

CAMPAIGNING ON MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH: 'WHEN A WORKER SUFFERS, THE WHOLE COMPANY IS AFFECTED' AND 'WELL-BEING AT WORK IN THE FEDERAL TRUCK' (BELGIUM)

Type of initiative: Campaigns

Time frame: 2015-2016

1 Description of the initiative

1.1 Introduction

The Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (FPS Employment) launched a campaign on the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) in November 2015. The campaign slogan was 'When a worker suffers, the whole business is affected! Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are everyone's business! Learn how to avoid them' ('Quand un travailleur souffre, toute l'entreprise est touché! Les troubles musculosquelettiques (TMS) sont l'affaire de tous. Apprenez à les éviter'). The campaign encompassed a website, brochures and outreach activities. The campaign concluded in 2016.

The Federal Truck is a truck of the federal government that is fully equipped to carry out awareness campaigns. It travels around Belgium and offers the federal government the opportunity to meet the citizens. The truck is served by a campaign team providing support for the preparation and implementation of campaigns. The campaign team's support is available to other federal government services free of charge. In 2015-16 the truck was campaigning on MSDs.

1.2 Aim of the initiative

The aim of the campaign 'When a worker suffers, the whole business is affected!' was to raise awareness of MSDs and the tools available that can be used to prevent them. In previous years, the ministry developed a series of MSD prevention brochures for different professions and jobs. The website and the outreach activities promoted the usage of these materials.

The focus of the campaign 'Well-being at work in the federal truck' in 2015-16 was on MSDs, and it specifically targeted students in secondary education. The aim was to provide information about MSDs and their causes, and how they can be prevented.

1.3 Organisations involved

The Belgian Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, FPS Employment (Service public fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation Sociale) initiated the campaign. The mission and tasks of the ministry include preparing, promoting and implementing policies on well-being at work, supporting social dialogue and ensuring compliance with the law through the inspection services, whose role comprises advice, prevention and enforcement.

1.4 What was done and how

The ministry commissioned a communications company to develop the campaign concept and the website (<https://www.preventiondestms.be/fr>). It published informational inserts in widely-read print media. The informational inserts were published in *Z.O. Magazine* (17 March 2016), *Union & Actions* (4 March 2016) and *Métro* (five times between 7 March and 11 March 2016). A specific website was conceived in the form of a set of cards to familiarise the public with the topic of musculoskeletal health. The cards are organised in four colours, each of which has a theme. There are 12 cards per colour. The red cards provide information on the consequences of MSDs, the orange cards provide information on their causes, the green cards provide information on solutions and the blue cards provide information on tools. Each card presents a key message, and some include hyperlinks to more information. The communications company designed the messages to be easily understood by the general public.

The website 'When a worker suffers, the whole business is affected!' is part of an extensive web portal of the Centre de connaissance belge sur le bien-être au travail part of which is dedicated to the topic of MSDs. The web portal provides information on and links to relevant regulation, research, and risk assessment tools. It also includes materials for awareness-raising such as the website 'When a worker suffers, the whole business is affected!', a number of videos on the prevention of MSDs in different sectors and jobs (e.g. agriculture and horticulture, constructions, home care), and the card game 'The Flexaminator'.

The website and links to publications and information material available on the ministry's website. A series of brochures have been developed by the Directorate General Humanization of Labour of FPS Employment between 2010 and 2015 with the support of the European Social Fund. The series focuses on the prevention of MSDs. It includes practical manuals for the prevention of MSDs in various sectors and professions (HORECA, construction, waste treatment, home care, transport and logistics, etc.) for prevention advisors, containing also recommendations for employers and occupational physicians. In the sub-series *Musculoskeletal disorders in the trades*, each brochure is dedicated to a specific occupation (bakers, butchers, shoemakers, homecare workers, truck drivers, bar tenders, kitchen staff, etc.). These brochures are specifically intended for the workers concerned.

In 2015-16, the FPS Employment used the federal truck to raise awareness of MSD prevention in schools and among teachers. In November 2015 and during March to April 2016, the Federal Public Service Employment animators offered the game 'The Flexaminator' to students and teachers of the third cycle of secondary education via the truck. The game 'The Flexaminator' was developed not only to tell young people about MSDs but also to inform them about the origin of MSDs and their prevention, for example using appropriate tools and good techniques, and adopting good postures. 'The Flexaminator' is available free of charge from the Ministry's website (<http://www.emploi.belgique.be/publicationDefault.aspx?id=43597>). Using the truck and the card game was an innovative way of educating future workers about the risks of MSDs at an early age, an approach often advocated to promote musculoskeletal health and health behaviour.

The budget dedicated to the campaigns was EUR 72,000 in total, excluding funding from the European Social Fund. Of this amount, EUR 25,000 was dedicated to the slogan and website, EUR 25,000 to the print media publications, and EUR 22,000 to the use of the federal truck. Using the truck for the information campaign to provide a strong focus for the promotion can be seen as an innovative element of the campaign.

1.5 What was achieved

The federal truck reached 72 groups during the campaign; this included 55 classrooms of students and 17 sessions that were arranged for teachers.

The print media had the potential to reach a wide audience. Although 'reach' was not formally evaluated, it is known that the *Métro* newspaper is read by approximately 827,500 readers every day, while *Z.O. Magazine* has a circulation of approximately 53,000, and *Union & Actions* has a circulation of about 45,000.

1.6 Success factors and challenges

The outreach actions, such as using the federal truck and awareness-raising sessions, increased the active participation of the target audience compared with just making the brochures available to those who are interested. The attractive design of the information and awareness-raising material prepared (e.g. the 'Flexaminator' game) was another success factor and particularly important for children and young people.

1.7 Transferability

Most elements of the campaign are transferable to other countries and contexts, depending on the resources available. In this case, the ministry could rely on a large amount of publications and information materials that were produced previously and could be promoted during the campaign.

2 National background

Data from Labour Force Survey ad hoc modules show that, in the 5 years from 2007 to 2013, the percentage of workers in Belgium reporting some form of MSD remained essentially unchanged (from 57.5 % to 56.7 %). By contrast, in the whole of the EU, there was an increase from 54.2 % to 60.1 % over the same period.

National legislation implementing the provisions of the Manual Handling Directive contains no more stringent or detailed requirements than the EU Directive. However, Belgian legislation adopts a slightly wider definition of display screen equipment than that in the Directive, and the requirements for health surveillance are more extensive, covering MSDs as well as visual problems.

New legislation on the prevention of psychosocial risks came into force on 1 September 2014. The new law updates previous legislation enacted in 1996 on the well-being of employees at work, addressing the prevention of psychosocial risks, including issues of violence, harassment and sexual harassment at work. The new legislation provides a new definition of psychosocial risks at work and a better definition of stakeholders' roles in the prevention of those risks. These stakeholders include the employer, line managers, the workplace prevention and protection committee, specialists in the prevention of psychosocial risks and the confidential counsellor.

References and resources

1. The Belgian Federal Ministry of Labour campaign website. Available in French at: <https://www.preventiondestms.be/fr>
2. BeSWIC Centre de connaissance belge sur le bien-être au travail, *Troubles musculosquelettiques (TMS)*. Available in French at: <https://www.beswic.be/fr/themes/troubles-musculosquelettiques-tms>
3. Guide pour la prevention des troubles musculosquelettiques au travail, 2015. Available at <http://www.emploi.belgique.be/publicationDefault.aspx?id=43282>
4. Email correspondence with the Belgian Federal Ministry of Labour.

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