

## Work-related psychosocial risks in Europe

*Fact-Finding seminar addressing psychosocial aspects and risks at work*

William Cockburn

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work



# European Union – regulation and policy

- **The EU Framework Directive (89/391): legal obligation to protect workers by avoiding, evaluating and combatting risks to their safety and health**
- **EU Social Partners Agreements on:**
  - Telework (2002)
  - Work-Related Stress (2004)
  - Violence and Harassment at Work (2007)
- **Safer and Healthier Work for All - modernisation of the EU occupational safety and health legislation and policy (EC, 2017)**

*‘Psychosocial risks and work-related stress are among the most challenging and growing occupational safety and health concerns’*

- **European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)**

Chapter II, 9 ‘Work-life balance’

Chapter II, 10 ‘Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment and data protection’

# Member States – approaches to regulation, policy and support

- **Specific regulatory provisions**
  - Clarifying general obligation, defining terms and concepts, specifying inclusion in risk assessment and its scope, conferring rights on workers, defining competencies of preventive services, differentiating work time from private time
  - Stress, violence, bullying, discrimination
- **Soft law measures**
  - Social partner joint declarations, framework agreements (national and sectoral)
- **Guidance and support**
  - Guidance, checklists, 'management standards' or codes of practice for employers, online tools, advice service, guidance for labour inspectors, sector-targeted inspection, awareness raising
- **Strategies**
  - Setting targets and priorities, earmarking resources

# Evidence of measures' impact

## ■ Sweden

- EU-OSHA 'SESAME' research: MSEs more aware of psychosocial risks following the provisions introduced by SWEA in 2016 and associated awareness raising (*companies participating in a seminar or training course regarding the new provisions*).

## ■ Austria

- ESENER showed an increase in use of psychologist from 10% in 2009 to 20% in 2014 (18% in 2019) following legislation that included access to a psychologist in preventive services

## ■ Italy

- ESENER showed an increase in companies having an action plan for stress from 17% in 2009 to 50% in 2014 (48% in 2019) following changes in legislation and publishing national guidelines

# The scale of the problem

- **Eurobarometer:** **27%** of workers suffered from stress, depression or anxiety caused by or worsened by work during last 12 months (European Commission, 2014)
- **United Kingdom:** 'work-related stress, depression and anxiety' accounts for **37%** of work-related ill health cases and **45%** of days lost in 2015/16 (HSE, 2017)
- **Spain:** between **11% and 27%** of mental disorders can be attributed to working conditions. Direct health cost estimated at €150-€372 million (UGT, 2013)
- **Germany:** job strain costs **€29 billion** annually; reduced performance estimated to cost twice that of absence (Bodeker & Friedrichs, 2011)

