



Good workplace health practice in Europe

The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) was formally established in 1996. Since then, it has been at the leading edge of the developments in European workplace health promotion. By means of various joint initiatives, it developed good practice criteria for a variety of organisations and established infrastructures for WHP in the Member States. Through these national forums, ENWHP facilitates the cross-border exchange of information and the dissemination of good workplace health practice in Europe. The current ENWHP initiative “Work. Adapted for all. Move Europe” focuses on promoting healthy work for employees with chronic illness.

ENWHP

Workplace Health Promotion in a globalised world

As formulated in the Ottawa Charter of the WHO (1986), the aim of health promotion is to initiate a process, which is intended to grant everyone a greater degree of self-determination as regards health. Health promotion thus becomes a social responsibility as well as a question of personal life style.

- People (not exclusively risk groups) are addressed in their daily lives;
- Health promotion:
 - aims at influencing the conditions for good health and eliminating the causes of poor health;
 - combines different but complementary actions and approaches;
 - aims at achieving active and effective participation of the general public. (1)

These objectives formulated at Ottawa eventually led to the world of work being perceived as an area where health promotion is to be pursued. The Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21st Century demanded new responses and new mechanisms for funding in order to secure an infrastructure for workplace health promotion. (2) ENWHP was and is an innovative answer to this demand.

The European concept of workplace health promotion

With the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and the incorporation of Article 129 into the EU Treaty, the bodies of the European Union were granted the authority to become active in the field of public health. The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Dortmund was asked by the European Commission:

- to develop an integrated action concept for workplace health promotion in Europe;
- to develop a draft structure for an information network to focus the resources available in the member states;
- to determine the conditions for an informal network at European level and to submit a proposal for its establishment and operation.

This was the birth of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion, as an informal network of national occupational health and safety institutes, public health, health promotion and statutory social insurance institutions. ENWHP aims through the joint efforts of all its members to contribute to improving workplace health and well-being, and to reducing the impact of work-related ill health on the European workforce. The network is a platform for all stakeholders interested in the improvement of workplace health and committed to its vision “healthy employees in healthy organisations”.

First order of business for the ENWHP members was to establish a common understanding of workplace health promotion – which led to the Luxembourg Declaration:

“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 is achieved through a combination of

- improving the work organisation and the working environment;
- promoting the active participation of employees in health activities;
- encouraging personal development.” (3)
-

ENWHP initiatives

Funded by the European Commission, ENWHP has carried out joint initiatives to develop common standards for Europe. The 1st initiative aimed to identify companies that clearly demonstrated good practice in workplace health promotion and disseminated this information to encourage the implementation of WHP all over Europe. To provide an objective basis for the assessment of good practice, the ENWHP members developed a set of quality criteria.

Initiatives by the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion		
1 st	1997-1999	Quality criteria and success factors of workplace health promotion
2 nd	1999-2000	Workplace health promotion in small and medium-sized enterprises
3 rd	2001-2002	Workplace health promotion in the public administration sector
4 th	2002-2004	The implementation of infrastructures for promoting workplace health
5 th	2004-2006	Healthy work in an ageing Europe
6 th	2005-2007	Disseminating good workplace health in Eastern European countries
7 th	2007-2009	Move Europe – healthy lifestyles in the working environment
8 th	2009-2010	Work in tune with life. Move Europe

Since small and medium sized enterprises (SME) show different needs and operate in a different way than large companies, the 2nd initiative focused on models of good practice in SMEs. Based on country reports and examples of good practice, a set of recommendations for workplace health promotion in SMEs was put forward. The 3rd initiative examined the situation regarding WHP in the public administrations of Europe. The 4th initiative created

national infrastructures on WHP, for concerted action and closer co-operation between governmental organisations, professionals, social partners, social insurance organisations and companies. This initiative also produced a collection of methods and tools (toolbox) to facilitate the introduction of WHP into organisations.

