

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION OF OiRA IN BELGIUM

1 Background

In 2011, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) introduced the Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA), a web-based platform designed to create sector-specific risk assessment tools. OiRA addresses the challenges small businesses face in managing workplace safety and health by offering user-friendly tools adapted to national and sectoral circumstances. The platform helps users systematically identify risks, decide on preventive measures and generate customised action plans.¹

Belgium officially became a partner in 2013, through the agreement signed with the Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (FPS Employment).² Since then, Belgium has developed 35 OiRA tools in Dutch and French, covering various sectors, along with thematic tools for COVID-19 and psychosocial risks.^{3,4} These tools support Belgium's Well-Being at Work Code, which mandates comprehensive risk assessments in five key areas: occupational safety, health, psychosocial risks, ergonomics, and occupational hygiene.⁵

While large businesses in Belgium show high compliance (93.3%) with regular risk assessments, micro and small businesses, particularly those with fewer than 10 employees, show much lower compliance (60.2%), as noted in EU-OSHA's third European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER 2019).⁶ To increase OiRA's visibility and adoption, in 2020 EU-OSHA backed a promotional strategy for the tools. This effort, combined with national initiatives from the FPS Employment, aimed to broaden OiRA's reach and user engagement in Belgium.^{7,8}

This case study reviews the development, promotion and adoption of OiRA tools in Belgium. It is on the one hand based on desk research and data analysis stemming from the OiRA statistics (Metabase). On the other hand it builds on feedback from interviews with the FPS Employment, labour inspectors, external OSH prevention service providers, sectoral OSH experts and social partners, to identify the factors contributing to OiRA's success.

2 Development of Belgian OiRA tools: key features and guidelines

Belgium's OiRA tools are tailored to meet the specific needs of different sectors, with a focus on micro and small enterprises (MSEs). These tools are designed to align with the Belgian legal framework, especially the Code on Well-Being at Work,⁹ ensuring that the tools are effective, accessible and legally compliant. The following sections outline the key features and guidelines behind the development of these tools.

¹ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), official website: <https://oira.osha.europa.eu/en>

² European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), OiRA partner Belgium: <https://oira.osha.europa.eu/en/Partners/fps-employment-labour-and-social-dialogue>

³ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), Belgian OiRA tools: <https://oira.osha.europa.eu/en/oira-tools?f%5B0%5D=country%3A8>

⁴ Belgian knowledge centre on well-being at work (BeSWIC), Dedicated tool website for Belgian OiRA tools: <https://beswic.be/nl/kmo/oira-uw-online-risicoanalyse>

⁵ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue: <https://employment.belgium.be/en/act-4-august-1996-well-being-workers-performance-their-work>

⁶ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), ESENER 2019. Workplace risks assessments: https://visualisation.osha.europa.eu/esener/en/survey/detailpage-national-bar-chart/2019/osh-management/en_1/E3Q250/company-size/BE

⁷ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Promotion material: <https://www.oirapromo.be/>

⁸ Belgian knowledge centre on well-being at work (BeSWIC), Promotion material: <https://beswic.be/nl/kmo/oira-uw-online-risicoanalyse/oira-promoten>

⁹ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Code du bien-être au travail: <https://emploi.belgique.be/fr/themes/bien-etre-au-travail/principes-generaux/code-du-bien-etre-au-travail>

2.1 Alignment with the Code on Well-Being at Work

Belgium's occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations are based on the Law of 4 August 1996 on the Well-Being of Workers, which established the Code on Well-Being at Work.^{5,9} This code requires employers to regularly assess risks in five key domains: occupational safety, worker health, psychosocial risks, ergonomics, and occupational hygiene.

To fulfil these obligations, employers must seek expertise from an external service for prevention and protection at work which provides OSH services. Upon hiring their first employee, they are required to join such a service. Additionally, an internal prevention advisor must be appointed to oversee the internal service for prevention and protection at work. In companies with fewer than 20 employees, the employer can assume this role personally.¹⁰

The internal and external services for prevention and protection at work collaborate to promote employee safety and wellbeing. While the internal service handles daily prevention tasks within the company, the external service offers external expertise to ensure compliance with legal requirements. This partnership helps create a safer and healthier work environment for all employees.

To facilitate compliance with the code, OiRA tools in Belgium help employers conduct risk assessments, identify hazards, propose preventive measures and develop action plans. These tools streamline legal compliance and enhance cooperation with external services for prevention and protection at work.

In the spotlight:

OiRA Domestic work¹¹ launched in 2023 to advance protection for domestic workers.

In 2023, Belgium extended workplace wellbeing regulations to domestic workers, ensuring equality with other sectors through the Royal Decree of 7 May 2023.¹² A key component of this legal expansion was the simultaneous development of the OiRA tool Domestic work by the FPS Employment, in close collaboration with social partners reflecting the content of this new royal decree. Notably, the **OiRA tool Domestic Work¹¹** is explicitly referenced in the Code on Well-Being at Work.¹² Employers of domestic workers are now required to conduct risk assessments, implement preventive measures, and collaborate with an external service for prevention and protection at work. Employers who use this OiRA tool to identify risks, document preventive measures and monitor their implementation are considered to have met their legal obligations. In this case, a separate global prevention plan or annual action plan is not required. The reports and plans generated through the OiRA tool are sufficient to comply with the legal requirements.

2.2 Integration into national OSH strategy

National strategies are essential policy instruments for enhancing OSH systems.¹³ Belgium's National Action Plan for Well-being at Work 2022-2027¹⁴ serves as a cornerstone for its national OSH policy. This National Action Plan builds upon the previous National Strategy for Well-being at Work (2016-2020)¹⁵ and is aligned with the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027.¹⁶ The plan was developed through extensive consultation with social partners, scientific experts and key stakeholders within the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. This advisory body, part of the FPS Employment, facilitates social dialogue

¹⁰ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Code du bien-être au travail:

<https://emploi.belgique.be/fr/themes/bien-etre-au-travail/structures-organisationnelles/service-externe-pour-la-prevention-et-1>

¹¹ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), OiRA tool Domestic work: https://oira.osha.europa.eu/en/oira-tools?aggregated_field=&f%5B0%5D=country%3A8&f%5B1%5D=sector%3A1201

¹² Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Code du bien-être au travail:

<https://werk.belgie.be/nl/themes/welzijn-op-het-werk/werkorganisatie-en-bijzondere-werknemerscategorieen/dienstboden-en>

¹³ OiRA and other online risk assessment tools in national OSH strategies and legislations:

<https://oshwiki.osha.europa.eu/en/themes/oira-and-other-online-risk-assessment-tools-national-osh-strategies-and-legislation>

¹⁴ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, National Strategy for Wellbeing at Work 2022-2027:

<https://employment.belgium.be/en/publications/national-action-plan-improve-well-being-workers-performance-their-work-2022-2027>

¹⁵ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, National Strategy for Wellbeing at Work 2016-2020:

https://employment.belgium.be/sites/default/files/content/documents/Welzijn%20op%20het%20werk/EN/nat_strategie_EN.pdf

