

**Event:** Healthy Workplaces Summit 2013, **Closing Conference, Health Workplaces – The Way Forward**

**Date:** 12 November 2013 (12:00hrs)

**Speaker:** Christa Sedlatschek, Director

---

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

This conference marks the end of our two year campaign on Working Together for Risk Prevention. Although the campaign itself draws to a close, we are however careful to remind you all today that the work on this topic doesn't end. **It is just beginning.** And now, there is **a sustainable legacy there** in terms of the knowledge gathered, activities shared and resources available.

So where do we go from here? I would like now to take a moment to give you a short preview of what the next campaign will entail. And, to my mind, there is a logical progression from the current campaign to the next one because **unless we take working together seriously in the future,** we are not going to make an impact on one of the greatest threats to workers' health and companies' performance – **stress in the workplace.**

Under the slogan, *Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress*, the next campaign will be launched in April next year and will run until November 2015.

### [short pause]

This will be the second time we've run a European campaign on the topic of stress, quite simply because it is still one of the most topical and challenging issues in occupational safety and health. Over half of Europe's workers report that work-related stress is common in their workplace; **a staggering proportion** of the workforce.

Our previous campaign on stress took place in 2002. Since then, much has happened in the social, political and economic environment in Europe that merits our renewed attention. . In addition to long-term trends such as the growth in service sector jobs, rising job insecurity and increased competitiveness for employers, three topics are particularly relevant:

Firstly, 13 countries have joined the EU since the last campaign, Croatia only this year, and this presents us with the opportunity to reach even more businesses and workers throughout Europe and promote the benefits of a positive psychosocial work environment. Since 2002, many new resources and tools have been developed, and the new campaign will promote these throughout Europe.

Secondly, we must remember that, since 2002, many young people will have entered the workforce, and many new companies will have been established, and hence may be unaware of our previous campaign.

Finally, the global economic recession clearly affected businesses and workers in Europe. The economic crisis has led to indirect and consequential crises among Europe's workforce. Considered in this context, it makes sense that our recent opinion poll found that job reorganisation or job insecurity is the most common cause of work-related stress, affecting 7 out of 10 workers. This problem can and should be addressed and our next campaign will raise awareness about that....

**[short pause]**

Stress is often a taboo subject for discussion in workplaces – the word can be misunderstood or used too casually. Although much has been done and is being done to improve matters, there remains a stigma or element of shame about confessing to or experiencing the consequences of stress.

We shouldn't forget that work-related stress occurs **when demands at work are beyond the worker's ability to cope with them. It can happen to anyone, regardless of position or track record**

It's becoming a major issue across Europe. The EUROSTAT data has shown that work-related stress, depression and anxiety represent, after musculoskeletal disorders, the health problem most frequently reported by workers in Europe.

In our recent opinion poll we found that 4 out of 10 workers think that stress is not handled well in their workplace. In our large-scale Enterprise Survey, ESENER, 79% of European managers admitted that they are concerned by work-related stress; however, fewer than 30% reported taking any action to deal with this issue. Why? The survey found that over 40% of employers considered psychosocial risks more difficult to manage than 'traditional' ones. They lacked the skills or tools or willingness to tackle the problem. .

So, they gave us a clear message. we need to help workers and employers manage stress, and we need to encourage them **to work together when doing so.**

**We know** that stress related sick leave lasts longer than other sick leave and **we also know** that lost working days result in reduced productivity, poorer quality work and missed deadlines, which in turn only increase the pressure on businesses and workers throughout Europe. **It's a vicious circle.**

As I said earlier, our previous campaign on risk prevention promoted the idea of ***working together*** to manage risks in the workplace. That same principle of shared responsibility and collaboration is carried forward into this new campaign, as is the benchmarking project for official campaign partners, which was proven to be highly successful in the most recent campaign.

The new campaign will aim not only to raise awareness, but also to provide practical solutions with user-friendly tools.

Let's get one thing straight - **tackling psychosocial risk is possible and doing so creates a healthy work environment in which workers not only *feel* valued but demonstrably *are* valued.** The workplace culture is more positive, and, consequently, business performance improves. The cycle of lower productivity, poor quality or missed schedules that stress causes **can be reversed**: when stress is reduced or eliminated, productivity and quality increase and schedules are met. Addressing stress makes good business sense as well as being good for individual workers.

With this campaign we will again be drawing on our many networks to spread our message and provide support and guidance. This includes our Europe-wide network of focal points, members of the Enterprise Europe Network, media partners and our many official campaign partners. We also receive invaluable support from the European Commission and EU Presidencies. It's another example of working together if you like – it is the help and cooperation of these network organisations that makes the Healthy Workplaces campaigns the largest in the world..

This year we ended up with 87 official campaign partners – **a record number** – who were involved in promoting our message that safety and health makes a more productive workforce and a stronger economy.

These comprised a huge range of organisations: large and small, distinguished and less well known.

Following that record level of involvement, we want the next campaign to be even bigger and more effective – so to our official campaign partners and to all here present today I would like to stress how much we need *your* help to make the ***Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress*** campaign even more successful than the last. We can't do it alone, nor can employers or workers without each other's participation. Please stay involved and stay committed – together we can make a difference.

**[short pause]**

Ladies and gentlemen, once again thank you very much.