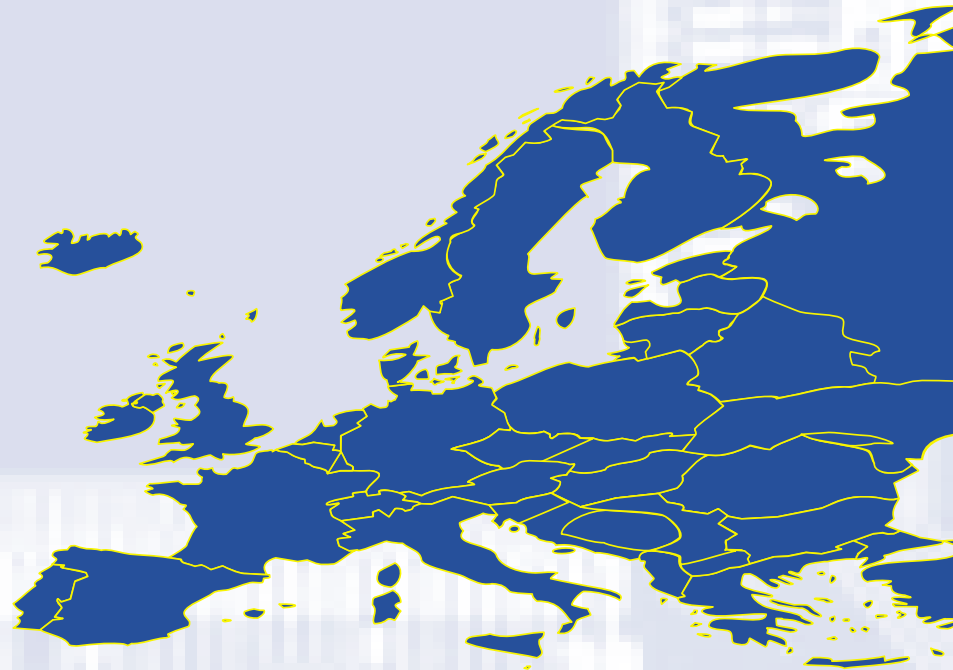




# Healthy Employees in Healthy Organisations: The European Network for Workplace Health Promotion



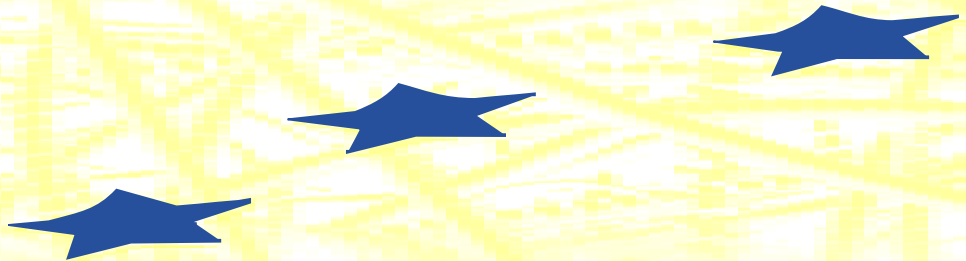
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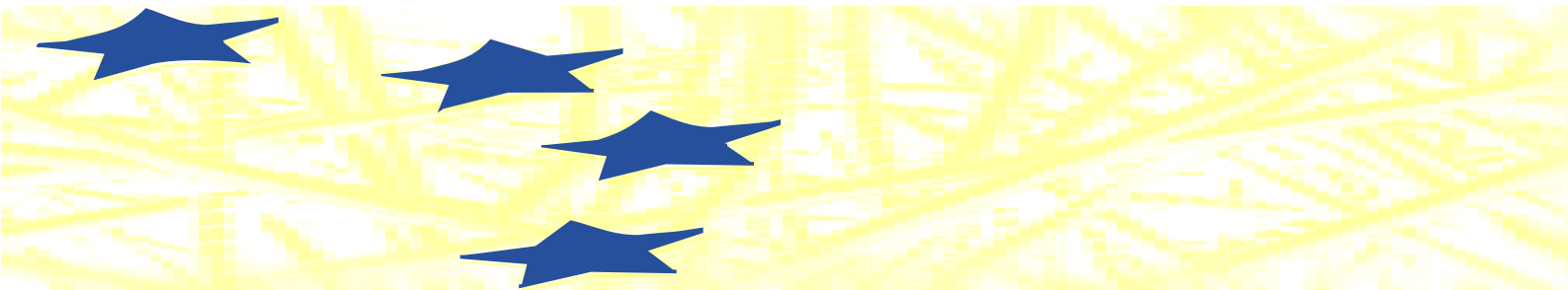
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## Why promote Health at the Workplace?

