

## TMS PROS - A SUPPORT PROGRAM TO TACKLE MSDs

**Type:** Programme

**Time frame:** 2014-2022

### 1 Description of the initiative

#### 1.1 Introduction

MSDs have a major economic effect on French businesses. They account for 87 % of all work-related illness, during which the employee takes sick leave or receives financial compensation. Dealing with MSDs can prove costly for the employer because of employee absence; the time spent dealing with files, moving people around and recruiting absence cover, bringing in specialist equipment for employees affected by MSDs; lower productivity from these employees; and increased insurance contributions. Social security services estimate the direct cost of an MSD case at over EUR 22,000, with the full social costs (to be borne by various stakeholders) being even higher.

With these figures in mind, the Health Insurance — Occupational Risks (Assurance Maladie Risques Professionnels) launched a national-level prevention programme, TMS (troubles musculo-squelettiques) Pros. The objective of the programme is to tackle work-related MSDs. It offers businesses support for the development of an action plan to prevent work-related MSDs.

#### 1.2 Aim of the initiative

The aim of the TMS Pros programme is to reduce the prevalence of work-related MSDs by providing support to enterprises to put in place effective MSD prevention measures.

#### 1.3 Organisations involved

The project is run by the Health Insurance — Occupational Risks section (Assurance Maladie-Risques Professionnels) of the National Health Insurance Fund for Salaried Workers (Caisse Nationale de l'Assurance Maladie des Travailleurs Salariés, CNAMTS), with the participation of and support at a local level from 15 regional offices of the pension and health at work insurance funds (Caisse Assurance Retraite et Santé au travail, CARSAT) and Caisse Régionale d'Assurance Maladie (CRAM) Ile de France.

CNAMTS was set up in 1967 and linked to the reform of the social security system. It was also assigned the task of managing occupational risks. The French Law of 25 April 1994 enabled the Health Insurance — Occupational Risks section (l'Assurance Maladie — Risques Professionnels (Branche AT/MP)) to acquire a certain degree of independence, in particular financial independence, while remaining with the CNAMTS. The Health Insurance — Occupational Risks sign a convention on objectives and management (COG) with the state every 4 years; the last one was signed in October 2018.

#### 1.4 What was done and how

TMS Pros, a support programme for companies to tackle MSDs, was set up in 2014 by the Health Insurance — Occupational Risks section of the CNAMTS. It targeted 8,000 companies in total, which represented about one third of enterprises with a worker who had taken MSD-related sick leave in the 3 years prior to 2014.

The first phase of the programme ran from 2014 to 2017, with a second phase planned for 2018-2022. The second phase will target an additional 8,000 companies with a focus on the care work sector.

The programme uses an online platform, on which employers have a personal workspace to track their own progress. There is a strong emphasis on giving the businesses ownership of the process, thereby encouraging them to complete the programme.

The process comprises the four steps outlined below.

1. Ensuring management support for the project: the manager must be convinced that it is in the company's best interest to develop an MSD prevention strategy.
2. Setting up the project: the company should define the priority areas for action, inform workers about the initiative and appoint someone to lead the project.
3. Developing an action plan: the plan should encompass human resources, technical solutions and changes to work organisation.
4. Evaluating the results: the company should assess progress during the course of the project, including whether or not the internal skills and knowledge gained during the project are sustainable.

Enterprises interested in the TMS Pros programme can contact the regional office (CARSAT) to register for the programme and receive access to a restricted virtual space. Once registered, the enterprises can benefit from assistance in MSD prevention tailored to their needs, including advice on the financial support available to them.

Since 2016, the initiative has provided financial support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Enterprises with fewer than 50 employees can apply for co-financing of 70 % of the costs of training an internal project manager on MSD prevention and for commissioning an MSD study or action plan tailored to their needs. Once they have developed an action plan with someone qualified in MSD prevention, they can also apply for 50 % co-financing to buy the technical equipment needed to implement the plan. Specific prevention contracts also offer financial help to enterprises with fewer than 200 employees. Innovative elements of this initiative include the provision of individual support tailored to the needs of each company and the financial support provided for SMEs.

To acknowledge companies involved in the programme, the Health Insurance - Occupational Risks created the TMS Pros Trophies. All the enterprises registered in the TMS Pros programme had the opportunity to compete in the first edition of this competition.

