

Psychological Assessment for the Safety and Health of Transport Workers

European regulations in need of psychological assessment for the safety and health of Transport Workers

Authors: **Franco Amore, Pietro Bussotti, Santo Di Nuovo** (*Italian Network of Psychological Associations*)

Foreword:

The issue of assessing psychological fitness for specific tasks, particularly those involving community safety needs our attention.

The European regulations relating to the railway sector but also the rules related to civil pilots testify importance attributed by the European legislator to the psychological assessment of suitability for specific transport tasks. The psychological assessment can also be usefully applied in the field of health protection in the workplace within the examinations that the occupational physician may require to express the suitability judgment. For these aspects, it's a transversal matter of wide interest and development for our profession in all European countries, within the Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2023-2025, whose EFPA is a partner.

Whole article:

At the congress held in Ljubljana, in July 2022, a topic regarded psychological fitness in tasks and conditions for activities involving safety and health in working places was presented.

Even now we believe that its contents are current, and help the development of psychological assessment activities for tasks involving the safety of staff and third parties. This proposal fits well with the news that [EFPA has recently been accepted as an official partner of the Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2023-2025](#).

Our contribution is specifically related to the enlargement of professional psychology for the assessment of workers' competencies in railway and air enterprises, but it's a model of professional practice extendable to other work sectors.

This text was issued by the CNOP ([Italian National Council of Psychologists Order](#)), an institution State subsidiary, that represents all the professional psychologists in Italy, in collaboration with the scientific societies AIP ([Italian Association of Psychology](#)) and SIPLO ([Italian Society of Occupational and Organizational Psychology](#)). The evolution of many work tasks and attention to mental health, as well as the protection of collective safety, have suggested the divulgation of an e-book to the Italian colleagues of INPA.

As can be seen from the literature and experiences, strong changes are taking place in production processes (computerization and automation, change of employees by age and cultural origin, job insecurity, etc.) also affected by the consequences of the pandemic and the economic crisis. On the other hand, the reference literature suggests that anxious depression will be the most widespread psychic pathology by 2030, together with the mental consequences of the use of psychoactive substances (including illicit ones) in the workplace.

This set of aspects strongly influences workers' health and safety, consequently increasing the need to evaluate the fitness of psychological functionality, that involves the safety of workers (e.g. train and air transports), in hiring and during the work path. Psychological evaluation of fitness for a job aims to assess psycho-aptitudinal skills and specific personality aspects of the worker, and eventual evidence of forms of mental distress or disorder. In particular, it describes the absence of cognitive, emotional, or behavioral "functional deficits" that can compromise safety in professional tasks. Moreover, it evaluates the maintenance of the subject's psychological functional abilities for job tasks, e.g., after the presence of adverse events or mental disorders, to help ensure the health and safety conditions of personnel to protect also the community from risks deriving from workers' unfitness. This approach can give added value to the

assessment in the complex field of mental health and therefore for supporting the occupational evaluation of the worker. In particular, this psychological assessment finds its elective field for a wide range of mild and moderate mental disorders and in severe ones for planning a total or partial functional compensation. It is also useful for solving doubts about the persistence of the psychological requirements of the staff already in service.

These evaluations are specific to psychologists because purpose and practice are distinguished from the usual personnel selection. Psychological assessment of specific tasks and conditions could be included in a staff selection process, but it investigates a different area of the assessments carried out in the typical staff selection and management. It is different:

- by objective, because the first is aimed at assessing the absence of deficits in operational psychological abilities and in personality dimensions and not primarily at choosing the people with the best skills;
- for the definition of the cut-off which, in the second case, is related to the best performances, while in the case of fitness is indicative of psychological functional deficit;
- for the choice of the evaluation method, also aimed at the sustainability of the judgment in the event of appeals;
- for the use of congruent tools (in terms of content and type of expected result) with the objective of fitness;
- for the type of user base that also concerns workers who already perform tasks and are not only candidates in the selection phase.

Psychological fitness differs from psychiatric assessments mainly aimed at necessary qualitative and quantitative diagnosis of psychopathology, its organic causes, substance intake, pharmacological and therapeutic aspects for prognosis. Usually, the psychiatric specialist check is carried out in the case of an important mental disorder in progress or in the context dedicated to the diagnosis and medical treatment of patients, while psychologists have competencies to evaluate normal and abnormal behavior linked to the work environment.

The considerations on psychological evaluation for fitness in transport jobs are well supported by some European rules:

- [DIRECTIVE 2007/59/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 October 2007](#) (Current consolidated version: [08/07/2019](#)) on the certification of train drivers operating locomotives and trains on the railway system in the Community. See Art. 11 Basic requirements, Annex II point 2.2, 3.1, art. 16.
- [EUROPEAN COMMISSION REGULATION \(EU\) 2019/773](#) (consolidated version: [28/09/2023](#)), for the train crew. Point 4.7.2.1.2 regards psychological evaluation. For subsequent evaluations, in case of the inconvenience of operation or doubt about the persistence of the requirements, reference is made to art. 4.7.2.2.3. Evaluation minimum criteria related to safety function are *a) cognitive*: attention and concentration, memory, perception skills, reasoning, communication; *b) psychomotor*: reaction speed, gestural coordination; *c) behavioral and personality-related*: emotional self-control, behavioral reliability, autonomy, conscientiousness.
- [COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION \(EU\) 2018/762 of 8 March 2018](#) (consolidated version: [16/06/2020](#)) establishing common safety methods on safety management system requirements according to [Directive \(EU\) 2016/798 of the European Parliament](#) and of the Council and repealing [Commission Regulations \(EU\) No 1158/2010](#) and [\(EU\) No 1169/2010](#) (Text with EEA relevance), Competences point 4.2.
- [REGULATIONS COMMISSION \(EU\) 2018/1042 of 23 July 2018](#) amending Regulation (EU) No 965/2012, as regards technical requirements and administrative procedures related to introducing support programs, psychological assessment of flight crew, as well as systematic and random testing of psychoactive substances to ensure medical fitness of flight and cabin crew members, and as regards equipping newly manufactured

turbine-powered airplanes with a maximum certified take-off mass of 5,700 kg or less and approved to carry six to nine passengers with a terrain awareness warning system. Specifically, in CAT.GEN.MPA.175 - Endangering safety.

Furthermore, supporting this psychological evaluation allows a wide expansion of specifically psychological activities in workplaces, also with possible positive consequences on other sectors such as better collaboration in medical examinations for issuing driving licenses on the road.

For these reasons, we suggest evaluating the opportunity to create a group of experts who can monitor and propose, to the EFPA management, specific actions at the European level (within Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2023-2025, whose EFPA is a partner) for the protection of health workers and users in the railway and air transport sectors.

Franco Amore, Pietro Bussotti, Santo Di Nuovo

(Italian Network of Psychological Associations)