**Not only has working life undergone change, but so have attitudes to employment. For most people employment is more than merely a source of income. Promoting health at work is therefore one of the most effective ways of achieving better standards of safety and health at work – while also influencing other aspects of a persons life.**

Employment provides an opportunity for gaining qualifications and skills; it creates opportunities for social contact between colleagues; it can signify social status or at least recognition, and it can provide the fundamental basis for a person's self-esteem and identity. Employees spend a large part of their "waking" life at work and work therefore plays an important role not only in the health and mental well-being of an individual, but also the whole population.

It is possible to prevent work related accidents and illnesses and to design healthy workplaces. But work is also the setting where a person can acquire the knowledge and motivation necessary to positively influence their health related behaviour and attitudes both within and outside their working life.

Society and companies are now more dependant than ever on well trained, highly quali-

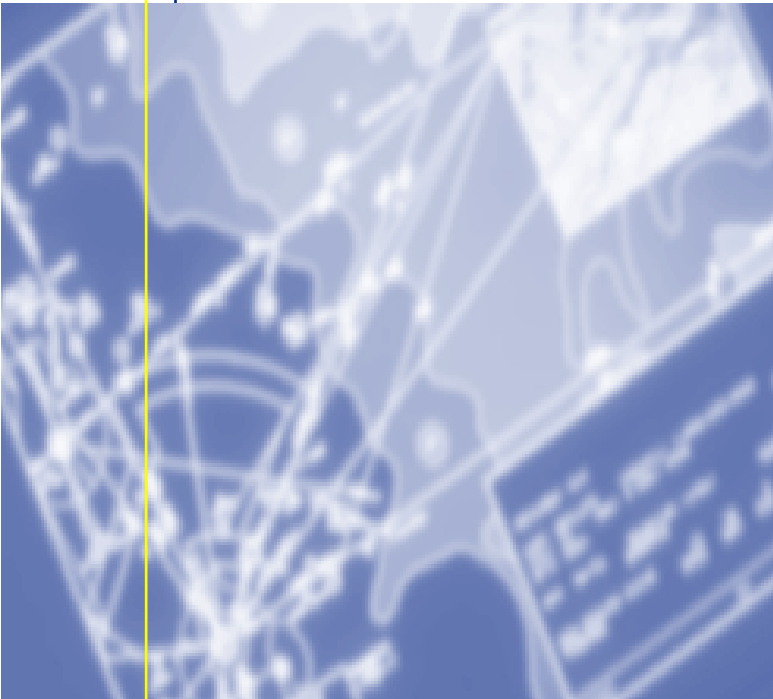
fied, highly motivated and contented employees. Health is more than the mere absence of disease and actively promoting employee health is a comprehensive task that goes beyond accident prevention and the avoidance of work-related illnesses.

Significantly, work satisfaction, a pleasant working environment and intelligent work organisation are just as important as safety helmets and good ventilation systems for example.

Health promotion at work is beneficial for the employees, for "healthy" employees are a vital resource in the process of creating a truly "healthy" company. In reducing sickness-related costs and increasing productivity health promotion at work also has a direct benefit for the company.



## Is Workplace Health Promotion worthwhile?



Research has shown that workplace health promotion should not be regarded as an “optional social benefit”, but is of value both for the company and its employees.