## 1.5 What was achieved

By the end of 2017, around 7,000 of the 8,000 businesses targeted had engaged with the process. Around half of these had set up an action plan, and 1,600 had reached the final evaluation stage, by which they had developed sufficient autonomy to manage their own MSD prevention programme going forward.

## 1.6 Success factors and challenges

One of the success factors of the programme is the existence of the network of regional offices of CARSAT and CRAM that have expertise in MSD prevention and can offer local support to companies engaged with the programme. The clear step-by-step approach, managing the process via the website, offering tailored support to companies when they need it and the financial support provided are all important factors contributing to the

success of the initiative. Feedback from the businesses involved indicated that they particularly valued the involvement of experts from regional offices, who visited their workplaces to offer advice.

However, the process relies heavily on convincing business owners and managers that it is in their own interest to improve MSD prevention in their companies, which might be a challenge.

In the future, more businesses will be targeted and work will be better coordinated with other public services offering assistance in the area of health at work.

## 1.7 Transferability

The step-by-step approach supported by an online platform is easily transferable to other Member States. However, one of the main success factors of the project is country specific: the existing network of regional social security offices with an expertise in MSD prevention providing support to companies. The financial incentives for SMEs require adequate financial resources.

## 2 National background

According to Eurostat, data from Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) ad hoc modules show that, in the 5 years from 2007 to 2013, the percentage of workers in France reporting some form of musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) rose from 47.3 % to 57.7 %, compared with the trend across the EU overall, which shows an increase from 54.2 % to 60.1 % in the same period. Nevertheless, national data published by Health Insurance — Occupational Risks (Assurance Maladie-Risques Professionnels) on occupational accidents and diseases show a decreasing trend for occupational diseases, including MSDs, since 2012. The trend continued in 2017, although the decline in the number of occupational diseases was not as significant as in previous years: -0.5 % between 2016 and 2017 against -4.3 % between 2015 and 2016. MSDs show a similar decrease (-0.4 % in 2017 against -4.1 % in 2016). In contrast, there has been a 35 % increase in mental health problems of occupational origin, with 806 recognised cases in 2017.

National legislation implementing the provisions of the Manual Handling Directive goes beyond the provisions of that relevant Directive with respect to the weights that can be handled. Article R4541-9 of the Labour Code quantifies the conditions applicable to the manual handling of a load by a worker. It states that when manual handling is unavoidable and mechanical equipment cannot be implemented, a (male) worker may be allowed to handle loads greater than 55 kg, only if he has been authorised to do so by an occupational physician. Even with such authorisation, these loads cannot exceed 105 kg. Women are not allowed to handle loads greater than 25 kg or carry loads greater than 40 kg with a wheelbarrow (wheelbarrow weight included). Pregnant women are further protected, with Article D4152-12 of the Labour Code stating that pregnant women cannot be asked to use a two-wheeled trolley (hand truck). Finally, Article D4153-39 of the Labour Code restricts the maximum loads that can be handled by young workers (< 18 years).

The national implementation of the Display Screen Equipment Directive contains a minor change, in that 'typewriters with windows' are not excluded.

There is no specific legislation on psychosocial risks; they are covered under the general safety and health obligations of employers, laid down by the Labour Code (and the courts are increasingly recognising the management of psychosocial risks as part of an employer's duties). However, specific legislation covers the issue of harassment (covering psychological as well as physical and sexual harassment).

## References and resources

- (1) TMS Pros website. Available in French at: <https://tmspros.fr/TMSPROS/>

- (2) National Institute for research on the prevention of work-based accidents and illness (INRS) magazine, *Travail et Sécurité*, April 2016. Available in French at: <http://www.inrs.fr/actualites/numero-avril-2016-revue-TS.html>
- (3) Ameli website for employers. Available in French at: <https://www.ameli.fr/employeur/prevention/aides-financieres/tms-pros-action-pour-les-petites-et-moyennes-entreprises/une-aide-pour-reduire-les-troubles-musculo-squelettiques>
- (4) Interview with a manager of the project from the French social security service. Available in French at: <http://www.infoprotection.fr/SANTE-ET-SECURITE-AU-TRAVAIL/Article.htm?Zoom=bc7dee5800a8174ee342c37e5798a7d3>

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