



The Directorate General of Health (DGS) organised and implemented the Active and Healthy Life at the Workplace (AHLW) project. Based on WHP principles, its aim was to improve health and well-being at the workplace.

An experimental programme, it involved a limited number of companies plus local and regional health authorities. The ultimate objective being to motivate a broad range of companies to recognise the benefits of WHP and introduce it to the workplace.

Preparatory phase

In the first place, the DGS selected companies and representatives from the social partners to take part in a national event on WHP.

Following that event a number of activities took place:

- n Visits were made to various firms to evaluate their work environment and assess the conditions there with a view to initiating and implementing a WHP project.
- n The most pressing problems in selected companies were analysed and possible solutions identified.
- n Follow up visits were made to interested enterprises to evaluate the potential for management involvement and workers' participation on a variety of WHP projects and to assess the extent of technical support required.
- n A consensus on criteria for identifying WHP Models of Good Practice was established.

Translating theory into practice

The project was launched at the second National Meeting on Workplace Health Promotion held in Coimbra, in October 1998. A committee made up of representatives from employers associations, trades unions and government delegates was set up to work on the development of WHP activities.

The project's main objectives are:

- n To improve the health of the working population via WHP measures involving the participation of employers, management and employees in all activities right from the outset
- n To identify the elements within the project that successfully promoted the ideal of healthy and active life at workplace.

Before joining the DGS Project, each enterprise agreed to prepare a Health Status Report as a basis for creating, implementing and evaluating a company WHP Project.

Areas worked on so far include:

- n Development of health promotion concepts and principles
- n HP programming and evaluation
- n Better communication
- n Stress management
- n Smoking and passive smoking
- n Nutrition
- n Exercise

The project has created an arena for developing innovative activities:

- n Comprehensive "Health Status" reports
- n Workshop sessions for presenting the different initiatives and for evaluating progress in participating organisations
- n Collation of data for identification of main problems within the company and for analysing programmes/methods so that the most successful interventions can be adopted in the future
- n Development of evaluation processes
- n Organisation of Technical Seminars for presentation and discussion on a number of issues.

Health Promotion and WHP concepts include:

- n Presentation of company WHP Projects and subsequent evaluation
- n Creating a forum for employer and management involvement
- n Developing participation strategies
- n Marketing
- n Stress management
- n Transactional analysis
- n Nutrition at the Workplace
- n Breast screening at the workplace
- n Passive Smoking at workplace
- n Physical exercise.

Making significant progress

Fifteen companies were selected for the project. The five Regional Health Authorities also took part with the aim of carrying out similar activities in the regions.

Each enterprise designed its own WHP initiatives according to the general guidelines proposed by the project co-ordinators, and within the parameters of WHP, identified individual areas they felt needed to be addressed.

Even without adequate quantified data, a number of major achievements are clearly recognisable as a direct result of the Active and Healthy Life at the Workplace Project. These include:

- n Better understanding of WHP and a raised profile for health promotion activities
- n Increased sense of responsibility and motivation among the regional and local health authorities
- n Recognition of the benefits of WHP by participating companies and a desire to communicate these findings to further organisations
- n A sharp learning curve experienced and enjoyed by all the partners involved
- n Opportunities developed for making best use of the Internet.

Evaluation process

Evaluation is crucial. The participating companies looked at levels of management motivation and par-

ticipation, employee motivation, participation, and empowerment, health gains and other significant issues related to WHP.

Participants considered the project to be an excellent example of how small businesses could be motivated to introduce good WHP practices into daily routines. Each enterprise carried out their own projects and activities. These were specific to each organisation. This diversity of approach is very encouraging and is a positive step towards meeting the broad range of requirements found within small businesses. It was accepted at the start that the successful WHP models and processes developed should be useful and transposable to other situations and this seems to be the case. Tried and tested Models of Good Practice can be applied on a broader scale.

Looking to the future

Following regular evaluation throughout the project a final assessment will take place in 2001 and a national conference organised for the presentation of the results. A written report will also be compiled.

There are plans for the project to be continued and extended to a large number of enterprises throughout the country in the near future.



Associação de Empresas de Engenharia, Arquitetura, Saúde e Formação, S.A.

COSAT is a nationally recognised occupational health services provider with headquarters in Lisbon and several regional branches throughout the country. It employs 48 people. COSAT works in conjunction with PAGE, a group of companies with expertise in management, human resources, communication and multimedia.

Meeting objectives

The company provides OHS advice and services to approximately 300 companies (most of which are SMEs), in the industrial, commerce and services sectors, looking after approximately 8000 workers.

Specific objectives are:

- n To advise businesses on work conditions, health and risk assessment and to pinpoint specific needs so that Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) programmes can be developed
- n To improve employee health by implementing a health strategy that focuses on preventive measures
- n To encourage the active participation of management and workers
- n To offer scientific and technical advice to employers on improving work organisation and to redesign and reorganise workplaces to make them safer and healthier
- n To ensure that legal requirements on OHS are met.

Providing an exemplary service

COSAT has excellent and wide-ranging facilities and a broad range of expertise. Personnel include occupational health doctors, nurses and other health experts such as psychologists, occupational safety and hygiene specialists, nutritionists and multimedia experts.

Implementing workplace health promotion

Workplace Health Promotion is one of COSAT's main concerns. OHS and WHP quality management is based on data collection, analysis and evaluation, so that better programmes, practices and procedures can be put together.

COSAT recognises that successful WHP requires certain preconditions:

- n support from the owner/manager. Without this back-up, it is impossible to motivate employees.
- n the creation of WHP programmes specific to individual organisations that should also provide a framework for the introduction of health circles and promote the general principle of participation.



Eight SMEs are receiving WHP services from COSAT. Most of these firms have initiated specific WHP activities in areas such as nutrition, alcoholism, smoking and exercise. 430 workers are currently involved, but there are plans to greatly increase these numbers.

A positive response

With COSAT's help, many companies are improving communication channels and opportunities for staff participation. Co-operation between management and workers has improved a great deal. A significant number of firms are introducing health circles too.

Data collected by the occupational health doctors has helped to identify the main problem areas that need to be analysed in the health circles. The areas most commonly identified as needing addressing include muscular-skeletal problems, ergonomic improvements and better health and safety. Other proposals relate to changing behaviour and encouraging a healthy lifestyle e.g. nutrition and exercise programmes, stop smoking and alcohol campaigns. These measures were, generally speaking, well received.

