

Work environment risk management in Latvian organizations

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INTRODUCTION

The work environment is an integral part of our lives, and we spend most of our lives at work, so it is necessary to create this work environment that we can work safely and comfortably. In order for us to feel safe in our workplace, the company must ensure all occupational safety requirements, from the assessment of work environment risks, the development of occupational safety plans, to the training of employees, information on occupational health and safety risks and explanation of preventive measures.

In today's developed work environment, employees are exposed various work environment risks, like physically demanding work, i.e. weight handling and frequent repetitive movements. In Latvia, one of the industries is the manufacturing industry, where the largest number of first-time occupational patients is diagnosed every year, and the most common occupational diseases are musculoskeletal and connective tissue diseases.

The work environment in this sector is evolving, i.e. many processes are automated and the work process is facilitated, but there are processes that are very difficult to automate and therefore need workers who can do the job.

The State Labor Inspectorate points out that employers do not regularly assess work environment risks. Accidents in the workplace occur as a result of insufficient training, when the employee is not clear about the assigned task and various human errors occur in decision-making (SLI, 2020).

Aim of the research is to describe the current situation in the management of work environment risks in Latvian manufacturing industry organizations and to find out possible directions for improvement to ensure the occupational health and safety system.

RESULTS

In Latvia, it can still be observed that the occupational health and safety system is required only at the document level, but in practice no measures are taken to reduce work environment risks.

According to the 2018 survey of employers, a large number of employers indicate that a work environment risk assessment has been carried out, but one in two employers in the survey admits that such a measure has not been taken or has been taken only partially.

Employers from the private sector and companies most often mentioned that the work environment risk assessment has not been performed (SLI, 2020). It can be observed that the occupational health and safety system receives a lot of attention from large organizations that have sufficient resources, as well as organizations whose mother companies are located abroad, where occupational health and safety is highly valued.

This could involve maintaining the management system in organizations using standards such as quality, environmental and occupational health and safety standards (ISO 9001, 14001; 45001).

There are many and varied work environment risks in the manufacturing industry that are harmful and dangerous to human health, so it would be necessary to pay attention to work environment (SLI, 2020).

The data of the 2018 employee survey show that the most popular risks are work in a forced position, uniform movements and moving of heavy objects, as well as work with people and work with a computer (SLI, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

In the research such methods were used: literature analysis, monographic method, statistical analysis, descriptive method.

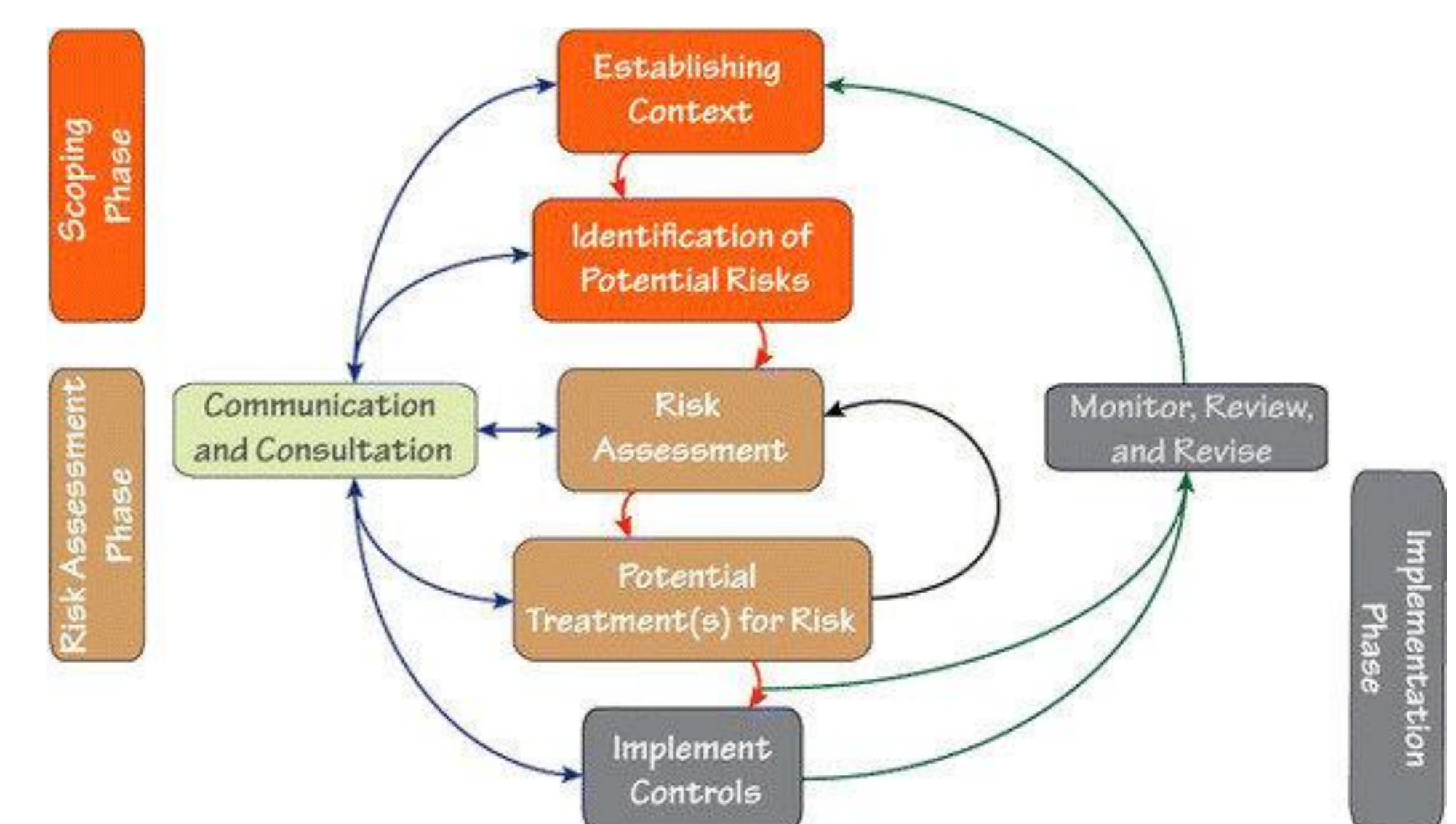


Figure 1. Risk management approach for occupational safety and health (Poplin et al., 2015)

