

protected from work with radiation, high temperatures, magnetic voltage and a number of other substances that might affect reproduction. In Burkina Faso, all women are also prohibited from working in workplaces that are engaged in, among other processes, manufacture of paint or painting with a base of white lead, work in places where flesh, remains and waste from slaughtered animals are stored, manufacture of alkaline chlorides, or treatment of fruit against insects with nitrogen trichloride or with acetylene or ethylene.

The scope of protection related to radiation also varies significantly from country to country. In this case, the legislation often provides protection for women of childbearing age as well as increased protection for pregnant women or nursing mothers.¹⁸

Where work involving a particular capacity to maintain physical balance is concerned, protection for pregnant women is specifically provided in a small number of countries in the database. In Colombia, pregnant women may not do any work that requires a marked ability to maintain equilibrium, such as working up ladders or handling heavy machinery, or work that involves dangerous procedures. Austria and Croatia have similar restrictions on work involving heights or scaffolding for pregnant women and/or nursing mothers. In Thailand, this is prohibited for all women.

Some countries provide protection with regard to work involving physical strain due to prolonged periods of sitting or standing, extreme temperatures or vibration. For these risks, the provisions of the countries analysed cover pregnant workers.¹⁹

In the European Union, the protection from dangerous and unhealthy work for pregnant and breastfeeding workers provided by the Directive on pregnant workers is very detailed. In most respects, it requires the same protective procedures as the ILO's current standards on maternity protection.²⁰

Workplace risk assessment

Risk assessments are a primary means of determining whether or not work poses health risks to a worker. A comprehensive review of legislation to determine requirements of risk assessment in relation to pregnancy and maternity was not possible; however, examples of legislation establishing mandatory risk

Members should take measures to ensure assessment of any workplace risks related to the safety and health of the pregnant or nursing woman and her child. The results of the assessment should be made available to the woman concerned.

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assessments were found in at least 25 countries.²¹ In South Africa, for example, there is a legal requirement for employers to conduct risk assessments in relation to the work of pregnant and nursing employees; the employer must undertake this evaluation upon notification by the employee that she is pregnant, and the assessment must be kept under regular review.²² In the Russian Federation, employers are required to create safe, medically approved working conditions for all women.

Another seven countries had legislation that offered the possibility of risk assessments and/or the option for a woman to request the labour inspectorate to undertake an assessment. For example, in Mauritania, a pregnant woman, like other women workers, may request that the labour inspector order an examination by an approved medical practitioner in order to ascertain that the work which is given to her is not beyond her strength. In Benin, the labour inspectorate may require a risk assessment for female workers or minors, or an "interested person" may request one.²³

Social partners are essential in the development, effective implementation and evaluation of workplace risk assessments, which represent an important entry point to further maternity protection at the workplace. Alongside risk assessments, information and awareness-raising at the workplace are important to prevent and tackle hazardous and unhealthy work or any occupational health and safety (OSH) risks. In the Netherlands, 2012 amendments to a Working Conditions Decree require the employer to provide effective information on work-related risks during pregnancy and breastfeeding periods within two weeks from the date the employer is notified of the worker's pregnancy. Internet resources and toolkits were also developed concerning occupational health risks for pregnant women and also containing communication plans for family doctors, midwives and gynaecologists (ILO CEACR, 2014).