Three case studies

■ Jorge Honório da Silva & Filho, Lda, employs 152 workers and pro-

duces refrigerated containers. The company invested 381.000 in a short term 'Risk Control Programme'. This programme looked at the quality of the working environment, OHS and ergonomics and provided a good basis for the introduction of WHP. The company has looked at a number of lifestyle issues with a view to improving staff health via better nutrition, exercise and reduced consumption of alcohol and tobacco.

■ AL – Fábrica de Material Eléctrico, S.A. employs 154 workers and manufactures components for use in electricity, water and gas circuits, as well as equipment for lighting and telecommunications.

AL won the "Excellence" award for SMEs three years running and early in 2000 it gained the NP EN ISO 9002 standard. A new industrial unit was built creating better working conditions for all staff. Work organisation, muscular problems and exposure to dust have also been looked at. Within the scope of workplace health promotion, the company has developed a programme for improving lifestyle and behaviour that will focus on diet, exercise, and control of alcohol and smoking.

■ Pórtico Rochas Decorativas, Lda. employs 15 people and manufactures products made of marble and other types of stone for building and decorative purposes.

The company is working towards the NP EN ISO 9002 certificate.

Management policy focuses on productivity by improving work conditions, assessing and preventing risks, health checks and workplace health promotion. The company encourages staff to enjoy a healthier lifestyle by eating properly, taking regular exercise and cutting out smoking and reducing alcohol consumption.

Following their work with COSAT, these three companies have entered a national competition on safe work.

Other achievements

COSAT has carried out a great deal of work on preventing muscular-skeletal problems. This work has been compiled in an accessible format for use by client companies. One of COSAT's studies was recently presented as an example of good practice during Europe Week 2000, organised by the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work.

Because of its project on ergonomics and muscular-skeletal problems COSAT was given a European Good Practice Award in Health and Safety at Work.

Seghisa is an Occupational Health, Safety and Hygiene provider with 206 clients on its books. It is committed to developing Occupational Health and Safety and workplace health promotion in SMEs from a broad range of industries.

Seghisa works in partnership with a number of health specialists including doctors, nurses and hygiene and safety experts.

WHP: a new approach

The company places great emphasis on WHP, taking into account not only its impact on workers' health but also the significant role it can play in revitalising traditional OHS.

Seghisa has introduced WHP strategies to various client enterprises with great success. Support, encouragement and expertise is provided to these companies in their efforts to initiate WHP programmes. There is a tremendous focus on preventive measures too and Seghisa provides support with meeting mandatory requirements as well as helping companies take these measures a step further.

Introducing WHP to an organisation

Before WHP can be brought into a company it is essential to:

- n Secure the support of the owner or management team
- n Interest and motivate employees and ensure that they participate
- n Interest the OHS team
- n Make sure that a budget is avail-

able for developing WHP measures

- n Ensure that everyone understands the benefits that better health and wellbeing will bring to the organisation
- n Make sure that time is set aside during working hours for running health circles.

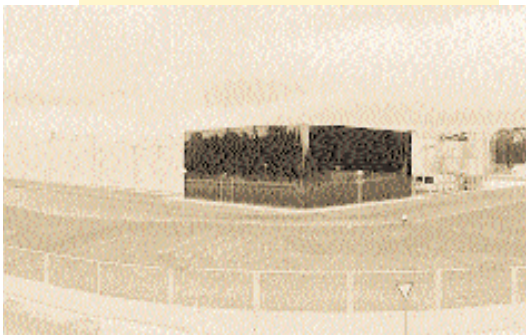
Once the basic groundwork for introducing WHP has been carried out further activities can be developed. These include:

- n Health information and education campaigns (including videos, pamphlets, leaflets, presentations, seminars etc)
- n Creation of health circles
- n Promotion of healthy lifestyle, behaviour and safe practices.

Generating interest in WHP

The Director of Seghisa has been participating in "Active and Healthy Life at the Workplace", a pilot project implemented by the Directorate General of Health. This provided an opportunity to increase interest in WHP and introduce it to client companies. A number of SMEs now recognise the importance of WHP activities.

Seghisa sees WHP as an invaluable way of improving the health of the



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working population as well as being an excellent method of enhancing traditional OHS. It has also found that motivating client companies to bring WHP programmes into their policies has not been difficult. A great deal of interest was generated once positive results began to come through. This interest extended to the smaller companies too, even though they are generally less focused on WHP activities. Seghisa has selected one of its clients, a manufacturing company, as a Model of Good Practice in WHP.

Roca Torneiras, Lda

Roca Torneiras, Lda manufactures taps and employs 49 workers. Its business is expanding and it plans to maximise export potential and increase production in the near future. Roca believes that better employee health and satisfaction will enhance the company's business opportunities and improve staff morale and with it productivity. Therefore, with the help of Seghisa, it has developed a number of OHS and WHP programmes that are proving to be very successful.

Looking at better health in the future

In order to improve the working environment, Roca has developed a risk assessment policy to identify the main risk factors at the workplace. With advice from the OHS

provider it is also working towards achieving the dual goals of preventing ill health and promoting health.

Practical measures to improve daily life for staff have been developed. For example, better methods of transporting goods around the plant and a highly sophisticated system is now in operation as a result. This study was presented at Safety Week 2000, and the company was subsequently selected as a nominee for a European Agency for Health and Safety at Work award, as a Model of Good Practice in preventing muscular-skeletal problems.

Working together

The WHP team at Roca includes

- n ***from the external services provider:***
 - Occupational health doctor
 - Nurse trained in OHS
 - Safety and hygiene experts
- n ***From the company:***
 - Management representatives
 - Human resources department representatives
 - Employees.

Roca has developed a number of health related projects:

- n Regular health checks for employees
- n Training in First Aid, Safety and, more recently, in WHP
- n Risk assessment and control
- n Improved working conditions

- n Information and education on Health and Safety
- n Identification of new resources for WHP
- n Development of better ergonomic conditions

The following workplace health promotion activities were introduced:

- n Creation of health circles
- n Promotion of healthy lifestyle and behaviour (nutrition, physical exercise, safety etc)
- n Training on health education
- n Dissemination of information on WHP interventions and the benefits
- n Introduction of new WHP projects.