Demonstrable benefits for the company include: a reduction in absenteeism due to sickness, increased productivity and over time, increased flexibility resulting from the reduction in the number of sick employees. There are however, many more positive effects including a measurable increase in product and service quality, an improvement in the working environment and through improved communications and co-operation, the companies develop a more

positive corporate image.

Health promotion has a highly positive influence on behavioural attitudes and therefore on the health of the employees. Consequently even more benefits can be gained from workplace health promotion. Work strain is reduced and health problems occur less often. In a pleasant working environment the feeling of well-being and enthusiasm for work is naturally greater. A general health consciousness is created which extends beyond the boundaries of work. In this respect, workplace health promotion leads to a situation where there are no losers - only winners!



## Review: New Ways to better Health

The Ottawa Charter, developed by the World Health Organisation in 1986, marked a turning point in health prevention policy. Health was no longer defined as the mere absence of illness. For the first time, a new way of creating better health was described and this strongly influenced the concept of workplace health promotion. It recognised that health together with occupational safety and health, depends not only on stipulations set from “above”, but on the co-operation and participation of each individual. In the new health policy, companies were now included as important settings for action as well as communities and schools.

*>>Health promotion should be a process that enables people to increase control over and to improve their own health.<<*

World Health Organisation  
Ottawa Charter, 1986

## Creating a better Working World



The EC Amsterdam Treaty contains sections relating to population health demonstrating the commitment of the European Community to achieving a high level of health protection, improving the health of the population and eliminating the causes and risk factors associated with ill-health. The major statements in this context are formulated in Articles 3 and 152.

Article 152 for example, allows the Community to undertake promotional measures to protect and improve human health. The world of work naturally could not be excluded from these approaches. Creating a healthy working world is therefore high on the agenda in European occupational safety and health policy.

The 1989 EU Framework Directive (89/391/EEC) emphasises this interpretation of safety and health at the workplace. For the first time, a new legislative basis in occupational safety and health was established for all the EU Member States and a new, more comprehensive approach was formulated. The focus of preventative occupational safety and health policy was no longer on single risk factors such as noise, dust or vibration, but on the inherent risks, stress and strain factors associated with the individual workplace as a whole.

The stipulations in the EU-Framework Directive have now been transferred into national law in most of the Member States.





## A Network for Workplace Health Promotion

In the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties, the EU Member States committed themselves to a more active health policy and to improving co-operation in the field of public health. The way was now open for launching specific activities relating to health promotion in Europe. In the Programme of Action on Health Promotion, Information and Training many activities with the common aim of “raising the level of health” in the Community were initiated between 1996 and 2000. Workplace Health Promotion became part of a comprehensive interdisciplinary Programme of Health Promotion in the EU.

The ambitious task of establishing workplace health promotion in each of the 15 EU Member States led to the idea of developing a European Network for Workplace Health Promotion. This forum is now firmly established and has proved very successful. A lively exchange of information and experience takes place between the national institutions and collective decisions are taken on programmes of action. One of the most important

outcomes of the Network has been the development of tools (quality criteria, questionnaire), which are now available to assist companies in their efforts to implement workplace health promotion.

The success of the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion can also be seen in its list of members. In addition to members from OHS and public health institutions from all 15 EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Rumania and Poland are now represented in the Network. A contact office (NCO) was set up in every country and the Network is co-ordinated by the Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Dortmund (Germany). The secretariat is located at the BKK Bundesverband . DG Health and Consumer Protection of the European Commission supports the Network.

1996

Foundation of the Network for WHP

1997

The 'Luxembourg Declaration' was ratified

1998

Passing of the 'Cardiff Memorandum'

1999

June 1999 - Final conference of the 1st ENWHP initiative 'Success factors and quality of WHP' Presentation of the publications 'Quality criteria, questionnaire and models of good practice in WHP'

2000

2nd ENWHP initiative 'WHP in small and medium sized enterprises' Development of the 3rd initiative 'WHP in public sector'

## What is Workplace Health Promotion?

>> *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, 1997

In 1997 a common European understanding of workplace health promotion was defined. This was encapsulated in the Luxembourg Declaration which became the first important milestone of the European Network. In the Declaration the Network Partners outlined the objectives of workplace health promotion and laid down the guidelines for Network activities. The basis was laid for future Network projects.

