Managing stress and psychosocial risks at work
EU-OSHA Healthy Workplaces Campaign 2014-15

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Safety and health at work is everyone’s concern. It’s good for you. It’s good for business.
Overview

The campaign

The scale of the problem

Understanding stress and psychosocial risks

Take action

Campaign resources

www.healthy-workplaces.eu
Overview

The campaign

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The scale of the problem
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Eurobarometer (2014)

- Exposure to stress considered to be the main workplace health and safety risk (indicated by 53% of European workers)
- 27% of workers suffered from stress, depression or anxiety caused by or worsened by work (during last 12 months)

EU-OSHA opinion poll (2013)

- around 4 in 10 workers think that stress is not handled well in their workplace.
The scale of the problem – countries (EU-OSHA opinion poll, 2013)

How common, if at all, are cases of work-related stress in your workplace? (% of workers responses)

Difference to 100% due to exclusion of Don't know and None; **Universe:** Workers aged 18+

www.healthy-workplaces.eu
Causes of work-related stress (EU-OSHA opinion poll, 2013)

- Job reorganisation or job insecurity: 72%
- Hours worked or workload: 66%
- Being subject to unacceptable behaviours such as bullying or harassment: 59%
- Lack of support to fulfil your role from colleagues or superiors: 57%
- Lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities: 52%
- Limited opportunity to manage own work patterns: 46%
Management of stress and psychosocial risks

ESENER survey (EU-OSHA, 2009)

- 79% of European managers are concerned about stress at work
- Fewer than 30% establishments have procedures in place to deal with stress, workplace violence and harassment
- 42% managers consider it more difficult to manage psychosocial risks than more ‘traditional’ OSH risks
Overview

Understanding stress and psychosocial risks
Psychosocial risks and stress at work

Psychosocial risks arise from:
- poor work design, organisation and management
- unfavourable social context of work

Work-related stress
- is an organisational issue
- occurs when demands at work are beyond the worker’s capacity to cope with them
Psychosocial risks

- **Excessively demanding work and/or not enough time to complete tasks**
  - tight or unrealistic deadlines, excessive amounts of emails, continuous pressure to perform more, better, quicker…

- **Conflicting demands and lack of clarity over the worker’s role**
  - poor job descriptions, unclear responsibilities, contradicting orders…

- **A mismatch between the demands of the job and the worker’s competency**
  - underusing or overstretching workers’ skills, lack of training…

- **A lack of involvement in making decisions and a lack of influence over the way the job is done**
  - a lack of consultation, unnecessary, rigid instructions to follow…

- **A lack of support from management and colleagues**
  - a lack of constructive feedback and recognition…
Psychosocial risks

- Poor interpersonal relationships
  - poor organisational values, lack of mutual respect, blame culture….

- Harassment
  - “repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards an employee, or group of employees, aimed at victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening them”.

- Poorly managed organisational change and job insecurity
  - ineffective communication, unpredictable work environment, gossips…

- Unjust distribution of work, rewards, promotions or career opportunities
  - a lack of clarity in the existing procedures…

- Difficulties in combining commitments at work and at home
  - inflexible working time, a lack of understanding for personal problems…
Work-related stress

• Work-related stress occurs when demands at work are beyond the worker’s capacity to cope with them
• It is an organisational issue, not a sign of individual weakness

Experiencing stress at work is not the same as working in a demanding or exciting job.

**Only when** pressure becomes too much and the demands become too high for a worker to cope with them stress may occur!

Proper monitoring of work demands, allocation of enough resources, provision of adequate support, etc. enable workers to cope with challenges, remain motivated and productive.
Psychosocial risks, stress and health

**Psychosocial risks**
- time pressure, excessive demands, poor work organisation, job insecurity, role ambiguity, harassment, violence, lack of influence, lack of support, poorly managed organisational change, conflicting demands at work and home, etc.