¹⁶ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), Legislation: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/safety-and-health-legislation/eu-strategic-framework-health-and-safety-work-2021-2027>

on workplace wellbeing. It brings together social partners, experts, administrative representatives and, when necessary, representatives from the competent minister's policy unit to provide guidance on OSH policies.^{17,18}

Belgium has explicitly integrated OiRA into its national OSH strategy, particularly under Axis III of the National Strategy for Well-Being at Work (2021-2027), which focuses on strengthening workplace risk prevention. This strategy emphasises the development and distribution of tools like OiRA to ensure consistent worker protection across all enterprises, particularly MSEs. A specific action within the strategy, notably Action 6: Developing and promoting tools for SMEs, focuses on the creation of sector-specific OiRA tools, ensuring they are accessible and widely promoted to businesses with limited resources or expertise.^{14,17}

The implementation of this strategy is reinforced by a policy agreement between the FPS Employment and the Federal Minister of Work mandating the development and distribution of OiRA tools. Countries that have integrated OiRA into their national OSH strategies tend to see an increase in the development of such tools, supporting better risk prevention and workplace safety.¹³

2.3 Tailored sectoral development

Belgium develops OiRA tools for specific sectors based on the demand from social partners, such as employers' organisations and trade unions. The development process proceeds only if all relevant stakeholders are actively engaged and committed to collaborating throughout the project. This sector-driven approach ensures that each tool is tailored to the unique needs and risks of the sector, as well as ensuring its alignment with the OSH regulations set out in the Code on Well-Being at Work.

All OiRA tools are developed in close cooperation with sector experts and stakeholders, ensuring that they are both practical and relevant to the target audience. This participatory development process is recognised by EU-OSHA as a best practice for the development of tools, as it fosters sector-wide buy-in and engagement.

Belgium's first sector-specific OiRA tool, developed in 2013, targeted the *hairdressing sector*. Over the years, additional tools have been developed for various sectors, including *woodworking, construction, hotels and restaurants, cleaning, bakeries, live performance (venues and productions), passenger land transport (buses and coaches), real estate (including cleaning and maintenance), nurseries and primary education (only in Dutch), flower farming, domestic work, office work and agriculture*, demonstrating Belgium's ongoing commitment to expanding OiRA's reach across different industries.^{3,4}

2.4 Thematic OiRA tools

The *OiRA COVID-19 tool*, introduced in 2020, was developed by EU-OSHA to help businesses navigate the rapidly evolving health and safety guidelines during the pandemic. It served as a valuable resource to ensure OSH compliance across sectors. For Belgium, the tool was translated into Dutch and French. However, the OiRA COVID-19 tool was not actively promoted, as the FPS Employment, together with the social partners and the minister's policy unit, prioritised the development of a generic guide.¹⁹ This guide was regularly updated to reflect the evolving situation and was accompanied by various promotional materials to support workplaces in implementing the necessary prevention and protection measures.

Another *thematic tool, launched in 2024, addresses psychosocial risks*. This tool is part of Belgium's broader plan for Mental Well-Being at Work, which aims to prevent stress, burnout and other mental health challenges in the workplace.²⁰ Approved by the Council of Ministers in November 2022, the plan comprises 13 actions coordinated by the FPS Employment, structured around three main pillars:

- The first axis focuses on wellbeing actors, such as occupational physicians, psychosocial prevention advisors and workers' representatives, who play critical roles in promoting workplace wellbeing.
- The second axis involves updating and evaluating regulations under the workplace wellbeing code to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.
- The third axis emphasises the development of tools, including an OiRA psychosocial risks tool, to support practical implementation in the field.

¹⁷ National OSH strategy Belgium: <https://oshwiki.osha.europa.eu/en/themes/national-osh-strategy-belgium>

¹⁸ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Social dialogue: <https://werk.belgie.be/nl/themas/sociaal-overleg/interprofessioneel-niveau/hoge-raad-voor-preventie-en-bescherming-op-het>

¹⁹ Belgian knowledge centre on well-being at work (BeSWIC), Dedicated tool website for Belgian OiRA tools: <https://beswic.be/nl/in-de-praktijk/einde-verplichtingen-generieke-gids-veilig-werken-tijdens-een-epidemie-een-pandemie>

²⁰ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, National, Mental wellbeing at work: <https://werk.belgie.be/nl/blog/plan-mentaal-welzijn-op-het-werk-mwohw-belangrijkste-actoren-regelgeving-en-tools>

The *OiRA psychosocial risks tool* is a cornerstone of the third axis and specifically developed to assist MSEs in systematically addressing psychosocial risks. By offering a structured and user-friendly method to assess psychosocial risks, the OiRA psychosocial risks tool reinforces Belgium's approach to integrate mental health risk prevention into workplace practices. It is aligned with broader national and sectoral efforts, ensuring that SMEs have the resources and guidance needed to implement best practices in mental health and workplace wellbeing management.

2.5 Stakeholder collaboration

The development of OiRA tools in Belgium relies on a coordinated effort among key stakeholders, ensuring the tools align with workplace safety regulation and effectively address sector-specific needs.

The FPS Employment plays a central role as the country manager for OiRA. After having signed the memorandum with EU-OSHA, the FPS Employment is responsible for overseeing OiRA's implementation in Belgium, ensuring alignment with the national OSH policies. The Belgian OiRA country manager for EU-OSHA, managed by the Directorate General for the Humanisation of Labour within the FPS Employment, coordinates the nationwide development and implementation of OiRA tools.

The labour inspectorate within the FPS Employment supports OiRA by assigning labour inspectors to contribute to the development of OiRA tools. These inspectors are actively involved throughout the process to ensure compliance with the Code on Well-Being at Work. During company visits, they assess whether businesses meet risk assessment requirements. OiRA tools are recognised as a reliable resource to demonstrate compliance with OSH regulations, making them valuable for both employers and inspectors.

Collaboration with social partners is key to the OiRA initiative. Representatives of employers' and workers' organisations collaborate on the development and acceptance of each OiRA tool. Sector-specific experts, including OSH specialists, prevention advisors from external services for prevention and protection at work, the appointed labour inspector and experts from the FPS Employment, also play a key role in the content creation of the OiRA tools tailored to industry-specific risks.

Each OiRA tool is led by a team leader, appointed by the Belgian OiRA country manager within the FPS Employment. With expertise in workplace wellbeing, risk assessment and project management, the team leader coordinates the steering group, ensures continuity, uploads the tool onto the platform and organises feedback loops.

The development process begins with an introductory meeting where the OiRA concept is presented, and social partners commit to collaboration. A project plan is then established, defining the timeline, team composition and meeting schedule. Progress is tracked through regular updates to the steering committee. Once a draft is ready, end users test its clarity and usability. After revisions and the final approval, the tool is validated and launched and promoted by all the stakeholders, that is, social partners and the FPS Employment.