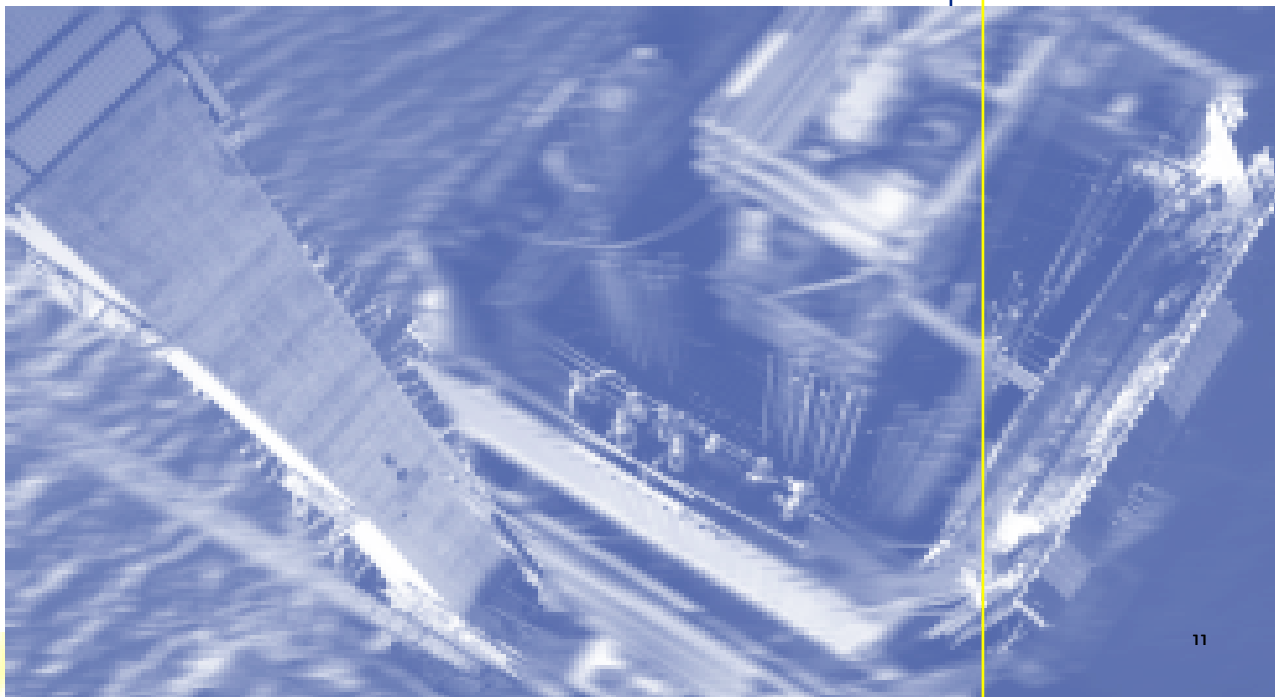


## What is “Good Practice”?

Successful health promotion can only be achieved if the quality of the measures undertaken is ensured. For this reason, the Network initiated a joint project in 1997 aimed at identifying companies in the Member States who set an outstanding example in the field of workplace health promotion.

At the outset an extensive catalogue of quality criteria for workplace health promotion were drawn up by the Network. The quality

criteria and the derived questionnaire help companies to evaluate their own health activities and also judge whether the required standards have been met. In this respect, both the catalogue of quality criteria and the questionnaire are important instruments for ensuring that “good intentions” actually produce good workplace health promotion practice.