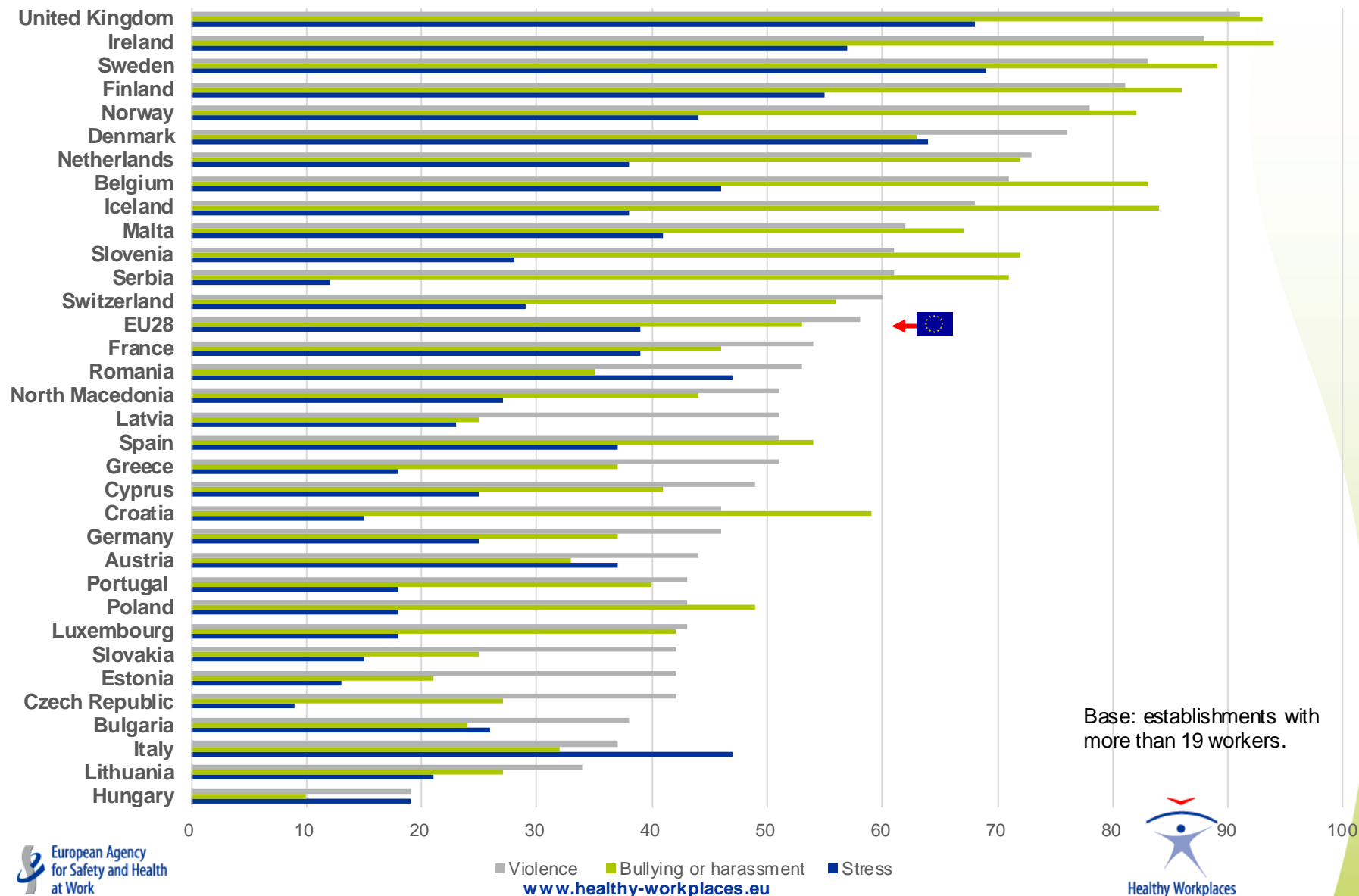
# ESENER-3: Risk factors present in the establishment (% establishments, EU-28)