**Work-related Stress**
- work demands are beyond capacity to cope with them organisational issue

**Non work-related factors**
- major life events, serious illness, bereavement, etc.

**Negative outcomes**
- **Emotional**
  - irritability, anxiety, low mood, sleeping problems
- **Cognitive**
  - difficulty in concentrating, learning new things, making decisions, negative thinking
- **Behavioural**
  - making errors, becoming withdrawn or aggressive, substance abuse
- **Physical and mental ill-health**
  - depression, burnout, musculoskeletal and cardiovascular diseases
Work-related stress - negative outcome for organisations

- Poor overall business performance
- Increased absenteeism
  - Stress is one of the main causes of lost working days in Europe
  - Stress-related sick leaves usually last much longer than sick leaves caused by other issues.
- Presenteeism
- Increased accident and injury rates
- High turnover

The negative effects for societies:
- Health care costs
- Early retirement
Overview

Take action – what can we do?
Managing psychosocial risks

- Despite its sensitive nature, stress and psychosocial risks at work can be **successfully reduced and dealt with** in the same logical and systematic way as other OSH issues.

- **Holistic approach** the most effective:
  - Improving the work environment
  - Promoting health
  - Back to work programmes

- **Leadership and worker participation** is crucial to tackle psychosocial risks and work-related stress effectively.

- **Management leadership**
EU Policy background

The EU Framework Directive (89/391)

- Creates a legal obligation on employers to protect their workers by avoiding, evaluating and combatting risks to their safety and health
- This includes psychosocial risks in the workplace which can cause or contribute to stress or mental health problems

EU Social Partners Agreements

- Framework Agreement on Violence and Harassment at Work (2007)

European Pact for Mental Health and Well-being (2008)

- Encourages employers to implement measures to promote mental well-being at work
Managing psychosocial risks: how to start

- Managing stress and psychosocial risks involves the same basic principles and processes as for other workplace hazards

1) Raising awareness
2) Assessing risks
3) Developing an action plan
4) Monitoring and evaluation
1) Raising awareness in the workplace

- Ensuring common understanding about:
  - the long term health impacts
  - the causes
  - the steps the organisation and individual workers can take to reduce stress

- Developing (and making employees aware of) a stress policy
  - outlining the steps to be taken

- Ensuring there is a commitment from all involved
  - the role of managers is managing stress is crucial
2) Assessing risks

- Identify hazards (possible causes of work-related stress)
  - Consider needs of different groups of workers (workers with disabilities, migrant workers, young and older workers)
  - Practical tools for risk assessment are available: survey/questionnaire, external evaluation

- Evaluate and prioritise risk
  - How often (and how many) workers are exposed to the risk
  - How likely it is that a hazard will cause harm and how serious it is likely to be
  - Take into consideration
    - absenteeism, high staff turnover, accidents, health problems, psychosocial problems (e.g. great amount of conflicts), complaints from workers etc.

- Document, monitor and review the results

✓ It is essential that employees are consulted and involved in the risk assessment!
3) Taking action

- **Decide on actions**
  - Discuss the results with workers
  - Develop a plan of action
  - Clarify roles and responsibilities
  - Implement the actions agreed

- **Give priority to organisational measures**
  - Improvements in the work environment must always be considered first
  - Individual measures (e.g. coping with stress training) must be based on good psychosocial work environment
3) Taking action

- **If harm already occurred take action as soon as possible**
  - Provide necessary help for affected workers and improve the aspects of the work environment that contributed to the problem
  - In case of non work-related problems, showing understanding, and, if possible and necessary, facilitating getting external help will benefit the workers and the organisation
  - Implement ‘return to work’ procedure
3) Implementing preventive measures (examples)

- Ensuring enough time for workers to perform their tasks, providing support, deciding about priorities
- Providing clear job descriptions and rewarding good performance
- Adjusting workloads to the capabilities and resources of each worker, designing tasks to be stimulating
- Giving workers control over the way they do their work
- Allowing workers to take part in decisions that affect them
- Establishing flexible working time
3) Implementing preventive measures (examples)

- Transparency in terms of job security, clear promotion procedures
- Enabling workers to make complaints and have them taken seriously
- Minimising physical risks
- Providing opportunities for social interaction
- Providing stress management training, conflict resolution techniques and boosting resilience
- Promoting healthy life style
- Regular evaluation of interventions and measures taken
4) Monitoring and evaluation

- Document, monitor and review the results

- The positive outcomes may include:
  - Improved workers' well-being and job satisfaction
  - A healthy, motivated and productive staff
  - Improved overall performance and productivity
  - Reduced absence and staff turnover rates

- The benefits of managing psychosocial risks and work-related stress at individual and organisational level clearly outweigh the costs of implementation for organisations of all sizes
Action on Trade Union level – support the EU-OSHA Campaign!