Roca provides all the necessary administrative support for the implementation of WHP measures and makes sure that time and money is set aside so that these health promoting activities can enjoy maximum effect. The support from Seghisa has been very helpful indeed in getting health promotion projects launched and the company feels that it will now be able to continue with its good work.

GESTPYME

GESTPYME is a training project for SMEs launched in Catalonia under the EU ADAPT Initiative. The project has a broad scope and operates on the premises that training is one of the most effective tools for keeping people in employment and achieving a qualitative improvement in the management of SMEs. Overall responsibility for GESTPYME was largely undertaken by CEAC, a leading European private training group and Fomento del Trabajo Nacional, the largest Entrepreneurs Association in Catalonia.

Training workers for the future

GESTPYME is a very practical training programme designed to meet the real needs of workers and to be of benefit to the companies who employ them. As a great deal of care has gone into the development of relevant, accessible courses, positive results have been recorded. For instance, businesses are better placed to adapt to the constant changes taking place in the work environment, yet they are able to provide greater job security. Other benefits include:

- Improved on-the-job training skills
- A better working atmosphere
- A more competitive approach

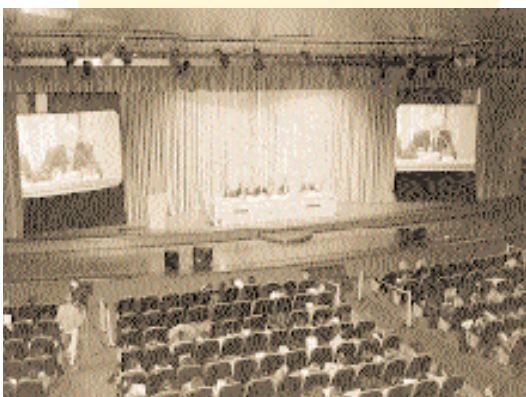
GESTPYME was designed for a variety of different situations. Training programmes were tailored to meet the varying needs of the workforce. Training was provided for workers needing to upgrade their skills before taking up newly-created job positions or for people who need to polish certain skills due to internal promotion. A clear need for effective training courses

was identified in companies where workers faced the threat of redundancy. In cases of job loss, considerable retraining is often necessary. Recently unemployed workers (no longer than three months) were also taken under the wing of GESTPYME and provided with the opportunity of learning new skills.

What's on offer?

A broad range of courses were set up to meet a wide variety of employee needs. These include: Commercial strategies (CE), Managing the EURO challenge in SMEs (GEP), Environmental Management in SMEs (GMP), SME Management (GPME), Management Skills (HD), Labour Relations (RL), Negotiation Skills (TN) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS). All but one of these courses covers OHS and WHP to some degree.

As far as teaching tools and materials are concerned, all courses use videos and CD-ROMs as well as written material. Communication between participants, tutors and supervisors takes place within a



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Virtual Campus situation, making optimum use of a range of modern learning tools and technologies.

A key factor in GESTPYME's success has been its ability to assess and improve the courses it runs. Part of this analysis includes feedback from participants via a 'training process evaluation' system. Despite the potential disadvantages of long distance learning it has in fact proved to be a very positive experience. Most students made excellent use of the Virtual Campus facilities. Adequate contact was maintained between pupils and tutors and it was possible to create a supportive atmosphere. Students were motivated and showed great enthusiasm for their work. The teaching tools and educational materials used were also considered to be highly effective.

Although all the courses proved to be very popular, the Occupational Health and Safety course was particularly highly thought of and well subscribed to. The success of all GESTPYME's courses is reflected in the encouragingly high numbers of students completing them. A total of 3,503 students completed their courses, this was out of an initial figure of 4,463 enquiries and 3,806 people enrolling on courses.

Learning lessons for the future

A number of lessons can be drawn out of a project such as this.

Detailed assessment of the programmes on offer enables the organisation to create even more effective courses. By obtaining feedback from participants and the companies who employ them it is possible to find out what the training preferences of SMEs are, not only in terms of content but also relating to training tools. Continuing to meet the needs of SMEs in an effective and relevant manner is absolutely crucial.

Other useful elements that can be developed further include:

- Learning how to manage successful fund-raising strategies
- Learning how to build good partnership agreements and developing effective technical and marketing strategies.

In all training programmes launched by CEAC, regardless of the subjects involved, students are given an excellent opportunity to familiarise themselves with accessing and using new IT tools. IT is an integral part of almost every type of employment and is an essential skill to master.

PROCOL is part of the building industry and is committed to improving health, safety and well-being on building sites. It has 65 employees, (mainly men) organised in work teams of three who are working on the development of preventive strategies in the building industry.

Implementing successful OHS strategies

The company technical director has responsibility for OHS. He believes that the most effective method of improving health and safety is to empower workers to make changes. He also sees his own role as that of facilitator not leader. The success of a group approach such as this is dependent on adequate and on-going training. Good communication is also vital either through formal meetings or in an informal manner i.e. daily discussions with the workforce.

the technical director a snapshot of the health and safety culture in the company while creating an environment in which critical issues can be highlighted and employees' concerns put forward. This process also underlines the differences between workers' and experts' risk/needs perceptions. Ideas for possible technological and organisational improvements are also discussed in staff meetings. Meetings provide a useful opportunity for discussing health practices and for identifying gaps in training that need to be addressed. It is important that workers are trained so that they can make an informed contribution to improving health and environmental and safety management.

Self-directed work teams

PROCOL steers clear of a rigid hierarchical structure and allows workers to operate with a significant degree of autonomy. Employees are divided into 17 teams of three people, each with a specific job to do. The teams are supported by four foremen. Teams are informed daily about the job to be done and then they are on their own. New workers are trained by experienced ones.

The advantages of this approach is that everyone in the organisation is working towards better health and safety. It is a process that involves participation from all echelons of the company, continuous improvement is encouraged and the action plan put together corresponds to the needs of both management and workers.

Workers are encouraged to voice their opinions on the health and safety situation at work. This gives

There are problems involved in bringing about improved health and safety, however. The nature of the industry means that job sites

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change regularly and work conditions are largely dependent on clients' willingness to co-operate. The kind of participative process described above is also very time consuming for both the facilitator and employees, which might affect its sustainability.

Creating a worker friendly environment

Workers are entitled to make their own decisions about work scheduling, improving working procedures and co-ordinating with other groups. This approach has been supported by extensive training efforts including co-operative and communication skills. Both formal and informal training is carried out.