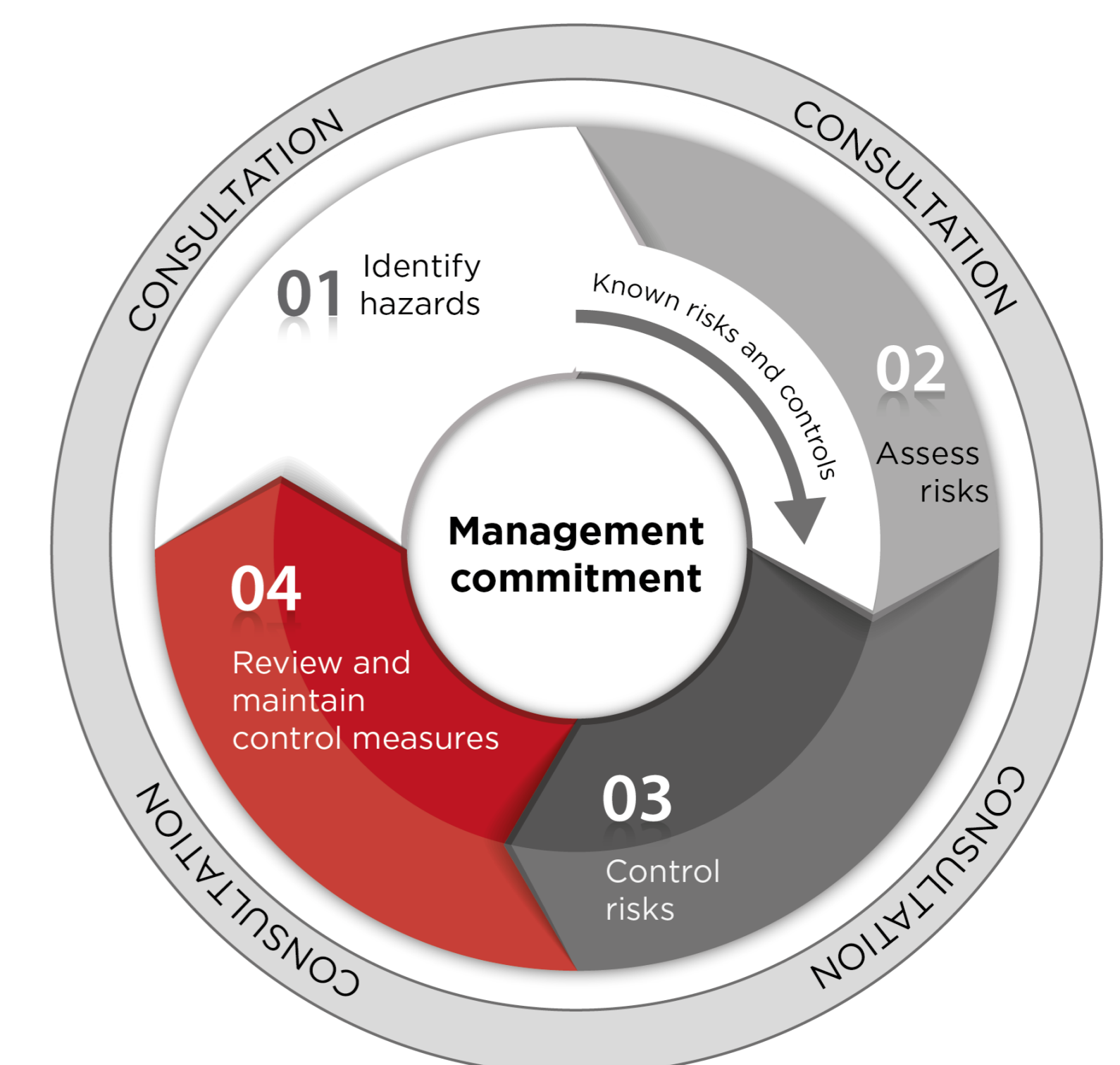


Figure 2. The risk management process (www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au, 2021)

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the work environment risk management and occupational health and safety system, based on statistical data in Latvian manufacturing organizations, revealed that in general most companies work environment risks are assessed, as well as the occupational health and safety system is maintained, but it is performed at the document level to meet requirements of regulatory enactments.

In reality, companies that pay attention to the maintenance of the occupational health and safety system and perform work environment risk assessment and prevention measures are international organizations (small and medium-sized enterprises in Latvia), where the number of employees ranges from 10 to 249 employees.

These companies also have an understanding of the need for and benefits of occupational health and safety system in promoting employee well-being and in financial terms.

BIO Sketch:

Kristine Andza, MSc., Ph.D. student at the University of Latvia. Her research interests are connected with the ergonomics, human factors, business management, occupational health and safety. At the moment she is in her final stage of Ph.D. thesis development.
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