



**Healthy Employees
in Healthy Organisations**

Recommendations

for Promoting Workplace Health Action



1. Introduction

The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) was established in 1996 and is being supported by the European Commission within the Programme for Action on Health Promotion, Information, Education and Training within the framework for action in the field of Public Health (No 645/96/EC). The members of the network are organisations from all 15 Member States, the countries of the European Economic Area (EEA countries) and 3 countries of the enlargement group.

This document summarises recommendations on how to develop workplace health action at European and national level. The recommendations have been developed by the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) and are based on two Europe-wide initiatives of the ENWHP which have been carried out between 1997 and 2001 and have focused on the documentation of good WHP practice in Europe (ENWHP 1999a, b, c, d; 2001 a, b)

The main objective of this document is to provide support for developing strategies and implementing action to promote a healthy workforce in healthy enterprises in Europe. The recommendations which follow address a number of stakeholders at European and national level. They should be viewed as a framework for developing specific strategies and policies within the Member States.

2. Enterprises for Health: Principles of Workplace Health Promotion

Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work.

This can be achieved through a combination of:

- Improving work organisation and the working environment
- Promoting active participation in the process of WHP
- Encouraging personal development

(Luxembourg Declaration on WHP in the European Union)

A healthy, motivated and well-qualified workforce is fundamental to the future social and economic well-being of the European Union. There is a growing body of evidence that improvements in workplace health can be key ingredients of business efficiency and competitiveness. In innovative enterprises, the quality of work and the quality of products or services are elements of the same strategy.

Research results based on a large number of Models of Good Practice in enterprises from different European regions show the common success factors for workplace health promotion. These include:

- Workplace health action should be based on an analysis of the health requirements and needs of an enterprise
- Health actions should involve all stakeholders in enterprises, especially the workers, and representatives of intermediary organisations (a participative approach)
- WHP actions should seek to improve the quality of working life and conditions as well as focusing on the behaviour of the individual worker
- Workplace health action should become an integral part of management practices and daily working life at all levels of an enterprise.

These general characteristics of successful workplace health practice are independent of enterprise size and economic sector.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are a very important economic sector, particularly in terms of job creation. To date, the majority of resources in occupational health and safety as well as workplace health promotion have been used to address the needs of larger enterprises. However, the situation in SMEs is different from larger enterprises, and there is widespread recognition that delivering workplace health services to SMEs and the encouragement of better workplace health practice constitute major problems which are yet to be adequately resolved.

2. Principles of WHP

Bringing WHP to SMEs in an effective manner involves applying a number of principles which are especially important to this sector. These include:

- Providing integrated services - it is important to provide integrated services to SMEs, as their needs are likely to be episodic rather than continuous. This means providing the full range of workplace health services on a demand led basis.
- Making use of existing SME networks - the delivery of services to SMEs always poses a challenge. Making use of existing SME networks offers the possibility of meeting SME needs using channels which are trusted by the SME sector, and which minimise the effort needed by service providers.
- Providing easy to use services - SMEs have difficulty in devoting of time and effort to engaging in WHP. In this situation, service providers must make their services relevant, easy to access and easy to use.
- Providing services at reduced costs - SMEs generally and micro-enterprises in particular, do not have the resources to engage in WHP on a self-funded basis. The cost of workplace health action therefore must be subsidised by external agencies if the uptake of services is to be high.

3. Recommendations

3. Recommendations on Promoting Workplace Health Action in the European Union

The recommendations outlined below are based on general principles of good workplace health practice. In particular, they recognize the specific requirements of working with SMEs.

The recommendations are made according to the following structure:

- EU level
- National, Governmental level
- Intermediary level.

EU level recommendations refer to actions which might be taken by the Commission or any other EU funded agencies involved in the areas of health promotion, occupational health and safety or rehabilitation.

National level recommendations refer to actions which might be undertaken by Governmental or regional agencies for workplace health promotion or occupational health, or by public or private sector social insurance systems which play a role in workplace health.

Intermediary level recommendations refer to actions which might be taken by organisations such as trade associations, industry associations, unions and professional bodies to develop WHP in SMEs.

