

OIRA PROMOTION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

1 Introduction

The OiRA web application helps Sectoral Social Partners (employers' and employees' organisations) and National Authorities (Ministries, Labour Inspectorates, OSH institutes, etc.) to produce sector-specific risk assessment tools (RA tools) targeting small businesses.

Proper risk assessment is the key to healthy workplaces. Yet carrying out risk assessments can be quite challenging, particularly for micro and small enterprises that may lack the resources or the occupational safety and health (OSH) know-how to do so effectively. To facilitate the process, EU-OSHA has developed a comprehensive yet easy to use and cost-free web application, the OiRA Online interactive Risk Assessment tool. OiRA helps micro and small organisations to put in place a thorough step-by-step risk assessment process – from the identification and evaluation of workplace risks, through decision making on preventive actions and their completion, to continued monitoring and reporting. See [documentation about the OiRA tool](#) for more information.

The aim of this E-fact is to provide Member State policy makers, EU and national social partners, OSH-experts, researchers and other relevant networks or associations with information on the implementation strategy of sector-specific risk assessment tools for micro and small enterprises.

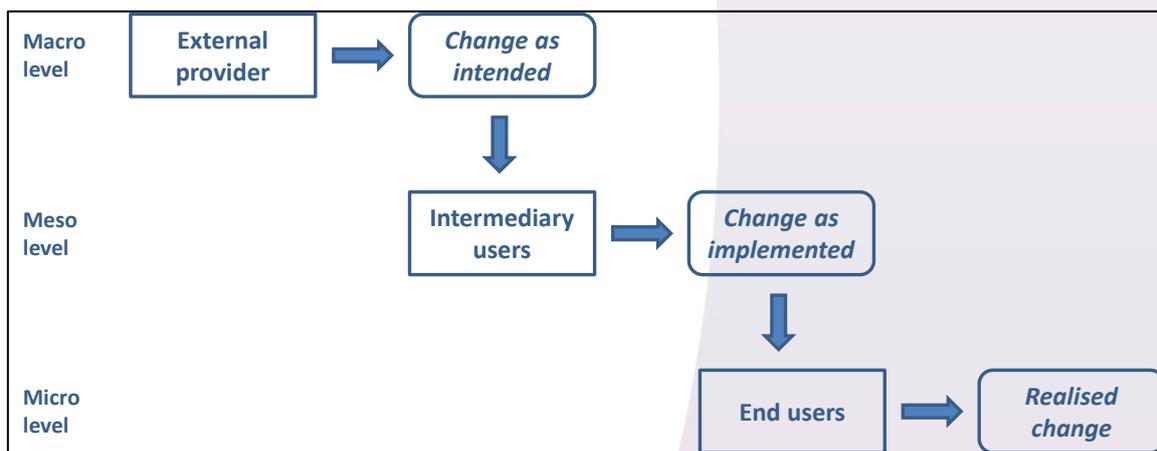
The Dutch experience with the RI&E tools is an important source of information. The RI&E tools named after the Dutch word for RA tools ('Risico- Inventarisatie- en Evaluatie-instrumenten') were among the first online risk assessment tools to be developed in Europe. The development of digital risk assessment tools in the Netherlands grew significantly after the development in 2003 of a so called generic tool for MKB Nederland (the Dutch employers' organisation for micro and small enterprises). Over the years the activities have resulted in the development of specific tools in many Dutch sectors and several promotion and implementation activities.

2 The role of different stakeholders

The implementation of OiRA involves several actors: the external provider (in this case EU-OSHA), intermediary users and the end-users (the businesses). They all have a role and contribute to successful implementation. Figure 1 illustrates these three actors.

To reach success it is important that all stakeholders have a common goal and a common idea about how to reach that goal.

Figure 1: External initiated innovation processes distinguished by level of implementation (Paulussen, 1994)



For the OiRA project we can distinguish three levels of implementation:

- Macro level: EU-OSHA the provider of the OiRA web application allowing the development of OiRA sectoral tools: to foster the development of free, easy to use interactive RA tools facilitating the risk assessment process among micro and small businesses throughout the EU;
- Meso level: Intermediary organisations (government, social partners) on national or sector level: to develop and promote the OiRA tools and stimulate and support their use;
- Micro level: Businesses (employers and employees): use the OiRA tools and continue to use them. This leads to improvements of the working conditions.

3 Strategy to implement the OiRA tools

Implementation is putting change into effect. For OiRA this means that the tools are used by employers and employees and are also applied on the shop floor. In order to be able to use the OiRA tools, the employer (and/or employee) must know that it exists and must know where it can be found. Using it means filling in the tool and creating action plans. Applying the tool goes further. It means that the employer carries out the plans, updates them on a regular basis, re-prioritises and acts on them. Only then has the change come into effect and the employer sees its benefit and not only as a one-off activity.

What does a successful implementation strategy look like? Some of the key elements, derived from the phases in innovation theory (Paulussen et al., 2007), are:

1. **Adoption:** Active promotion of a new tool by using the mass communication channels and interpersonal communication channels that best suit the target group. A distinction must be made between dissemination, i.e. diffusing the knowledge and reaching acceptance among a large group, and the actual implementation which is aimed at changing the behaviour in practice. Dissemination is a condition to foster implementation but not sufficient to reach actual change in behaviour. Supporting material should show that application is possible in practice and that the impact of the use is positive. Using role models and telling their success story are ways to enhance this.
2. **Implementation:** Providing support to the users once the tool has been introduced, for example, training. Important elements to be taken into account are: transferring information, demonstrating use in practice, providing the possibility of practising, giving feedback and coaching.
3. **Continuation:** Active knowledge exchange between users in order to learn from each other and to implement the tool within the company as well as the possibility of forming a network of organisations who exchange knowledge about the use of the tools.