2.6 Promotional and training initiatives

The FPS Employment plays a pivotal role in ensuring ongoing communication about OiRA tools. Through platforms like www.uwrisicoanalyse.be,⁴ the FPS Employment engages continuously with intermediaries such as organisations of OSH professionals, training institutions, social partners and payroll offices. This ongoing effort includes direct mail campaigns and social media engagement, ensuring OiRA tools remain visible throughout the year.

However, sustaining consistent communication and outreach of sectoral partners beyond the initial launch phase has been a challenge. To address this, the FPS Employment initiated an extensive promotional campaign in 2019 in collaboration with an external communications agency.

The campaign's preparatory phase included a comprehensive survey of various OiRA stakeholders to assess their needs and gather insights for ongoing OiRA promotion. The findings highlighted key areas and actions for improvement.

■ Centralised national platform for promotion

While the EU-OSHA OiRA website provides an overview of all existing tools, it is not designed as a national entry page for OiRA users. Accordingly, the FPS Employment required a more adequate targeted national or sector-specific entry page. Stakeholders recommended consolidating all Belgian OiRA tools under a single URL to enhance accessibility. As a result, a dedicated OiRA landing page, www.uwrisicoanalyse.be in Dutch and www.votreanalyse-des-risques.be in French, was created on BeSWIC, serving as the foundation for all promotional activities.⁴

▪ Enhancing sectoral communication capacity

Many sectoral partners involved in OiRA lacked the expertise and resources for consistent, effective communication. Some former OiRA sectoral partners were uncertain about how to promote the tools effectively. To address this, standardised communication packages were developed for each OiRA tool. These packages include structured guidelines for year-round outreach: brochures; mascot-branded stickers; training materials for schools and institutions; banners and advertisements; a social media calendar for key dates; and adaptable promotional materials for schools, social partners and other relevant stakeholders. The goal was to empower sectors to use these materials in their direct engagement with MSEs. These resources are available on [Oirapromo.be](https://oirapromo.be), and all sector-specific OiRA stakeholders were informed about these customised promotional materials.^{7,8} This strategy relied heavily on intermediaries, such as sectoral organisations and external OSH prevention service providers, to reach MSEs directly.

▪ Leveraging digital advertising

In addition to the above-mentioned promotional efforts, a targeted digital advertising strategy was implemented. Paid advertisements were launched by the external communications agency on platforms such as Google, Facebook and LinkedIn. However, measuring the immediate impact of these ads proved challenging.

Following the preparatory phase and implementation of these promotional strategies, the official campaign rollout in September 2020 was shadowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With some delay, a clear increase in user engagement and assessments occurred in 2021 as pandemic-related restrictions eased (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Post-campaign evaluations conducted by the external communications agency aimed to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. However, frequent turnover among sector representatives led to inconsistencies in sectoral engagement, making it difficult to determine which sectors used the promotional materials. Despite this, certain sectors, such as *OiRA Woodworking* and *OiRA Construction*, successfully maintained consistent promotion and communication efforts.

Belgium is actively involved in European initiatives like EU-OSHA's OSHVET project, which promotes OSH awareness in vocational education and training.²¹ The FPS Employment has embedded OiRA tools into Belgium's OSH training programmes for prevention advisors and vocational schools, ensuring that students, trainees and educators develop essential workplace safety skills.

Examples of OiRA in Belgian training programmes:

- Vocational schools: The *OiRA Hairdressers tool*, for example, has been widely promoted in vocational schools. Both students and instructors are informed at school and encouraged to use the OiRA tool during internships to assess and update workplace safety measures. This hands-on experience helps vocational students develop a shared responsibility for safety with their employers.
- Walloon training and employment office (Forem): Forem has integrated OiRA tools into its vocational training programmes. This ensures that future employees are well acquainted with OiRA tools before entering the workforce.²²
- The OiRA tool is also introduced as a potential risk assessment tool for MSEs within training courses for prevention advisors, provided by institutions specialising in OSH education. This ensures that professionals completing the training are well informed and equipped with knowledge of OiRA for risk assessment purposes in MSEs.
- Educational institutions: Teachers and trainers are encouraged to incorporate OiRA materials into their curricula, equipping students — including future business owners — with knowledge of risk assessment and prevention planning. To facilitate accessibility, OiRA tools and teaching materials are distributed through digital platforms, for example, *KlasCement*.²³ Platforms like *KlasCement* allow educators from the Dutch-speaking region to share lesson materials, exchange best practices and provide additional resources for institutions seeking to strengthen OSH education.

²¹ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), Mainstreaming OSH into education: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/themes/mainstreaming-osh-education/oshvet-project-osh-vocational-education-and-training>

²² Walloon Training and Employment Office, Forem website: <https://www.leforem.be/citoyens/offres-emploi.html>

²³ Flemish government, *leermiddelen*: <https://www.klascement.net/>

- As mentioned above, comprehensive educational material, including teacher guides and sector-specific fact sheets, is incorporated in the OiRA promotion material and available on the FPS Employment website via Oirapromo.be.⁷

2.7 Continuous adaptation and evolution

Belgium's OiRA tools undergo regular updates for various reasons. For example, changes to legal references on the FPS Employment website in 2020 required revising all related links. Additionally, sector-specific demands influence content adjustments, with update frequency depending on sector representatives' engagement. Highly active sectors, such as *woodworking* and *construction*, see frequent revisions, whereas less involved sectors experience a lower frequency of updates. High turnover among representatives can delay the process, while committed sectors drive continuous improvements, ranging from minor tweaks to major revisions, and actively promote the tools. Notably, *OiRA Woodworking* underwent a complete content overhaul in 2018. These ongoing updates ensure the tools remain relevant, effective and aligned with workplace safety priorities.

3 OiRA implementation: key figures

3.1 Overview of the Belgian OiRA tools

The first OiRA tool in Belgium, developed for the hairdressing sector, was launched in 2013. Since then, the country has expanded its offering to 35 OiRA tools, with all tools available in both French and Dutch, except for the *Nurseries and primary education* tool.²⁴

Thirty-one of these tools focus on specific sectors, such as woodworking, construction, hotels and restaurants, cleaning, bakeries, live performance (venues and productions), passenger land transport (buses and coaches), real estate (including cleaning and maintenance), nurseries and primary education (only in Dutch), flower farming, domestic work, office work and agriculture.

The remaining four OiRA tools are thematic, addressing broader issues like psychosocial risks and specific challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

A comprehensive overview of these tools can be found on the European OiRA platform hosted by EU-OSHA,³ as well as on the Belgian OiRA landing page managed by the FPS Employment.⁴

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the available OiRA tools, including their release dates, the number of users and the number of risk assessments conducted.

Table 1: List of OiRA tools with release date, number of users and number of assessments

Type of OiRA tool (Dutch and French version)	Release date	Users (n=)	Assessments (n=)
Hairdressers	September 2013	1,779	2,272
Woodworking	November 2014	1,964	2,674
Construction	November 2015	5,794	8,310
Hotels and restaurants	October 2016	2,083	2,981
Cleaning	May 2017	1,653	2,084
Bakeries	November 2017	667	878
Live performance/venues	June 2018	304	384
Live performance/productions	June 2018	327	415

²⁴ Education falls under the regional government and as such has not been adapted in the French language for the French-speaking part of Belgium (Wallonia and Brussels).

