



Healthy Workplaces

Working together for risk prevention



## Summary - EU Partnership meeting

Brussels, 28 March 2012

### Potential campaign partners learn of benefits

*'Working together means adding value, not just for health and safety, but for the overall competitiveness of companies.'*

That was the message of **Christa Sedlatschek, Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work**, as she introduced the Agency's new Healthy Workplaces Campaign for 2012-13, entitled Working together for risk prevention.

Representatives of many different types of European organisations had gathered in Brussels on 28 March 2012, to hear about the campaign, and the benefits of becoming official campaign partners. Organisations that had been partners in previous campaigns were joined by others who were thinking of becoming partners for the first time. The Healthy Workplaces Campaigns are now the biggest occupational safety and health (OSH) campaigns in the world.

But as Christa Sedlatschek pointed out, more than five and a half thousand people are still losing their lives every year in the EU, as a result of accidents in the workplace. 'And besides that, over hundred and fifty thousand die as a result of occupational diseases. That's one every three and a half minutes.' Research tells us, though, that the vast majority of these accidents and cases of ill-health are preventable.

Lives could be saved if we paid more attention to preventing workplace risks, which is why the Agency is focusing on risk prevention in the new campaign, which will be launched on 18 April 2012. The campaign is designed to help businesses, workers and their representatives to co-operate, to evaluate and reduce the risks that Europe's workers face. Of course, running a successful European campaign on the scale of the Healthy Workplaces Campaigns means working with the big European institutions, many of them based in Brussels. Christa Sedlatschek paid tribute to the high-level support that previous campaigns have enjoyed, from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Council Presidencies. And representatives of the European Parliament and Commission were on hand, to promise their continued support for the new campaign.





Commission representative **Armino Silva, who is Director at the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion**, said that the campaign theme – Working together for risk prevention – fits clearly with the Community Strategy on Health and Safety at Work, as well as with the 2020 Strategy for inclusive growth in the EU. 'It also sends a strong message, emphasising the importance of investing in OSH. We're continuing to see unemployment at historically high levels, and many organisations are trying to do more with less. There's a temptation to see risk assessment as a cost, and even as an obstacle to job creation. We need to emphasise again that investment in OSH enhances competitiveness, reducing absenteeism and staff turnover.'



**Stephen Hughes, Vice-Chair of the S&D Group in the European Parliament**, also pledged his support for the campaign. 'So much of OSH can seem like common sense,' he said, 'but the continuing death rate in Europe's workplaces shows that there sometimes isn't much common sense around. If you look at the 1989 Framework Directive, and its powerful provisions on risk prevention, you could ask: if this were just implemented properly, would you need any more legislation on OSH?' The importance of the campaign, therefore, is partly in helping to implement existing legislation, by raising awareness of the legal obligations that organisations have, as well as providing practical tools (especially to SMEs) to help them meet those obligations. The new campaign, Stephen Hughes said, 'is on a crucial theme – get it right and we'll see a radical reduction in deaths and injuries in Europe's workplaces.'



The Healthy Workplaces Campaigns aren't just about working with the big European institutions, though: they only succeed if campaign messages can also reach workplaces in the furthest corners of Europe. **Peter Wragg, who is Head of Business Cooperation and Business Support Network Development at the European Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry**, spoke about the important collaboration between the Agency and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), which acts as a bridge to Europe's SME community. The EEN has been working with the Agency since 2009, enabling the Agency to reach SMEs with important health and safety messages. 'The global crisis has hit SMEs hard,' Peter Wragg said, 'and some may be tempted to see investment in OSH as a non-productive cost. Providing them with information is crucial.'

Speaking about the themes of the new campaign, **Agency project manager Dietmar Elsler** stressed that its aim is ultimately to reduce accidents and illness – which, apart from the human suffering they cause, are estimated to cost 4% of GDP in Europe, or 490 billion Euros every year. Good leadership is vital for risk prevention, with visible commitment from managers. But managers also need to engage their workforces in the process: workers are often the real experts on their workplaces, after all, and their commitment is essential if changes are to be implemented.