Research shows that in addition the following factors are important for a successful implementation of a risk assessment instrument (Le Feber et al., 2003):

1. Sector analyses: it is important to identify what the problems are in the sector and how the information channels are organised. It is also interesting to know whether there are current initiatives that can be helpful in the promotion and implementation of a new tool.
2. Design roles: the outcome of the sector analysis can be used to design roles in order to: raise awareness of the employer/employee, inform the sector, motivate employers/employees and involve the sector/companies in the development of the tool.
3. Develop a tool under specific conditions: it is important that the tool is developed with the sector, is recognised by the sector, and that it is a solution for their real problems.
4. Companies work with the tools: let the organisations experiment with the tool.
5. Agree on the support to be provided to the company and how the evaluation will be carried out.

The different phases of the implementation strategy for the OiRA tool on the meso-level are described below and the main questions to be asked at this level are:

- How to support and help sectors on *national* level with the implementation of the OiRA tool.
- How to support and help companies on *sector* level with the implementation of the OiRA tool

The development of the implementation strategy is part of the overall [OiRA project strategy](#). One of the first steps is to put together a project team.

The promotion and implementation of the OiRA tools should be thought about from the very beginning. The strategy cycle contains 5 steps: setting goals, determining relevant OSH partners, developing the implementation strategy, executing strategy, monitoring effects and eventually (re-) adjusting strategy. The steps are illustrated with tools and experiences from the Netherlands.

3.1 Step 1: Setting goals

A good plan starts with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) goals. This also applies to the development and implementation strategy of an OiRA tool. The first question to be asked is what should the implementation strategy achieve. Here are some examples:

At **country** level – Ministry, Labour Inspectorate, National OSH Institute:

- Development of an OiRA support desk to
 - provide support to organisations willing to develop OiRA tools;
 - produce FAQ's at sector organisation and at enterprise levels.
- Development of additional legislation / good practice – Catalogues of OSH solutions or preventive measures that :
 - support the way in which micro and small enterprises can easily fulfil their obligations, therefore encouraging them to improve working conditions;
 - encourage sectors to maintain the published OiRA tools updated;
 - encourage sectors to make sector specific OiRA tools and to implement them in their sector.

At **sector** level – national social partners:

- Availability of a sector specific OiRA-tool via the website / publicity reaching a certain % of the sectors/companies.
- Use of the sector specific tool by a certain % of micro and small companies (end-users: employers and employees)
- Support in the implementation of the sector-specific tool by a certain date.
- (Re)development of OSH-support for enterprises in the sector by a certain date.
- Development of a website with, among others, frequently asked questions.

3.2 Step 2: Determining relevant (OSH) partners and designing roles

One of the main starting activities is to map out all the relevant OSH stakeholders that are important for the implementation of the OiRA tool. In order to do this, the so called OSH network structure can be used as a framework. Figure 2 illustrates the Dutch OSH infrastructure (Nossent et al., 2000) which could be adapted to each particular case.

3.2.1 Determining relevant partners

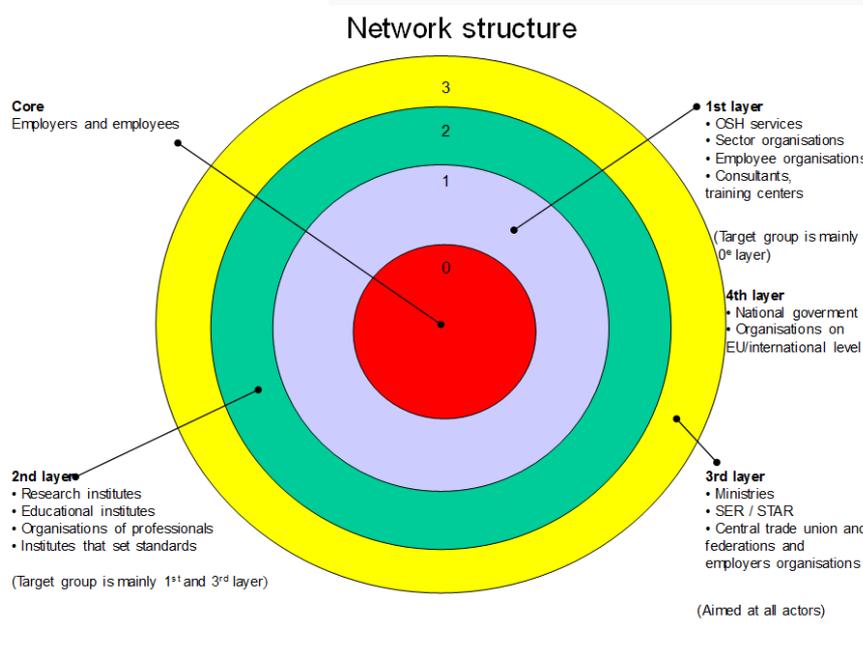
Each company (the target group) is part of a sector where several stakeholders develop, disseminate, implement and evaluate knowledge about OSH. This model is a practical tool that can be used to map out the network structure. There are five layers:

1. **Core:** employers and employees, the focus of the OSH infrastructure, this is where the knowledge should be implemented.
2. The **1st layer:** direct support to the core layer by consulting, coaching, education and provision of information. Includes: OSH services, employer and employee organisations, producers of work equipment, consultants, labour inspectorate, certifying organisations, patient organisations etc.
3. The **2nd layer:** knowledge creation for the core layer and the 1st layer and support of professionals in the 1st layer. Scientific, applied and policy research commissioned by the 3rd or 4th layer. It includes: knowledge institutes, universities, organisations for professionals, etc.

