



2014–15 Healthy Workplaces Campaign partnership meeting Brussels, 8 April 2014

Partners are invited to join Healthy Workplaces Campaign

Representatives from international and European organisations and companies came together to share their experiences and discuss how to get involved in the 2014–15 campaign and effectively manage stress and psychosocial risks in the workplace.



'We all want healthy workplaces — and healthy workplaces are those that manage stress.'

Those were the words of the **European Agency for Safety and Health (EU-OSHA) director, Christa Sedlatschek**, as she introduced the 2014–15 Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress campaign to potential partners.

Representatives from organisations and companies of many sizes and backgrounds were at the partnership meeting to find out more about becoming a campaign partner and to hear contributions from leading European businesses, workers' and employers' organisations and European occupational safety and health (OSH) experts.

The meeting gave participants the opportunity to get to know the campaign, network with new and old partners and find out more about the role of a campaign partner: 'We will show you that getting involved is easy, the benefits are interesting, we are trying to create a win–win situation for you.'

EU-OSHA relies on its campaign partners and counts on them for their support in increasing risk awareness in the workplace and making European workplaces healthier, safer and more productive. 'Being an official campaign partner is an excellent opportunity to network, exchange ideas and get involved in benchmarking. By getting involved with us as our official campaign partners, we will take this theme of working together to an even higher dimension,' remarked Dr Sedlatschek.



The focus of the 2014–15 campaign — stress — is the second most frequently reported work-related health problem in Europe. Dr Sedlatschek relayed the shocking figures to demonstrate the scale of the problem. Unfortunately,

stress is often misunderstood, and employers and managers believe it can be too difficult to tackle. Ignoring it can be costly, though, especially for long-term economic competitiveness and business sustainability. 'By working together, employers and workers *can* successfully manage and prevent psychosocial risks and workplace stress,' she said.

The director informed delegates that this is EU-OSHA's second campaign on work-related stress, the previous one being in 2002. However, it remains one of the most topical and challenging issues in OSH, and much has happened since 2002, including a global economic crisis, to merit revisiting the topic.

The impact of, and evidence for, work-related stress

Johannes Siegrist, senior professor of work stress research at Heinrich-Heine University Duesseldorf,

Germany, gave 'the science part' of the day — the gritty evidence for work-related stress. Professor Siegrist, a long-standing researcher on the health effects of adverse psychosocial working conditions, presented evidence at the organisational level to answer three main questions: *Is stress at work a real challenge to working populations across Europe? What is the scientific evidence for work-related stress and its impact on health?*

What can be done at the organisational level to manage stress and improve health at work?

One of the main messages of the campaign, which Professor Siegrist reiterated, is that work-related stress is not an individual fault, but rather an organisational issue, and that solutions are available at an organisational level. He pledged his support for the campaign, explaining that 'it is the ideal stimulus for organisations to develop a Healthy Workplace programme and implement these solutions'.

The Campaign and the European Commission agenda

The Healthy Workplaces campaign is backed by the European Commission, the European Parliament, national governments and national and European social partners and features in the work programmes of all forthcoming EU presidencies for its duration.

Representatives of the European Commission, **Armindo Silva (director, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion)** and **Andrzej Rudka (adviser to the Deputy Director-General of DG Enterprise and Industry)**, spoke about how the 2014–15 campaign supports the European Commission's agenda and ties in with the Europe 2020 growth strategy to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. This was also



stressed by László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, at the launch of the campaign in Brussels, who emphasised that addressing stress and psychosocial risks will go a long way to improve business performance and long-term business sustainability and result in a more economically successful Europe.

The Manage Stress campaign

One of the campaign's project managers, **Malgorzata Milczarek**, who developed the scientific content, spoke about



its main objectives, the first of which is raising awareness and providing a better understanding of the growing problem of stress and psychosocial risks. The campaign will also focus on the positive effects of successful psychosocial risk management, including the business case for improved workers' well-being and job satisfaction.

'Tackling stress and psychosocial risks leads to a healthy, motivated and productive workforce; improved overall performance

and productivity; reduced absence and staff turnover rates; and reduced costs and burden on society as a whole. Not to mention complying with the law.'

