

Workshop “New and emerging risks to occupational safety and health associated with digitalisation by 2025”

The workshop builds on EU-OSHA’s project “Foresight on new and emerging risks occupational safety and health (OSH) associated with digitalisation by 2025”.

The digitalisation of the economy, also referred to as the 4th industrial revolution, affects the types of jobs available, how, where and when we work, who works and organisational structures. ICT is no longer seen as a specific separate sector but rather as a provider of essential services for all sectors of our economy and society. The emergence of new technologies such as the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, collaborative robotics, augmented reality, additive manufacturing, on-line platforms, etc. has a profound impact on the world of work. Even in jobs where a physical presence is required, computer control, increased automation, use of robots and AI are changing the nature of work. Digitalisation enables new business models and contributes to a proliferation of diverse types of employment, an increase in (pseudo) self-employment, diversification and decentralisation of workplaces, and a change of work content and work organisation. It can also help improve access to the labour market for disadvantaged workers’ groups.

Digitalisation opens the door to a rise of OSH challenges, which need to be better understood and managed. The balance between challenges and opportunities from digitalisation depends on a proper application of the technology and on how OSH is managed. EU-OSHA’s Foresight project explores the potential impact that digitalisation may have on work and in particular on workers’ health and safety by 2025. The foresight was implemented using the scenario-building method in two steps: 1) Identification of key trends and drivers of change through horizon scanning and expert consultation; 2) Development and testing of four scenarios through an interactive process with stakeholders.

The four scenarios describe four possible Futures of the world of work by 2025 and describe potential challenges and opportunities for OSH associated with digitalisation. The basis of this foresight is the understanding that the future can evolve in different directions, which can be shaped by the actions and decision of various players taken today. The scenarios should help anticipate the possible emerging challenges identified in the project and support decision-making towards safe and healthy workplaces of tomorrow.

The workshop on 20th September 2018 will be the opportunity to discuss the new and emerging OSH challenges identified in the foresight and to explore strategic options to address these challenges. The workshop will begin by presenting the findings of the foresight research including the 2025 scenarios as well as the future OSH challenges and opportunities identified. Discussions on policy and strategic options will then be facilitated through the use of the 2025 scenarios. The results of these discussions will finally be tested against the different scenarios enabling a broad range of strategic options to be “future-proofed” and evaluated.

Workshop participants will therefore have a chance not only to gain better insights into the new and emerging challenges identified in the project but also to experiment how the scenarios can be used as a tool to support strategic thinking and decision-making.

To promote interaction and debate, the number of participants should ideally be limited to 40.

The report of the 1st Workpackage of the Foresight on Key trends and drivers of change in information and communication technologies and work location is available on EU-OSHA’s website: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/highlights/how-will-changes-ict-affect-work-future>

More information about the project is available here: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/developments-ict-and-digitalisation-work>