- Spread information

- Normalize discussion about psychosocial risks in the workplace

- Push for better understanding of psychosocial risks using all possible levels

**BENEFITS**

- **for WORKERS** greater well-being and job satisfaction
- **for MANAGERS** a healthier, more motivated and productive workforce
- **for WORKPLACES** improved performance, reduced accident and injury rate, lower absenteeism
Overview

Campaign resources

www.healthy-workplaces.eu
E-guide for managing stress and psychosocial risks

- explains work-related stress and psychosocial risks, their causes and consequences
- gives practical examples of actions that fit small companies
- addresses concerns and misconceptions
- directs to national resources

www.healthy-workplaces.eu
Irish E-guide is ready!

Actions to take

What can I do to help my business and workers?

Reducing psychosocial risks at work is good for the business - as well as good for the workers. A good approach to reducing these risks and managing the risk of stress at work is likely to involve a combination of measures.

As with all hazards in the workplace, the reduction of risks should take priority and is a legal obligation. However, there are other things which you can also do which, although not obligatory, are part of good management practice. These help maintain a good psychosocial working environment with healthy, effective workers.

- Raise Awareness
- Manage risks: Assess
- Manage risks: Take action
  - Preventive Action
  - Corrective Action
- Health improvement
  - Improve resilience
Resources (documents)

Work-related Stress and Psychosocial Risks

Documents

Sharing the content
If you would like to share the content of this e-guide with others there are two methods you can use:
1. Give or send them the whole e-guide
2. Click here (PDF, 328 KB) for a printer-friendly version of the text from the e-guide which you can take extracts from

Resources (PDFs) contained within the guide

Framework Agreement Harassment and Violence at Work: The aim of this agreement is to increase awareness and understanding of workplace harassment and violence. It provides an action-orientated framework to identify, prevent and manage problems of harassment and violence in the workplace.

Framework Agreement on Work Related Stress: The aim of this agreement is to increase the awareness and understanding of work related stress and draw attention to signs that could indicate problems of stress in the workplace.

HSA Code of Practice: This Code of Practice provides practical guidance for employers on identifying and preventing bullying at work.

HSA Work-related stress a guide for employers: The subject of this Guide is work related stress. It focuses on ways to reduce its likelihood and its effects as well as ways to prevent short-term stress becoming a long-term problem.
Reports – facts and figures

- ‘Psychosocial risks in Europe: prevalence and strategies for prevention’

- ‘Calculating the costs of stress and psychosocial risks at work’

- Facts and figures: ESENER survey,

- Data published in 2014
  ✓ ESENER 2
  ✓ Eurobarometer
  ✓ Labour Force Survey
  ✓ ‘The violence against women’
    (Fundamental Rights Agency)
Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress (2014-15)

Resources ([www.healthy-workplaces.eu](http://www.healthy-workplaces.eu))
- Campaign guide and leaflets, infographics, video, PPT, Napo
- ‘Calculating the costs of stress and psychosocial risks at work’
- ‘Psychosocial risks in Europe: prevalence and strategies for prevention’
- Information on events and news items
- E-guide

Activities
- Official Campaign Partners (69 in the 1st round)
- Good Practice Awards
- Conferences and seminars (incl. XX World Congress in Frankfurt)
- European Week
- Benchmarking project on initiative of OCP
  - 2 July 2014: Heineken Amsterdam
  - 23-24 September 2014: LEGO, Denmark
  - 26-27 November 2014: Toyota Sweden
  - 2015: Benchmarking Event Brussels, Siemens, Germany (tbc)
- Closing ceremony in Bilbao, November 2015
Thank You!

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir

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