

Dear readers

we are pleased to provide you with our latest news from the field of corporate health policy and culture.

Kind regards
EfH-Newsletter-Team

The current topics

Management Conference 2008: Achieving Business Excellence – Health, Wellbeing and Performance

The conference is a European platform for enterprises which combine health, employee participation and corporate culture with business excellence as integral elements of their company policies. It aims at decision-makers and practitioners - personnel management and production managers alike - and will also attract experts from occupational health and safety and training. With their participation this conference will identify and exchange strategies with which the common vision, 'healthy enterprises in an economically and socially healthy Europe', can be achieved. [more...](#)

Developing the business case for mental health at work

The paper of the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health discusses the importance to employers of mental health problems in the workforce. Drawing on UK and international evidence, it seeks to identify all the key effects of mental ill health and stress at work and to quantify these in financial terms. There are a number of reasons for supposing that mental health problems in the workforce are more important and more costly to employers than most realise. [more...](#)

Better psychosocial work environment: A study of workplace interventions

The recently completed Danish project 'BEST' has created a body of knowledge that companies can use to improve their psychological work environment and thereby reduce stress, absence and exclusion from the labour market. The basic premise is that there is no "best way" to improve the psychological work environment! Each company has to develop its own solutions based on the knowledge available. [more...](#)

New findings: Preventing noncommunicable diseases in the workplace

As a further step towards the implementation of the WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health, WHO and the World Economic Forum organized a Joint Event on the prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCD) in the workplace through healthy diets and physical activity. The participants of the Joint Event (Dalian, China, September 2007) discussed the current state of knowledge regarding use of the workplace as a setting for NCD's prevention, key elements of successful workplace health promotion programmes focusing on diet and physical activity, and potential roles for different stakeholders in the development and implementation of these programmes. [more...](#)

Lighten the Load: A European campaign on musculoskeletal disorders

The European campaign 'Lighten the Load' promoted an integrated management approach to tackling musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), embracing both prevention and the retention, rehabilitation and reintegration of workers who already have MSDs. Run by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the campaign involved several stakeholders in improving MSD prevention in workplaces. [more...](#)

Members only

Next Business Meeting: Mental health management in an ageing Europe

The agenda for our 14. network meeting on 21.-22. April 2008 at MTU Aero Engines GmbH in Munich is up-to-date for downloading (see below "EfH Network Meetings" / "14. Network Meeting"). [more...](#)

Achieving Business Excellence - The Conference Publication

We are pleased to announce that on the occasion of the London Management Conference we shall be issuing yet another comprehensive EfH publication, which will tackle the key topics and results of the EfH group's activities (see below "EfH Network Meetings" / "14. Network Meeting"). [more...](#)

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<http://www.enterprise-for-health.org>

Events & Dates

13rd June 2008: Brussels, Belgium --- EU high-level conference "Together for Mental Health and Well-being"
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18-20 June 2008: Sheffield, United Kingdom --- Work, Well-being and Performance: New Perspectives for the Modern Workplace
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For further information, please refer to: <http://www.enterprise-for-health.org/index.php?id=214>

(13.03.2008,)

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For further information, please refer to: <http://www.enterprise-for-health.org/index.php?id=218>

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Better psychosocial work environment: A study of workplace interventions

The recently completed Danish project 'BEST' has created a body of knowledge that companies can use to improve their psychological work environment and thereby reduce stress, absence and exclusion from the labour market. The basic premise is that there is no "best way" to improve the psychological work environment! Each company has to develop its own solutions based on the knowledge available.

The psychosocial work environment is a hot issue in Denmark . New reports about more stress, burn out, and psychosocial illnesses are regularly published. Many companies are making a serious effort to improve the psychosocial work environment. But it is a difficult issue for many companies to manage. Often they are not certain of how to take care of the psychosocial work environment. Is it an issue for the health and safety committee or the works council? Or does it in reality belong to the human resource department? Is the best point of departure a mapping of the problems, and how to continue after this exercise?

Many people and companies find it difficult to maintain the focus on the psychosocial work environment, and much too often the effort comes to nothing. The complex nature of the psychosocial work environment can be one explanation of these constraints. It is difficult to describe the problems, and it is therefore also difficult to identify solutions. Compared to the mainstream activities in the companies, the psychosocial work environment may end up as a peripheral problem which is not considered to be important by the central decision makers. However, in spite of the constraints some companies are able to implement very successful measures which lead to substantial improvement.

The project needs to study two dimensions in order to understand a successful effort or a failed process. The first dimension is the process: What are the companies doing in order to improve the psychosocial work environment, and do these activities result in any changes. The second dimension is the effect: Has the psychosocial work environment been improved?

The study is therefore designed as a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies. All participating companies will start with a thorough investigation of prior activities in this field and a mapping of the psychosocial

work environment. The results from this investigation will serve as a tool for the companies to plan their activities. It is at the same time serving as the baseline survey for later measurements of effect.

BEST is carried out as collaboration between researchers from the Technical University of Denmark, the Institute of Occupational Health, Centre for Alternative Social Analysis, and Roskilde University in the period 2004 – 07. It is funded with DKK 7.7 million from the Danish Work Environment Research Fund, making it one of the largest research projects in this field.

It includes 14 companies with approximately 5,000 employees which are dedicated to a serious effort in order to improve the psychosocial work environment. The companies cover three sectors with considerable problems related to the psychosocial work environment:

- The manufacturing industry with intensive Taylorized work e.g. in the food and metal industry.
- Caring for humans with the risk of stress and burn out e.g. in the care for the elderly and social welfare work.
- The borderless knowledge work with large demands and long working hours e.g. within the ICT-area, consultancy, and the financial sector.