4. The **3rd layer**: initiates and finances policy research and other knowledge related activities for the general interest and policy preparation for the government. Includes: Ministries, central employee and employer organisations, advisory boards, health council, research funds etc.
5. The **4th layer**: decides on national and international policies and issues legislation and commissions national and international research. Includes national government, European governments, EU-OSHA, Eurofound, international employee and employer organisations and bi- or tri partite organisations (ILO, ISSA).

In addition there are actors that 'transport' knowledge like publishers, online discussion groups, OSH-networks, information centers, etc.. Moreover, some stakeholders may act in more than one layer.

Figure 2: OSH network structure (Nossent et al., 2000)



The following points lead to the creation of a successful network:

- actors are present in all layers;
- the 1st layer organisations are the dominant knowledge providers;
- the actors within and between the layers work together;
- good relationships between employers' and employees' organisations exist, as well as good relations between these organisations and the government;
- unequal competition between actors is avoided, organisations should have common goals.

Included below are two examples from the Netherlands that illustrate the role of social dialogue and the role of the government which could be crucial in the promotion of the OiRA tools.

The role of social dialogue: relationship between employers' and employees' organisations

In the Netherlands, responsibilities in the field of health and safety rest increasingly on the social partners at company level (employer and employees), but also at sector level (employers' organisations and trade unions). Experience has shown that it is very important to involve both social partners from the very beginning. (Meeuwssen et al, 2011). Employers' organisations can help their members by supporting them in complying with their legal obligations and in this way assist them in their operations. The commitment and involvement of these social partners has ensured that the companies have taken ownership of the tools. Furthermore, it has resulted in more sector-oriented, more practical and overall better tools. In other words it is based on a bottom-up rather than a top-down model – which has not been product driven, but company and business driven. (Meeuwssen et al, 2011).

When the relationship between the employers' and employees' organisations, on national, sector and company level, is not working well, the role of these stakeholders in promoting and implementing the OiRA tool may be less successful (Meeuwssen et al, 2011). Recent findings from Eurofound demonstrate that social dialogue is in 'robust' shape, but large differences between member states exist (Eurofound, 2009).

The following could be considered as preconditions for a positive social dialogue (Meeuwssen et al, 2011):

- independency between the social parties to some extent;
- organisational capacity and legitimacy to act on behalf of the people/organisations they represent;
- division of power between the participants is not too uneven, the involved participants show a willingness to cooperate and acknowledge the legitimate interests of the other participants.

In addition, there are other ways to build partnerships to reach and make micro and small enterprises act, especially when social dialogue is weaker:

- Involve other important stakeholders, like insurance companies, banks and accountants who have direct commercial connections with micro and small enterprises and are their ears and eyes in the market;
- Connect with associations of OSH professionals (safety engineers, occupational physicians and others); inform them and include them in the process from the beginning.

The government: national policy and legislative environment

Although in the Netherlands the process was driven from the bottom up, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has played a significant role as a facilitator in pushing developments forward. In this role the Ministry's main tasks have been:

- to initiate discussions with the employer representative of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (MKB-Nederland) at a time when risk assessment compliance was proving particularly hard for SMEs, especially for micro and small companies. The idea was not to dictate to SMEs what they should do but try to reach goals based upon consensus about their needs. The SME OSH programme (MKB Arbo Activiteitenprogramma) reflected this.
- to provide financial means - many sectors benefited from this and it really helped to push developments forward.
- to initiate the process – it was very important that the Ministry identified the benefits and was one of the initiators of the new approach. This was crucial in helping SMEs with risk assessment and in lowering their costs.
- to be involved on an on-going basis in the RA Support Point (see also page 8) as an observer and sponsor to increase the number of tools, to contribute to their maintenance and to promote RA more widely.

The cooperation, promotion and funding provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment has been essential in ensuring the development and roll out of the tools.

Another element that has contributed to engaging the sectors is the fact that RA tools are only valid for 3 years. In order to maintain the approval of the RI&E Support Point of their tools, sectors are required to update them regularly.

Another factor that has been instrumental in the Netherlands is the adaptation of the legal requirements of risk assessment for companies with 25 or less employees. The use of a digital risk assessment tool officially approved by social partners in the sector and a certified OSH professional, exempts these small enterprises from an authorisation procedure with an OSH service (an obligation for all other Dutch companies and which requires investment). For many sectors there is now a sector specific RA tool available which has already been approved by the social partners (employee and employer representatives). This policy provides a relatively easy and inexpensive way for the smallest companies to fulfill the legal risk assessment requirement. Sectoral organisations have found it very easy to convince their members of the benefits of participating in the Dutch digital risk assessment initiative. Conclusions can therefore be made that it is not enough to put a tool at the disposal of the end users for free; some other incentives or rewards are needed.

The Dutch experience shows that the digital RA tool flourished because the OSH policy environment was:

- Willing to change and adapt rules and obligations for specific target groups; not to offer them a free ride, but to stimulate these specific groups (e.g. micro and small enterprises) to comply more easily;
- Willing to fund or subsidize good initiatives that improve working conditions in the country;
- Entrusting employers and employees to come up with OSH solutions and measures that suit them best.

In addition:

- Willing to think of 'soft law' initiatives such as covenants between the social partners and the government and campaigns focused on specific risks together with social partners.

3.2.2 Assigning roles

Research has shown that successful implementation of risk assessment requires allocating stakeholders with important roles and responsibilities such as: involving a/the sector, raising awareness of the employer/employee and motivating employers/employees.

