

The human being is the measure



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The IMPULS concept

Risk assessment and interventions with work related stress

In 2002 the EU Agency for Safety and Health at Work decided to put the emphasis on "work-related psychosocial stress" and all member countries set activities in this respect. On behalf of the employee organisations in Austria, the Employees' organisation Chamber for Welfare (AK) and the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB) and the employers' organisation Chamber of Economics Austria (WKOe) and Industrial Association (IV) with funds provided by the General Institute for Accident insurance (AUVA) IMPULS documents were created under direction of the occupational psychologist Martina Molnar (humanware GmbH).

1. Background: Occupational stress or psycho-social risks

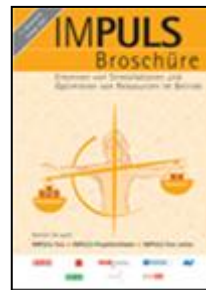


Chronic stress is the result of one lengthened imbalance between too high stressors (loads) and insufficient resources.

Examples of stress factors: High work load; missing feedback of colleagues/executives, little team-work/cooperation, frequent interruptions; environmental exposure (noise, climate discomfort, dust...), etc.

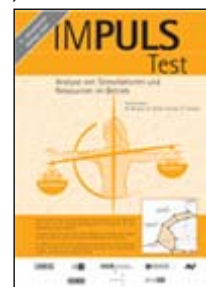
Examples of resources: Manoeuvring room, colleagues'/executives' support / sufficient information and the individual expression of one's views, growth prospects, etc.

2. The IMPULS materials ¹



THE IMPULS- Brochure (Molnar M., Haiden C., Geissler-Gruber B., 1/2009: 15th Edition) informs about,

1. what work stress is,
2. how it affects psychologically, physically and organizationally
3. which counter measures can be taken and
4. provides a series of numbers, facts and data to this topic



The IMPULS-Test (Molnar M., Haiden C., Geissler-Gruber B 2/2009: 15th Edition) makes it for individuals or groups (departments, firms) possible to get an initial overview on the quantitative development of work-related stress factors and resources by looking at the ratings of the concerned employees (11 topics, a total of 26 questions).

The test is based on an advancement of the KFZA (short questionnaire to the work analysis) of Pruemper J. , Hartmannsgruber K. and Frese

¹ Molnar M. (2003): Stressfaktoren und Ressourcen. In: Sichere Arbeit, Internationales Fachmagazin für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin. Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt (Hrsg), Heft 2/2003, Wien, S.15-18.

Molnar M. (2006): Betriebliche Stressobjekte in der Praxis. In: „Psychologie in Österreich 2/2006. Sonderausgabe betriebliche Gesundheitsvorsorge.“ Serviceorganisation des BÖP GmbH. (Hg.), Wien, S. 104-109

Richter G., Friesenbichler H., Vanis M. (2004): Psychische Belastungen: Checklisten für den Einstieg. In: Psychische Gesundheit am Arbeitsplatz, Teil 4. AUVA; BAUA, SUVA (Hrsg.). InfoMedia-Verlag, Tharandt.

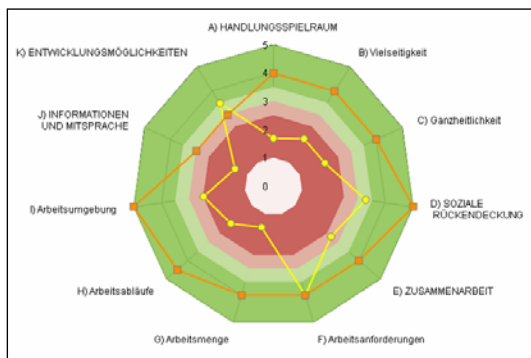
M. (in 1995), which is a validated instrument.²

Meanwhile shortened translated versions of the IMPULS test are available in English, Serb-Croatian-Bosnian, Turkish, Slovak, Czech.



In 2007 the **Project guideline** was published (Molnar M., 2/2009: 2nd Edition). It provides a support for the planning and execution of an operational IMPULS project step by step. From a rough analysis with the help of the IMPULS test up to a more sophisticated analysis in

IMPULS workshops, the procedure is represented in detail on an imaginary company.



