

The Lisbon Statement on **Workplace Health** in SMEs



**Small, Healthy and Competitive
New Strategies for Improved Health
in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises**

The Lisbon Statement on Workplace Health in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

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*
- *encouraging personal development.*

Workplace Health Promotion significantly improves the health and well-being of employees and their families, and contributes to achieving economic success by increasing productivity and economic growth. Workplace Health in SMEs needs networking for concerted action: Joint initiatives of supportive organisations are particularly beneficial to improving health.

This statement is aimed at the social partners and decision-makers in politics, enterprises, science and research and is intended to help improve the framework conditions for health and economic success in SMEs in the European Community (EC).

This statement is the result of a joint initiative in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) launched by the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP). 21 European countries participated in the SME initiative. The ENWHP was supported by the European Commission within the framework of the Health Promotion Programme.

The ENWHP comprises organisations such as national occupational health and safety institutes, public health institutions and Ministries of Health and Labour from all Member States of the European Community, the countries in the European Economic Area and a number of candidate countries.

The role of SMEs in creating an entrepreneurial, socially aware and healthy Europe

More than 99% of companies in the EU are SMEs and between them they employ more than two thirds of the EU's workforce. Not only are SMEs of growing importance with regard to employment policy, they are also significant in economic terms, accounting for more than half the EU turnover.

In the European Union there is broad consensus that small and medium-sized enterprises make a major contribution to growth, competitiveness, innovation and employment.

EC policies and programmes, especially enterprise policy, have a common goal: they are intended to generate a supportive environment for the creation and development of innovative enterprises, especially in the SME sector (conclusions of the Lisbon European Council on 23 and 24 March 2000). To achieve this, it is necessary to simplify administrative, regulatory, legal, tax, financial and social requirements.

Health and well-being at the workplace are essential prerequisites for increased innovative potential in SMEs

while, at the same time, constituting a fundamental component of modern human resources policy and management practice.

The economic efficiency of SMEs and consequently the social development in European Union countries depends increasingly on well-qualified, highly motivated and healthy employees.

SMEs: Resources for health

The working and production conditions in small enterprises differ in many respects from those of larger enterprises. Some of these circumstances harbour great potential for health. For example, the influence the company owner exerts on the nature of working conditions, the fact that there is often a family atmosphere in small and micro-enterprises, along with very different work requirements (such as greater individual responsibility and a broader job description) and simpler organisational structures.

However, due to limited financial resources, issues such as safety, occupational health and workplace health promotion often have a lower priority in SMEs. Statutory occupational health and safety requirements

are at times seen as involving additional administrative work, thus reducing competitiveness.

Against this background, all decision-makers and institutions concerned with questions of health at work are faced with the following challenge:

How can the social and economic framework conditions for SMEs be developed in such a way that economic growth, including the creation of new jobs, can be linked with the promotion of healthy working conditions and the implementation of appropriate social and safety standards?

WHP: A new strategy for better health at the workplace and improved economic success in SMEs

The ENWHP has identified, analysed and documented models of good practice in health promotion in SMEs in 21 European countries. This collection of examples is backed up by illustrative material and convincing criteria for improving practical strategies.

These examples underline the fact that workplace health promotion makes a successful and lasting contribution towards creating the right conditions for growth, employment and innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe. WHP improves the health of the population and, at the same time, helps to lay a stable foundation for a socially aware Europe.

On the basis of an analysis of current practice regarding workplace health promotion in SMEs, the ENWHP has identified strategies and recommendations which are intended to support the future dissemination of workplace health promotion in such enterprises.

Enterprise for Health: WHP in SME

The major driving forces for health in SMEs are the owners and senior executive staff. Exemplary leadership should integrate health into daily managerial practice by

- involving all employees in an enterprise's planning and decision-making process
- ensuring a good working atmosphere
- recognizing and rewarding good performance
- monitoring improvements - especially those related to work organisation.

Building a supportive environment for health: Creating a multiplier effect

Due to the limited resources of the infrastructure of occupational health and safety institutions, new strategies and partners for communicating and organizing workplace health in SMEs should be engaged and involved.

Of particular importance are organisations that already provide other supportive action for SMEs (i.e. Chambers of commerce, guilds, accident and health insurance organisations, social partner organisations, banks etc.).

These intermediary organisations have a key role with regard to

- marketing and communication
- promotion of a supportive infrastructure for WHP in SMEs
- organisation of services for WHP.

Information campaigns aimed at promoting health awareness in SMEs should be conducted at the various levels (Community, national, regional and local).

The following basic requirements should be followed:

- All relevant organisations that play a role in the development of SMEs should be involved in information campaigns.
- The actual needs and problems of SMEs must be included in the planning and implementation of measures.
- Networks involving intermediary organisations should be initiated and utilised on a local, regional or national level.

On a Community level, workplace health promotion should complement existing measures supporting SMEs. These include the "Multi-annual Programme for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship 2001-2005" and the planned "European Charter for Small Companies". The Member States, the countries of the European Economic Area and the candidate countries should also take workplace health promotion into account in their efforts to provide improved framework conditions for the creation and development of SMEs. They should also ensure that the institutions relevant to SMEs develop and support models and strategies that enable SMEs to make use of WHP.

Workplace health promotion services in SMEs should be based on the "Criteria of Good Practice" developed by the ENWHP. The important players on a national level should encourage SMEs, service-providers and all other bodies concerned to apply these criteria.

This statement was adopted at the network meeting of the ENWHP on June 16, 2001 and subsequently presented at the 2nd European Conference on June 18-19, 2001. Both events were held in Lisbon.

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