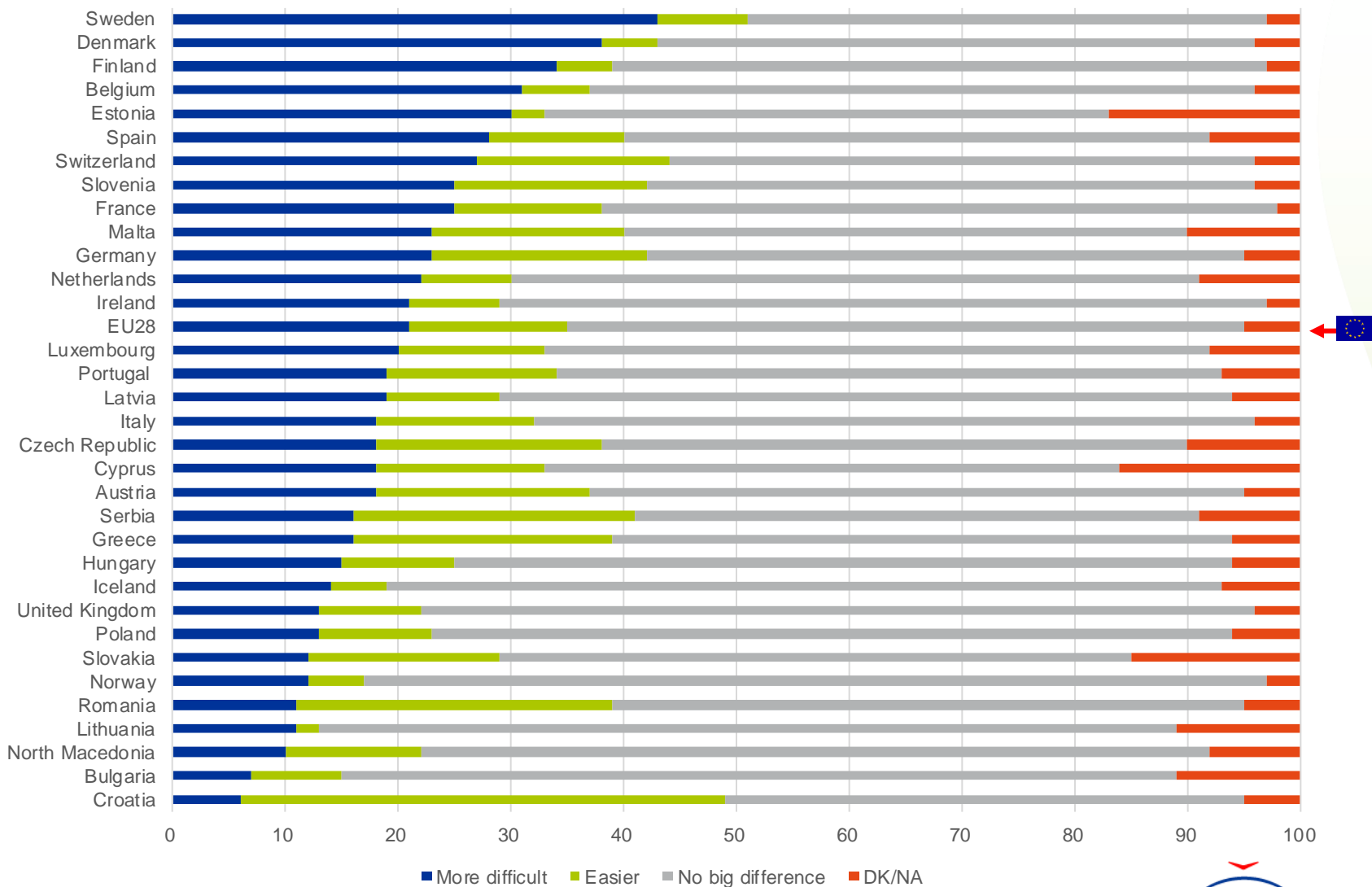
Base: all establishments in the EU-28.

# ESENER-3: Procedures to deal with psychosocial risks, 2019

(% establishments, EU-28)