‘In the campaign,’ Dietmar Elsler said, ‘we’ll be drawing on all our experience of working through our networks of partners: with the focal points, the EEN, the social partners, as well as the official campaign partners. We will make all kinds of free information and promotional material available via the campaign website, at [www.healthy-workplaces.eu](http://www.healthy-workplaces.eu). And again we will be organising Good Practice Awards, to recognise organisations who have found innovative ways of communicating our campaign messages.’



A good example of how things can go well, when employers and employees cooperate on OSH, was provided by **Louise Brearey, who is head of the United Kingdom Health and Safety Executive’s involvement in the London 2012 Olympics.** Together with a team of

inspectors, she has overseen the OSH aspects of the construction of the Olympic Park and Stadium, and the success of the project fits with the campaign theme. ‘We succeeded by working together,’ Louise Brearey said, ‘on the largest infrastructure construction site in Europe, involving some 36,000 employees, with contractors ranging from big multinationals to small SMEs. There was a real emphasis on worker engagement, with a focus on training supervisors (as the link between managers and workers), and on worker feedback. The construction has seen no



fatalities – the first time ever for an Olympic stadium. And overall, accident rates were comparable to those in all United Kingdom sectors, not just construction. As we put it, by working together, we made working on the Olympic site no more dangerous than working in a shop.’ The lessons of this success have been captured in the ‘learning legacy’ section on the HSE website.

And of course, the involvement of official campaign partners is vital to the campaign. With every campaign, more organisations have been joining as partners (including some big names from around Europe): 53 organisations, of many different kinds, signed up for the last one on safe maintenance.

**Andrew Smith, head of the Agency's Communication and Promotion Unit**, highlighted the benefits that official campaign partners receive. In exchange for disseminating messages relating to the campaign, promoting the campaign internally and through their supply chains, the Agency gives its partners support and visibility. That includes providing free campaign material, such as publications, posters, leaflets and DVDs, as well as high-profile recognition. The Agency is also looking to increase opportunities for networking among the official campaign partners themselves; organisations that have shown already, through their support of the campaign, that they have something in common. Andrew Smith re-emphasised the entry criteria for becoming an official campaign partner: that this is open to international or pan-European organisations working in several EU Member States, which are prepared to get substantially involved in the campaign. Online application forms can be found on the campaign website – [www.healthy-workplaces.eu](http://www.healthy-workplaces.eu) – with the first round of applications (from new prospective partners, as well as old ones) open until 11 May 2012: organisations will find out at the beginning of June 2012 whether they have been accepted. A second and final round of applications will be held before the end of 2012. The application procedure has been made simpler for organisations that have been official partners for other campaigns.



Finally, representatives of three previous campaign partners, for the 2010-11 campaign on safe maintenance, spoke about their experiences. For **Judith Kirton-Darling, Confederal Secretary of workers' representatives ETUC**, the campaign had been an opportunity to shine a light on precarious groups of workers: maintenance and facilities management is often outsourced, with implications for working conditions. ETUC had put forward some examples

from the union world for the Good Practice Awards, and some of these had been recognised.



For **Davide Spanti of multinational tyre manufacturer Pirelli**, the important thing was that top management at the company had shown their support for the campaign: campaign messages were promoted internally, and ideas from it were incorporated into training. Pirelli has seen a drop of around 30% in maintenance-related injuries since 2008.

For **Rebekah Smith of employers' representatives BUSINESSEUROPE**, meanwhile, involvement in the last campaign provided a visible demonstration of the importance that employers (and BUSINESSEUROPE itself) place on health and safety issues. For the next campaign, BUSINESSEUROPE will be developing a guide (together with the Agency) on management leadership in risk prevention.



To find out more about becoming an official campaign partner for the Healthy Workplaces Campaign, contact Cristina Comunian (Tel. 0034 94 479 3557; [comunian@osha.europa.eu](mailto:comunian@osha.europa.eu)) and Violaine Roggeri (Tel. 0034 94 479 3559; [roggeri@osha.europa.eu](mailto:roggeri@osha.europa.eu)).

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