Taking positive strides

The model has been running since May 2000. It came about at the instigation of the managing director who created opportunities in the company for the assessment of every operational procedure within the business, those who work in it (from the managing director down) and health and safety. This process is based on the conviction that health and safety is everybody's responsibility and demands commitment, involvement and action.

Seeing improvements

Working on a building site is a physically demanding job; the work is hard, there are potential risks inherent in it and employees work outside in all weathers.

The work teams have addressed safety in various building sites, for instance, by placing safety nets at different heights in case of falls. Security belts and special gloves are also used.

Each team is responsible for its own project so a sense of ownership develops. Employees are proud that they work efficiently and produce top quality results that compare very favourably to other highly regarded companies within the industry.

An excellent team spirit has developed and there is tremendous motivation to get the job done and to do it as well as possible. The teams are always looking at ways in which quality and efficiency can be improved upon. The fact that workers are given such autonomy means that they are capable of reacting well in situations where an immediate, practical response is needed.

Social welfare activities

Provision of extra facilities for workers has improved the situation on-site. A room is set aside for workers to rest, meet up with colleagues and have a coffee. Shower facilities are also provided. As a token of appreciation, a Christmas lunch is laid on for all staff and gifts distributed.

Workers' health is monitored annually by an external service responsible for occupational health and risk reduction as well as health education activities such as tobacco and alcohol education programmes, nutrition, exercise and information campaigns on flu and tetanus vaccination.

Looking at the results

As yet there has been no quantitative evaluation but anecdotal evidence suggests that considerable improvements have been made. The quality of work has improved, jobs are completed faster, staff turnover has decreased along with sickness and absenteeism. In line with an overall improvement in performance, skills have been upgraded too.

ISTAS is an autonomous technical foundation supported by 'Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras' (Trade Union Confederation CCOO – one of the main Spanish trades unions). Its main objectives are to develop social interventions for improving working conditions, the working environment and workers' health.

Making progress

ISTAS has developed a number of intervention programmes designed to provide information for professionals involved in occupational health and safety and to broaden the debate on health related issues.

Measures taken include:

n Providing information

An information and documentation service was set up for answering queries relating to occupational health and the working environment (including technical problems, legal advice, trade union problems/queries).

n Training

Training programmes were devised expressly for the purpose of improving the skills of workers' representatives, particularly OHS delegates.

n OHS Assessment

A decentralised network of trade union bureaux was co-ordinated for assessing OHS workers' delegates and health and safety committees.

n Research

Systematic research methods were developed to identify links between

work, the working environment and health.

n Dissemination of information

A number of highly informative publications have been put together and a forum created for increased social debate on occupational health and the working environment.

An award-winning publication for professionals

'Por experiencia' is a quarterly publication distributed free to around 32.000 OHS delegates and about 8.000 people involved in the preventive services and in scientific and academic fields. Its main purpose is to disseminate useful information about health promotion and preventive practices in order to improve the intervention skills of OHS workers' delegates. It aims to do this in an accessible and interesting manner.

'Por experiencia' is also available online (<http://www.ccoo.es/istas/pe>). The electronic version is easy to access and the various sections are simple to navigate through. The interactive options and animated information packages are presented in a very attractive, lively and



engaging way. This website recently received the double U quality certification which is given to webs which fulfil strict criteria relating to content, design, professionalism, originality and practicality.

The publication is divided into six sections:

n *Notice board*

with brief news pieces and announcements.

n *Working conditions*

containing articles on a broad spectrum of issues that impact on health, musculoskeletal diseases, for example, risk of job loss, the dangers of asbestos etc.

n *Dossier*

This section looks at contemporary health and safety topics such as the risks of working with pesticides, temporary work agencies, and other current occupational diseases and occupational injuries.

n *Opinion/interview*

Interviews or opinion pieces with relevant experts in the field of OHS and from a variety of other disciplines too (scientific, social etc)

n *Trade union activities*

contributions from those with practical experience in the field.

n *Bulletin board*

designed to create a link between delegates by providing a forum for the exchange of information and publication of letters.

Reaching out to health professionals

'Por experiencia' is aimed mainly at OHS workers' delegates but is also written with all OHS professionals in mind and indeed anyone with an interest in occupational health and safety.

Efforts are being made to bring SMEs on board where health issues are concerned. Improving health in SMEs is mentioned as a specific aim along with improving the health and safety situation in high risk sectors. So that SMEs can be targeted specifically, criteria for collective bargaining during 2001 include the need to incorporate sectoral Health and Safety Joint Committees which include an OHS delegate. This point is also reinforced by the government by provision of finance for health and preventive interventions.

It's clear from a number of studies that the more training hours and the more information delegates have, the more proactive they become in terms of participating and engaging in health matters. 'Por experiencia' contributes to this by raising awareness on health issues and by providing continuous information on practical solutions to problems and on new trends in health matters.

Future objectives

Specific aims for 2001 include:

- n** Improving the distribution of the journal and increasing its circulation to 75.000 copies.
- n** Contributing to the enforcement of OHS legislation by providing information about working conditions in SMEs and the consequences of failing to fulfil legal obligations.
- n** Improving OHS delegates' understanding of how SMEs operate and the specific problems facing small companies.
- n** External evaluation of the journal using indicators such as number of people reached, reader satisfaction and expert opinions about its structure, content, usefulness and impact on working conditions.



Configura Sverige AB is an IT company and a leading provider of sales configuration software. The organisation employs 40 people (30 men, 10 women), with an average age of just under 30. A new member of staff is taken on every month. More than 95% have a university education. The company carries out in-house health promotion activities, but is not part of a supportive structure.

About the company

Using the unique Configura® system, the company helps businesses to increase revenue and profit margins by re-engineering their entire sales process. Since the company was set up in 1990, it has delivered the Configura software system to many market-leading companies throughout the world.

The company believes that a healthy, motivated workforce is vital to its success. The IT business is developing very rapidly and, in order to meet all the new challenges, it is extremely important that employees enjoy the best possible working environment. Employees are a valuable resource – without their expertise and commitment the company would not survive.

Configura promotes health and well-being by creating an open atmosphere where health issues can be discussed freely. Employees receive vocational training at the workplace and this helps them to develop their professional skills (good communication skills are particularly important).