# Quality Criteria for Workplace Health Promotion

The criteria are divided into six groups. They enable the decision-makers in companies to gain a comprehensive picture of the quality of workplace health promotion activities. The main points in the groups are summarised below:

## 1. Corporate policy

The success of workplace health promotion depends on it being perceived as a vital managerial responsibility and being integrated into existing management systems. A written corporate philosophy on WHP is equally as important as the active support of the company management in its implementation, their willingness to provide the necessary resources and the regular monitoring of the progress of the health promotion measures are essential.

## 2. Human resource management and work organisation

A major requirement of human resource management in the promotion of health at work is to fully take into consideration, the skills, aptitudes and experience of the employees when planning and organising working practices and tasks.

A second major requirement for the success of workplace health promotion is that all employees are actively involved in the planning and decision-making processes relating to health at work and working practices and tasks.

## 3. Planning of workplace health promotion

Workplace health promotion is successful when it is based on a clear model which is continuously reviewed, improved and communicated to all staff.

## 4. Social responsibility

A crucial factor for the success of workplace health promotion is whether and how an organisation fulfils its responsibility in dealing with natural resources together with the support it gives health promoting initiatives at local, regional, national and international level.

## 5. Implementation of workplace health promotion

Workplace health promotion comprises measures for health promoting job design and the support of health behaviour. It is successful when these measures are permanently inter-linked and systematically implemented.

## 6. Results of workplace health promotion

A number of short, medium and long-term indicators can be used to measure the success of workplace promotion. These include: customer satisfaction, satisfaction of staff with working conditions, absenteeism and accident rates, motivation and staff turnover.

## Learning from others: Models of Good Practice

The European Network has selected companies from all the EU Member States who have set a good example in implementing workplace health promotion measures. The activities carried out in these companies have been documented and published by the Network. The following two models of good practice illustrate successful examples of workplace health promotion.

*Greece*

### **Example: ELAIS**

*ELAIS states in its corporate guidelines that one of its objectives is to promote the well-being of employees and their families. The occupational health department is responsible for workplace health promotion. It reports to the human resources manager of the company. At ELAIS health promotion is incorporated into the culture of total quality management. The department has its own separate budget.*

#### *Health groups for everyone*

*A steering committee whose members belong to the company's executive team assesses the results of the health promotion measures and develops suggestions for improvement and further activities. Its work is supplemented by the numerous quality and health groups which all ELAIS employees participate in.*

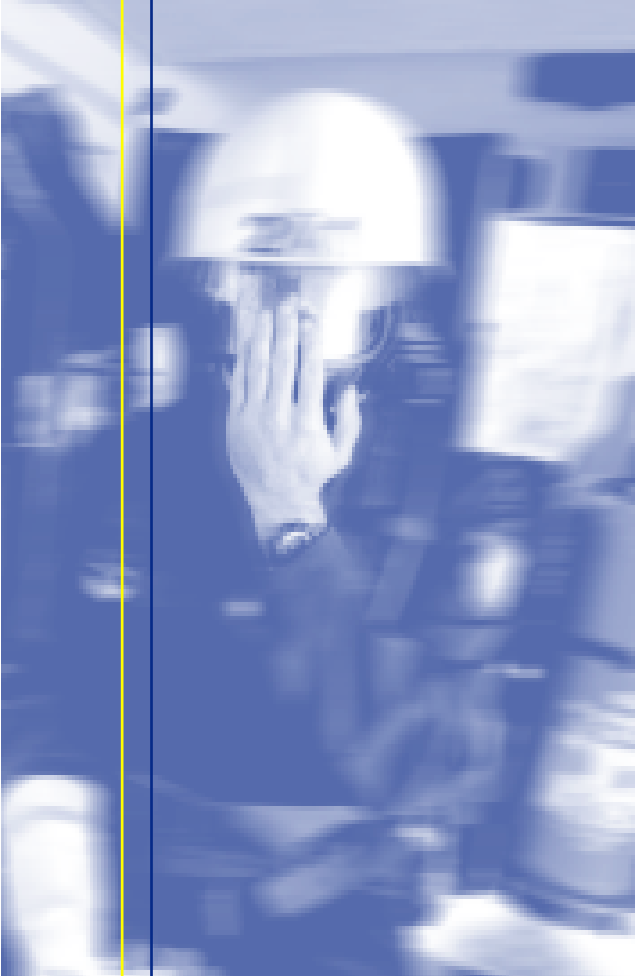
*The following data is used as a basis for planning: days lost due to illness and industrial accident, the medical examination of the entire workforce (annually) as well as the results of the staff survey on job satisfaction (annually) are included. Moreover, regular studies into the work requirements and working conditions are conducted.*

