



**si2021.eu**

**Slovensko predsedovanje Svetu Evropske Unije**

**The Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

**Vse avtorske pravice so pridržane.**

**Te predstavitve ni dovoljeno spreminjati, razmnoževati ali razpošiljati v kakršnikoli obliki brez predhodnega pisnega dovoljenja avtorja.**

**All rights reserved.**

**This presentation may not be changed, reproduced or distributed in any form without the prior written permission of the author.**



# Managing psychosocial risks and stress in the digital work environment

Sarah Copsey

# Digitalisation and psychosocial risk factors

- **Collaboration vs machine/system driven**
  - More varied tasks – overload?
  - More mundane tasks –underload?
- **Teleworking – benefits and challenges**
- **Platform work – control and flexibility for who?**
- **Poor human-machine interaction/ poor software**
- **Lack of social support - isolation**
- **Monitoring, control and evaluation**
  - Algorithmic management, continuous evaluation and performance rating
- **Blurring of work and life**
- **Prolonged sitting – links to depression??**
- **Virtual harassment from the public or internal**
- **Gender bias and discrimination**
- **Fear for the future – role changes, job loss**
- **‘Traditional’ risks – e.g. poor communication, change management**

# Platform work and psychosocial risks

- Isolation and lone working,
  - Intensification of work, long working hours,
  - Algorithmic management, digital monitoring and surveillance,
  - Blurring of work and private life vs control over when to work
  - Lack of professional identity or meaningless tasks or jobs
- 
- It depends on HOW it is applied - control and flexibility for who?

# Third-party violence and workplace bullying

## Third-party violence

- Increased expectations of customers – e.g. instant service
- Customer/client frustration with automated systems etc.
- Easy cases dealt with by algorithms – humans left with the tricky ones
- Social media – online
- Online trolling – by general public – anyone, anytime
- Gendered attacks

# Risk management of online third party violence and harassment

- Formulation of a clear policy, with procedures/protocols
- Survey – WHERE, when, how, by whom
- Reporting system
- Action - planned – multidimensional – based on risk assessment
- Information, training and awareness-raising – workers & managers
- Incidents – support, follow-up
  - Authorities, media platforms
- Seek external input where necessary
  - including police, media websites, anti-bullying associations
- Worker involvement
- Review

# Third-party violence and workplace bullying

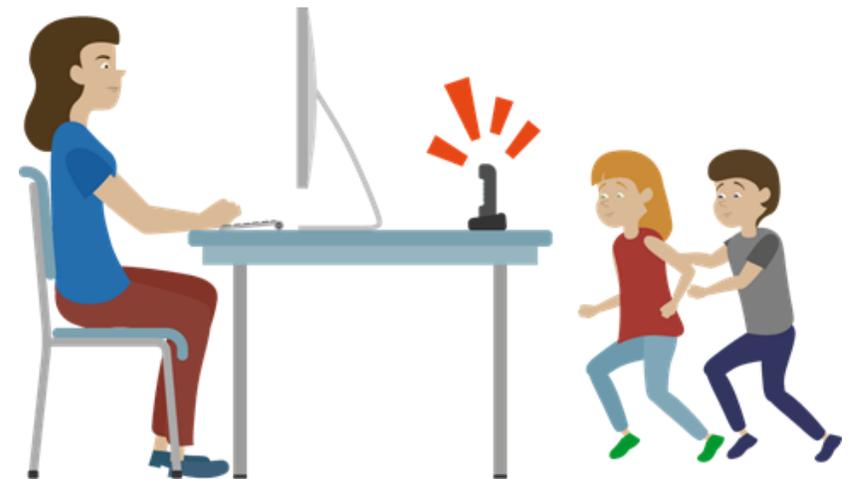
## Workplace bullying and harassment – Virtual harassment

- Social media bullying happens
- Transference of bullying to new mediums
  - Zoom meetings/chats
  - Work Whatsapp groups
  - Exclusion from Whatsapp groups/chats
- In work and outside work
- Workplace harassment policies need amending, guidance, reporting, training and awareness-raising



# Work organisation and work-life balance – setting boundaries – the example of telework

- Separate workspace – where you can work without being disturbed
- Fixed working time – for mental and physical health
  - Schedule the workday - including lunch and short breaks
  - Respect ‘normal’ office working hours - set a routine
  - Make plans for the after-work hours – it will force you to logoff on time
- Vary tasks
- Get outside for a period of time each day
  - for mental and physical health



# Preventing social isolation – the example of telework

Supervisors & employers can:

- Stay in regular contact
- Regular team meetings
- Encourage workers to schedule meetings
- Make time for informal talks and hearing friendly voices
  - Reserve the first part of the meeting for a check-in
  - Virtual coffee room

# Multi-tasking – multi-conversations

- Multi-messaging sources – PC instant messaging, mobile, emails
- Combined with online conferences and conference chats
- Instant replies expected
- Divided attention
- Stress of keeping up



# Software – help or hindrance?

- Complex not user-friendly or just unsuitable
- Slow
- System down
- Frustration
- DSE regulations covers software – in theory
- Framework directive – adapt work to workers
- Worker participation – ergonomic principles
- Training and IT support

# Conclusions

- Digitalisation and mental health - cross-cutting OSH issues
- Digitalisation brings new psychosocial risks and can intensify existing ones
- Potential to improve work if person-centred approach taken
- Meaningful jobs – workers in control
- Cover both psychosocial/work organisational risks and physical risks – in devising new work systems, software, devices
- Risk assessment – adapt work to workers
- Involve workers



# Join us and Lighten the Load

➤ <https://healthy-workplaces.eu/en>

➤ **Thank you for your attention**

➤ [copsey@osha.europa.eu](mailto:copsey@osha.europa.eu)