The starting salary is lower here than in many other IT companies, but Configura's workers value a good working environment, security and friendship more than money. However, long-term employees at Configura are rewarded with a bonus system, paid according to length of service and the company's economic situation. A measure of the company's success in creating a good working environment is the fact that no one has left since it was set up ten years ago.

Involving employees in the planning and decision making process

Owners and employees work together closely on day-to-day issues. Suggestions for improvement are welcomed and responded to quickly. Employees are also encouraged to take responsibility for their own work and to continuously update their skills. Emphasis is placed on good communication both within the company and with customers. Individual employees need to take an active interest in the business process in order to provide a high quality service to customers and to maintain the company's strong market position.



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Balancing the demands of the job with employees' needs

Work can be tailored according to an individual's family situation - this includes flexitime and working from home. Overtime has been abolished. However, IT is a fast-moving business and employees need to stay in close contact with the workplace to keep pace with developments and to update personal skills - even during parental leave.

Providing a good working environment

Promoting health at work, creating a good working environment, improving fitness and encouraging good eating habits are high on Configura's list of priorities. Configura is not an hierarchical organisation and the decision-making process is informal. Employees are also encouraged to report problems to management so that solutions can be found quickly. Company training activities are run every two weeks, providing an opportunity for sharing expertise and experiences and to help staff members to understand one another's work. Employees say that this process has reduced stress.

An open-plan office invites social interaction. Favourite music played through headphones makes concentrating on difficult tasks easier. The company closes twice a year

for planning and recreational purposes. The staff spend a great deal of their spare time together e.g. at the work film club. Staff often watch sporting events together and the company is one of the sponsors of a local ice-hockey team. Configura also organises parties for employees and their families to encourage social contact.

Three times a week management and staff start the day with an eastern learning programme called "Inner Power". Staff report being able to deal with the pressures of work better on the days when these sessions take place. They also report catching fewer colds now.

Access to health and safety service providers

The company offers a comprehensive insurance scheme for all its employees. In the event of illness, they and their families have access to a doctor round the clock.

Health and lifestyle issues

Health and lifestyle matters are discussed regularly at work. The management believes, for instance, that eating habits and health have a major effect on productivity and quality. Fresh fruit is always served at the workplace. Alcohol abuse has never been a problem.

Specific welfare related activities

There has never been a case of long-term sick leave within the company. Configura implements a preventive policy, trying to prevent ill health by promoting exercise and a healthy diet. Configura also looks after the future by providing staff with additional pension benefits that come into effect from the age of 25.

Business results

Configura does not have any statistics to prove that a good working environment and good health pay off in financial terms, but the managing director is convinced that these are an absolute necessity for creating a top-quality operation. He says that these factors promote profitability, productivity and result in more satisfied customers. Needless to say, sick leave and staff turnover are reduced.



Brukshälsan is a small occupational health service unit operating in a rural area near Söderfors (about 100 km north of Stockholm). The unit was set up ten years ago in response to the needs of SMEs in the region and is run by the three founding members. They also work in association with a physiotherapist, a psychologist and a safety officer.

Brukshälsan serves 5 medium sized enterprises and 18 SSEs. This small unit provides a personal service and stresses the importance of good medical care and social support. This caring ethos runs hand in hand with vital business considerations such as productivity and profitability.

Providing a comprehensive health service

Brukshälsan's client base comes largely from the steel industry where there is a high level of manual labour. The company aims to improve safety measures, enhance the working environment, reduce sick leave rates, rehabilitate staff on long term sick leave and provide health checks when new employees are taken on.

Health promotion programmes – exercise, diet, weight reduction, drug misuse, job satisfaction – form Brukshälsan's core business. It also runs short courses on first aid, heart and lung resuscitation and avoiding back problems. Special physiotherapy treatment is provided for employees at risk of developing long term muscular-skeletal problems. Policy programmes for the prevention of alcohol and drug misuse have been

implemented with the approval of employees and "Quit smoking" programmes set up with the aim of cutting smoking by 50%. One-day seminars have been organised for foremen and other group leaders on subjects such as "Sleep problems and shiftwork", "Burn out" and "Coping with bullying at the workplace".

Special projects

Brukshälsan runs a number of projects aimed at helping people with long-term health problems get back into the workplace.

One in particular provides support for people on sick leave due to stress related burn out and other types of mental exhaustion. Within the county, about 100 people suffer from this kind of illness every year and 20 of those are referred to a psychologist.

From good health to high productivity

The primary objective of any project is to enhance productivity by improving employee health. The goals are decided jointly by employees, management and Brukshälsan, e.g. reducing smoking rates, weight reduction, physical exercise, stress reduction, prevent-



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Project infrastructure

Primary Care
General practitioners
Social insurance offices
Employment exchange
Community offices

BRUKSHÄLSAN

AA-Minnesota model
Sjundeå Rehabilitation Centre

Subcontractors:
• psychologist
• physiotherapist
• safety engineer

ing burn out and long term sick leave and helping unemployed people to return to the workplace. Regular personal contact, feedback and follow-up visits are vital for a project to succeed.

How measures are implemented

A customer's needs are assessed and a written outline of the project sent to the enterprise to be discussed. Agreements on the projects is then reached with the leaders, unions and the employees. The five SMEs that formally subscribe to Brukshälsan are expected to take part in health promotion projects on a regular basis. SSEs have more leeway to choose between services, but are obliged to contribute at least 40 ECU per employee annually.

Improved health: a success story

Projects have resulted in employees adopting healthier lifestyles and contributed to very low levels of sick leave in some organisations. No evidence of a positive economic impact is available. However, levels of customer satisfaction are well above expectation and the enterprises are thriving. The health policies advocated by Brukshälsan

could well have contributed to this success.

Relevance for SSEs

Brukshälsan's services are designed to meet the needs of five SMEs, but they match the needs of the SSEs very well too. Establishing these services in medium sized organisations has paved the way for their acceptance into smaller enterprises. Examples of two SSE's are given below.

Smedjan, Scana Söderfors AB

This steel hammer forge has 19 employees working four shifts. The work is quite demanding physically and there is a high accident risk in this industry. However, the sick leave rate is very low, about 1.9%, and no occupational accidents have occurred in the last six years. The four shift groups are self-governed and manage production planning and delivery of the products within the group. Job rotation prevents monotony, job satisfaction and commitment to work are very high and the staff turn-over is very low (in a six-year period only one staff member has left). The staff took part in a health promotion project resulting in a marked

increase in physical exercise and lower smoking rates. Stress is not a big problem and tends to be managed within the shift groups.

