



What policy actions might be helpful in MSD prevention?

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Policy actions to aid MSD prevention

- Project: Review of research, policy and practice on prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)
- Commissioned by EU OSHA
- Collaborators included Milieu (Brussels); IES & RAND Europe (UK)
- Three related reports available through EU OSHA website.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention

- The overall project had three main tasks:
 - Research review;
 - Field research with OSH intermediaries and actors at the workplace level;
 - An overview of policy level initiatives fostering preventive action.
- Aim was to integrate knowledge from these to gain a better understanding of why MSDs remain a major issue in workplaces.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Research review:

- What does the research literature tell us that might help understand the persistence of MSDs in the workplace?
 - Limitations and deficiencies of risk assessments (including psychosocial risks);
 - Demographic change (aging workforce);
 - Sex & gender-related differences;
 - New ways of working (e.g. teleworking);
 - Holistic health (individual non-work factors).

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Field research:

- Workshops with practitioners in six EU MSs to provide 'grass roots' view of deficiencies:
 - Not all companies did risk assessments;
 - Especially (but not just) SMEs;
 - Those that were done were often insufficient;
 - Didn't consider all risk factors;
 - Inadequate or inappropriate preventive measures adopted;
 - Too much emphasis on training and job rotation – not taking an ergonomics approach.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview:

- Initial desk-based overview of policy-level actions EU-wide and beyond;
 - Started with material provided by the EU OSHA 'Focal Point' (FoP) contacts in response to an EU OSHA consultation document;
 - Supplemented by material from non-EU countries such as USA, Canada, Australia;
 - After initial systematic screening further material was obtained for 25-30 of these and 25 short reports were prepared;
 - These covered actions including: support schemes, Inspectorate initiatives, legislative developments, etc.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview:

- Expanding short reports;
 - Following an overview of available material by the project team with EU OSHA, six EU MSs were selected for more detailed examination to reflect a variety of different policy-level approaches.
 - Additional material was gathered including material supplied by national experts including a series of in-depth interviews – a mixture of advisory experts and government employees responsible for developing and applying policy-level initiatives;
 - This material was summarised in six in-depth reports, one for each of the selected MSs.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview: Six in-depth reports

- Austria: AUVA support schemes — Auvasicher and Auvafit and other initiatives tackling MSDs;
- SMEs present particular challenges for many reasons, not least of which is the lack of OSH understanding and knowledge in house. Initiatives such as AUVAAsicher therefore provide a valuable avenue through which assistance can be provided.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview: Six in-depth reports

- Belgium: Prevention of musculoskeletal disorders as a priority in the national strategy and campaigning on MSDs prevention;
- In addressing the health of the workforce, the strategic approach adopted takes a broader, more holistic, 'wellbeing' viewpoint. It emphasises the benefits of MSD prevention not just from the perspective of the worker but also for the employer and for society.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview: Six in-depth reports

- France: The TMS Pros programme and other initiatives to tackle MSDs;
- During the last decade the problem of MSDs has been addressed in France through a series of initiatives by various stakeholders taking a variety of different approaches, including through research, awareness raising, support schemes, sectoral plans, guidance and other materials.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview: Six in-depth reports

- Germany: A systematic approach to preventing MSDs;
- A strong aspect of the policy approach adopted in Germany to address the problem of workplace MSDs is the collaboration at a strategic level between different partners, helping to ensure consistency and coordination.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview: Six in-depth reports

- Sweden: Women's Work Environment and MSDs prevention;
- The national occupational safety and health (OSH) strategy in Sweden can be seen against a background of efforts in the late 1990s towards achieving gender equality and 'mainstreaming' the gender aspect in all policies.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

Policy overview: Six in-depth reports

- United Kingdom: The 'Helping Great Britain Work Well' strategy and tackling MSDs.
- The policy approach adopted in the United Kingdom is one of enabling and informing, encouraging employers to take action and address risks, rather than the more prescriptive approach adopted in many other EU countries. This approach is reflected in a series of strategies, programmes and campaigns dating back more than 20 years.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

'Take home' messages include:

- Ensure top level commitment and resourcing;
 - Sustained, integrated thinking in national approaches;
- Adopt a wider perspective;
 - Encourage an awareness of all relevant risks, and understand that MSDs do not recognise work-life boundaries;
- Promote a preventive approach;
 - As with all occupational health and safety risks, prevention at source is the best approach.

Policy actions to aid MSD prevention:

- A lot to take in;
- Thank you for listening – any questions?
- For publications see:
<https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/work-related-musculoskeletal-disorders-research-practice-what-can-be-learnt/view>

