

Hearts and Minds at Work in Europe

Strategies and Policies for Promoting Health in
Working Life and other Life Domains

Workshop in Brussels, 21.3.2007, 10:00 – 16:00

**Organised by BKK Federal Association, Germany
in cooperation with the ENWHP**

Working life can act as a risk factor for the health of employees and their families. However, there is an inverse effect as an individual's state of health can have a tremendous impact on work. Private companies as well as public services are affected by diseases through employee absenteeism or reduced productivity, irrespective of the cause of the disease. Workplace health is therefore a public health issue as well.

Cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and mental ill health are the diseases which put the greatest sickness burden on European workers, economies and social security systems. Cardiovascular disease is the main cause of death in the European Union accounting for over 1.9 million deaths each year. Mental ill health is experienced by more than 27% of the adult EU population during any given year. This means that nearly 83 million people suffer from mental disorders every year. Almost every second person in the EU has been affected by mental disorders at some point in his or her lifetime. Finally, it is well known that mental disorders can be risk factors for CVDs and that CVDs increase the risk of mental disorders.

Both diseases share common risk factors in the working environment. There is scientific consent that stressful psychosocial work environments are associated with a reduction in mental and physical health. Stress occurs in many different circumstances, but is particularly strong when a person's ability to control the demands is threatened. Insecurity about successful performance and a fear of negative consequences resulting from failure to perform may evoke powerful negative emotions of anxiety, anger and irritation.

Stress can be caused by psychosocial hazards such as work design, organization and management; high job demands and low job control, and issues like harassment and violence at work as well as physical hazards, such as noise and temperature.

Both diseases also share risk factors in other domains which are the result of an interplay between working and living conditions. E.g. smoking, sedentary lifestyle, poor housing conditions and weak social networks are associated with CVD and mental ill health. Lifestyle factors can principally be influenced at work making workplaces a powerful setting for health promotion and prevention.

The aim of this workshop is therefore to bridge the gap between workplace health and public health by discussing the current knowledge available on workplace health in the context of today's health promotion strategies and practices. Starting with the results of the EU funded project WORKHEALTH, intervention strategies in working life will be discussed which at the same time address other life domains.

Draft Agenda

**Chair: Marc de Greef, PREVENT, Belgium
Theodor Haratau, ROMTENS Foundation,
Romania**

9:30 Come together

10:00 – 10:45 **Welcome and introduction**

Hearts and Minds at work in Europe:
Results from the WORKHEALTH II
project
Wolfgang Boedeker
BKK Federal Association, Germany

Work stress in Europe – current
trends

Greet Vermeylen, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Ireland

10:45 – 11:30 **Consequences for improving workplace health practices: what can we do?**

Good practice in organisational stress prevention

Richard Wynne, Work Research Centre, Ireland

Good practice in organisational lifestyle improvement

Gregor Breucker, BKK Federal Association, Germany

Coffee Break

12:00 – 13:00 **Networking Workplace Health: Current activities and priorities of European Networks**

Catherine Rubbens
CSR Europe, Belgium

Christine Hancock
Oxford Health Alliance UK,

Maria Dolores Solé
European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP), Spain

Lunch

14:00 – 15:00 **The role of workplace health within EU policies - the position of the European Commission and the Social Partners**

Statements from DG Sanco and DG Employment and Social Affairs,
Karl Freese, DG Sanco, Luxembourg
Charles Price, DG Sanco, Luxembourg
Jorge Costa-David, DG Employment, Luxembourg

15:00 - 16:00: **Conclusions: How to develop public-work-health policy for the future?**

Discussion

16:00 End of meeting