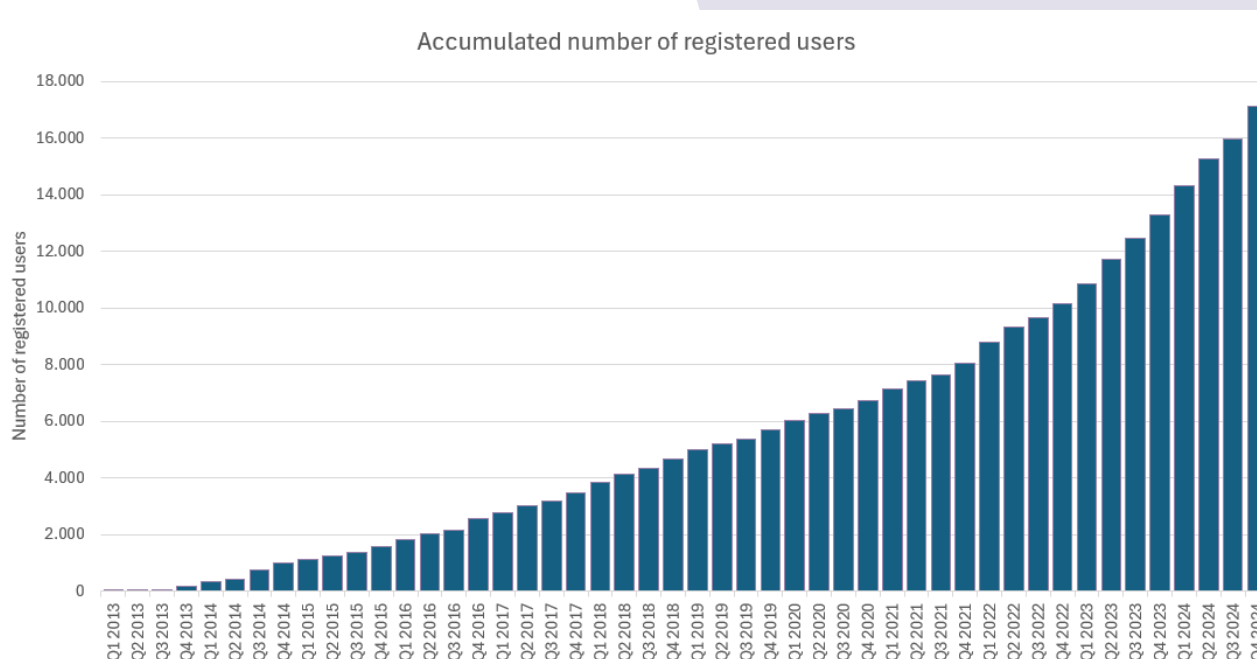
Type of OiRA tool (Dutch and French version)	Release date	Users (n=)	Assessments (n=)
Landscape service activities	September 2018	962	1,251
Passenger land transport – Buses & coaches	October 2019	477	628
COVID-19	October 2020	535	610
Real estate (including cleaning and maintenance)	November 2020	429	552
Nurseries and primary education (Dutch)	October 2021	805	1,278
Flower farming	March 2022	299	377
Domestic work	May 2023	381	454
Office work	May 2023	3,572	4,480
Agriculture	November 2024	139	167
Psychosocial risks	November 2024	232	261

(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

3.2 Trends in the growth of registered users

Between January 2013 and January 2025, Belgium registered a total of 17,102 OiRA users — individuals who created an account within the OiRA platform. The number of registered users has grown steadily over the years, with a notable acceleration after 2021 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Accumulation of registered users per quarter from January 2013 and January 2025

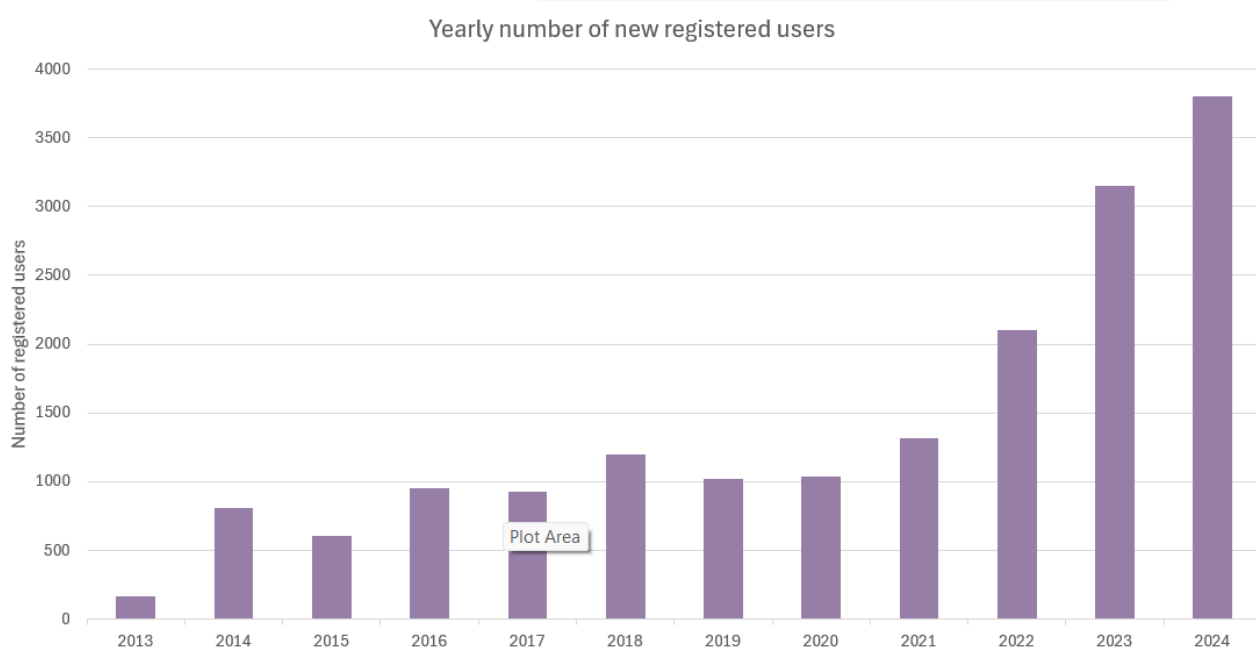


(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

The most significant growth in new users occurred in 2022, 2023 and 2024. As shown in Figure 2, the number of new users between January 2022 and January 2025 exceeded the total recorded during the previous nine years (January 2013 to December 2021). While growth in 2021 was more modest, probably due to COVID-19 restrictions and limited promotional activities, the number of new users nearly doubled in 2022. By 2024, user growth was nearly four times higher than in 2019.

