixto de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo	Dirección General De Higiene Y Seguridad Industrial (DGHSI) (Santo Domingo)	The purpose of this manual is to support enterprises in the creation of joint OSH committees. It includes answers to the most frequently asked questions about joint OSH committees, as well as the concepts and tools to facilitate the implementation and operation of committee in the simplest and most effective way. <i>Available in Spanish</i>	https://ovi.mt.gob.do/Files/Manual%20Guia%20DGHSI.pdf
Constitución y funcionamiento de los comités mixtos	Ministerio de Salud, Gobierno de la provincia de Buenos Aires (Argentina)	The manual is intended to promote active participation of OSH joint committees in managing OSH in the workplace. It provides links to self-assessment questionnaires to promote the creation and functioning of OSH joint committees. <i>Available in Spanish</i>	https://www.ms.gba.gov.ar/sitios/pepst/files/2021/06/Manual-Constituci%C3%B3n-y-Funcionamiento-de-los-Comit%C3%A9s-Mixtos-PEPSyT.pdf
CultureSAFE	Tripartite Alliance for Workplace Safety and Health, Singapore	This web portal provides information on how to improve the safety culture of an enterprise.	https://www.tal.sg/wshc/programmes/culturesafe/about-culturesafe
Guía para implementar la ergonomía participativa en los lugares de trabajo	Instituto de Salud Pública de Chile	The guide entails a methodological structure, with a preventive orientation, to incorporate a participative management on OSH and ergonomics in the enterprise. <i>Available in Spanish</i>	https://www.ispch.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Gu%C3%ADa-T%C3%A9cnica-Ergonom%C3%ADa-Participativa-v0.pdf
Guide to effective communication in occupational risk prevention in the company and promote the PRL	Government of Spain, Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security	This guide provides procedures and recommendations for the improvement of internal communication on risk prevention, in order to create a preventive OSH culture. The guide also proposes practical tools and good practices for improving internal communication.	https://portal.croem.es/Web20/CROEMPrevencionRiesgos.nsf/F350EE6B4FD1CAC5C12584B20039259D/\$FILE/GU%C3%8DA%20COMUNICACI%C3%93N%20PRL%20DE%20CEPONTEVEDRA.pdf
Good practice tips: Joint involvement – safety committees and inspections	Health and Safety Executive, UK	This web resource provides good practice tips on joint involvement for health and safety committees at the workplace level.	https://www.hse.gov.uk/involvement/preparetips/jointinv.htm
Managing health and safety committees	WorkSafe New Zealand	This web resource describes the main functions of a health and safety committee.	https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/health-and-safety-committees/
Joint Health and Safety Committee Creation	Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety	This web resource describes to how to select members on a health and safety committee and its functions.	https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/hsccommittees/creation.html

Social dialogue in occupational safety and health	OSH Wiki, European Union	This online resource describes what social dialogue is and how it related to OSH.	https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Social_dialogue_in_occupational_safety_and_health
Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees: A practical Guide for Single Employer Workplaces	Labour and Workplace Development, Nova Scotia	This guide describes the roles and responsibilities of a joint OSH committees and how to evaluate the effectiveness of such committees.	https://novascotia.ca/lae/healthandsafety/docs/JOHCommitteeSingleEmployer.pdf
Occupational Health Committees	Saskatchewan, Canada	This online guide describes the duties of occupational health committees.	https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/safety-in-the-workplace/ohc-and-ohs-representative/ohc
Joint Health and Safety Committee Fundamentals	WorkSafe BC	This workbook describes the fundamentals of creating and maintaining a joint health and safety committee.	https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj3y5qX4sz2AhVS_rsIHVIFCgM4FBAWegQIERAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.worksafebc.com%2Fresources%2Fhealth-safety%2Fbooks-guides%2Fjoint-committee-participant-workbook%3Flang%3Den%26direct&usg=AOvVaw1iP9PXDHGQWf1Q5iiEfYN6
Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee Foundation Workbook	WorkSafe BC	This workbook looks at concepts and methods to develop and maintain an effective Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee at your workplace.	https://www.uvic.ca/ohse/assets/docs/JHSC_Responsibilities_Workbook.pdf
Remote Collaboration: Facing the challenges of COVID-19	Deloitte	This presentation discusses ways that employers can collaborate actively with workers during telework, including on areas related to OSH.	https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/de/Documents/human-capital/Remote-Collaboration-COVID-19.pdf
Health and Safety and Organizing	Trades Union Congress (TUC), UK	This publication discusses safety committees and other ways social dialogue contributes to OSH.	TUC 25951 Health and Safety Organising Report v4 Lo-res. pdf
Management Leadership in Occupational Safety and Health – a practical guide	EU-OSHA	This guide gives business leaders practical information on how safety and health can be improved through effective leadership, worker involvement and ongoing assessment and review, making businesses and organisations safe and healthy for everyone. A diagnostic check gives an idea of the level of prevention in a company and provides ideas for improvement.	https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/management-leadership-occupational-safety-and-health-practical-guide

Union Health and Safety Programs	United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)	This web resource describes health and safety program tips, tips for union participation in joint health and safety committee meetings and other information. <i>Also available in Spanish.</i>	https://www.ueunion.org/stwd_hlthsftyprgms.html
The impact of safety representatives on occupational health	European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)	This publication describes how safety representatives influence OSH and different approaches and activities.	https://perc.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/FINAL-INT-UK-ETU009_Epsare_UK_Int_v05.pdf
Safety culture	Health and Safety Executive (HSE), UK	This information note discusses the concept of safety culture and key aspects of an effective culture of safety.	https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKewjqt4vV6sz2AhVa_rsIHdxVAgQQFnoECCsQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.hse.gov.uk%2Fhumanfactors%2Ftopics%2Fcommon4.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2m3NKZzNs6FDpepKnnGesU
Worker participation in Occupational Safety and Health – A Practical Guide	EU-OSHA	This guide outlines the respective roles, responsibilities and duties of employers, workers and their representatives. It gives concrete examples of steps that all parties can take to meaningfully improve occupational safety and health. This guide also contains a ‘checklist’ that workers and their representatives can work through to ensure that they are doing their utmost to reduce risks.	https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/worker-participation-occupational-safety-and-health-practical-guide

International Labour Organization

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