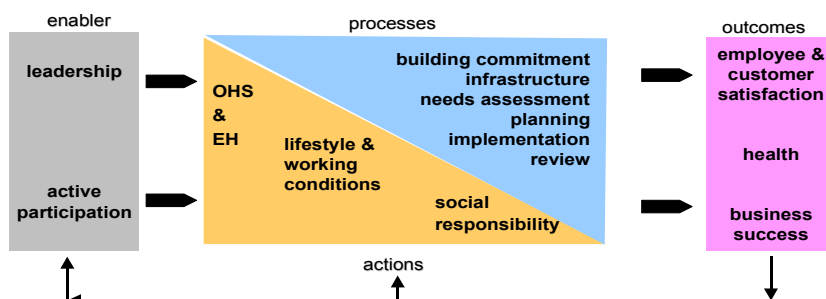
Because of the ageing workforce in Europe, the 5th initiative focused on strategies that enable employees to remain longer in gainful employment. During the 6th initiative, ENWHP carried out three separate projects to identify the specific requirements and challenges regarding WHP in Eastern European Countries and to pave the way for improved dissemination of workplace health promotion in this region.

The 7th initiative addressed health problems associated with the employee's personal life, because the workplace is an ideal setting for influencing daily behaviour. To help promote healthy lifestyles and prevent risk factors associated with chronic diseases (high blood pressure, tobacco, obesity, stress etc), ENWHP initiated a European campaign on 4 topics: physical activity, smoking prevention, healthy diet and mental health. More than 3.000 small, medium and large enterprises, public administrations, schools and hospitals took part. Mental health disorders were the main focus of the last initiative, which sensitised employers and employees to strategies and programmes to help promote mental health at the workplace, and to recognise their own and colleagues' mental disorders at an early stage. ENWHP identified once more good practices and produced guidelines.

Outcomes

As a result of its good practice initiatives, ENWHP has established a general model of workplace health management and common success factors for WHP. The model is based on the assumption that it will be important in the future to combine and integrate existing workplace health-related disciplines, to improve effectiveness and compatibility to general trends in management thinking. There is a growing body of evidence that improvements in workplace health can be key ingredients of business efficiency and competitiveness.

European Model of Workplace Health Management



Common success factors for workplace health promotion itself (formulated by ENWHP) insist that actions should:

- be based on an analysis of the health requirements of the enterprise (need-based);
- involve all stakeholders in enterprises: especially the workers and representatives of intermediary organisations (participation);
- seek to improve the quality and conditions of working life, as well as focus on the behaviour of the individual worker (a balanced approach);
- become an integral part of management practices and daily working life at all levels of an enterprise (integration).

The good practice criteria developed by ENWHP and a questionnaire, which permits to assess the quality of workplace health policy, make it easier for organisations to establish what their current position is along the “way” to “healthy employees in healthy organizations” and how far they are from the “destination”...



Work. Adapted for all. Move Europe

“Promoting healthy work for employees with chronic illness” – the 9th ENWHP initiative – was launched in 2011. This initiative is coordinated by Prevent and will be concluded with a conference in Brussels on 22-23 October 2013. The objective is to promote healthy work for those suffering the consequences of chronic illness – either through enabling job retention or by supporting their return to work. ENWHP works towards introducing effective workplace health practices, by creating a favourable culture and by providing guidance to employers. To this end, good practices were collected and a set of guidelines on comprehensive WHP strategies and interventions on behalf of chronically ill workers was created. The Guide to Good Practice is disseminated across Europe – in order to enhance the sustainable employability of these employees, so that they can remain a valuable part of the workforce!



**Funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union**

Co-authors:

Prof. Dr. Karl Kuhn
Chair ENWHP

Nettie Van der Auwera
Project Coordinator Work. Adapted for all.

enwhp@prevent.be
www.enwhp.org

ENWHP Network Secretariat
Prevent - Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Rue Gachard 88
B - 1050 Brussels
Belgium

Reference list:

1. World Health Organization. The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. Ottawa, 1986.
2. World Health Organization. The Jakarta Declaration on Leading Health Promotion into the 21st Century. Jakarta, 1997.
3. European Network for Workplace Health Promotion. Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion in the European Union, 1997.