The surge in new registrations is partly driven by the growing number of available OiRA tools in Belgium, which naturally supports higher annual growth. Another key factor was the promotional campaign launched by the FPS Employment in 2019. During the campaign's preparatory phase, efforts focused on addressing identified needs, including the creation of a centralised Belgian OiRA platform, strengthening sectoral communication through standardised promotional packages, and implementing targeted digital advertising.^{4,7,8} The official campaign rollout was scheduled for September 2020 but was hampered by COVID-19 restrictions. As these restrictions eased, user engagement and risk assessments began to rise in 2021, with a significant acceleration in the following years, reflecting the combined impact of the promotional campaign and the expanding range of OiRA tools.

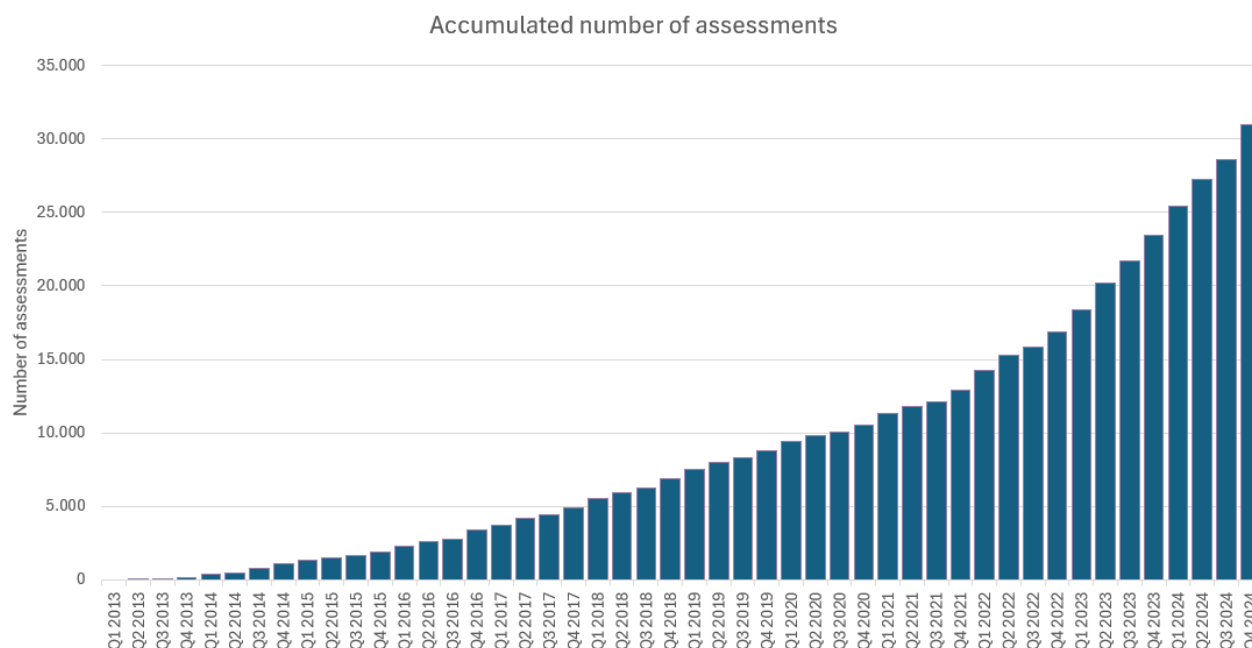
Figure 2: Yearly amount of new registered users since the start of all 35 OiRA tools (January 2013 - January 2025)



(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

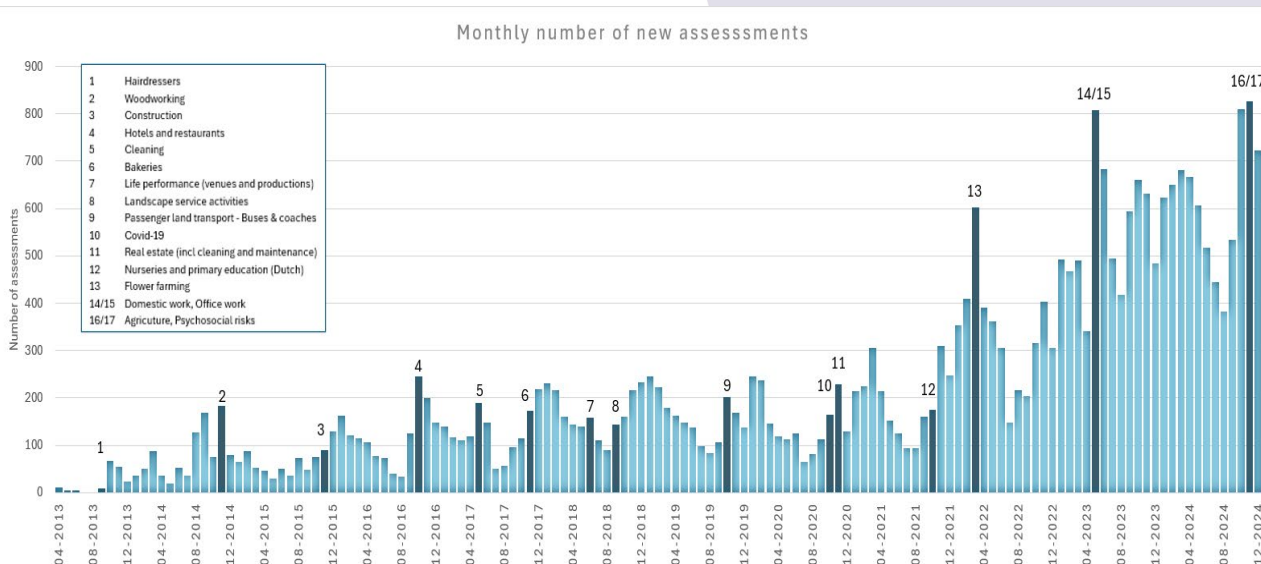
3.3 Progression in the number of assessments

Since 2013, a total of 30,930 OiRA assessments have been initiated in Belgium across the 35 available tools, demonstrating a consistent upward trend. This growth aligns closely with the increase in registered users, with a significant acceleration observed after 2021 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Accumulation of assessments per quarter started from January 2013 to January 2025

(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

The number of new assessments per month shows distinct spikes, each corresponding to the launch of a new tool and the intensified promotional efforts by stakeholders (Figure 4). These spikes highlight the ongoing challenge of maintaining communication and outreach beyond the initial launch phase. However, since 2022, the baseline of these spikes no longer returns to pre-launch levels but instead demonstrates an accelerated cumulative upward trend. As mentioned above, this may be a reflection of the combined impact of the promotional campaign and the expanding availability of OiRA tools.

Figure 4: Monthly amount of new assessments for all 35 OiRA tools launched from January 2013 to January 2025

(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

To gain deeper insights into the spikes, the number of new assessments for each specific OiRA tool was reviewed. The data was compiled by combining assessments from both the Dutch and French versions of each tool. Additionally, the OiRA tools for live performance (venues and productions) were grouped together,

while the Nurseries and primary education tool included solely the Dutch version. This approach resulted in the evaluation of 17 specific tools over the past 12 years (Figure 5).