3.1 EU Level Recommendations

3.1 EU Level Recommendations

These recommendations are directed at the following actors:

- Directorate-General "Health and Consumer Protection"
- Directorate-General "Employment and Social Affairs"
- Directorate-General "Enterprise"
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
- European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

It is intended that these (and other relevant bodies at EU level) would co-ordinate their efforts to ensure that there is a coherent and comprehensive response to these recommendations.

Awareness Raising, Marketing and Communication

■ Recommendation 1

The EU should continue and strengthen their efforts to raise awareness of WHP and its benefits. Consideration should be given to involving more closely the social partners in these efforts. In particular, there is a need to continue and strengthen the actions of dissemination networks dealing with WHP throughout Europe.

■ Recommendation 2

EU level institutions should support the implementation of the following marketing strategies which have demonstrated their positive impact on national level:

- To support Europe-wide award campaigns
- To encourage the dissemination of models of good and best practice
- To support European level networks of relevant national level intermediary organisations (such as OSH, public health sector organisations, social insurance etc.)

■ Recommendation 3

The EU should give consideration to taking advantage of the possibilities provided by Internet technology in supporting information dissemination strategies and the development of virtual networks or communities of interest. Any such systems should be designed to ensure compatibility with existing systems (e.g. the European Agency system) and with existing or future national systems, as well as ease of access for users.

■ Recommendation 4

Consideration should be given to developing new messages and marketing methods for encouraging SMEs to become involved in WHP. This should be based on research into the precise needs of SMEs in this regard. These marketing methods should involve intermediary organisations (e.g. representative organisations, sectoral organisations, trade associations) as multipliers of the WHP message.

3.1 EU Level Recommendations

Setting Up Infrastructures - Policy Development and Integration

■ Recommendation 5

The EU should encourage the development of strong WHP policy at EU and national level. This could be achieved through the development of an EU level policy which national governments could subscribe to. Consideration should be given to developing a Communication from the Commission in this regard.

■ Recommendation 6

There is a need to co-ordinate and integrate policy with regard to WHP among the various arms of the Commission and its agencies. Particular consideration should be given to integrating policy and research functions and to co-ordinating policy between all agencies dealing with workplace health (DG Health and Consumer Protection, DG Employment and Social Affairs, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) and those dealing with SMEs (e.g. DG Enterprise). Monitoring the success of the policy development and implementation process is an essential role for the Commission.

Setting Up Infrastructures - Research and Development/Training

■ Recommendation 7

There is a need to develop knowledge and skills in the area of WHP throughout the EU. The Commission can lead the development of this necessary infrastructural element by promoting the development of a research and training agenda for Europe. This would help prevent duplication of effort in an area where resources are scarce.

■ Recommendation 8

There are special training and research needs with regard to SMEs which need to be considered. In particular, there is a need to gather information on the real workplace health needs of SMEs; to design effective delivery models for SMEs; and to develop effective marketing, needs assessment, and programme design tools for SMEs. In addition, the requirements of providing a demand-led integrated health service for SMEs need to be reflected in national and other level training and professional development courses.

3.2 National Level Recommendations

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These recommendations are directed at the following actors:

- Relevant Government/Regional Ministries
- WHP agencies
- OHS agencies
- Social Insurance Institutions
- Research funding agencies
- Training institutions

It is appropriate that responsibility for undertaking these recommendations primarily belongs to the appropriate Government Ministries. However, it is also appropriate for each of the named agencies which could be involved should initiate actions in collaboration with one another. There is an obvious need for co-ordination of policy and practical action at national/regional level.

Awareness Raising, Marketing and Communication

■ Recommendation 1

National agencies with responsibility for, and interests in developing WHP should undertake awareness raising campaigns targeted at enterprises in general and SMEs in particular. These campaigns should emphasise the benefits of WHP, the nature of WHP and should firmly place them in the context of developing OHS and other relevant policy areas (e.g. productivity, labour market and human resource management strategies).

Issues of importance which should be incorporated here include the need to involve intermediary organisations in the awareness raising strategy; the need to develop targeted messages about the concept of WHP appropriate for different national contexts, sectors, regions and target groups; and the use of a range of methods which can be used to deliver the message of WHP (especially Internet based methods, Pilot projects and network development).

