EG on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH EG)
31st meeting in Helsinki Finland
24 September 2026

NDPHS
Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

Reference	OSH 31/1
Submitted by	ITA in Coordination with the Chair

NDPHS Secretariat: Ülla-Karin Nürm, Lukas Lorenzen, Mai Peksen
Estonia: Karin Reinhold
Finland: Owe Österbacka (chair), Päivi Hämäläinen (ITA), Elina Virtanen
Latvia: : Ivars Vanadziņš
Lithuania: Lolita Pilipavičienė
Norway: Monica Varem Pettersen
Poland: Eliza Goszczyńska

Thursday 24 September 2026

1. Opening of the meeting and welcome

The Chair welcomed participants to the 31st Occupational Safety and Health Expert Group meeting and noted that two members were expected to join later. A brief round of introductions was held, including a welcome to a new participant Mai Peksen from the NDPHS Secretariat. The chair outlined also the day's programme.

The agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as such.

Mia Mäkinen from the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health highlighted the importance of international cooperation in a challenging global environment. She welcomed the strengthened Nordic-Baltic cooperation and noted that the Ministry works actively with partners such as the EU, WHO, ILO, and the Nordic Council of Ministers. She also emphasized the relevance of comprehensive security, preparedness, gender equality, and the links between health, well-being, and competitiveness in the Ministry's international activities.

2. Notifications from the NDPHS Secretariat

The NDPHS Secretariat provided an update on current activities and strategic developments. No major changes had occurred since the previous meeting, although some leadership changes had taken place within the partnership and expert groups.

The Secretariat noted that resilience of people and communities remains a key priority, with mental health continuing to be a central theme. Preparations are ongoing for the revision of the NDPHS strategy beyond 2027, and discussions are underway on future priorities and areas of cooperation.

The importance of cross-sectoral collaboration was highlighted, particularly through the "Health in All Policies" approach and cooperation with sectors such as education, culture, energy, and environmental health. The Secretariat also emphasized the growing importance of regional connectivity and Nordic-Baltic cooperation within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The OSH Expert Group and the Primary Health Care Expert Group remain the two active expert groups within the partnership. The Secretariat also reported an increasing number of projects and funding opportunities, supported by stronger links with EU initiatives and regional cooperation frameworks.

Mai Peksen from NDPHS Secretariat presented plans to strengthen the visibility and impact of NDPHS activities. LinkedIn was highlighted as the primary communication channel, complemented by Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Spotify podcasts, and the NDPHS website.

A new communication initiative linked to the Politics and Mental Health Platform was introduced. The platform aims to bring together experiences and good practices from different sectors, including workplaces, municipalities, NGOs, schools, and research organisations, to promote mental health and support policy development.

The Secretariat also proposed increasing the visibility of the OSH Expert Group through expert profiles, articles, podcasts, and social media content. Participants were encouraged to contribute key messages and insights from their work, helping translate expert knowledge into accessible content for wider audiences. The Secretariat stressed the importance of active engagement with NDPHS communication channels to increase outreach and visibility.

3. Key takeaways from the (EPIC) workshop (please see Lukas's summary)

Lukas Lorenzen from the NDPHS Secretariat reviewed the outcomes of the previous day's workshop on potential research collaboration and identified three preliminary project concepts. The first focused on protective and mitigating work environment factors that support employee health, work ability, and organizational resilience during prolonged crises. The second addressed preparedness and resilience in small and micro-enterprises, with particular attention to integrating OSH and preparedness into everyday business practices. The third explored the development of a digital psychosocial risk management tool for the healthcare sector to support organizations and workers during crisis situations.

Participants discussed the objectives, target groups, methodologies, and potential consortium partners for each concept. There was broad agreement that all three themes are relevant and should be developed further as separate concepts rather than merged at this stage. Existing work, including the Mental Health Matters initiative, was recognized as a valuable foundation for future project development.

The group also discussed potential funding opportunities, the need to map related initiatives to avoid duplication, and the importance of aligning future proposals with emerging national, Nordic-Baltic, and European priorities. The Secretariat was encouraged to further elaborate the three concepts so they can be matched with suitable funding calls as they arise.