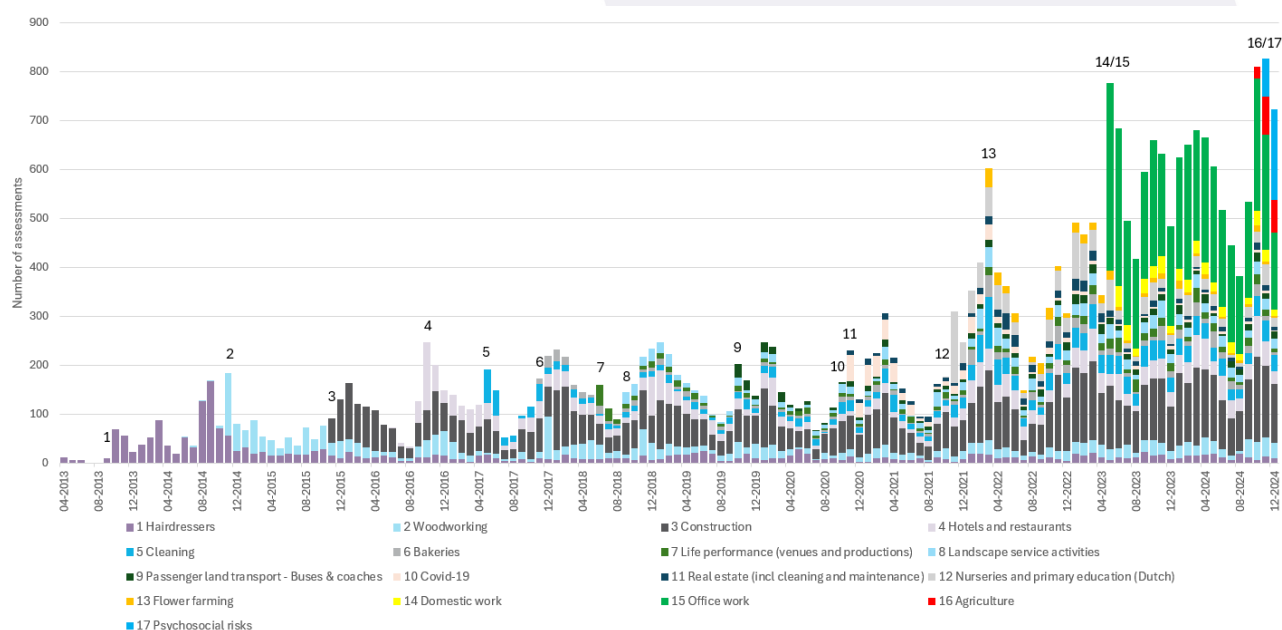
Early assessment surges were driven by the introduction of tools like *OiRA Hairdressers* (Q4 2013), *OiRA Woodworking* (Q4 2014), *OiRA Construction* (Q4 2015), and *OiRA Hotels and restaurants* (Q4 2016). The launch of *OiRA Bakeries* in 2017 marked a turning point, as subsequent promotional efforts boosted not only new tools but also sustained the usage of existing ones. As a result, the baseline of these spikes has stayed above pre-launch levels, showing a steady increase with an accelerated upward trend since 2022.

The highest peak in tool assessments occurred in 2023, driven by the success of *OiRA Office Work*, launched in Q2 2023. Its broad applicability across industries made it one of the most widely adopted tools, alongside *OiRA Construction*, which consistently ranks among the top-performing tools. Both tools demonstrate how broad relevance and continuous promotion by active sectoral stakeholders drive sustained usage.

While *OiRA Hotels and restaurants* and *OiRA Woodworking* also feature in all peaks, driven by highly engaged stakeholders, their overall impact is somewhat limited due to their smaller applicability to MSEs, as they are relevant to a more limited number of MSEs.

New tools, such as *OiRA Psychosocial risks*, launched in November 2024, are already showing strong adoption trends, indicating significant potential for future growth. This tool addresses psychosocial risks in the workplace, filling a critical gap in occupational risk assessment and benefiting from strong support by the stakeholder group of labour inspectors.

Figure 5: Monthly amount of new assessments per specific OiRA tool from January 2013 to January 2025



(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

3.4 Percentage of assessment completion

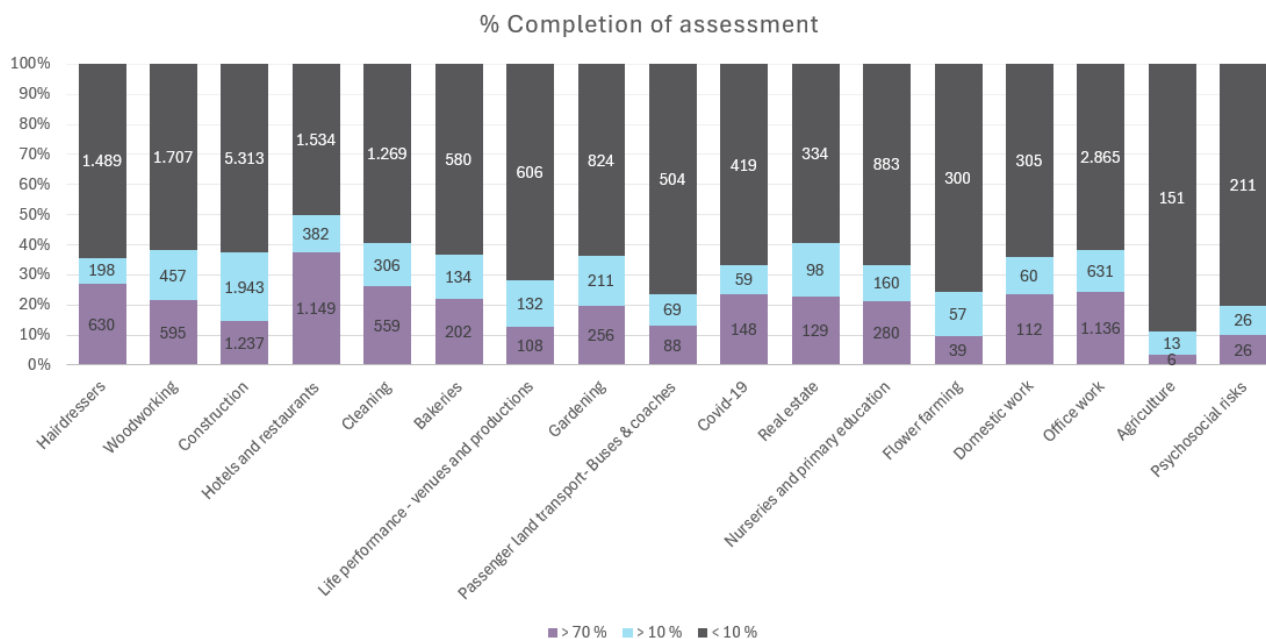
While the use of OiRA tools is an important indicator of engagement, it is not the sole metric considered. Also evaluated was the extent of assessment completion. Among all assessments, 21.5% are categorised as 'top assessments', meaning that 70% or more of the risk statements were answered. Another 15.8% fall under the 'average' category, with more than 10% of the risk statements completed. The majority of assessments (62.7%) had a low completion rate, with fewer than 10% of the risk statements answered.