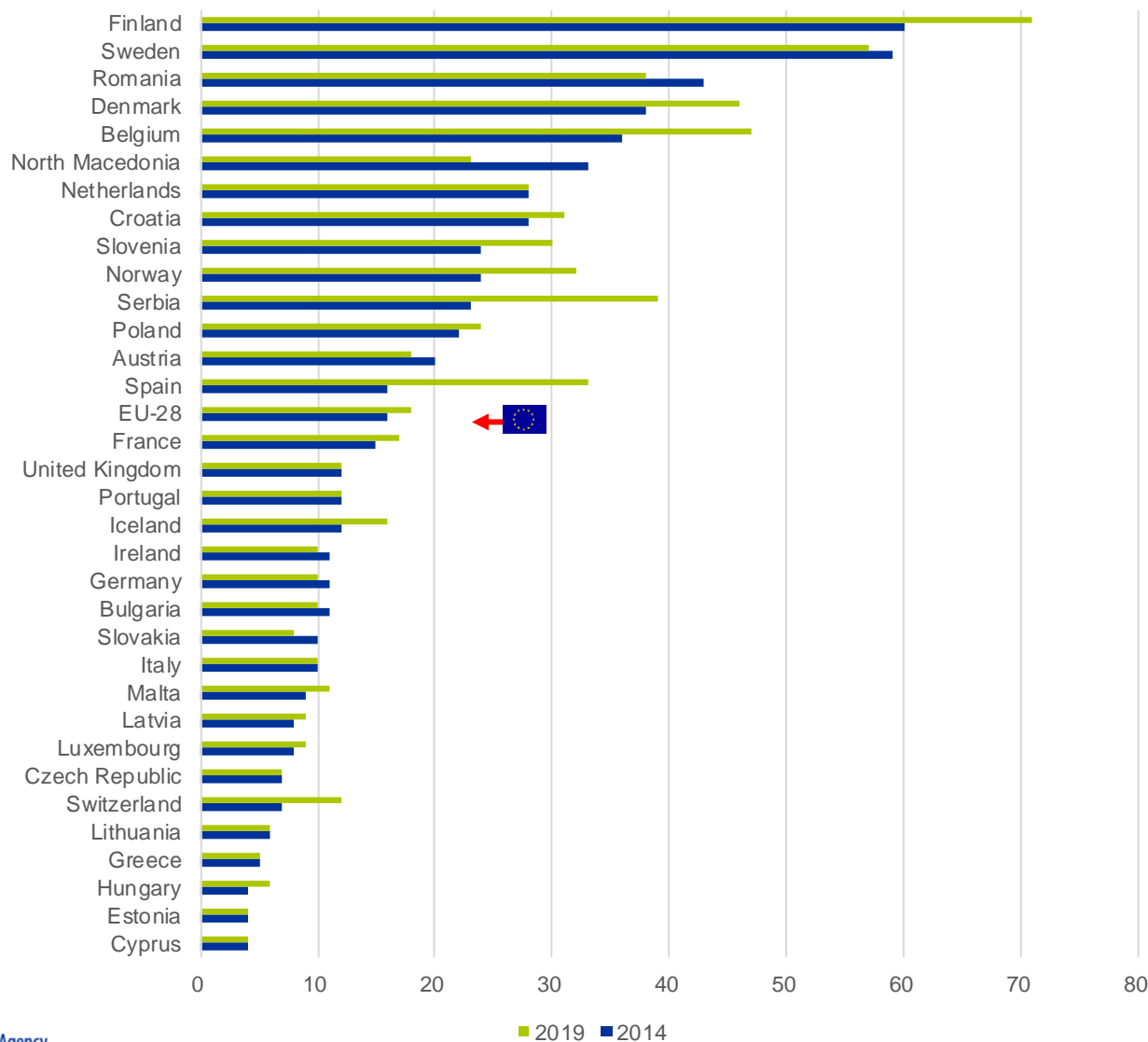


# ESENER-3: Are psychosocial risks easier or more difficult to address than other risks? By country, 2019 (% establishments)

