

The Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion in the European Union*

Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) is the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and well-being of people at work.

This can be achieved through a combination of:

- *improving the work organisation and the working environment*
- *promoting active participation*
- *encouraging personal development*

Introduction

Two factors provide the basis for the current activity in Workplace Health Promotion. The first, being the Framework Directive on safety and health (Council Directive 89/391/EC) which prepared the ground for a reorientation of traditional occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation and practice, and the second the increasing profile of the workplace as a public health setting.

A healthy, motivated and well-qualified workforce is fundamental to the future social and economic wellbeing of the European Union. The responsible European Commission's service has therefore supported an initiative to establish a European Network for Workplace Health Promotion. This initiative is in accordance with Article 129 of the Treaty on European Union and the Programme of Community action in the field of public health (2003-2008). The European Network includes organisations from all 25 Member States, countries of the European Economic Area, Switzerland, and candidate countries. They act as National Contact Offices (NCOs).

The objective of the network is to identify and disseminate examples of good practice of WHP by exchanging experience and knowledge. By doing this the Union is encouraging the Member States to place WHP high on their agenda and to incorporate workplace health issues in all respective policies.

Challenges for the working world in the 21st century

The world of work is undergoing major change - a process which will continue. Some of the key issues to be confronted are:

globalisation

- unemployment
- increasing use of information technology
- changes in employment practice (e.g. short-term and part-time employment, tele-work)
- ageing
- increasing importance of service sector
- downsizing
- increasing number of people working in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- customer orientation and quality management

* In the version of June 2005

The future success of organisations is dependent on having well-qualified, motivated and healthy employees. WHP has a significant role to play in preparing and equipping people and organisations to face these challenges.

Workplace Health Promotion: an organisational investment for the future

Traditional OHS has significantly improved health in the workplace by reducing accidents and preventing occupational diseases. However, it has become obvious that OHS alone cannot address the wide range of issues mentioned above.

By promoting health in the workplace organisations will see a reduction in sickness related costs and an increase in productivity. This results from a healthier workforce with increased motivation, higher morale and improved working relationships.

WHP is a modern corporate strategy which aims at preventing ill-health at work (including work-related diseases, accidents, injuries, occupational diseases and stress) and enhancing health-promoting potentials and well-being in the workforce.

Workplace Health Promotion: healthy people in healthy organisations

The workplace influences health and disease in various ways. Work can cause ill-health if employees have to work within health-damaging working conditions, the available skills are inadequate, or the mutual support from colleagues is lacking. At the same time work can be a resource for personal development and enhancement of personal skills.

WHP contributes to a wide range of work factors which improve employees' health. These include:

- management principles and methods which recognise that employees are a necessary success factor for the organisation instead of a mere cost factor
- a culture and corresponding leadership principles which include participation of the employees and encourage motivation and responsibility of all employees
- work organisation principles which provide the employees with an appropriate balance between job demands, control over their own work, level of skills and social support
- a personnel policy which actively incorporates health promotion issues
- an integrated occupational health and safety service

Workplace Health Promotion is evidenced-based and successful

WHP is based on multisectoral and multidisciplinary co-operation and can only be successful if all the key players are committed to it.

WHP can reach the aim "healthy people in healthy organisations" if it is oriented along the following guidelines:

1. All staff have to be involved (participation).
2. WHP has to be integrated in all important decisions and in all areas of organisations (integration).

3. All measures and programmes have to be oriented to a problem-solving cycle: needs analysis, setting priorities, planning, implementation, continuous control and evaluation (project management).

4. WHP includes individual-directed and environment-directed measures from various fields. It combines the strategy of risk reduction with the strategy of the development of protection factors and health potentials (comprehensiveness).

Priorities of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion

The European Network for WHP co-ordinates the exchange of information and the dissemination of examples of good practice in Europe. Its member organisations have committed themselves to initiate networks at national level. All activities and priorities are based on the principle of subsidiarity and support the co-operation between the Member States. In view of the future challenges and with the aim to expand health-promoting workplaces, the European Network for WHP regards the following priorities as a basis for future activities:

1. Increase awareness of WHP and promote responsibility for health with regard to all stakeholders.
2. Identification and dissemination of models of good practice.
3. Develop guidelines for effective WHP.
4. Ensure commitment of the Member States to incorporate respective policies.
5. Address the specific challenges of working together with SMEs
6. Develop supportive infrastructures at national level involving all relevant stakeholders, thus creating a lasting basis for the dissemination and incorporation of WHP.

This declaration was adopted by all members of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion at the network meeting held in Luxembourg on November 27-28, 1997.