Moreover, expectations should be clear. In the Netherlands for example it was foreseen that the sector organisations would succeed in stimulating small companies to fill in the risk assessment. In practice the majority of sectors focused on providing information to companies. Personal attention and advice given from for example OSH consultants or through specific network meetings proved to be of great importance especially for small companies. Sectors carrying out these kinds of activities were most successful in increasing the OSH awareness of small companies.

Furthermore it is important that the actors involved have common goals. Conflicting goals can hinder the promotion of the tool. For example, when the risk assessment process is strongly expert based from the start, it might be difficult to promote new ways in which both employer and workers together try to find the best solutions with the OiRA tool. The interests of experts and non-experts should be balanced somehow; for example by putting these two groups or their representatives together in a working group during the design phase of the RA tools. In this way experts and other stakeholders can complement each other with their knowledge about the sector and the risks.

3.3 Step 3: Developing the implementation strategy

The design of the final strategy depends on the OSH infrastructure, the quality of the social dialogue and the policy environment at national and sector level. Presented below are three possible strategies at sector level based on the Dutch experience. These approaches ensure not only that the tool will be used, but if it is organised correctly they will also help to give the employers' organisation itself a better picture of its members.

The strategies have been developed from pilot projects carried out by various employers' organisations in the Netherlands [Guide for sector organisations](#), 2011 (in Dutch).

3.3.1 Starting the implementation strategy before the development of the OiRA tool

This approach fosters active contact with stakeholders from the start of the development of the RA tool. Joint decisions can be taken on:

- the content of the tool;
- the way in which attention will be brought to the tool so that employers (and employees) will use and apply it;
- the support needed at sector level to help members use the tool.

The activities should be included in a coherent development plan, connecting one activity to another and this should be communicated regularly and effectively to the members who are not directly involved in the development process. For example, during the development process by providing publicity about the meetings in the media available in the sector. An enthusiastic group of people developing the content of the tool can instil enthusiasm in others to use it.

Advice can also be asked to these and other members about how to bring the tool to the attention of other companies in the sector in an appealing way. Information can also be obtained about the best way of keeping other companies informed that there is a tool available and what it can mean for them in order that they start to use it.

All the information gathered can provide input about what types of services the members need, in addition to the tool. These services can be provided by the tool developers themselves or by service providers in the sector.

An example of this development strategy is the OiRA tool developed in the hairdressing sector in Cyprus initiated by the Department of Labour Inspection (DLI). From the very beginning the DLI built up a network of relevant actors within the sector. 'The careful initial planning and collective approach with the Hairdressers' Association helped to ensure that the development, led by the DLI, was a straight-forward process which took approximately eight weeks.'

Read [The Cyprus Case](#)

3.3.2 Starting the implementation strategy after development of the tool

With this approach implementation begins after the RA tool has been developed. Some stakeholders may have been involved in the development but there has been no widespread communication or dissemination of the RA tool.

The activities to be carried out should aim at:

- informing all the members that the tool has been developed for them and that it will make life easier for them;
- encouraging the members to use the tool;
- supporting the members in the use of the tool.

A coherent implementation plan should be developed that connects one activity with the next. Results should be checked and if necessary the communication strategy modified to achieve the goals.

A good example would be to send a message using one of the communication channels available to invite people to take part in a workshop. After the workshop an article could be placed in one of the media to encourage employers to inform colleagues about the OiRA tool and what it can do for them.

This is not a one-off activity: there can be repeated activities of the same type, with different emphases. For example, regional meetings could be organised where an enthusiastic employer explains what he or she has got out of the OiRA tool and then this can be reported in the media again.

The feedback picked up from members - from a workshop or at a meeting - can then be translated into services.

3.3.3 Risk assessment as a resource

The starting situation here is completely different. This is not about the RA tool as such, but the use of the tool as a resource in dealing with 'issues' of concern among companies.

With this approach (themed) meetings are organised on issues that concern employers (and employees). Experts on the chosen subject can be invited as speakers and as well as discussing the subject and the possible paths that can be taken to find solutions, attention can be brought to the tool to examine whether the subject is dealt with sufficiently in the tool and/or whether the possible solutions are appropriate. In reality, the tool is being presented as a resource to obtain information about the subject and come up with solutions. The results of the meeting will show whether the

content in the tool is appropriate to deal with the subject. Another example of using the tool as a resource could be through a cabaret performance on 'good practice' organised jointly by a number of employers' organisations and made available on a regional basis. In a serious but entertaining way, subjects can be put in the spotlight. These might include 'good entrepreneurship', to enable entrepreneurs to stand out from competitors, or 'good employment practices', to enable staff to provide the services needed to achieve or maintain the competitive position. The storyline of the performance starts with someone calling in sick (or having an accident). During the performance it becomes apparent that the employer could have been aware of the cause if he had filled in the risk assessment together with his/her staff.

3.4 Step 4: Implementing the strategy

Development is followed by the implementation phase. Some practical elements that can be incorporated in the activities are described below.

3.4.1 Elements at national level

Elements of the Dutch national strategy that have contributed to the implementation of the Dutch RA tools are described below. See: [Review of Dutch Experience](#) for more information.

The success of the risk assessment model in the Netherlands is very much a product of the socio-economic context in which industrial relations are characterised by a very close tripartite collaboration between Government and the social partners. This is not necessarily the case in all countries. Also, the Dutch RA tool is the result of a process which has taken some 8 years of gradual development from a generic tool initially, through to pilot projects in a few sectors, in order to eventually reach the remarkable array of sectors that are represented today.