*The human resources department constantly compares the qualifications and skills of the employees with the respective job demands. The further training needs determined in this way are satisfied by two in-house training centres.*

*ELAIS also promotes the reconciliation of family and working life. For mothers there are flexible working hours. Excursions lasting several days and other social events ("Women's Day", children's parties etc.) are organised every year for the employees and their families.*

#### *Better satisfied, healthier employees*

*As a result of health-related activities, staff satisfaction at ELAIS has risen continually, the working conditions have become healthier and safer. Over the last three years the working days lost due to illness fell by 10% and the accident rate by 77.5%.*



*Sweden*

## **Example: Firebrigade Malmö – Sweden**

*The Malmö fire brigade is convinced that people like doing well. The company wants to create a climate in which the employees can enjoy their work. Their ideas on work organisation are taken on board as it is assumed that they themselves can best solve the problems which arise. Trust and support play a crucial role in the leadership style.*

*“People want to achieve something...”*

*The development of the WHP principles at the Malmö fire brigade including the on-going planning, supervision, control and evaluation of the measures implemented is the responsibility of specifically designated committees. In addition to this, the “departmental council” meets once a month to discuss topics relevant to health and safety and to plan appropriate campaigns. Staff representatives work in steering committees on the design, implementation and evaluation of WHP measures. Outside these committees employees actively discuss possible improvements in working conditions - supported by a good information flow and an open atmosphere. Staff development plays an important role at the company. At least once a year superiors discuss personal and professional development with each employee. Colleagues with alcohol or drug problems receive qualified counselling with the aim of being treated and returning to his/her workplace. Another group deals with the prevention and treatment of traumatic stress caused by very difficult call-outs.*

*... People are capable of this.”*

*The great commitment of the employees has contributed towards firmly anchoring health promotion within the company. The working atmosphere and image have improved, staff turnover and absenteeism are low at an average of 9 days. Participation in fitness programmes is very high. The addiction programmes have also made savings. The accident rate fell from 70 to 22 between 1981 and 1997.*

# Workplace Health Promotion in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Throughout Europe more than 50% of the total workforce is employed in SMEs and the numbers are still increasing. In order to do justice to the special needs of SMEs, the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion set a further objective. The Cardiff Memorandum (November 1998), stated:

“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”

The European Network has given priority to supporting SMEs and has established contact with national networks and players who can provide assistance with the implementation of workplace health promotion activities. This “on-site” expertise ensures that the peculiarities of SMEs are not seen as a disadvantage and can in fact be of advantage. For example, the close contact existing between employers and employees in smaller enterprises can be of benefit when implementing a new company health philosophy.



## Italy

### **Example: Water Team Srl**

*The Water Team S.r.l. is responsible for the entire cycle of water treatment. Eighteen people work here and all have a degree or have completed some form of professional training.*

#### **Securing health and safety at work**

*At the end of 1995 official guidelines were introduced to safeguard health and safety at the workplace for all full-time employees plus anyone involved with the workplace on an intermittent basis.*