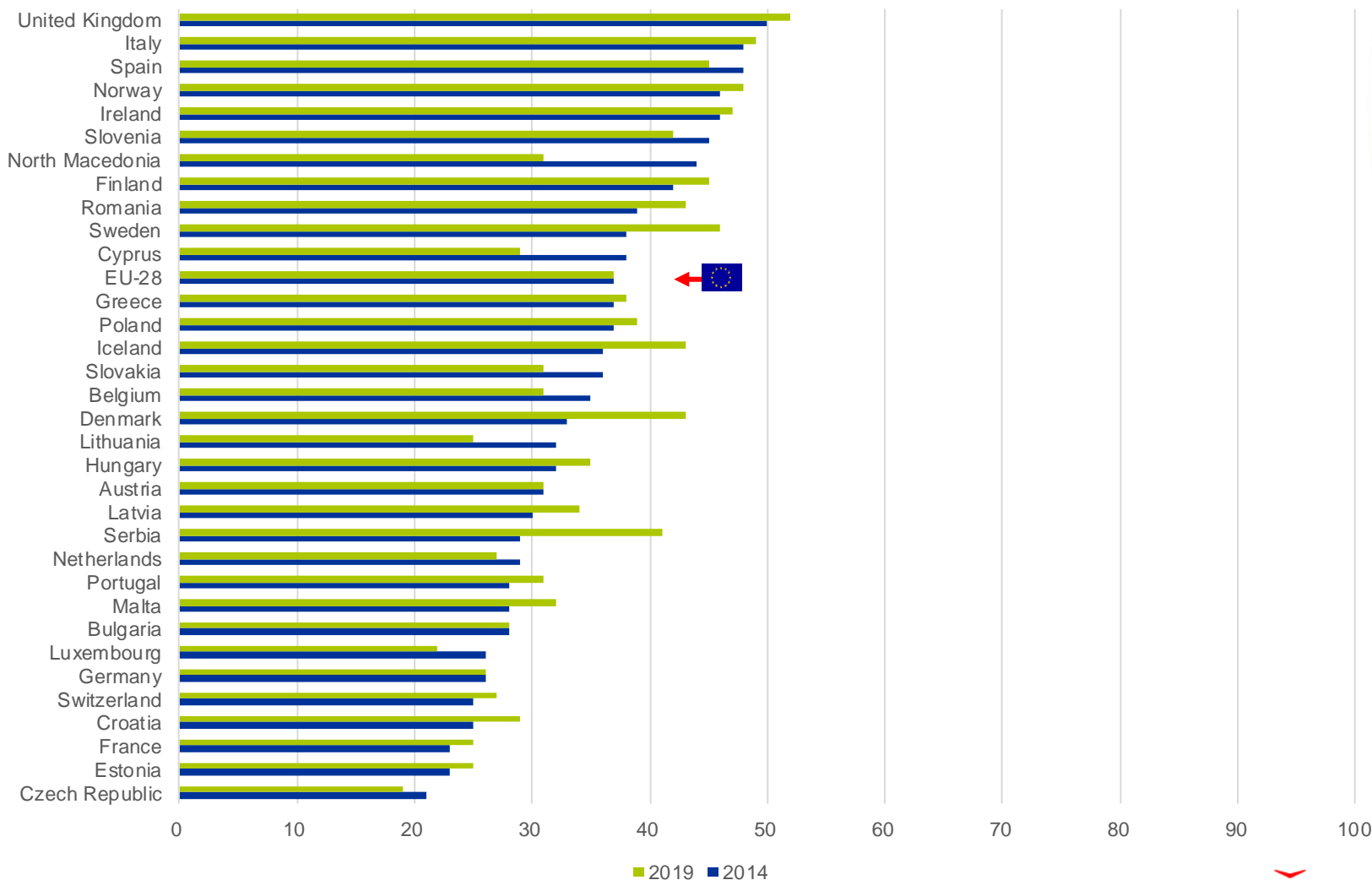




# ESENER-3: Use of a psychologist, in-house or contracted externally, by country (% establishments)



# ESENER-3: Providing employees with training on psychosocial risks (% establishments)



# EU-OSHA resources

- **COVID-19 guidance, telework good practice recently published**
- **OSH Overview on Psychosocial Risks 2022-2025**
  - Preparatory work in 2021
- **Campaign 2020-2022 ‘Prevention of work-related MSDs’**
  - Role of psychosocial risk factors in MSD occurrence and prevention
- **ESENER – management of psychosocial risks in small companies**
  - Data analysis + 120 interviews across six Member States
  - Survey dashboard <https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/esener#!/en>

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress>



### Key findings

- Confirmed positive impact of worker representation
- Psychosocial risks:
  - Often regarded as **separate** from OSH risks.
  - **Different** management strategies by different parts of the organisation.
  - **Traditional** worker 'safety representatives' had little chance of representing workers on those matters.
  - Growing recognition that this is a **significant** problem, but perceived lack of solutions in which the worker representatives have role.

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/worker-participation-management-occupational-safety-health/view>

# EU-OSHA research: OSH in micro and small enterprises (2014-2018)

- Nearly 99% of companies in the EU are micro and small firms (1-49 workers), they employ about half of the workforce
- Psychosocial risks are not taken into consideration in most MSEs. Common and shared perspective among managers and workers:
  - Strong believe in 'common sense' and individual responsibility for being safe and healthy
  - OSH risks perceived as 'part of the job', health risks underestimated
  - Psychosocial risks are perceived as an individual issue and/or a problem created by the current 'hard economic climate', not a subject of workplace interventions

## Micro and Small Enterprises

<https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/safety-and-health-micro-and-small-enterprises>



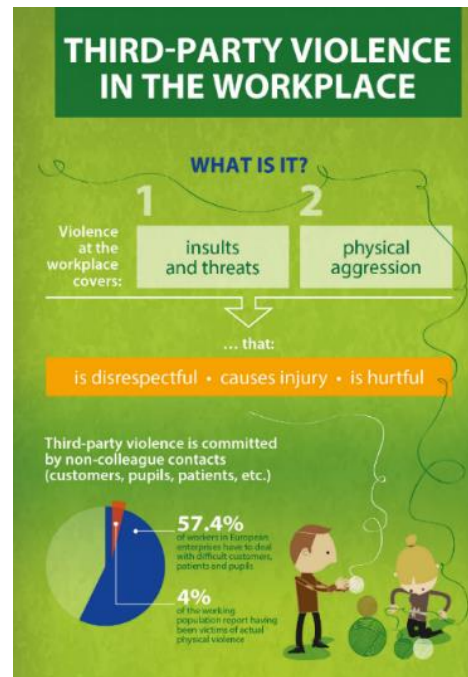
# Thank You!

