

Cardiff Memorandum on Workplace Health Promotion in small and medium sized enterprises

Introduction

"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"*

(Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion in the European Union)

WHP plays a significant role in developing healthy organisations: future economic success and well-being is strongly dependent on well-qualified, motivated and healthy employees. In the past, WHP activities have mainly targeted larger organisations, which have an appropriate infrastructure for WHP to be successful. Yet throughout Europe more than 50% of the total workforce is employed in SMEs with a staff of less than 100, with the numbers of people working in small organisations still increasing. SMEs have limited resources and have to avoid heavy administrative, financial and legal procedures that could jeopardise their development.

The state of health of employees in SMEs is of prime importance to them, to the organisations in which they work, their families, the communities they live in and the economic well-being of the Member States. This memorandum launches new initiatives of the European Network for WHP to bridge the gap of finding an appropriate infrastructure for SMEs to implement WHP activities in small organisations.

Characteristics of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs differ from larger organisations in many respects:

- less division of labour and standardisation of jobs and working conditions
- direct relationships between employers and employees
- higher degree of flexibility
- less benefits from occupational health and safety services
- limited time and resources for promoting employee well-being and health
- higher dependency on employees' attendance at work

Challenges facing WHP in SMEs

Considering the limited resources in small organisations, it is especially difficult for SMEs to carry out health promotion activities. In addition, the available knowledge in WHP is based on experience in larger organisations which must be adapted and modified to the needs of SMEs.

WHP in SMEs needs to respond to a wide range of challenges:

- to increase the awareness of WHP and its benefits among stakeholders in SMEs
- to develop appropriate models for WHP in SMEs

- to implement specific strategies involving the different stakeholders concerned
- to adapt WHP activities to an appropriate scale and connect them to the actual problems and needs of the SME
- to highlight how the implementation and development of WHP in SMEs could be supported by external resources
- to continue action at branch, local and regional level

Priorities of the European Network for WHP

The members of the European Network for WHP regard SMEs as a priority for action.

In order to meet the challenges listed above, the Network proposes the following initiatives to promote WHP in SMEs:

1. To increase awareness of the current priorities, health concerns and health actions undertaken in SMEs.
2. To identify and disseminate good practice in WHP in SMEs.
3. To promote the benefits of WHP in SMEs to all stakeholders.
4. To build alliances and partnerships with the small business sector and key representative organisations
5. To support the development of appropriate WHP models and methods for increasing health and well-being in SMEs.

This memorandum was adopted by all members of the European Network for WHP at the network meeting held in Cardiff on April 24-25, 1998.