

Editorial

Mental health problems are recognised as the occupational hazard of the 21st century. It is expected that by 2020 anxiety disorders and depressions will be the second and third most important causes of illness in Europe. In our country, stress already causes 20% of all working days lost each year.



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Mental health problems can thus have a big effect on the health and productivity of an organisation. That is why it is important for an organisation to be attentive to mental health and take initiatives to foster the mental health of employees.

The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) wants to promote good practices in health promotion at work and spread them across Europe. In 2007 the network launched the Move Europe campaign, a European campaign on general health promotion at work. For two years companies were encouraged to invest in programmes with the purpose of improving the lifestyle of their employees from the point of view of health. Move Europe created awareness on diet, exercise, smoking and stress.

The campaign was a success and that is why ENWHP has decided to build further on it. On 26 November, Prevent launched the Belgian wing of the new campaign: Move Europe, Work on Mental Health. For a year we will encourage companies to invest in programmes to foster the mental health of employees.

You too can contribute to the success of the campaign. Are you convinced that it is worth investing in the mental health of your employees? Have you already set up a number of activities or are you planning to get started shortly? Sign the Move Charter, send us your logo and we will give your company positive publicity on the move-europe.be website and in the campaign communications. Do not let this opportunity pass you by!



Marc De Greef, Managing Director

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MOVE EUROPE CAMPAIGN

Work on Mental Health

The new Move Europe campaign, *Work on Mental Health*, was launched on 26 November. It will encourage companies to invest in the mental health of their employees. In Belgium the campaign is supported by *Securex, Vigez, the Onafhankelijke Ziekenfondsen and Idewe*.

During the opening conference in the Brussels conference centre, Square, *Securex* produced hard figures on the mental health of Belgian employees. According to a recent study, 40% of Belgian employees feel stressed in general. Almost a quarter do not feel "in a good psychological state to work".

VIGeZ and the *Onafhankelijke Ziekenfondsen* discussed their views on mental health promotion in companies. Efforts in this area are important to prevent sick leave and productivity losses as a result of mental health problems. For VIGeZ an efficient health policy is based on three pillars: policy measures (such as work organisation), facilitation (e.g. structural adjustments) and health education through information and creating awareness.

Information and awareness creation are also what the Move Europe campaign does for companies. They can evaluate their current mental health policy via the Mental Health Promotion Check. Based on the answers to the questionnaire, the company receives tips on improving that policy. Through the Mental Health Promotion Check, *Prevent* searches for organisations in Belgium that take an innovative approach to employee mental health. Their policy can serve as a good practice and example for other employers who feel strongly about the mental health of their employees and who want to do more about it. One of these companies is *Manpower*, who was able to present its health policy during the launch of the campaign.

Further information: www.move-europe.be

PRIZE AWARD

Recyfuel wins the Pro-Safe Award 2009

The SME, *Recyfuel nv*, was presented with the Pro-Safe Award 2009 on Friday 27 November by *Jean-Claude Debussche*, member of the Executive Committee of *Assuralia*. The prize was presented at the conference, "From school to work: working together for a safe and healthy career" in the Brussels conference centre, Square.



Recyfuel nv, which for the occasion was represented by *Virginie Kalpers*, Quality and Environment Laboratory Manager, operates from Engis in the province of Liège and employs 40 people. The company collects and processes toxic industrial waste into an alternative fuel for the cement industry. The personnel of *Recyfuel* thus risk daily exposure to VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds). Hence *Recyfuel* developed a methodology to evaluate the exposure of its employees, to ensure observance of the Belgian standards in this respect and the Welfare at Work Code (Royal Decree 11/03/2002), and to devise measures to reduce exposure to the compounds and to provide the right personal protective equipment (PPE).

Further information: www.pro-safe.be or contact catherine.levaux@prevent.be

SEMINAR

Working Environment Challenges of the Future

On 24 and 25 September 2009, PEROSH (Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health), together with the Danish Working Environment Authority, organised a seminar on the future challenges of working conditions. The objective of the seminar was to identify and analyse new and emerging challenges in working conditions over the next 10 years, from 2010 to 2020. The contributions of the researchers will be used by the Danish government to give further shape to their working conditions strategy.

The guests were senior researchers and experts from the various PEROSH institutes, as well as the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (Bilbao), the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) and the Robert-Sauvé Institute for Research on Occupational Health and Safety (IRSST) from Quebec.

The seminar was concluded by a panel discussion on the most important challenges and priorities in the field of prevention and research. They debated demographic changes (population ageing, gender, migration), changing lifestyles (obesity), the impact of new technologies, globalisation and the new economic reality. The panel also discussed the climate issue and the "traditional" welfare subjects (biological and chemical substances, psychosocial stress, violence and intimidation).

The contributions of the experts and the video presentations are available on the PEROSH website: www.perosh.eu.

Further information on PEROSH:
contact nele.roskams@prevent.be

FIT FOR WORK REPORT

Tackling musculoskeletal disorders at work



The European report, Fit for Work, was presented on 30 September 2009. The aim of Fit for Work is to draw attention to the lot of employees with musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). During the conference participants from different European member states debated how to ensure wider media coverage of musculoskeletal disorders and greater interest in the issue on the part of policy-makers.

The Belgian Fit for Work report shows that MSDs, which are better known as muscle and joint pains, account for 40% of Belgian sick leave. The researchers point out that prevention, early diagnosis and rapid adjustment of the workstation and work organisation to the needs of employees with MSDs could prevent employees from taking sick leave or even dropping out of employment altogether.

The European and Belgian Fit for Work reports and the presentations of the speakers at the conference are available in full on www.fitforworkeurope.eu.

Further information on Fit for Work: contact marthe.verjans@prevent.be

REPORT

Quality of work: a challenge in times of crisis

Further to the success of the Benelux conference in its first year, employers, unions and the politicians concerned met again on 25 May 2009 in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg during the 2nd Benelux day, with the theme "Quality of work: a challenge in times of crisis".

The participants looked at the need to maintain high standards on safety and welfare at work. In times of crisis many companies are compelled to scale down their operations, thus reducing the level of employment. But the crisis can also have effects on health and safety at work. Stress, fear of redundancy, reorganisation of jobs and departments in companies are factors that can contribute to an increase in the risk of accidents at work.

The full report of the second Benelux conference can be read on www.prevent.be.

Further information on the Benelux conference: contact sebastien.noulet@prevent.be

Prevent is a multidisciplinary institute centred on the prevention of occupational risks through the promotion of the quality of working conditions and the improvement of work organisation. The institute provides support, advice and information for businesses and organisations, such as occupational accident insurers, external prevention and protection services, sectoral organisations, the social partners, the government and other societal actors.

Prevent is dedicated to the development, collection and mobilisation of occupational safety and health knowledge. To this end, the institute carries out research and studies centred on practical experience. In addition, it gathers information and documentation from all over the world. Lastly, the institute contributes actively to the development of regional, national, and international networks in order to exchange information and experience.

The institute transfers its accumulated knowledge using various means such as consulting, disseminating information and documentation, writing and editing publications, developing training programs and carrying out information and awareness campaigns. The institute gives particular attention to the issue of occupational safety and health in SMEs.

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