4. Mental Health Matters article (please see Karin's slides)

Karin Reinhold presented progress on the scientific article based on the results of the Mental Health Matters project. The article draws on data from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway, and Poland and uses a realist review approach to examine how psychosocial risk management interventions work in different national contexts. The aim is to identify the mechanisms and conditions that contribute to successful workplace mental health initiatives.

The article's theoretical framework combines established models of workplace mental health promotion, prevention, and support. Based on data collected through interviews, communities of

practice, project reports, and policy documents, the analysis identified 16 context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOCs) across the participating countries.

Three main findings emerged from the analysis: clear responsibilities for psychosocial risk management support preventive action, accessible and trusted resources increase implementation, and sustainable results require coordination between organizational prevention, individual support, and work participation measures. These findings form the basis of a programme theory explaining how effective psychosocial risk management can be supported across different contexts.

The discussion section is still under development, and further refinement of the theoretical interpretation is planned. Karin aims to circulate a draft for review later in the year, with a more detailed discussion of the manuscript planned for the Expert Group's December meeting. Participants expressed strong appreciation for the progress made and offered support for the next stages of the writing process.

5. Summary on key activities in Finland (please see Virpi's slides)

Virpi Kalakoski from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health presented ongoing research on algorithmic management and artificial intelligence in working life. She described how digital systems and AI are increasingly used to allocate tasks, monitor performance, schedule work, and support managerial decision-making across many sectors.

Research findings indicate that algorithmic management is becoming common in conventional workplaces and can significantly affect psychosocial working conditions. Key challenges identified include increased workload, intensified work pace, continuous monitoring, reduced opportunities for recovery, and weaker social interaction within work communities. At the same time, algorithmic systems can also provide benefits, such as improved access to information, better work organization, and support for decision-making when implemented appropriately.

To address emerging occupational safety and health risks, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is developing a practical checklist and guidance tool for assessing psychosocial risks related to algorithmic management. The tool builds on existing psychosocial risk assessment methods and aims to help employers, employees, and labour inspectors identify and manage risks associated with AI-driven work practices. The project is currently testing the tool in workplaces and gathering feedback for further development.

The discussion highlighted the growing importance of understanding the impact of AI and algorithmic management on work organization, employee well-being, and productivity. Participants also emphasized the need for practical guidance, regulatory support, and occupational safety and health expertise to ensure that digital technologies are introduced in ways that support both organizational performance and worker well-being.

Päivi Hämäläinen from the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health provided an overview of current national priorities related to working life and occupational safety and health. Preparations are underway for the upcoming government term, with ministries developing policy priorities for the next government programme. Significant efforts are also focused on negotiations concerning the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework and the new National and Regional Partnership Plan, which will combine several EU funding instruments into a single framework.

The ministry presented the newly published National Working Life Development Strategy, developed jointly by the ministries responsible for social affairs, employment, and education together with social

partners and other stakeholders. The strategy aims to improve productivity, well-being at work, and the quality of working life, with implementation planning currently in progress.

Secondly Päivi presented government's programme "Finland on the Move" programme, including activities to promote physical activity, work ability, and functional capacity among the working-age population.

Lastly Päivi presented ongoing work on an Occupational Safety and Health Programme for the education, health, and social services sectors. The programme focuses on preventing workplace violence and harassment, reducing psychosocial workload, improving risk management, and preventing occupational accidents.

Owe also informed about the ongoing revision of Finland's occupational health care legislation and related guidance, which is expected to enter into force in 2027 and will be discussed further at future meetings.

6. Roundtable: Key activities and objectives of the OSH Expert Group

Owe opened a roundtable discussion on the future development of the OSH Expert Group and invited feedback on meeting formats, priorities, and the added value of the network. He suggested reducing lengthy country reports in favour of more focused thematic discussions, external expert presentations, and deeper exchanges on emerging topics such as preparedness, resilience, artificial intelligence, and psychosocial work environment factors. He also raised the possibility of collecting selected OSH indicators or statistics regularly and exploring more targeted knowledge-sharing between members.