Although full completion of assessments is the ultimate objective, partially completed assessments still provide significant value. According to the interviewed stakeholders' representatives, including sector-specific experts and OSH specialists who work closely with MSEs, the fact that employers have engaged with the OiRA tools demonstrates an interest in workplace safety and that they may have begun their risk assessment process. The interviewees confirm that this initial involvement can encourage the employer to seek support from their

external service for prevention and protection at work, sector representatives or other experts to implement effective prevention and safety measures.

Recent OiRA research (EU-OSHA, 2025) further suggests that users also benefit from OiRA information by scrolling through the tools and using them to double-check the legal basis of risk assessments done with other means or to learn about OSH. As such, the completion percentage of tools has to be looked at and interpreted with care, since it seems that OiRA users who don't answer any statements also seem to benefit from the tools' use.²⁵

Figure 6: Completion of assessments per specific OiRA tool



(Figures based on the OiRA metabase including data from January 2013 to January 2025)

4 Insights from OiRA user feedback

To gain a deeper understanding of the OiRA users, in-depth stakeholder interviews with professionals actively involved in the tool's development, promotion and implementation were conducted. These included the OiRA country manager at the FPS Employment, a labour inspector from the FPS Employment who contributed to the development of the *OiRA Psychosocial risks* tool and who regularly engages with MSEs during site visits, and a sectoral expert who has been closely involved with the *OiRA Woodworking* project since its inception. Additionally, two OSH professionals from an external service for prevention and protection at work were consulted. These experts have contributed to the development of multiple OiRA tools, including those for *passenger land transport (buses and coaches)*, *real estate (including cleaning and maintenance)*, *nurseries and primary education*, *domestic work* and *psychosocial risks*, while providing continuous support to MSEs across various sectors.

Alongside the stakeholder interviews, the survey responses from 9,585 OiRA users who voluntarily completed a feedback questionnaire on the platform that is automatically offered to each user at the end of an assessment (Source: OiRA Metabase²⁶) were also reviewed. This combined feedback offers valuable insights into user engagement, satisfaction, promotional effectiveness and employee involvement in the risk assessment process.

4.1 Reaching MSEs

According to the OiRA Metabase survey responses, the majority of respondents represent MSEs. Of the 9,585 respondents, 64.8% work in companies with fewer than 50 employees (41.6% in businesses with 1-9

²⁵ See: https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/OiRA-Europe-comparative-report_EN.pdf

²⁶ 21 February 2025.

employees and 23.2% in those with 10-49 employees). Larger companies account for 13.4% of respondents (9.5% with 50-249 employees and 3.9% with over 250 employees), while 21.9% did not specify company size.

Despite this significant representation, stakeholder interviews revealed persistent challenges in reaching MSEs, primarily due to low employer motivation. According to interviewees, many employers remain unaware of the importance of risk assessment and prevention, resulting in limited engagement. Often, MSEs typically engage with risk management only after serious incidents or when inspections prompt action.

4.2 User satisfaction and willingness to recommend OiRA

Although motivating MSEs to invest in risk assessment remains challenging, stakeholders report that once users engage with OiRA, they quickly recognise its value. Many express regrets at not discovering the tool earlier, as it provides clarity, structure and sector-specific guidance that simplifies compliance and streamlines preventive measures.

This positive user experience is reflected in the OiRA Metabase survey results: 61.5% of respondents would recommend OiRA (35.8% did not provide an answer to that question) and only 2.7% would not recommend the tool, and 62.6% reported that the tool effectively met their needs (34.2% did not provide an answer to that question) and only 3.1% said the tool did not meet their needs. These findings highlight the potential for greater adoption if awareness efforts continue to target MSEs effectively.

4.3 Channels driving awareness of OiRA

According to the OiRA Metabase survey, nearly half of the respondents discovered OiRA through professional and institutional channels, including employers' organisations (18.7%), health and safety experts (17.7%), and national public institutions (10.2%).

Stakeholder interviews confirmed that significant communication efforts have been made across these channels to raise awareness of the tool. As detailed in section 2.6, government bodies, such as the FPS Employment, have implemented ongoing communication efforts alongside a dedicated promotional campaign.

These initiatives have been further reinforced by the labour inspectorate, ensuring all Dutch- and French-speaking inspectors are well informed about the tool. Regarding *OiRA Psychosocial risks*, the interviewed labour inspector confirmed that inspectors are instructed to highlight this thematic tool during workplace visits and include a link to it in their reports. The campaign on psychosocial wellbeing will continue throughout 2025, supported by an increase in proactive inspections, with all companies reporting psychosocial issues being referred to OiRA.

The external services for prevention and protection at work also confirm they actively communicate about the OiRA tool. According to the interviewees representing this sector, OSH professionals inform MSEs about the tool through mailings, social media campaigns and company visits, often providing hands-on guidance throughout the implementation process.

Similarly, the woodworking sector representative highlighted various promotional initiatives for *OiRA Woodworking*, including information sessions and direct communication with employers, often prompted by high-risk incidents or inspections. While the FPS Employment has made notable efforts in developing promotional materials, the representative emphasised the need for continuous improvement to ensure materials resonate more effectively with the target audience.

4.4 Employee involvement in the risk assessment process

According to the OiRA Metabase survey, 34% of users confirm that they actively involve employees in the risk assessment process.

During the interviews, the labour inspector stressed the importance of strengthening employee participation, recognising it as a cornerstone of effective risk management. To address this, the OiRA country manager highlighted several new OiRA features, introduced in late 2023, aimed at enhancing employee and OSH professional engagement:

- **Multiuser feature:** Facilitates collaborative risk analysis by allowing users to share access to their risk assessments, enabling feedback and active employee involvement.²⁷

²⁷ Belgian knowledge centre on well-being at work (BeSWIC), Sharing functionality: <https://beswic.be/nl/kmo/oira-uw-online-risicoanalyse/deel-uw-oira-risicoanalyse-binnen-uw-bedrijf-met-een-sectororganisatie>

- **Validation functionality:** Allows external services for prevention and protection at work to review and validate risk assessments and lock finalised content. This feature allows an online collaboration with the external service while still ensuring that the employer has access to and the feeling of ownership over their risk assessment.²⁸
- **Subscription options:** Provides anonymous subscriptions to newsletters at sectoral tool and national levels. Via this feature, the FPS employment can keep users informed about relevant updates and other relevant OSH information.

To promote these features, the OiRA country manager launched an extensive communication campaign via the FPS Employment website, webinars, OiRA tool launches, and a seminar *10 Years of OiRA in Belgium* event.²⁹

An interviewee from an external service for prevention and protection at work confirmed that these new features have the potential to foster more collaborative engagement, empowering OSH professionals to participate actively in the risk assessment process and ensuring that risk management becomes an integrated part of daily workplace practices.²⁷

5 Key success factors and challenges

This section explores the key success factors and challenges identified by stakeholders, highlighting their insights on what drives success and the obstacles they anticipate.