The campaign aims to increase organisations' practical knowledge related to recognising and preventing psychosocial risks at work and to provide and promote the use of simple, practical tools and guidance for managing psychosocial risks and stress in the workplace. 'Psychosocial risks can be assessed and managed in the same systematic way as other OSH risks — practical tools and guidance *do* exist. The benefits of managing these risks far outweigh the costs of implementation for organisations.'

The importance of working together to tackle stress was emphasised: employers, managers and workers should all be involved. Employers are responsible for implementing a plan to prevent or reduce psychosocial risks, but worker participation and engagement are just as important.

To end her introduction to the campaign, Malgorzata gave an overview of the campaign resources and an introduction to the European Good Practice Awards, which will be held in the first half of 2015 and will highlight the best examples of working together to reduce work-related stress and psychosocial risks.

Partnership offer

The official campaign partnership offer was presented by **Andrew Smith, head of EU-OSHA's Communication and Promotion Unit**. He outlined the benefits of the partnership offer, the application process and how exactly campaign partners can get involved.

The 2012–13 partnership scheme was a huge success, resulting in 87 official campaign partners. These included



EU employers' and workers' federations, technology platforms, non-governmental organisations and multinational companies, and their activities included training and coaching, workshops, seminars, conferences and promoting the message of the campaign. Following in the footsteps of this success, new opportunities for partners in the 2014–15 campaign were highlighted, including a dedicated Official Campaign Partnership Good Practice Award at European level and even more networking and learning exchange opportunities.

Benchmarking was one of the most attractive benefits of the previous campaign, and this will be built upon in the 2014–15 campaign to provide added value for both EU-OSHA and campaign partners. During the campaign, leading European companies will be organising benchmarking workshops around Europe to give partners the opportunity to share learning and good practice.



'If you help us by getting involved in the campaign, you will receive recognition for your efforts,' Andrew Smith summed up.

Real-life workplace examples

Enrico Gibellieri from trade union IndustriALL, which represents workers in the mining, engineering and manufacturing sectors, **and Nathalie Darge from Eurofer**, the European Steel Association, together spoke about a joint project by Eurofer and IndustriALL that investigated the management of psychosocial hazards in workplaces in the steel sector. Three companies — ArcelorMittal in France, Rautaruukki in Finland and Slazgitter in Germany — were selected as case studies to establish what their strategies for assessing and preventing psychosocial issues at work were and how the workers or workers' representatives were involved. Each of the three companies had developed specific actions to deal with, reduce or prevent the incidence and negative impact of psychosocial



constraints on both workers and the company. The companies involved all workers, especially management, in addressing this issue. The case studies emphasise the positive effect of workers' direct participation in managing health and safety, and in tackling psychosocial risks in particular. Encouraging workers to talk about possible psychosocial issues, rather than ignore them, was found to be important, something which is echoed in the campaign's practical advice.



For **Reyes Gonzalez**, global safety manager for **Heineken International**, being a campaign partner in the 2012–13 campaign on risk prevention ‘gave an opportunity for visible and palpable OSH leadership; to engage our leaders to drive OSH strategy across the company and engage our workforce in our global OSH strategy’. Heineken committed to disseminating information about the campaign, promoting the campaign for example in its newsletter and organising OSH events, workshops and training sessions dedicated to the topic of the campaign. The company has already

signed up as a partner for the 2014–15 campaign, and will focus its efforts on psychosocial hazards for lone workers and those that can lead to musculoskeletal disorders. Heineken will be hosting a benchmarking event on 2 July 2014 for campaign partners on leadership training and OSH competence for all those involved in managing OSH.

What next for potential partners?

Closing the meeting, Christa Sedlatschek recapped on what the campaign would involve for partners. She emphasised that the campaign is coordinated in more than 30 countries, is recognised as the biggest OSH campaign worldwide and is practical and adaptable.

‘By the time this campaign ends in 2015,’ she remarked, ‘let us all hope that many long-lasting and constructive changes will have taken place throughout workplaces in Europe to reduce stress and psychosocial risks. We in the Agency know that we cannot do this alone, but we can do it together.’

To find out more about becoming an official campaign partner of the Healthy Workplaces Campaign, visit www.healthy-workplaces.eu or contact partners@healthy-workplaces.eu