■ Recommendation 2

As part of raising awareness, national WHP agencies should consider setting up communities of interest (networks) of interested parties. This could include the following types of network:

- Enterprise networks (at national, regional or local level/sector specific or general)
- Regular platforms for information exchange among key stakeholders (these could be both formal and informal in nature, such as the national information days of the ENWHP)
- Integrating WHP issues into the existing formal agendas of co-operating national stakeholders
- National working committees under the umbrella of relevant ministries

3.2 National Level Recommendations

■ Recommendation 3

With regards to SMEs, national stakeholders should support the development and implementation of awareness campaigns. These campaigns should build up a dialogue with intermediary level organisations and focus on the development of a vision which can be shared by SMEs (such as "Healthy Craftsmanship"). This vision should combine the positive perspective of specific SME sectors with a salutogenic approach to workplace health. All awareness raising campaigns should include SME representative organisations, service suppliers, interested companies, insurers and the professionals in the field.

Setting Up Infrastructures - Policy Development and Integration

■ Recommendation 4

National level agencies should support the development of strong WHP policy, especially in relation to SMEs. Issues to be incorporated should include the development of a vision which integrates the concerns of public health, occupational health and rehabilitation, and the integration of policies from these areas; and the development of a supply infrastructure for delivering the expanded WHP services to enterprises. In addition, policy initiatives should have adequate resources assigned to ensure effective implementation.

Consideration should be given to introducing policies which provide incentives for enterprises and especially SMEs to take part in WHP activities. These could consist of changing health insurance systems so that good practice is encouraged and/or internalising more of the costs of ill health to workplaces.

Monitoring the success of the policy development and implementation process is an essential role for WHP agencies.

Setting Up Infrastructures - Networking and Partnership Building

■ Recommendation 5

National level stakeholders should support and encourage the development of partnerships and networks dealing with workplace health matters. This should include enterprise networks (in combination with service-providers), the involvement of relevant stakeholders from the intermediary level within key pilot projects, intermediary level networks etc. These approaches can be used as part of marketing strategies as well as a means to develop a national infrastructure for WHP.

■ Recommendation 6

New strategic partnerships should be built (or existing ones redefined and revitalised). National level stakeholders from the OSH sector and the public health sector should seek to establish partnerships with relevant intermediary level organisations. This strategy should look to complement the traditional social partner organisations and involve organisations who by tradition are linked to the SME sector (such as local and regional labour organisations, trade associations, banks, local and regional SME

3.2 National Level Recommendations

representative organisations etc.). These partnerships should be developed on the basis of pilot projects which would examine appropriate and efficient mechanisms for working together and for reaching SMEs.

In addition, national level stakeholder should encourage partnerships between large companies and SMEs. One good example for this approach are Good Neighbour Schemes which seek to bring large and small companies together to promote greater awareness of workplace labour protection issues and health and safety issues. Larger companies have the necessary infrastructural and specialist arrangements in place to deal with a range of related issues.

Setting Up Infrastructures - Research, Development and Training

■ Recommendation 7

National agencies responsible for WHP should develop a series of Pilot projects for implementing WHP. These should have as their focus the investigation of the need for and development of methods and tools for the implementation and delivery of WHP (especially to SMEs), the dissemination of information about best practice and the evaluation of the benefits and impact of WHP. Attention should be paid to the issue of the agencies involved in setting up the pilots - the widest possible representation of stakeholders should be ensured.

■ Recommendation 8

Appropriate information systems should be developed in order to establish evidence-based policies on national level. These systems should be based on national indicators of the state of workplace health promotion activities (broken down by branch, economic sector and company size), evaluation outcomes (in relation to health and economic impacts) and they should take account of the proposed indicators of public health proposed in the new European Public Health Strategy (EU, 2001).

■ Recommendation 9

National WHP agencies should also promote the development of professional training in the area of WHP, especially as it relates the needs of SMEs and the new methods which will be needed in this regard. Attention should be directed both to expanding the supply of appropriately trained professionals and extending the current skill base of existing professionals.