Tripartite setting to promote development of tools

In order to support the implementation of the generic and sector specific tools in the Netherlands, two different strategies were developed. Initially, the provision of support and a helpdesk for the generic tool (and for some of the sectoral tools of its member organisations) was located at MKB-Nederland. However, once the 20 sector-specific tools had been developed, a further step was made to bring the unions on board. In this tripartite setting – in line with the 'polder model' (Dutch version of consensus-based economic and social policy making) – more than 80 additional tools were designed based on the generic one. All of these sector tools focus at least on the most important risks of specific sectors and were developed with the involvement of TNO (knowledge institute for businesses, government bodies and social organisations) and the OSH preventive services.

RA support point

In 2007, after the OSH platform closed down, a new bipartite support function was put in place in the form of the current 'Steunpunt RI&E-Instrumenten' (RA Support Point), responsible for the management of the RI&E system. The main partners in the Support Point are the key employers' and employees' organisations, with the Ministry of Social Affairs acting as an observer. TNO still takes care of the day-to-day running of the support function. Their main task is to assess whether the developed sector risk assessment satisfies the criteria for an exemption of the expert test. The other key role of the RI&E Support Point is to guarantee the availability of RA tools, to raise awareness among potential users and to communicate with businesses and their organisations in order to stimulate the use of the tools.

An important element in this process has been the active involvement of the social partner organisations, especially those at sector level, in promoting the RA tools to their members. However, the collaboration of other partners such as insurance companies, accountancy firms and other advisers to small businesses has also been sought. One challenge in this context has been the

difficulty for social partners in reaching the smallest companies with between 1-9 employees, as very few of the employees in these companies are members of a trade union.

Given the importance attached to promoting the RA tools in order to get companies to implement them, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment committed approximately €250,000 a year in communication and implementation activities over 2011-2012. The communication campaign consisted of a number of workshops with SMEs and road shows at OSH events, as well as the production of brochures and articles to reach the relevant target audience. There is currently also a specific promotional campaign to raise awareness about the existence of the tools and the legal obligation to perform a risk assessment (for more information, see the paragraph about campaigns on page 9).

Website

A special website was set-up by the RA support point. The RI&E website (www.rie.nl) is organised in a relatively straightforward manner, providing an alphabetic overview of the different tools by sector with a specific page for each sector. Also included is a link to the tool and to the relevant sector organisation as well as information on the level of acknowledgement of the tool by the social partners. Furthermore, there is specific advice on how to carry out a risk assessment geared to the two main target groups: employers and employees in companies (micro level) and sectoral business organisations (meso level). The process of carrying out a risk assessment is divided into four different phases in order to make it more manageable for those involved. The steps differ depending on the target group:

- For companies: (i) identification of risks; (ii) evaluation of risks; (iii) action plan; and (iv) update;
- For sector organisations: (i) development of sector specific tool; (ii) acknowledgement; (iii) implementation; and (iv) maintenance.

Finally, the website provides links to [frequently asked questions](#) and access to an online [Help Desk](#) run by the RI&E Support Point (TNO) that provides technical assistance to developers and users.

Information about risk assessment is increasingly provided via social media. Regular updates and issues are provided via the [twitter account of the RA support centre](#). Furthermore there is now the possibility of having your questions answered via twitter at certain set times.

Information material

Information and material for sectors and companies are disseminated via the website www.rie.nl and via [digital newsletters](#), meetings/ conferences, [magazines](#) and workshops. There is a ['Guide for sector organisations'](#) and recently a new brochure has been developed for companies: ['A step by step guide for entrepreneurs who don't want to be exposed to risks'](#). Sector organisations can order the brochure with their own logo to disseminate in their sector. In 2012 the brochure was either checked or downloaded 38.602 times from www.rie.nl. Furthermore 5.000 brochures were printed, partly by sectors and one sector is planning to make a sector specific brochure based on the general version.

Campaigns

Several campaigns were used to raise extra awareness of the Dutch RA tools:

EU-OSHA European campaign 2008-2009: An important element in promoting RA tools was the contribution made by the EU-OSHA European campaign 2008-2009 on risk assessment. The main aim of this two-year campaign was to convey the message that risk assessment is not necessarily complicated or bureaucratic and that once in place it is likely to either prevent or control the occurrence of risks. Another aim of the campaign was to promote an integrated management approach to risk assessment taking account the different steps involved, which is the same approach the Dutch system uses. This European campaign contributed considerably to the general awareness of the public about the advantages of risk assessment and the existence of the Dutch RA tools.

National Campaign 'Check je werkplek' (*Check your work place*): In addition to earlier initiatives, the RA Support Point, started a new national campaign at the end of 2011. The main target group

was small companies in the HORECA and the retail sector. This group is particularly difficult to reach because they do not often make use of the communication channels that larger companies apply such as information from sector organisations and professional journals in the field of OSH and HRM. The percentage of companies who perform a risk assessment is relatively low in these sectors.

The campaign was based on the principle that the business owner is triggered by topics that are relevant for the continuity of the business. The message of the campaign was: 'check the workplace regularly to prevent accidents and sickness absenteeism'. A new appealing and accessible website (checkjewerkplek.nl) was launched. Here the focus was on specific topics: fire prevention, aggression and violence, physical heavy work, cuts and hygiene. Terms like 'risk assessment' and 'OSH' were avoided. During the campaign the five themes were introduced on the website and promoted via the media. Hygiene, the fifth and last was introduced in November 2012. A famous hygiene and quality controller, known from the television spoke about his experiences

The campaign was supported by employers' organisations (Royal Association MKB-Nederland representing the interests of SMEs), employees' organisations (FNV, CNV, MHP), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, sector organisations (Hoofd bedrijfsschap Detailhandel, bedrijfsschap horeca en catering) and the Chamber of Commerce.