Ivars (Latvia) emphasized that the main value of the group lies in *exchanging practical experiences* and *gaining an* overall *understanding of developments across countries*. He supported maintaining *short country updates focused on key policy changes* and emerging priorities. He also highlighted the *importance of understanding broader trends, such as new national strategies* and Nordic-Baltic policy developments, rather than gathering extensive statistical data.

Karin (Estonia) identified *networking and professional contacts* as the most valuable aspects of the group. She noted that collaboration within the network has *benefited both her professional work and Estonia's activities*. She *supported brief country updates* and considered it useful to learn about developments in partner organizations. Karin also highlighted *the importance of sharing information on OSH capacities and resources*, such as occupational health personnel, as these are relevant to preparedness and workforce development.

Eliza (Poland) emphasized that *joint projects are one of the strongest drivers* of collaboration and *learning within the group*. Using the Mental Health Matters project as an example, she noted that a *shared project creates common goals, strengthens cooperation, and facilitates the exchange of knowledge* and experiences across countries. She encouraged the group to continue seeking externally funded projects to maintain engagement and produce tangible results.

Lolita (Lithuania) considered all key functions of the expert group to be important and stressed the value of future collaborative projects. She expressed interest in involving a larger Lithuanian team in future activities and highlighted *opportunities to strengthen cooperation between institutions*. As her organization has a practical rather than research-oriented role, she particularly valued the possibility of *sharing knowledge and applying lessons learned* in workshops and training activities in Lithuania.

Elina (Finland) highlighted the *practical benefits of learning from other countries*, referring to Estonia's experiences in collecting and using occupational health statistics. She stressed that *long-term*

partnerships and familiarity between members make collaboration more effective and facilitate the development of joint projects. She also suggested that occupational safety and health for young people entering working life could become a future topic for the group.

Monica (Norway) emphasized that *networking and learning about activities in partner organizations are the most valuable outcomes of participation*. She supported the idea of future joint projects and highlighted artificial intelligence, platform work, and upcoming EU developments as relevant future themes. She also *welcomed opportunities for more in-depth thematic discussions* during meetings.

Lucas (secretariat) observed that expert groups create the greatest value when members have *common interests and concrete goals to work towards*. He considered the Mental Health Matters project a successful example of collaboration that produced tangible outcomes and strengthened group cohesion. He supported future project development and the inclusion of presentations from external experts on topics of shared interest.

Mai (secretariat) observed that *the group covers a much broader range of issues than she had initially expected*, addressing topics across the entire working life course. From a communications perspective, she described the group as a *rich source of expertise and content*. She encouraged members to contribute to planned communication activities, including expert profiles and articles, and suggested exploring ways to engage younger audiences through newer communication channels and formats.

Main conclusions were that the strongest value of the OSH Expert Group lies in networking, knowledge exchange, and the development of joint projects. There was broad support for maintaining concise country updates while allocating more time to thematic discussions, external expert presentations, and collaborative project development. Future areas of interest identified during the discussion included preparedness and resilience, artificial intelligence, platform work, climate-related challenges, and supporting young people entering working life.

7. Meeting schedule

The meeting schedule was confirmed. The next online meeting will take place on **3 December**, followed by a face-to-face meeting in Helsinki in April 2027, to be held in connection with the conference on prolonging working life. An additional online meeting is scheduled for 10 June 2027, and a tentative face-to-face meeting is planned in Stockholm on 22–23 September 2027.

- 32nd meeting, 3 December 2026, online
- 33rd meeting, 14 April 2027, Helsinki
  (connection with the conference on prolonging working life 13 April 2027)
- 34th meeting, 10 June 2027, online
- 35th meeting 22-23 September 2027, Stockholm

6. Other issues

No additional issues were raised, and the Chair thanked participants for their active contributions and closed the meeting.

Closing the meeting

The chair closed the meeting at 15.55.