EU-OSHA: [www.osha.europa.eu](http://www.osha.europa.eu)

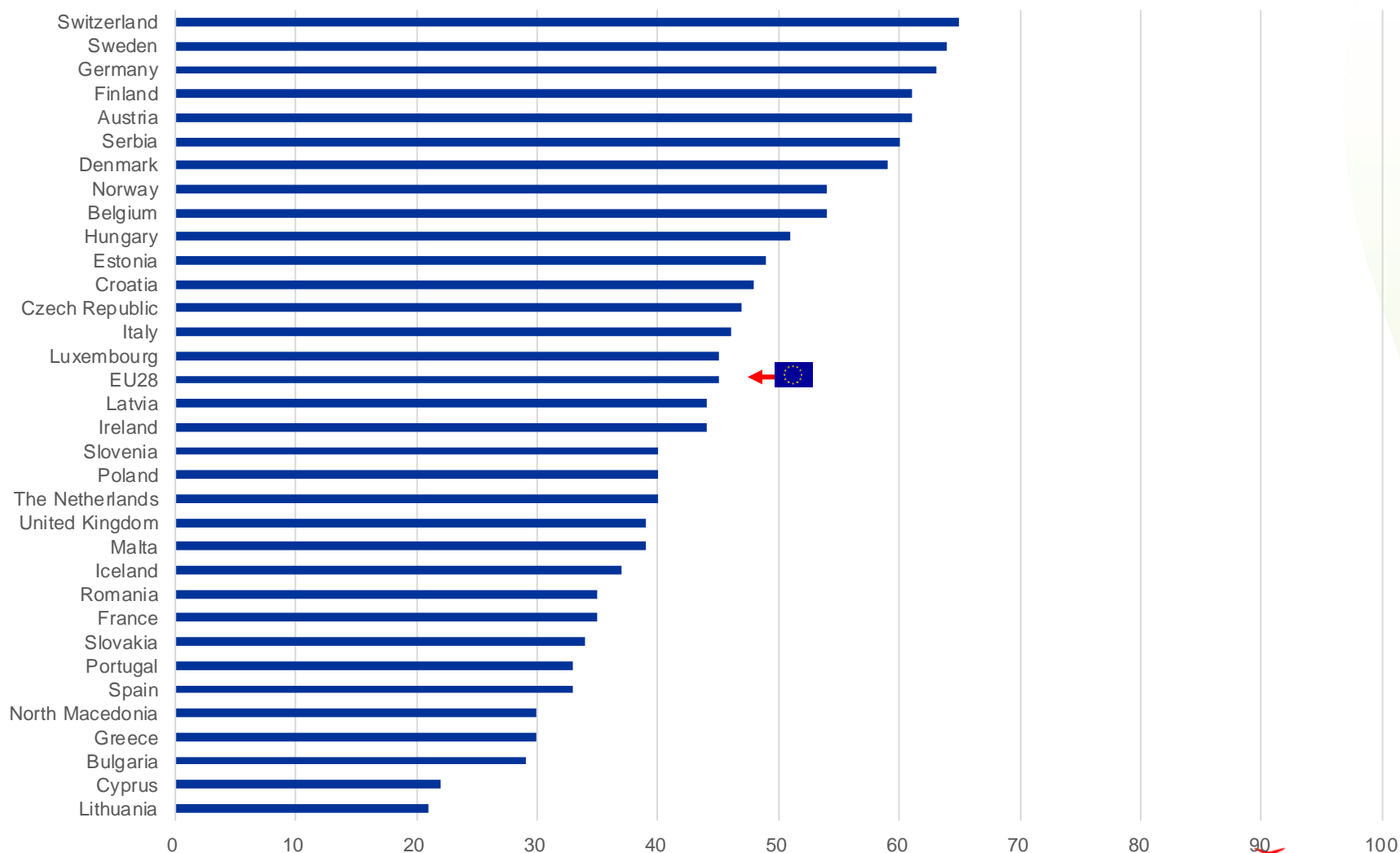
<https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/psychosocial-risks-and-stress>