Kardell Sweden

Kardell produces quality mops for both domestic and industrial premises. The wool is made from eco-flax which has won an environmental award – good environmental practice is part of the company's ethos. Kardell has 30 employees, 22 of whom are women. Much of the work demands skill and dexterity.

The commitment to health promoting activities has so far been rather limited, (not unusual given the traditionally low awareness of health issues in this trade). However, a "quit smoking" project has been launched aimed at reducing smoking levels by 30% . Lung function tests showed a marked improvement since the project began. Brukshälsan's involvement has encouraged further improvements in the work environment too. Although much of the work is monotonous, job satisfaction is high and staff turn over low.



Feelgood provides occupational health services and health counselling to a wide range of organisations. The organisation employs 750 people from a number of professions – occupational health doctors, psychologists, health counsellors, safety officers, nurses etc. Feelgood's staff work at 77 units in Sweden. 80% of them are university educated. Feelgood provides all its services in-house but has a long-term arrangement with the university of Uddevalla-Trollhättan for upgrading staff skills.

About the company

Feelgood aims to improve its clients' mental and physical well-being by providing a diverse range of services tailored to meet the needs of individual organisations. It offers clients a medical service (including conventional medical care, physiotherapy, health care and rehabilitation), as well as a variety of workplace activities relating to occupational health promotion and developing a relevant health strategy. Feelgood looks at a broad spectrum of considerations when providing such services: work organisation, psychosocial factors, education and training. Exercise programmes and access to a gym are also on offer.

Approximately 100,000 people subscribe to Feelgood, mostly from the manufacturing sector but with a small number of clients coming from the service sector and public organisations.

In January 2000 some of Feelgood's services were awarded a quality assurance certificate (ISO 9001).

Providing a high-quality service

Health promotion programmes are divided into three steps. Firstly, the needs of the employee are identified. This is achieved through a Health Profile Test that looks at lifestyle habits and risk factors (relating to disease) and an interview that provides a clearer picture of each individual in health terms.

Secondly, working conditions are assessed via a Working Environment Profile that gives an insight into the organisation. Any medical problems will become apparent here. The results of the profile lead to goals being identified.

The third step in this process is to agree on the measures to be taken in order to achieve these goals. Improvement measures are carried out in line with the principles set out in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion.

Meeting the needs of specific organisations

All projects are based on the needs of individual enterprises, and small

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organisations (employing fewer than 20 people) are looked at from a different perspective.

A steering group is set up as soon as a project begins. Regular meetings with Feelgood staff and employees are organised. These meetings revolve around the needs and requirements of employees and as a result motivation is usually high and most of the employees participate. The next step is to identify specific health needs and set goals for individual employees and for the work team as a whole. Projects generally run for a year. The twin targets of better efficiency and profitability are achieved by improving employee health and creating a better working environment by empowering workers and making them feel valued.

Snowclean – a case study

Feelgood's services can be adapted to suit organisations of all sizes. One of its SSE customers is described briefly below.

Snowclean, has 18 employees and a turn-over of 4 million Ecu. The company has gained quality assurance certificates ISO 9001 and 14001. Snowclean's employees were previously signed up to a conventional occupational health service, but the service didn't meet the needs of the enterprise. All staff were involved in choosing local unit Feelgood instead.

Snowclean produces car wash chemicals, half of which are exported. There is no official "foreman" or "leader" employed here. Employees rotate their work regularly and have a high level of personal autonomy. The sick leave rate is very low. However, the company joined a health promotion project at the end of 1998 to look at lifestyle issues. 16 out of the 18 employees took part and at the follow-up meeting a large proportion showed improvement. Some employees on medication for hypertension were able to decrease the dosage, for example. A need for personal development interviews with employees was identified too and Feelgood was able to offer a training course.

Project results: measuring SME satisfaction

Feelgood is a well established organisation and projects are implemented with a view to gaining long-term results. Follow-ups carried out at a variety of organisations show that many, if not all, of the good results achieved while the project is running, are sustainable. Companies also tend to stick with Feelgood once they have signed up.

Has health improved?

The Health Profile Test is carried out when a project ends and in some cases two years later as well

identifies improvements according to the goals outlined at the start. One positive example is that of a public organisation employing 35 people. Here the proportion of employees with a healthy life-style increased from 48% to 72% by the end of the project. Another example is a retail business with 70 employees; here the proportion of employees with a healthy life-style increased from 14% to 27% within a three-year period. No evaluation of the economic implications of various projects has been carried out.

The Lothian Occupational Health Project

United Kingdom



The Lothian Occupational Health Project explored the possibility of providing occupational health care services via a primary health care setting. Project partners were the Health Promotion and Primary Care Departments of Lothian Health Board, the Lothian Trades Union and Community Resource Centre and the Lothian Federation of Trades Union Councils. A steering group was drawn from the Federation of Small Businesses, Occupational Health Medicine, Health Education Board for Scotland and the Public Health Sciences Department of Lothian Health Board.

About the project

The provision of occupational health services to employees in the SME sector is currently very limited and only a third of all employees in Scotland have access to an occupational health service. Provision of an in-house service is beyond the means of most SMEs and the number of SMEs purchasing OH services from an external provider is negligible. However every employee has access to the primary health care service and it is within this setting that considerable potential exists to address occupational health needs. Unfortunately, studies show that the links between a person's health and their occupation are rarely explored in patient consultations and the opportunity to deal with work related health problems could easily be missed. In 1994 / 5 a number of factors combined to create an opportunity to explore the potential of offering occupational health services through the primary care setting, in this instance through General Medical Practitioners (GPs) surgeries. Despite understandable initial caution from GPs (e.g. regarding potential disruption to the practice), the

Lothian Occupational Health Project was launched in November 1995 in seven GP practices on five sites.

Putting the project into practice

Two occupational health advisors spent one day each week in the five primary care sites. Patients were invited to take part in an interview as they waited to see their GP. The interview included a discussion about the patient's work history, any work related ill-health experienced and any hazards they may have encountered.