*The enterprise bases its health and safety system on the OHSAS 18001:1999 quality certificate guidelines. Bringing employees into the decision making process is thought to play an important part in improving health and safety. Staff have a day-to-day understanding of the way the plant co-operates and have a valuable contribution to make. Staff are encouraged to make suggestions for enhancing the working environment and these are taken seriously. Employees can either discuss their thoughts directly with management or make contact via e-mail or on the intranet. Two months before the annual general meeting all the employees fill in a questionnaire anonymously. Forty-two questions touch on a number of areas: quality and improvement, organisation, relationships with other employees, pay, benefits, safety, communication, management, personal satisfaction, personal development. A questionnaire also goes out to the clients in order to ascertain their level of satisfaction. At the AGM the results of the questionnaires are presented and discussed.*

#### **Looking at the results**

*Absenteeism within this business is below average and staff turnover is low. This indicates that employee health is good and that job satisfaction is also high. As indicated earlier, analysis of the questionnaires suggests that morale is excellent and that there is a good working atmosphere and good relationships between staff. Job security is a factor that influences well-being and as prospects are good here, this has a positive impact on employees. In 1998 Water Team was the successful candidate and voted Italian Quality Company; it was also awarded the EFQM European Quality Award both in 1999 and 2000 – the only Italian company to receive this distinction!*

## Greece

### **Example: Zeneca Hellas S.A.**

*Zeneca employs 32 people and produces pesticides and public health products. In 1999, it was listed among the 100 most successful companies in Greece. It was also given an award for its excellent performance in safety, health and the environment.*

#### **Employee participation**

*Zeneca has a policy of involving employees in work related matters. Discussion on OHS problems is encouraged and suggestions welcomed. Employee knowledge and expertise is valued highly and it is understood that everyone has an important contribution to make. Many important health and safety improvements have come about as a direct result of consultation with staff.*

#### **Statutory health and safety regulations and Workplace Health Promotion**

*Zeneca employs an on site safety engineer, an occupational doctor and employee workplace health and safety representatives.*

#### **Exemplary working conditions**

*The factory is designed ergonomically throughout. Recent office refurbishment provided more space, while colour schemes were chosen by employees. Production units are spacious and well ventilated but warm in winter. Work schedules can be organised to suit working mothers and those who live far away from the workplace.*

*WHP projects are overseen by the occupational doctor and a senior manager. Tests such as measuring blood pressure are performed by the doctor, usually on the request of staff. Personal medical profiles are then kept on record.*

*A number of health promotion programmes have been implemented: stopping smoking, safe driving, healthy lifestyle, HIV/AIDS, fire safety and safe lifting techniques. These have been well received by staff.*

*No serious or fatal accidents have occurred at Zeneca in the last 15 years. Staff turnover is low; many employees stay with the company until retirement age. Absenteeism due to occupational illness is also very low. This points to a strong link between good workplace health and safety policies and a high standard of employee health and personal satisfaction.*





## Health Promotion and Workplace Health Management

Over the last 15 years workplace health promotion has developed into an independent discipline and has been successfully introduced to many European countries. One of the traditional concepts originated in America where there is a long history of workplace programmes using behavioural prevention to address issues such as smoking, nutrition and exercise. Although the programmes have improved over the years and have expanded to combine several issues (e.g. exercise and weight reduction), participation was often limited to those who were already very health-conscious with high risk groups not taking part.

Experience has shown that employees' attitudes to health can only be changed if the company also sets an example. For instance, changes to employees' dietary habits can only be influenced if the company canteen takes part in the programmes and implements and maintains nutritional recommendations. Incorporating workplace health promotion in the company philosophy has emerged as a decisive factor for success. Workplace health promotion should be integrated into the daily decision

making processes on all levels of the enterprise. Support from the management and the participation by the employees on all levels is essential.

Many European countries have envisaged integrating workplace health promotion into company management systems. In conjunction with this approach, management systems are now being developed to include workplace health promotion. The rationale behind this thinking is that workplace health can only be achieved through management systems with fully integrated health issues and the systematic involvement of all areas and levels of an enterprise.

The rapid changes taking place in today's marketplace, growing global competition and the fact of constant innovation mean that a healthy workforce is an important resource for a company and is vital for its chances of survival.

For these reasons, it is essential that workplace health promotion is incorporated into organisational, personal and production development.

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