ESENER survey dashboard

<https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/esener#/en>

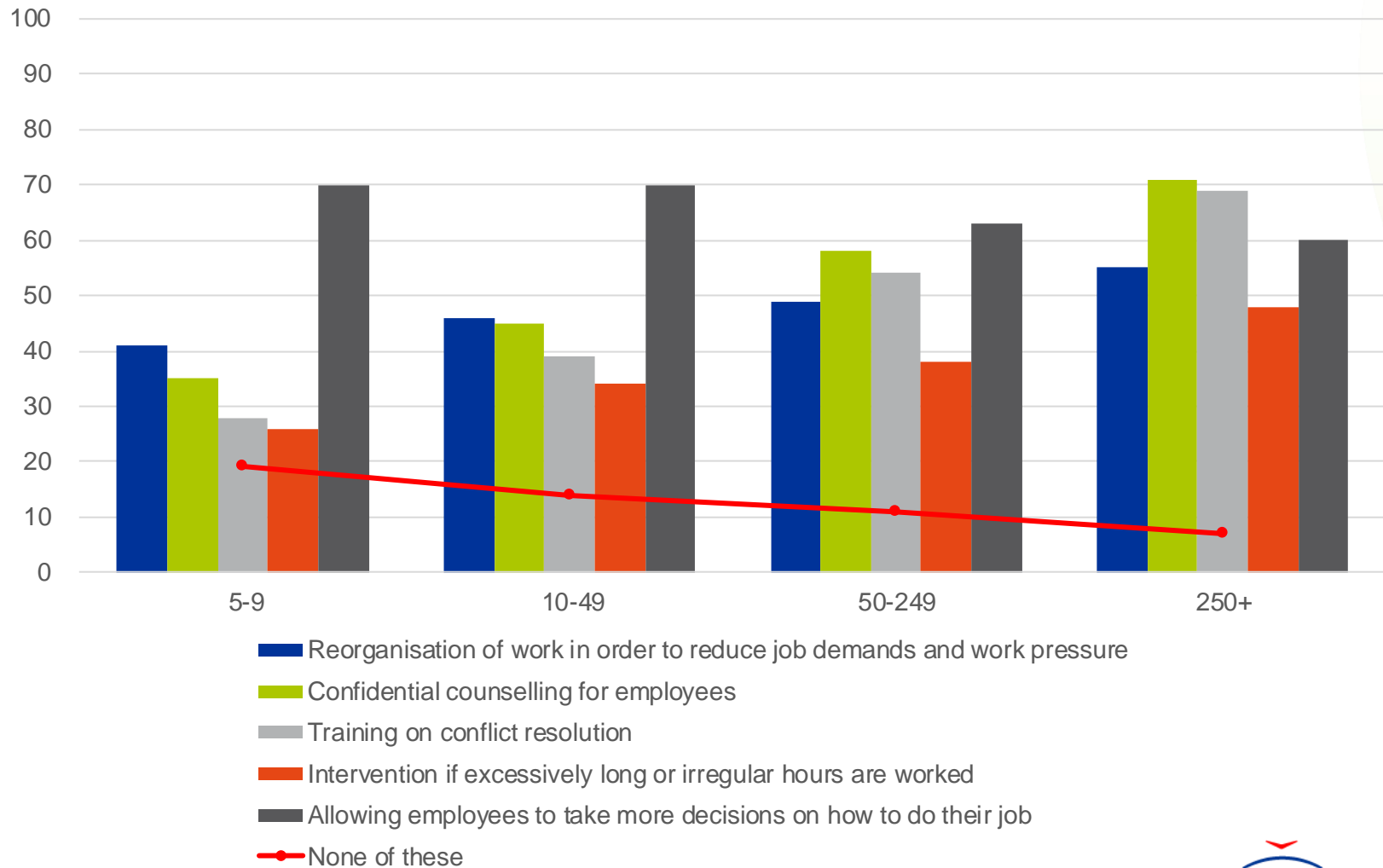


# ESENER-3: Employee involvement in identifying causes of work-related stress, by country 2019 (% establishments)



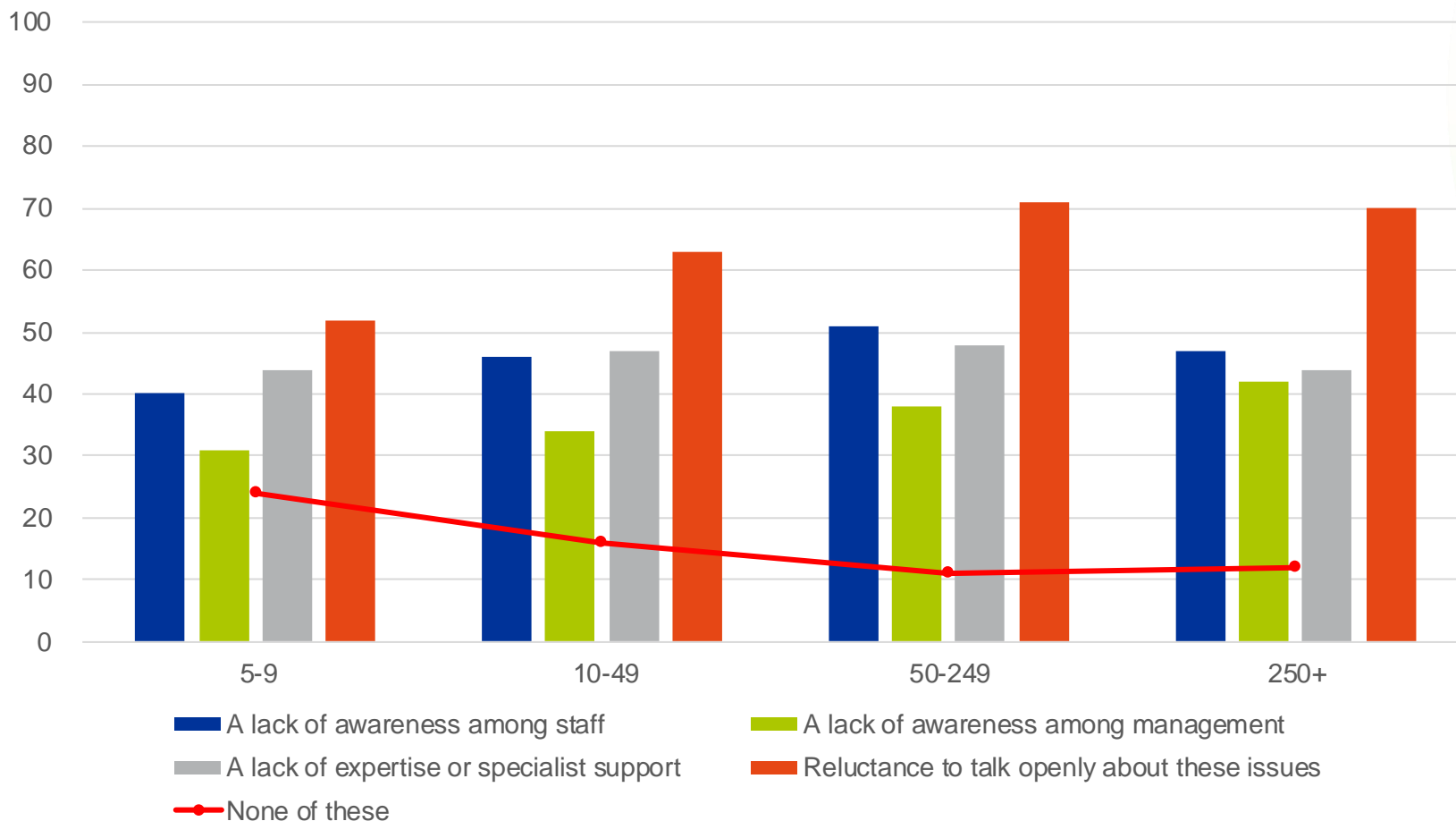
Base: establishments with less than 20 workers.

# ESENER-3: Measures to deal with psychosocial risks, by establishment size, 2019 (% establishments, EU-28)





# ESENER-3: Difficulties in addressing psychosocial risks, by establishment size, 2019 (% establishments)



Base: establishments in all 33 countries that report at least one psychosocial risk factor to be present in their establishments and that consider them to be more difficult to address than others.

# ESENER-3: Employee involvement in measures to address psychosocial risks, by country (% establishments)