If any links between the patient's work and health were identified these were followed up with written and oral information about the cause of the condition and what could be done in response. The legal responsibility of the employer together with the employee's responsibility and rights were included in this information. A record of the interview was included in the patient's records. If the patient's condition caused concern then the occupational health advisor would brief the GP. In some cases, if the employee desired it, the GP could then write to alert the

employer of potential risk and suggest measures to reduce it. Visits to a patient's workplace by Occupational Health Advisors were rare, but when they did occur the advice was well received and action was taken to reduce health risks.

Aims and objectives

The project had two goals: to work with primary care teams to improve the identification and treatment of work-related ill health, and secondly to contribute to the prevention of work-related ill health by seeking to eliminate or reduce hazardous working conditions. The project's contribution to the above aims was also evaluated. In the long term it was hoped the data collected would help to identify patterns of illness by industry type and geographical area. Evaluation was built into the project from the outset and included observation of interviews between the occupational health advisors and patients to ensure that consistent advice was being given and that patients understood and could effectively participate in the process.

Getting results

Almost 4000 patients were interviewed during the first thirty months of the project. Half worked in small or medium-sized companies and three quarters reported that they had no access to occupational health services at work.

What work hazards have been reported?

Figure 1: Percentage of patients reporting moderate or serious risk from the following hazards:

<i>Lifting</i>	45.3
<i>Stress</i>	39.2
<i>Environment</i>	36.3
<i>Job design</i>	34.1
<i>Hours of work</i>	30.2
<i>Dust</i>	27.3
<i>Noise</i>	23.7
<i>Fumes</i>	16.5
<i>Infections</i>	12.3
<i>VDU's</i>	11.9
<i>Chemicals</i>	11.2
<i>Fuels/ solvents/oils</i>	9.3
<i>Vibration</i>	6.6
<i>Asbestos</i>	2.0

What work-related ill health has been identified?

Figure 2: Percentages reporting work-related ill health caused or made worse by current job:

<i>Back</i>	31.0
<i>Muscles (other than back)</i>	25.6
<i>Nervous system</i>	11.7
<i>Skin</i>	11.6
<i>Nose/throat</i>	10.6
<i>Psychological</i>	7.9
<i>Chest</i>	5.6
<i>Hearing</i>	5.2
<i>Gastric/digestion</i>	4.2
<i>Asthma</i>	3.3
<i>Heart/circulation</i>	1.8
<i>Bladder</i>	0.4
<i>Reproductive</i>	0.2

Referrals

n 28 patients were referred to the project by their GP

- n 134 cases were highlighted for the special attention of the GP
- n 12 cases were recommended for referral to the Consultant in Occupational Health Medicine
- n 179 patients were recommended for hearing tests because of suspected work related hearing loss
- n 32 patients were given advice regarding possible compensation claims for occupational asthma, 10 for Beat Knee and Vibration White Finger, and 16 for accidents or other work related issues.

Conclusions

The Lothian Occupational Health Project addressed health and safety, occupational health, welfare rights and workplace health promotion through workplaces, the health services and the social partners. It was a very good example of how a broad base of support can be achieved to address work related health issues. One of the project's great strengths was its orientation towards the experience of the patients. It is the patient, of course, who has the real experience of the workplace and is in a position to make valuable comments on how situations arise and can be improved. Many of the GPs also felt that the project was beginning to affect their own practice in relation to occupational health in a positive way.

The Anglesey Sea Zoo

United Kingdom



Anglesey Sea Zoo is a major tourist attraction in North Wales. During the peak season it employs 35 people and in the off-peak season (October to March) 11 people. ASZ works in partnership with the Gwynedd Health Promotion Service of the North Wales Health Authority.

About the company

Anglesey Sea Zoo came into being in 1983, evolving from a lobster and oyster wholesale business when the owners realised that the tanks housing these creatures were becoming an attraction in their own right.

100,000 people now visit ASZ every year. ASZ prides itself on being a forward thinking, progressive company. From the outset, developing a corporate culture in which staff were valued and treated fairly, was a priority. These efforts have resulted in a number of awards: Investors in People Award (IIP), the Corporate Standard Gold Award for workplace health promotion activity, the Schrodgers Wales Tourist Board Environmental Award 1997 and the Gold Medal for Services to Tourism from the Wales Tourist Board. The company has also gone on to become a health promotion mentor to other organisations.

Key aims and objectives

Within the Sea Zoo's Business Plan 2000, three of its ten Business Objectives relate to employee health and well-being, these are:

- n To be a good place to work
- n To develop individual abilities in line with business objectives

- n To encourage staff loyalty and commitment in working as part of a team.

Implementation of health promoting projects

This began with a motivational lifestyle profile being offered to all the employees at the Sea Zoo. All except one participated. The lifestyle assessment was provided by specialist nurses from the Gwynedd Community Health Trust and consisted of motivational counselling in relation to lifestyle factors e.g. smoking, exercise, levels of alcohol consumption and so on. Each employee was provided with feedback, and the company was given an overall assessment of the health and well-being of its employees. Staff were very positive about the programme and no negative comments were received.

This "lifestyle approach" led to the development of a comprehensive range of policies and measures to protect and improve employee health and well-being. These naturally included the health and safety policy, but also included the development of a smoking policy, a nutrition policy (which reaches visitors via the restaurant as well), a parental leave policy and, since 1997, the use of Quality Circles as a method of resolving problems. The

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Sea Zoo has also developed an innovative policy on HIV / AIDS that applies to staff and visitors alike.

WHP activities

The owners of the Sea Zoo fully appreciate that workplace health promotion activity means something deeper than whether or not a company has a fully equipped gymnasium for its employees. On the contrary, what is important is the way in which the organisation, through its working practices and company ethos, supports and promotes employee health and well-being. With this in mind, the owners developed a company culture in which workplace health promotion was an integral part. This includes:

The staff handbook

This contains information on a wide range of issues:

- n Health and safety
- n Dealing with the public
- n What to do in an emergency
- n COSHH regulations (Control of substances hazardous to health)
- n Manual handling and lifting
- n The use of quality circles
- n Communication
- n Health related policies.

Innovative ways of encouraging staff to read the handbook have been developed. These include a social event / quiz night based on the handbook with prizes for the winning team. The staff are also

asked for their comments on its content and for suggestions on how it might be improved.

Health related policies

Clear policies have been developed for tobacco use, alcohol and drug use, nutrition, stress and HIV infection. Referral to confidential, independent counselling is available to any member of staff. Similarly the Sea Zoo will provide help and support to employees who wish to stop smoking. The smoking policy recognises the needs of some to smoke during the working day, but restricts this to areas away from the view of visitors.