The campaign offered practical instruments for employers and consultants via their [website](#) as well as various activities. Furthermore, the campaign avoided explicit prescriptive strategies such as telling the employer exactly what to do. Instead, they made use of implicit strategies for example with the use of '[real live stories](#)' told by reliable known people. Another implicit strategy was to change and add things in the technical or social environment of the businesses in order to foster desired behaviour. In line with this strategy the '[Risk Index](#)' (Risico Wijzer) was introduced. This is a prevention and emergency card in one. With a set of stickers the risky spots at the workplace can be marked. The card is visible at the workplace, fast to fill in, and reduces the time of teaching new employees about risks. The tools are explained with a short [video](#). Other videos show interviews with business owners. For example an [owner of a fish shop](#).

In addition an interactive knowledge quiz ([powerpoint presentation](#)) was developed to transfer knowledge towards employers and employees about risk assessment. This quiz was used at road shows and contained:

- Facts about a number of accidents/deaths due to unsafe and unhealthy work in the country;
- Facts about legislation around the risk assessment;
- Questions about risks at the workplace;
- Stories and tips from companies;
- Check of activities within the company (fire prevention, talking about risks with employees).

The quiz is illustrated with pictures and movies. The quiz ends with a winner in the company.

The number of visitors to the campaign website is still increasing over time. An extra effect is that the number of visitors to the website providing the risk assessments, www.rie.nl, is increasing as well as the number of completed risk assessments. Promotion of the campaign materials will continue during 2013.

For more information see: www.checkjewerkplek.nl. The website will be available till the end of 2013.

Training courses

In order to facilitate the use of the new Dutch RA tools, occasional training courses for companies on how to use the sector-based ones were organised by the RA support point and individual sector organisations with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.

In 2012 the RA support point together with a network organisation for OSH services and consultants ([De Goede Praktijk](#)), organised 10 half day workshops for companies in the HORECA and retail sectors. During half a day a group of companies (between 6 and 12) filled in the risk assessment under the guidance of a professional. The workshops were free and promoted via the sector organisations. One hundred companies were given the opportunity to fulfill their legal responsibilities regarding risk assessment in a half day. The sector involved were stimulated to spread the message

(it is not as difficult and time consuming as you might think) to their members through enthusiastic testimonials of participating companies.

3.4.2 Elements at sector level

Below we describe some concrete strategies and tips for sector organisations. These are the result of experiences taken from among employers' organisations in the Netherlands and also described in the ['Guide for sector organisations'](#).

Differentiate by actor

It is compulsory for an employer to have an up-to-date risk assessment. Employers, prevention staff, staff representatives and works councils influence the use and the application of the risk assessment so approaching these groups will also encourage companies.

Examples from practice:

Gezond transport (Healthy transport, the organisation for occupational health in the road transport industry) publishes articles about the RA tool in both employers' and employees' newsheets.

The **Productschap Diervoeder** (Animal Feed Marketing Board) together with the trade unions organises OSH information days. Employees, members of the works council, staff representatives and trade union officials are invited and employers are encouraged to allow their employees to take part. Risk assessment was one of the topics included in the OSH information days and after triggering the attention of the participants led to the organisation of a specific risk assessment workshop for companies. In this workshop, the people attending were able to have their questions answered, were given explanations about risk assessment in practice and were able to experiment with the RA tools. For more information see: <http://www.pdv.nl/nederland/arbeid/page4260.php>

The **Productschap Vis** (Marketing Board for Fish and Fish Products) organised a cabaret evening about good entrepreneurship and good employment practice for all the personnel in the sector. The performance showed that absences (occupational accidents/diseases) from work can be prevented by for example, employer and employees filling in the risk assessment together. The event also provided the opportunity for employers and employees to discuss the performance and what it meant for the workplace.

Written and digital communication channels and involvement of companies

A general article about the value of and the need for a risk assessment is an excellent way of putting the RA tool in the spotlight. The more the employer feels that he/she personally can see the added value for him/herself and his/her company, the greater the chance is that it will be used. An interview and/or quotes from an employer are examples in which the added value can be stressed.

Periodical sector newspapers and journals are an excellent way to report news items about the RA tool, either in the form of articles or columns. However you are of course always dependent on the publication date and more rapid communication channels include letters, e-mail messages (whether personalised or not), newsletters and the social media.

Information to support implementation can also be put on an employers' organisation's website. Employers and employees can be encouraged to visit the site more regularly by referring to the site in articles and by developing a specific column on the site with, for example, frequently asked questions from employers and employees about the RA tool. The frequently asked questions page can be added to by setting out the actions that the employers' organisation is planning to undertake as a result of the questions that have been asked. Not only is this interesting for the members but it also contributes to the profile. Members can be called on to respond and adapt the organisation's services to their responses. This provides added value for members and demonstrates that the organisation tackles issues about which their members are concerned.

Examples from practice:

In the **metalworking sector** members were involved in the improvement of the RA tool. A questionnaire sent out among a group of companies revealed that the main difficulties companies had were related to putting the results of the risk assessment into practice. In a new version of the risk assessment all the data are collected into a digital database. This allows the monitoring of the amount of companies that have completed the RA tool and the action plan. Furthermore companies receive a reminder related to the dates included in the action plan. A recent survey shows that the number of companies with a risk assessment has increased. The successful procedure carried out by the metalworking sector could be adopted more broadly in other companies (SER, 2012). The Dutch Government has asked the support of the Dutch RA support point to spread this and other successful approaches.

Another example is the survey initiated by the *Centrale Branchevereniging Wonen* (central Association for the interior furnishings sector). With a personalised e-mail they asked members to become involved in testing the tool. In this way the RA tool itself was tested before being launched.

They started with the release of a survey by e-mail, with the purpose to:

- Test a prototype tool for usability and completeness;
- Learn what employers know about risk assessment;
- Learn what triggers an employer to use the risk assessment tool and create and carry out the plan with solutions.