5.1 Key success factors

▪ Expanding reach through promotion and growth

The significant rise in OiRA's usage is primarily attributed to a combination of the growing number of available tools and a focused promotional campaign by the FPS Employment. Although the COVID-19 pandemic initially delayed the campaign, its full launch in September 2020, followed by the expansion of OiRA tools across sectors, sparked a rapid increase in user registrations and assessments by 2022.

▪ Strong stakeholder collaboration: the backbone of OiRA

OiRA's success begins with a foundation built on collaboration. Social partners, the FPS Employment, legal specialists, labour inspectors, prevention advisors and other sector representatives have all played a role in shaping the tool. Their collective expertise ensures that OiRA remains legally sound, practical and relevant for businesses. External services in particular play a vital role in guiding SMEs through the risk assessment process, ensuring they understand how to implement preventive measures effectively. This multidisciplinary approach has allowed OiRA to remain a trusted and adaptable resource, continuously evolving to meet workplace safety needs.

▪ Sector-specific and user-friendly design: making risk assessment accessible

A key reason for OiRA's success is its ability to cater to the unique needs of different industries. The platform's sector-specific customisation ensures that businesses can assess risks in a way that aligns with their specific workflows and operational realities. Interviewees agree that its digital, modular structure allows employers to work through assessments at their own pace, targeted to their company's circumstances, reducing complexity and making implementation more manageable. According to the interview results, this focus on usability has helped MSEs, in particular, engage with workplace safety without feeling burdened by excessive bureaucracy.

▪ Practical benefits and sustainable impact: turning assessment into action

Beyond usability, interviewees agree that OiRA delivers tangible benefits. It simplifies compliance by breaking down complex legal requirements into structured, manageable steps. Labour inspectors and external services actively promote the tool, facilitating that companies not only assess risks but also implement meaningful preventive actions — also in areas such as psychosocial risks. Interviewees and recent OiRA research from other countries (EU-OSHA, 2025) suggest that the sector-specific approach further strengthens compliance, guiding businesses towards proactive safety management. Though the direct impact on workplace safety can be difficult to measure, OiRA has undeniably increased awareness and structured action.

²⁸ Belgian knowledge centre on well-being at work (BeSWIC), Validating functionality: <https://beswic.be/nl/kmo/oira-uw-online-risicoanalyse/deel-uw-oira-risicoanalyse-met-een-externe-dienst-en-laet-de-analyse-valideren>

²⁹ Federal Public Service for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, Colloquium: 10 years of OiRA in Belgium: <https://evenementen.werk.belgie.be/nl/evenementen-van-de-fod/colloquium-10-jaar-oira-belgie-een-stand-van-zaken-en-nieuwigheden>

5.2 Challenges

▪ Limited reach among MSEs

By definition, OiRA has been developed to support a hard-to-reach target audience. As such, interviewees highlighted that despite its benefits, many MSEs only turn to OiRA after accidents or inspections, rather than proactively engaging with it. Financial and operational challenges often seem to prevent businesses from prioritising risk assessment and management, leading to low voluntary adoption rates.³⁰

▪ From assessment to action: the implementation gap

Identifying risks is only the first step — translating assessments into concrete actions remains a challenge. Many employers, particularly in smaller businesses, lack the expertise or confidence to take preventive measures without external guidance. This is especially true for psychosocial risks, where the solutions may be less straightforward than in traditional safety measures. It is not clear from the OiRA figures as to how far businesses may complete an assessment but fail to implement meaningful changes. However, OiRA research indeed suggests that OiRA offers a process path that leads employers to better insights and understanding and as such enables them to take better control over OSH in their company (EU-OSHA, 2023).³¹

▪ Promotion and awareness

After the launch of each OiRA tool, it is important to keep up promotional efforts by the stakeholders to maintain and improve visibility, especially among MSEs. However, challenges and variations in stakeholder engagement can have a negative impact on the regular promotion of all sectoral tools. Without ongoing promotion, many businesses remain unaware of the platform's benefits.

6 Conclusion

The growth in registered OiRA accounts and the consistent rise in risk assessments in Belgium since 2013 demonstrate the platform's increasing relevance and utility in promoting workplace safety and health. This success reflects Belgium's strategic alignment of OiRA with its national OSH strategy, ensuring regulatory compliance and fostering a culture of proactive prevention. The collaborative development approach, engaging social partners and stakeholders, has further solidified the platform's accessibility and effectiveness, particularly for SMEs.

The data underscore the pivotal role of strategic tool launches, targeted promotional efforts and robust updates in driving user engagement and platform adoption. Notable surges in assessments following new tool introductions illustrate the importance of innovation and active promotion in sustaining growth.

Annex 1, Table 2: Key insights: Growth and drivers of OiRA adoption in Belgium (2013-2025), summarises the key factors behind OiRA's expansion.

Belgium's 13-year journey with OiRA offers valuable insights into the impact of well-coordinated partnerships between national authorities, European bodies and local stakeholders. However, to sustain and enhance OiRA's success, it is crucial to address key challenges such as improving MSE engagement, increasing employee participation, ensuring risk assessments lead to concrete preventive actions and maintaining consistent promotion. Tackling these issues will be essential in driving broader adoption and securing OiRA's long-term impact.

³⁰ See: https://osha.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Safety_and_health_MSEs_Final_report_3_yr_SESAME.pdf

³¹ See: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/risk-assessment-using-oira-french-workplaces-qualitative-study>

Annex 1

Table 2: Key insights: Growth and drivers of OiRA adoption in Belgium (2013-2025)

Key insights: Growth and drivers of OiRA adoption in Belgium (Jan. 2013 – Jan. 2025)

Growth dynamics

Tool availability	Belgium has published a total of 35 OiRA tools, including:
	▪ 15 sector-specific tools available in Dutch and French, ▪ one sector-specific tool available only in Dutch, ▪ a dedicated COVID-19 risk assessment tool (in Dutch and French), and ▪ a thematic tool specifically for psychosocial risk assessment (available in Dutch and French).
User engagement	The platform has accumulated 17,102 registered OiRA users and 30,930 assessments from January 2013 to 1 January 2025.
Growth acceleration	Growth has significantly accelerated, particularly after 2021.

Key drivers of growth and sustainability

Partnerships	Importance of partnerships with employers' organisations, sectoral social partners and OSH professionals.
Tailored tools	Sector-specific design, which allows the tool to address the unique needs of this specific sector. Recognisable. Significant update if needed.
Expanding toolset	The increasing number of OiRA tools has played a critical role in driving growth by catering to the needs of more sectors and user groups.
Spillover effects	The launch of each specific OiRA tool often leads to spillover effects, boosting the usage of other tools in the ecosystem.
Promotional campaigns	The 2020 promotional campaign (centralised Belgian OiRA platform, standardised promotional packages, targeted digital advertising, integration into training programmes) served as a turning point, resulting in a noticeable increase in registrations and tool usage.
Alignment with OSH legislation	Alignment with legislation, with the Code on Well-Being at Work and the national OSH strategy.

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