Flexible and family friendly working practices

The Sea Zoo believes that support should be given to parents with young children and to parents with disabled offspring. Consequently clear company guidelines have been developed to address the needs of employees with dependants. It is possible, for example, to work only during school hours (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) and not to work during the school holidays. Clearly however, this practice has to be implemented by negotiation with the individual employee and on the basis of need and merit.

Effective communication channels

The company operates an 'open door' policy so that staff can raise issues quickly and easily. Effective

communication between all staff is seen as central to the company's success.

Training

Offering training and development opportunities helps to build up a motivated and highly skilled workforce. Health related topics such as health and safety, handling and lifting, first aid and food hygiene are all addressed through these training programmes.

Involving the visitors

Exhibitions on health and social issues are frequently displayed in the reception area of the Sea Zoo (the most recent was on child welfare). This space is also used to promote National No Smoking Day, Sun Awareness, healthy eating initiatives etc. Healthy eating is also promoted in the restaurant where nutritional guidelines are closely followed and there is a wide variety of foods to choose from.

A successful conclusion

Since the implementation of the workplace health promotion programme sickness absence rates have fallen and staff turnover has also declined. Morale among the staff is good and working relationships are excellent. Employees indicate that the company has a caring image, works hard to create good working relations and both listens to and acts on suggestions from staff.

The Bro Taf Health Authority "Small Workplace" Project United Kingdom



Bro Taf Health Authority established the Healthy Hearts Initiative to tackle the problem of high levels of cardiovascular disease in Wales. A health initiative in small workplaces was identified as an effective method of reaching a significant sector of the population. Bro Taf Health Authority employed the services of Health Promotion Wales for analysis of employee questionnaires.

Cardiovascular disease in Wales: a serious problem

Levels of cardiovascular disease in Wales are among the highest in the world. In the Bro Taf Health Authority area cardiovascular disease is the largest single cause of ill health – in 1997 it accounted for around 40% of all deaths, and around 30% of deaths in persons under 65 years. Bro Taf is working hard to address this issue. The focus of discussions at both national and local levels concentrate on the most effective ways of promoting generic cardiovascular health in the population, and the most effective method of treating people who already present with symptoms. Given these levels of coronary heart and cardiovascular diseases, and the need to continually seek innovative ways of reducing them, Bro Taf Health Authority established the Healthy Hearts Initiative to enhance the treatment and management of cardiovascular disease in primary and secondary care and raise awareness of cardiovascular disease in the community. The initiative consists of four separate projects, one of which investigated the potential of health promotion in small workplaces to bring about behaviour change that will reduce

a worker's risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

A scientific approach

A business, once recruited to the project, was randomly allocated to either the intervention group or the control group. A control group was set up to ensure the scientific rigour of the initiative. For ethical reasons it was decided that this group would have an intervention, but on a health issue unrelated to cardiovascular disease – thus muscular-skeletal injury prevention was chosen. In the interests of equity it was decided to add a second year to the project to enable the measures implemented in the intervention group in year one to be implemented in the control group in year two, and vice versa. Therefore over the two-year period each participating business went through an identical process. The project provided an intensive health promotion campaign focusing on the reduction of risk factors for cardiovascular disease (the intervention group) and muscular-skeletal injury (the control group). It also monitored the level of organisational change resulting from the interventions together with changes in attitude and behaviour in employees.

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A six-step initiative

Recruiting businesses into the project proved to be a major challenge, however forty businesses eventually enrolled. The intervention consisted of six stages, starting with questionnaires for completion by employees being sent to every participating workplace. These covered issues such as the person's lifestyle and working practice. Each business received a site visit and audit of organisational practice. This included an examination of policy development and implementation, working practices, health and safety provision and ergonomic assessment. Recommendations for future action were then developed and communicated to the owners/managers. During the first visit the completed employee questionnaires were collected and forwarded to Health Promotion Wales for analysis. Stage two involved a further site visit during which employees' height, weight and blood pressure were measured and one to one advice on lifestyle issues was provided. In stage three training events were offered to the owners or senior managers on a range of health promotion issues, the prevention of cardiovascular disease (for the intervention group) and the prevention of muscular-skeletal injury (for the control group). Courses were run on a number of topics including, "Managing Stress", Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation, and ergonomics.

Stage four involved further site visits to provide the businesses with feedback on the progress they were making and what further action they needed to take. In stage five, at the end of the first twelve months, a second employee questionnaire went out and the employees weight and blood pressure was measured once again. In final stage the intervention group became the control group and vice versa. The project was then repeated as in year one but without the initial data collection exercise. The intervention phase of the project ended on the 31st March 2000, although some data collection will continue for the next twelve months.

Unexpected results


Tobacco use among employees was predicted to be an important issue to be addressed. In fact, this was not the case, with the notable exception of the residential care homes for the elderly where for both nursing and ancillary staff tobacco use was high. Stress was a major concern in all the organisations, both for the owners or managers and employees. There was considerable demand for information on nutrition and healthy eating – although awareness of healthy eating was generally high among those interviewed, their dietary practice was often poor. A number of instances of poor workplace design, working practice and ergonomic factors were identified

with manual handling and lifting being issues of particular concern.

At individual workplaces, health promoting organisational change has been very limited. This is largely due to the fact that there were few, if any, support structures in place in the workplaces participating in the study. If the owner was highly motivated or the business employed someone who was, then health-promoting practices were more likely to be introduced. Unfortunately this was not often the case. A second, and major, learning point was that in a project spread over two years, considerable efforts had to be made to maintain the commitment of the SMEs.

Looking to the future

The study has demonstrated that workplace health promotion in SMEs is feasible, but that a number of challenges need to be overcome. Working practices and working cultures are not always conducive to health, and while the intervention of an external "expert" can be of benefit in the short term, gaining the commitment and motivation of key individuals in small businesses is crucial, for without this the sustainability of health promotion activities is seriously in doubt.



*Supported by the European Commission.
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Small, Healthy and Competitive

New Strategies for Improved Health in Small and
Medium-Sized Enterprises



Published by:

*Federal Association of
Company Health Insurance Funds
(BKK Bundesverband)*

European Information Centre

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1. Edition, May 2001