■ Recommendation 10

There is a need for national WHP agencies to establish and undertake activities to promote knowledge and skill development as a means of promoting the supply side of coherent WHP services for SMEs. In relation to research side, there is a need to characterise the needs and requirements of SMEs for workplace based health services, to identify the best methods of delivery of services to SMEs (for example, by using intermediary organisations, through existing OHS services, using geographical, issues based or supply chain models, or providing workplace health services through community based public health services). Other issues of importance include the research and development of appropriate support tools and the evaluation of the benefits of WHP. Research should be carried out with reference to any EU research agenda.

3.2 National Level Recommendations

WHP Service Management

■ Recommendation 11

Workplace health promotion action should seek to be based on the highest possible professional standards such as those established as basic principles of good practice by the ENWHP. This would include the need:

- To link workplace health with relevant enterprise policies and ensure that it becomes part of daily practice (integration)
- To involve the employees within the planning, implementation and evaluation of workplace health action (participation)
- To seek to improve the quality of working life and conditions as well as focusing on the behaviour of the individual employee (a balanced approach)
- To ensure that any action is based on an analysis of the health requirements and needs of the various stakeholders within enterprises and is part of continuous improvement (need-based)

National level stakeholders should encourage enterprises, service providers and all other interested parties to consider the basic principles of good practice especially with regards to funding decisions.

Furthermore, joint efforts should be undertaken to ensure that these good practice principles become formal elements of relevant policies at national, intermediary and enterprise level.

■ Recommendation 12

The expanded concept of WHP appropriate for SMEs (involving the provision of HP, OHS and rehabilitation services) is founded on the availability of integrated services. National agencies in these areas should seek ways in which the current gaps between the services can be closed so that SMEs are able to easily access all required workplace based health services.

The precise conformation and organisation of services would vary between countries. In many, there is a need to extend the current OHS services and to link them with rehabilitation services. However, it is likely that the delivery of integrated services to SMEs and micro-enterprises will involve the extension of community based public health services to incorporate workplace health concerns.

There is a need to develop new approaches to service delivery. For example, there is a need to expand the role of occupational health services to incorporate broad WHP measures and there is a need to examine new ways of delivering these expanded services to far larger numbers of SMEs than is currently the case. Promising models of delivery include neighbourhood based schemes, supply-chain models, business development and training schemes targeting entrepreneurs, area based schemes, sectoral organisation schemes and use of the Internet to support information delivery and to provide support to SMEs implementing WHP.

3.3 Intermediary Level Recommendations

3.3 Intermediary Level Recommendations

Intermediary level organisations may be regarded as being multipliers of the impact of any national or regional level policy by virtue of their close relationship with groups of enterprises or SMEs. In this category are such organisations as:

- Employers organisations
- Trade Unions
- Sectoral organisations
- Trade associations
- Health insurers

They are an important focus for promoting WHP activity as they have the capability of multiplying policy effects and of communicating effectively with SMEs and larger enterprises. In addition, they are often the organisations which have the most direct financial interest in gaining from increases in WHP practice.

Awareness Raising, Marketing and Communication

■ Recommendation 1

Intermediary organisations should become closely involved in the development and delivery of national/regional awareness programmes. They should also contribute to the development of networks or communities of interest amongst their member organisations.

The success of information dissemination programmes in creating both awareness of WHP and demand for its services will be crucially dependent on the intermediary organisations (especially the sectoral organisations) taking an actively supportive role.

Setting Up Infrastructures - Research and Development

■ Recommendation 2

Intermediary organisations are especially well placed with regard to the development of pilot implementation projects. They should become involved as partners in the design and evaluation of such projects as well as in disseminating information about such projects.

WHP Service Management

■ Recommendation 3

Intermediary organisations, especially those involved in either insuring against workplace ill health or those involved in service delivery should contribute the definition and development of new integrated services for delivering WHP to SMEs. In addition, sectoral organisations and representative organisations should also contribute to the definition of services from the perspective of their membership.

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**Edited by:
European Network for
Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP)**

**Published by:
Federal Association of
Company Health Insurance Funds (BKK), Essen/Germany**

Essen, June 2001

The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion receives financial support by the European Commission. Neither the European Commission nor anyone acting on its behalf is liable for any consequences which may arise from using this information.