In 2007, the IMPULS test was placed on-line as well, under www.impulstest.at (Molnar M. with methodical support of Wagner – Menghin M.). Individuals can take the test here by filling out the questionnaire on-line and can receive an automated evaluation of the development of stress factors and resources.

3. Reactions to the IMPULS-Tools

Demands and editions: With the beginning of the IMPULS publications the demand for documents and information steadily increased. Meanwhile IMPULS tests and IMPULS brochures were produced in the 15th Edition (altogether approx. 100,000 pcs). The IMPULS-Project-guideline for experts and project executions appeared in the 2nd Edition. All available data can be ordered free of charge by the publisher organisations.

² Prümper J., Hartmannsgruber K., Frese M. (1995): KFZA – Kurzfragebogen zur Arbeitsanalyse. Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie. 39 Jg., Hogrefe-Verlag, Göttingen, S. 125 -132.
Prümper, J. (2009). KFZA – Kurz-Fragebogen zur Arbeitsanalyse. In W. Sarges & H. Wottawa (Hrsg.), Handbuch wirtschaftspsychologischer Testverfahren – Band 2: Organisationspsychologische Instrumente. Lengerich: Pabst-Verlag (in Druck).

Individual and project-relevant use of IMPULS:

The IMPULS documents were requested by numerous individuals. Moreover, a lot of surveys and projects in the German-speaking countries have been carried out by different internal and external participants in enterprises so far, based on the IMPULS test. In addition to that, the IMPULS test has also been applied in a number of scientific projects and researches.

On-line feedback: Since the IMPULS test is also available on the Internet under www.impulstest.at there is an increasing number of interested persons and users in Austria, but also in Germany and Switzerland and even from France and Italy. The requests of the different users, specialists and experts refer to the following topics: Test theory and methodology (standardisation, reference values), linguistic versions, practical examples and experiences, practical trainings, prevention-strategic and health-policy questions.

4. Operational IMPULS projects within the Austrian Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2007-2012

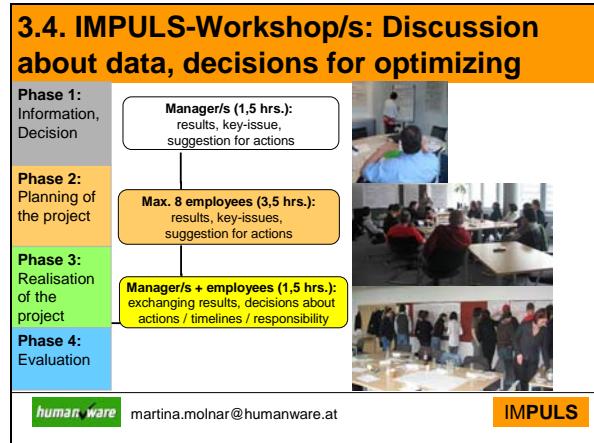
Clients and goals: The framework of the Austrian Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2007-2012 achieves, among other things, the aim to reduce psychosocial risks and illnesses. Therefore steps were taken by the Austrian Trade Union Federation with the assistance of the AUYA for the period 2008 up to 2010. They contained the initiation of approx. 14 operational IMPULS projects for sustainable stress prevention. The concept of strategy and the project support are made via the humanware GmbH and/or the IMPULS project manager M. Molnar.



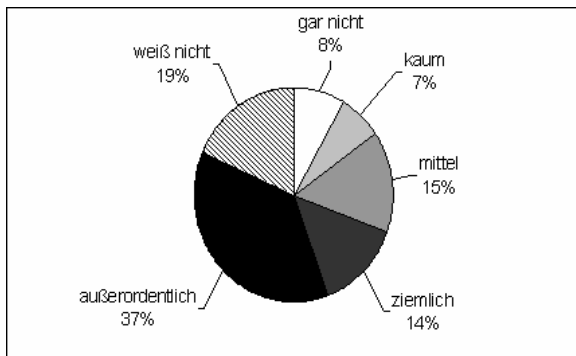
IMPULS information workshop October of 2009

Public relations: The action was promoted by the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions (ÖGB), technical organisations and -media as well as the Website www.impulstest.at. Interested enterprises received via e-mail an IMPULS information package and an invitation for a 3-hour information workshop.