For further information, please refer to: <http://www.best-project.dk/publications.html>

(13.03.2008,)

New findings: Preventing noncommunicable diseases in the workplace

As a further step towards the implementation of the WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health, WHO and the World Economic Forum organized a Joint Event on the prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCD) in the workplace through healthy diets and physical activity. The participants of the Joint Event (Dalian, China, September 2007) discussed the current state of knowledge regarding use of the workplace as a setting for NCD's prevention, key elements of successful workplace health promotion programmes focusing on diet and physical activity, and potential roles for different stakeholders in the development and implementation of these programmes.

Workplace health promotion (WHP) programmes, targeting physical inactivity and unhealthy dietary habits, are effective in improving health-related outcomes such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease risk factors. Enhancing employee productivity, improving corporate image and moderating medical care costs are some of the arguments that might foster senior management to initiate and invest in WHP programmes. Unhealthy diets and excessive energy intake, physical inactivity and tobacco use are major risk factors for noncommunicable diseases

(NCDs). In 2005, an estimated 35 million people died of NCDs such as heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. Around 80% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries that also have to deal with the burden of infectious diseases, maternal and perinatal conditions and nutritional deficiencies.

Key elements of successful WHP programmes include: establishing clear goals and objectives, linking programmes to business objectives; strong management support; effective communication with, and involvement of, employees at all levels of development and implementation of the WHP programme; creating supportive environments; adapting the programme to social norms and building social support; considering incentives to foster adherence to the programmes and improving self-efficacy of the participants.

Gaps in current knowledge:

To strengthen current knowledge, particularly on effectiveness, cost/benefit analysis and the impact on health of WHP programmes, further research is needed. The development of simple and easy-to-use validated instruments for diet and physical activity evaluation is encouraged. There needs to be further exploration of how the evidence-based diet and physical activity interventions are applied in workplaces that are in different geographic locations, and that vary in terms of governmental structure, literacy levels and social norms around different health behaviours. Identifying and publishing case reports and examples of international WHP programmes can also constitute supportive information that will help planners better understand how to develop global programmes. The information compiled in this report reflects evidence collected from WHP policies in high-income countries, primarily within the European and North American regions. The scarcity of information and case studies from low- and middle-income countries was highlighted as an important gap in the current knowledge that needs to be addressed.

Despite the limits of the available evidence, all stakeholders are encouraged to develop and implement WHP

policies and programmes
tackling unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

Addressing diet and physical activity in the workplace has the potential to improve the health status of workers; contribute to a positive and caring image of the company; improve staff morale; reduce staff turnover and absenteeism; enhance productivity; and reduce sick leave, health plan costs and workers' compensation and disability payments.

This report – the outcome of an event jointly organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Economic Forum – summarizes the current evidence available in addressing the different dimensions of the workplace as a key setting for interventions designed to prevent NCDs through diet and physical activity.

For further information, please refer to: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/workplace/en/>

(13.03.2008,)

Lighten the Load: A European campaign on musculoskeletal disorders

The European campaign 'Lighten the Load' promoted an integrated management approach to tackling musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), embracing both prevention and the retention, rehabilitation and reintegration of workers who already have MSDs. Run by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the campaign involved several stakeholders in improving MSD prevention in workplaces.

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are the most common work-related health problem in Europe, affecting millions of workers. Across the 27 Member States, 25% of workers complain of backache and 23% report muscular pains. MSDs can affect the body's muscles, joints, tendons, ligaments, bones and nerves. Most work-related MSDs develop over time and are caused either by the work itself or by the working environment. They can also result from accidents; for example, fractures and dislocations. Typically, MSDs affect the back, neck, shoulders and upper limbs; less often they affect the lower limbs. Health problems range from discomfort and minor aches and pains, to more serious medical conditions requiring time off work and even medical treatment. In more chronic cases, treatment and recovery are often unsatisfactory - the result could be permanent disability and loss of employment.

According to European statistics, 62% of workers in the EU27 are exposed a quarter of the time or more to repetitive hand and arm movements, 46% to painful or tiring positions and 35% to carrying or moving heavy loads. In general, women are less exposed to physical risk factors, although hand or arm movements and work involving painful or tiring positions are experienced equally by both women and men. However, in certain jobs - such as those involving moving people - and sectors - such as healthcare and manufacturing - women are significantly more at risk. Risk factors in some typically female new employment sectors, such as home care, may be underestimated because awareness is still low and these workers are difficult to contact. Workers in precarious employment, such as those on fixed-length contracts, are also significantly more exposed to repetitive work and working in painful or tiring positions.

MSDs exact a high toll on companies, workers and their families, and on society at large. The cost of MSDs to business is reflected in medical and social security expenses, compensation payments and lost productivity. But MSDs also cause personal suffering to many workers and their families.

The campaign featured the Good Practice Awards, which recognise organisations that have made outstanding and innovative contributions to tackling MSDs. The awards promote and encourage practical solutions in workplaces and share this good practice around Europe. The publication – for downloading here - contains 20 working examples of how companies and organisations from across the EU have taken action against MSDs. They were all entries in the 8th annual Good Practice Awards run by the Agency.

For further information, please refer to: <http://osha.europa.eu/publications/reports/TE8107132ENC>

(13.03.2008,)

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For further information, please refer to:
http://www.mz.gov.si/en/predsedovanje_eu_in_evropske_zadeve/ostali_dogodki/eu_konferenca_na_visoki_ravni_skupaj_za_dusevno_zdravje_in
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18-20 June 2008: Sheffield, United Kingdom --- Work, Well-being and Performance: New Perspectives for the Modern Workplace

For further information, please refer to: <http://iwpcconference.group.shef.ac.uk/>
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For further information, please refer to: <http://www.enwhp.org/index.php?id=550>
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