

INAIL ECONOMIC INCENTIVE PROGRAMME (ITALY)

Type of initiative: Support scheme

Timeframe: 2010 to present

1 Background

Data from the Eurostat Labour Force Survey ad hoc module show that in the 5 years from 2007 to 2013 the percentage of workers in Italy reporting some form of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) increased markedly, from 49.7 % to 59.2 %, compared with an overall EU increase from 54.2 % to 60.1 % during the same period. During that time, national legislation was in place to implement the provisions of two EU occupational safety and health (OSH) directives intended to address some of the major causes of MSDs (Directive 90/269/EEC - manual handling of loads and Directive 90/270/EEC - display screen equipment).

The national legislation implementing the provisions of the EU Manual Handling Directive is somewhat wider in scope than the directive. While the directive refers to risks, 'particularly of back injuries', the Italian legislation refers more generally to the prevention of diseases caused by biomechanical overload (which are defined as diseases affecting the musculoskeletal, musculotendinous and neurovascular structures). On risk assessments, it directs the employer to ISO 11228, which sets out ergonomic recommendations for various manual handling tasks.

In contrast, the scope of the national legislation based on the EU Display Screen Equipment Directive is slightly narrower than that of the directive, as it specifically excludes portable systems, even in relation to their prolonged use at workstations. On eye and eyesight testing, the national legislation is somewhat more prescriptive than the directive, requiring examinations every 5 years (and every 2 years for those over 50 years of age). Finally, provisions regarding breaks are more specific, with workers specifically entitled to a break of at least 15 minutes every 2 hours.

In Italy, the current legislative framework — namely Italian Legislative Decree 81/08 and its amendments and integrations — sets out an obligation for employers to assess all risks to workers' safety and health, including risks associated with work-related stress, as specified in the European framework agreement on work-related stress of 8 October 2004. To support companies, the Permanent Consultative Committee¹ for Health and Safety at Work provided guidelines (published in 2010) on the assessment of risks of work-related stress, recommending the active participation of an occupational health professional.

Italy has a strong insurance-based system, largely controlled by social partners and the National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL). INAIL funds extensive preventive activities; for example, it provides financial support for OSH training and OSH investments to companies, including micro and small enterprises (MSEs).

2 Description of the initiative

2.1 Introduction

The National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work (INAIL) funds preventive action in workplaces through its support for projects aimed at improving safety and health. The scheme 'Support incentives for enterprises' (ISI — *Incentivi di Sostegno alle Imprese*) provides financial support to enterprises and the self-

employed to improve safety and health at work, including for projects tackling the risks posed by manual handling of loads and projects involving the replacement or adaptation of work equipment to meet the latest standards. The scheme primarily targets high-risk sectors such as transport, agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture. Reduction of manual handling risks has been included in the ISI scheme's scope for 2017- 18 as a separate funding category with a budget of EUR 45 million in 2018 for projects focusing on this issue.

The scheme has been running since 2010 and is financed by redirecting a part of companies' compulsory insurance premiums to fund preventive action in workplaces; it can therefore be regarded as economically sustainable.

2.2 Aim of the initiative

The aim of the ISI scheme is to reduce the incidence of work-related accidents and occupational diseases and improve safety and health at work by providing financial support to enterprises. The scheme provides non-repayable grants to companies for the implementation of projects on safety and health at work, including projects tackling work-related MSDs.

2.3 Organisations involved

INAIL — the Italian workers' compensation authority — is a public, compulsory OSH insurance organisation. INAIL carries out extensive support activities for the prevention of work-related accidents and occupational diseases. Its activities include research and the provision of information and training. It also provides economic incentives and financial support for OSH interventions in companies.

2.4 What was done and how

The ISI scheme has been running since 2010. ISI is a national programme administered by Italy's regions, which are involved in the selection of appropriate projects and the transfer of funds. The non-repayable grants are assigned, subject to availability, in order of receipt of applications. The grant, equivalent to 40% to 65 % of the investment — up to a maximum of EUR 50,000 to EUR 130,000, depending on the project/intervention category — is paid when the technical and administrative audit/checks after the implementation of the project have been successfully completed. The total funding allocated by INAIL to the ISI scheme has amounted to about EUR 1.2 billion since 2010. The programme was designed primarily to support MSEs.