Course of project in the enterprises: Into the strategic project team are included both the decision makers and employees' committees. Executive managers and employees concerned are actively informed and participate in the problem analysis and search for solutions. The four project phases are oriented in accordance with the IMPULS project manual and cover the following activities in the enterprises:



1. Information and decision on the implementation of the project in the enterprise in the strategic project team, based on a "for and against" analysis;
2. Planning of a company-specific project;
3. Conversion of the project (information and survey of employees with the IMPULS test, calculation and documentation of the results; within the framework of IMPULS workshops, the qualitative supplement of the quantitative IMPULS results and the solution search are accomplished by managers and employees);
4. Evaluation of the project results after 6 months (standardised interviews with members of the project team and executive personnel) and after 12 months (2nd IMPULS questioning of the involved individuals and conclusion workshop with the project team);



A sample evaluation of telephone interviews for the conversion degree of the decided measures

IMPULS newsletters: The IMPULS enterprises

are supplied regularly with IMPULS newsletters, in which the project team members and the executive managers are informed discretely about previous data, experiences and good practical examples of all IMPULS-Project-enterprises.

3.6. IMPULS Newsletters

All members of the project teams receive our Newsletters

We have 11 companies in different branches (traffic, food, health care, IT, education, communication, transport, print office, pharma, ...)

Three had just passed through phase 4 (telephone interviews).

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Previous experiences: At present a total of 11 projects run in the phases 1 to 4. The fields of business communication, traffic, IT, food industry, health care, education, transport, publishing trade, print office, pharmaceutical companies are represented. Altogether the return quota in all enterprises participating in the test up to now amounts above the average of employee surveys in enterprises (approx. 50 %).

Only 10% of all IMPULS measures taken up to now by the enterprises are associated with capital costs! These refer e.g. to the space equipment and technical means. All other measures concern topics such as organisation, information and communication.

Scientific evaluation: The entire project is submitted to the University of Vienna (faculty of Psychology) within the framework of diploma theses and undergoes an exhaustive concomitant research and evaluation. It is examined thereby

- whether and in which extent changes from the IMPULS surveys between 1st and 2nd survey can be proven and
- which influence factors these changes could be dependent on (e.g. type and scope of the interventions, degrees the information and participation in the project in the enterprises, etc.)

5. IMPULS test for the risk judgment of the work inspection recognised

The Austrian Labour Inspection recommends this instrument developed on behalf of the social partners, as a suitable procedure for the assessment of work-related psychosocial risks.

Also in Germany the KFZA and the IMPULS test

are recommended as instruments for the risk judgment, both in the Toolbox to the BAUA (collection of instruments for the recording of mental stress)

<http://www.baua.de/de/Informationen-fuer-die-Praxis/Handlungshilfen-und-Praxisbeispiele/Toolbox/Toolbox.html>

and on the Internet offer "industrial safety of the MAGS in North Rhine Westphalia"

www.arbeitsschutz.nrw.de/bp/research/programm_e/bildschirm/instrumente/index.html.

6. Outlook

Advancement of IMPULS-KFZA: With the German scientific authors of the KFZA a regular expert exchange takes place and there are ideas for the further transnational cooperation.

IMPULS of branch profiles: In 2010 the execution of an university research project is planned, which is to provide branch and activity profiles regarding the development of work stress (IMPULS test), of job satisfaction and of condition/health and their reciprocal effects

The humanware GmbH has been active since 1992 theoretically and practically in the field of ergonomics, occupational psychology, usability and information design. The firm deals on the basis of ergonomic realisations with the humane design of information, products and working conditions. The power spectrum covers seminars and lectures, consultancy, specialist publications and other information media (off-line and online-tools, videos, educational games, etc.); moreover also research projects as well as teaching activity at the FH Joanneum and at the University of Vienna.

The executive manager of the company, **Mag. Martina Molnar**, is a occupational psychologist and is member of the Austrian Focal Point of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. She is the project manager in charge of the development of the IMPULS concept in Austria, which provides a package of print -, on-line and discussion tools for information, analysis and intervention in the field of work-related mental stress.