The participants were able to provide important conclusions about the content of the message and the communication channels to be used:

- Make it easy and super simple;
- Use plain short and concise language;
- Limit the length of the risk assessment;
- Provide simple solutions;
- Easy to do in practice;
- Sector focused.

Furthermore companies were also asked to:

- Explain what a risk assessment is and who it's for;
- State the importance of risk assessment:
 - Risk assessment = Public obligation (with fines)
 - Risk assessment = Brings awareness to risks
 - Demonstrates that things certainly could improve further
 - Discuss problem areas
 - Demonstrate risk assessment will reduce non-attendance by sickness
- Highlight the negative aspects
 - Illustrate accidents in a sector that could have been prevented by risk assessment
- Point out the benefits
 - Free, sector made, no costs
- Identify communication channels:
 - e-mail, letters, newsletters, magazines, phone
 - follow-up! repeat, repeat, repeat!

Overall the strategy contained:

- Involvement of members:
 - From the start of the development
 - Giving guidance to customize the risk assessment
 - Carrying out a pilot
- Sharing experiences amongst members
 - Letting them act as experience experts
 - Creating of that a continuous process
- Don't throw the tool "into the market", trigger members to use it

- Know who the downloaders are and keep in touch
- Highlight the benefits (when tool is checked) frequently asked questions, an opportunity to make comments, announce new solutions, etc....
- Results:
 - Each publication gave 100 hits on the website to download the RA Tool
 - The tool became increasingly familiar and triggered companies to use it.

More information of CBW: <http://www.inretail.nl/pages/415/Publicaties/Risico-Inventarisatie-en-Evaluatie-.html>

Workshops

Offering workshops to help fill in the OiRA tool can persuade employers to start to use it. The presence of advisers at the workshop can serve two purposes, namely

- the people attending the workshop get their questions answered immediately, and
- it brings the statements that raise questions to the employers' attention.

Based on the results of these workshops, on-going improvements can be made to the OiRA tool so that the person who fills it in next has fewer questions, and the employers' organisation can use the questions as an input for its services. This input can also result in changes to the services offered to their members.

Examples from practice

The **Productschap Vis** updated its RA tool following a workshop of this type. The members had a number of questions for which as yet the tool did not offer a solution.

At subject-based meetings the **Sociaal Fonds Taxi** (the social fund for the taxi sector) received feedback on the content of the RA tool and as a result it was modified to take into account the issues which were of concern to members.

Gezond transport organises workshops to fill in the risk assessments with companies. The workshops take around half a day and are organised at several locations all over the country. Companies with 25 employees or less and who are members of the sector organisations can subscribe for free. The program includes:

- General introduction of the RA tool;
- Filling in the RA tool by the company itself with help of the specialists from 'Gezond transport';
- The risk assessment is finished and follow-up appointments are made in case it has to be checked by a certified OSH service (more than 25 employees).

Participants evaluated the workshops very positively mainly because they can fill in the risk assessment with expert help and without being disturbed. The exchange of ideas and knowledge between companies is also perceived as very helpful. More information: <http://www.gezondtransport.nl/node/148>

Increasing the number of contacts

The employers' organisation usually has contact with a fixed group of companies. However when organising an activity these companies could be requested to provide the names of others who might also be interested in attending.

Another way of increasing the number of contacts is to choose the time and place of the meeting carefully.

Examples from practice:

The **Productschap Vis** organised a workshop to fill in the RA tool at a location where it knew that there was an active chairman for the small and medium-sized firms sector. They asked him to invite

more interested parties. Considerably more people registered than was expected. The risk assessment workshop was organised in the evening and locally.

The **Sociaal Fonds Taxi**, which organises general meetings for companies (employers and employees) where the RA tool is used as a resource, follows the same type of strategy. It also organises meetings in a 'nice place where you do not go every day'. The meeting is held at the end of the day, and includes a meal. Attendance exceeds expectations and the members are pleased because what is on offer ties in with the questions they have. It helps to attract others.

Use of language, obligation or help for companies

Carrying out a risk assessment is a legal obligation and takes time. Generally speaking the law is not a source of inspiration for the employer. He already 'has to' do too much. But the obligation to carry out a risk assessment can also be put forward in a positive light. A risk assessment is an easy way of identifying occupational risks (safety and health risks) and of working in a more targeted way on the causes of occupational accidents and diseases and absence from work. Perhaps 'working on quality' or 'healthy working' would be a more successful approach.

Tips:

- adapt the approach to the perceptions of the entrepreneur
- use language the entrepreneur will understand
- emphasise the sector-specific nature of the tool.

Example from practice:

From a test among its members the **Centrale Branchevereniging Wonen** obtained information about how it could best communicate with other members. Results from the employers taking part in the test were then used in the various media to explain the point of view of the users and to be an example for others. Some examples are:

- "To fill in the answers was easy"
- "Every employer should know that a risk assessment is obligatory"
- "The questions and explanation indicates that things can get better indeed "

The suggestions and quotes were used in communications in CBW publications. Each article published resulted in 100 extra "hits" on the website of the RA tool.

Give support

It is important that companies in the sector learn how to deal with the sector-specific RA tool. Some people are comfortable using computers, and others are wary about starting.

Organising workshops gives direct feedback on what else can be modified (in terms of content). It also provides feedback about the support needed to start using the risk assessment. Another way is to instruct internal or external health and safety experts or occupational health and safety service providers to always ask whether the members have a written risk assessment and/or whether they can and do work with it in practice. Here too signals can be picked up for follow-up, regarding services or the content of the tool.