This support scheme allows MSEs and the self-employed to invest in new working methods or work equipment to reduce specific workplace risks. Interventions that reduce the risks posed by manual handling of loads form one of the categories eligible for funding.

A 2012 report on the results of the initiative indicated that EUR 155 million had been allocated in non-repayable grants to enterprises for investments in better safety and health at work. Interventions to address physical load on musculoskeletal system as a major cause of injuries were financed through 173 projects (equivalent to 21 % of all projects funded) with a total allocated budget of EUR 9,524,600 (equivalent to 19 % of the total budget for 2012) ⁽¹⁾. In addition, 589 projects that developed preventive interventions to address the risk factors associated with MSDs were financed with a total allocated budget of EUR 35,564,235 in 2012. An increase in the number of and budget for projects focusing on preventive interventions to address risk factors for MSDs was reported during 2013 (31 % of projects for a total of EUR 66,955,236) and 2014 (25 % of projects for a total of EUR 57,170,542) ⁽²⁾. There are a number of requirements that enterprises must meet to access financing, and this incentivises companies to meet the criteria. Technical and administrative supervision is implemented through a dialogue with the OSH professional and inspection.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/docs/ucm_079921.pdf

⁽²⁾ See https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/docs/ucm_141301.pdf for 2013 and https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/docs/ucm_185840.pdf for 2014.

2.5 What was achieved

The ISI scheme is well known and many companies apply for funding. Based on data provided by INAIL, the number of grants paid to small businesses is increasing. In 2014, MSEs accounted for 93 % of all enterprises that obtained funding. Since 2010, this INAIL initiative has financed a large number of projects addressing the risks related to manual handling of loads. While several reports have been published detailing the numbers of projects funded and the budget allocation for various types of projects, no related evaluation of the initiative's impact has been carried out. However, the programme has resulted in tangible improvements in MSEs, and it may also increase OSH awareness, in particular in MSEs.

2.6 Success factors and challenges

The scope of the support scheme is broad; it covers several high-risk sectors and various types of projects (investment projects, organisational interventions, projects to reduce the risks posed by manual handling, etc.). This certainly contributes to the success of the scheme. Financing the scheme from companies' mandatory insurance premiums ensures the sustainability of the programme. Given the increasing number of companies applying for financing, it can be concluded that the programme is successful.

From an analysis of the feedback from those who have first-hand experience of the programme, some challenges can be identified at both INAIL level and company level with regard to the application procedure. These include, for companies, the resources and costs required to prepare an application for economic support and an element of randomness arising from the application procedure. On INAIL's side, the challenge is the high number of applications. INAIL has to examine many applications, resulting in delays in financing disbursement (e.g. in response to the 2015 call about 23,000 applications were received).

2.7 Transferability

The initiative could be applied in other countries, but its transferability would depend on the availability of resources, as this kind of programme requires substantial financial resources over several years.

ISI is a national scheme administered by Italy's regions, which are involved in the selection of projects for funding and the transfer of funds. This means that a robust infrastructure is needed for the implementation of the scheme.

References and resources

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- (2) INAIL, 'Incentivi alle imprese' ['Economic incentives to enterprises']: <https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/attivita/prevenzione-e-sicurezza/agevolazioni-e-finanziamenti/incentivi-alle-imprese.html>
- (3) INAIL, 2018, Text of the open call for projects under the Economic Incentive Programme 2018 (ISI 2018). Available in Italian at: <https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/atti-e-documenti/note-e-provvedimenti/determine-presidente/det-pres-519-del-6-dic-2018.html>
- (4) INAIL, Annex 3 to the ISI 2017 call for projects, with FAQs on projects seeking to reduce risk factors due to manual handling of loads. Available in Italian at: https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/docs/isi-2017-faq-allegato3_6443119393740.pdf?section=attivita
- (5) INAIL, 2012, Report on the ISI initiative 2012. Available in Italian at: https://www.inail.it/cs/internet/docs/ucm_079921.pdf

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