Examples from practice:

Gezond transport tries to ensure that advisers make appointments with members before, during or after they fill in the risk assessment. The information and suggestions that are obtained from the companies during the visits are transformed into new supporting activities on certain risks.

A successful example of obtaining information from the companies by real visits of OSH experts to companies is an initiative in the metalworking sector, by **Koninklijke Metaalunie**. In the metalworking sector all the 14.000 members are visited once in the two years by an advisor of the sector organization (SER, 2012). The general topic is to improve health and safety at work. More information:

<http://www.5xbeter.nl/site/nl/hoofdmenu/nieuws/hetlaatstenieuws/komtuwbedrijfinaanmerkingvooreenunchnmeteenverbetercoach>

Employer and employees

After the risk assessment has been carried out, employees often have to do their work differently. Therefore support for them is extremely important. The first step is for employees to be aware of the risks involved in their work. If only for this reason the employer should involve employees when dealing with the risk identification step, making plans and developing practical solutions for problems that come to light when the risk assessment is carried out. This also makes it more likely that the proposed solutions will indeed be put into practice.

Make a link to other OSH tools

In the Netherlands, legislation ever increasingly states the 'mandatory target provisions' (doelvoorschriften) and not so much how these objectives can be reached ("mandatory means provisions" or middelvoorschriften i.e. government rules concerning working procedures). Therefore sectors are encouraged to agree on an OSH catalogue. This document describes the methods and means to manage working conditions that are relevant to the sector and is officially recognized by employer and employee representatives and tested by the Dutch Labour Inspectorate for compliance with Dutch laws. Although in the Netherlands, the working conditions catalogue is not mentioned specifically in the working conditions act it was introduced into the amended Working Conditions Act and it is seen as a recognized 'recipe' for safe and healthy working conditions. Working with an OSH catalogue gives a guarantee that the legal obligations and objectives are met. For an overview of the catalogues please see: <http://www.arboportaal.nl/types/alle/arbocatalogi/?onderwerpen>

The Dutch RA support point informs users of sector specific RA tools on the existence of a sector specific OSH catalogue at their website and provides direct links if possible.

Example from practice:

The promotion of risk assessment and OSH catalogues can be combined and linked. In the Netherlands the **metalworking sector** is making use of the OSH catalogue (5x beter) as part of the risk assessment process. This catalogue contains practical solutions to improve the working conditions (<http://www.5xbeter.nl/site>).

3.5 Step 5: Monitor effects and re-adjust strategy

The evaluation of the chosen strategy is of great importance. Only then does it become clear whether the expected impact has been reached. It is therefore crucial to set 'indicators' at the beginning. Examples of sources and indicators are:

- Experience of the project group, sector organisations and other stakeholders;
- Number of companies that have actually filled out a risk assessment via the OiRA system
- Number of companies requesting information material
- Web statistics of the website, number of followers via twitter
- Surveys/interviews among companies.

Regular evaluations of the current strategy should be carried out to re-adjust it if necessary.

4 Conclusions

The aim of this document is to provide member state policy makers, EU and national social partners, OSH-experts, researchers and other relevant networks or associations with information on the *implementation strategy* of sector-specific risk assessment tools for micro and small enterprises.

The document explores the role of different stakeholders in this process and the different steps in the implementation strategy all illustrated with examples from the Dutch experience with the digital RA tools.

Strategy

The promotion and implementation of the OiRA tool should be considered from the very beginning. The strategy cycle contains 5 steps:

1. Set goals: make sure the goals are SMART
2. OSH infrastructure:
 - Determine relevant partners and assess the quality of the OSH infrastructure: map the relevant stakeholders, assess whether the structure is balanced and good relationships exist between the actors. In the Netherlands the social partners and the government are important stakeholders in promoting the use of the tools. However, alternative ways are possible, e.g. involving other stakeholders and/or allowing sector initiatives in individual sectors instead of developing a strategy on national level.
 - Assign roles: determine who does what, make expectations clear, and make sure there are common goals.
3. Develop the implementation strategy: depending on the OSH infrastructure on national or sector level one can decide to involve relevant stakeholders from the very beginning, to start with implementation activities when the tool is ready or not to implement the risk assessment as such, but perceive it as a resource to solve issues for companies. Other strategies are possible depending on the situation.
4. Execute strategy:

Possible communication elements:

 - A helpdesk function on national or sector level
 - Website
 - Information material
 - Campaigns
 - Workshops/training courses
 - Road shows
 - Face to face support

Tips:

 - Differentiate by actor in the communication activities (employees and employers!)
 - Use several channels
 - Involve the target group/companies in the development and implementation strategies of the risk assessment
 - Use plain simple and short language
 - Use the language/expressions familiar to companies
 - Point out the benefits and the negative side of not having a risk assessment
 - Make sure there is a follow-up, repeat the messages
 - Try to attract new people, e.g. by organising meetings in attractive places
 - Make a link with other available OSH tools or activities in a sector
5. Monitor effects and adjust the strategy:
 - Set indicators in the beginning of the project, related to the SMART goals. Evaluate the results regularly and re-adjust if necessary.

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The Dutch experience: <http://www.oiraproject.eu/documentation/materials-about-the-project/review-of-dutch-experience>

Website Risk Assessment Support Point: <http://www.rie.nl/>

OiRA documentation:

A guide to developing, implementing, maintaining and updating an OiRA tool for your sector: <http://www.oiraproject.eu/documentation/materials-about-the-project/guide-for-social-partners>

OiRA leaflet: <http://www.oiraproject.eu/documentation/materials-about-the-project/oir-a-leaflet>

Project Management Guide, How to set a Project Management Plan for the creation and promotion of an OiRA tool

<http://www.oiraproject.eu/documentation/materials-about-the-project/project-management-guide>

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