

SOCIAL PARTNERS' CONFERENCE



APPROACHES TO THE ISSUE OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL RISKS AND STRESS AT WORK



Helsinki conference 10 November 2015

On 10 November 2015 in Helsinki, HOSPEEM and EPSU held a social partners' conference on approaches to the issue of psychosocial risks and stress at work (PSRS@W), the second major activity foreseen under their joint project on health and safety risks in the hospital sector. This event, supported by EPSU and co-organised by the Finnish EPSU affiliates JHL, Superlitto and Tehy, was the contribution of HOSPEEM and EPSU to the EU-OSHA 2014-2015 "Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress" Campaign, as official campaign partners.

The conference brought together 80 participants from 18 EU Member States. It was mainly attended by trade unions' and employers' representatives. The European Commission (DG EMPL, Health and Safety Unit) as well as national experts in the field of psycho-social risks and stress at work also took part in this event.

PSRS@W: major work-related health problems in the hospital sector

Some facts and figures about PSRS@W:

- Psychosocial risks and stress at work are the second most frequently reported occupational hazards across the EU-28, after musculoskeletal disorders.
- PSRS@W significantly impact workers' health and well-being, organisations and society as a whole.
- Around half of European workers consider work-related stress to be common in their workplace.
- 50 to 60% of all lost working days can be attributed to work-related stress. Stress-related absences tend to be longer than those arising from other causes.
- Costs of PSRS@W are significant for organisations and national economies. The national costs of occupational stress in France were estimated at between 2 and 3 billion euros in 2007.

Source: EU-OSHA, data not specific to the healthcare sector.

Raising awareness and identifying good practice examples

The purpose of this second conference was to raise awareness amongst employers and trade unions and improve their understanding and knowledge of psychosocial risks and stress in the hospital sector. The conference also aimed at highlighting the benefits of preventing and managing psychosocial risks for health workers and healthcare institutions and presenting practical tools and good practice examples to successfully address them.

Conference highlights

This one-day conference was chaired by Margret Steffen, President of the EPSU Standing Committee for Health and Social Services, and Bjorn Henriksen, Vice-Secretary General of HOSPEEM.

To start with, the contracted expert Nico Knibbe (LOCOMotion Research NL) recalled the main outcomes of the first conference organised in Paris on 25 March 2015 on the issue of musculoskeletal disorders in the hospital sector and clearly emphasized the strong linkage between psycho-social risks and work-related stress and musculoskeletal disorders.



"When people are off it is harder to get them back, it is more costly and it has implications on the rest of the team. Doing nothing is not an option".

P. Kelly

The necessity of taking actions to tackle PSRS@W in the hospital sector was stressed firmly by Peter Kelly (Health and Safety Executive, UK), as health workers, in particular nurses, report the highest prevalence of psychosocial risks and work-related stress and as sufficient data about

PSRS@W in the health sector are available across Europe. He particularly highlighted the need to act before problems occur and emphasized the crucial dimension of communication and the importance for employers, employees and their representatives to work together.

In their presentation, James Tracey (NHS Trust, UK) and Kim Sunley (RCN,UK) put the emphasis on the benefit of working in partnership to successfully combat PSRS@W in the hospital sector and have a bigger impact, as illustrated by the guidance on prevention and management of stress at work developed by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Partnership Group. The need to engage employees and involve them into the decision making process in order to make change possible was strongly underlined.

A number of practical and inspiring instruments and approaches to assess, prevent and manage psychosocial risks and work-related stress were presented in-depth during the conference.

Albert Nienhaus (CVcare, DE) presented a tool for psychosocial risk assessment widely used in the healthcare sector in Germany, the Copenhagen psychosocial questionnaire, and particularly stressed the need for employers to perform a thorough risk assessment and involve workers and workers' representatives in such a process.

Sarah Rutten-Ketelaar (Academic Medical Center Amsterdam, NL) focused on the approach in place at the AMC to prevent work-related health problems called workers' health surveillance, consisting in a work-related health examination and a discussion of the results between the employee and an occupational physician, with the possibility of being given advice on how to improve work-related health.

The routine implemented by Region Gävleborg (Sweden) to prevent and handle harassment was explained in detail by Tord Andersson, Malin Vadelius and Anders Westlund.



"Everybody has a role to play in making stress management effective"

J. Tracey and K. Sunley

Throughout the day, the speakers underlined that good practice examples, instruments and material to deal with these risks were available across the EU but that they failed to be implemented.

To conclude the day, Saija Koskensalmi (Finnish Institute of Occupational Health) introduced the concept of work engagement, a positive, stable and affective-motivational state of fulfilment, where employee well-being is at its best. She highlighted in particular the positive impact of work engagement on health, job performance, job commitment, satisfaction and work productivity.

Moreover, a successful example of risk assessment and primary prevention of psychosocial risks and stress in the context of the transfer of several clinics on a same site in France was presented by Valérie d'Almeida (CFDT Bayonne) and Catherine Allemand (Syndex, FR). The involvement of employees and the well-functioning social dialogue were highlighted as being decisive for the success of the project.

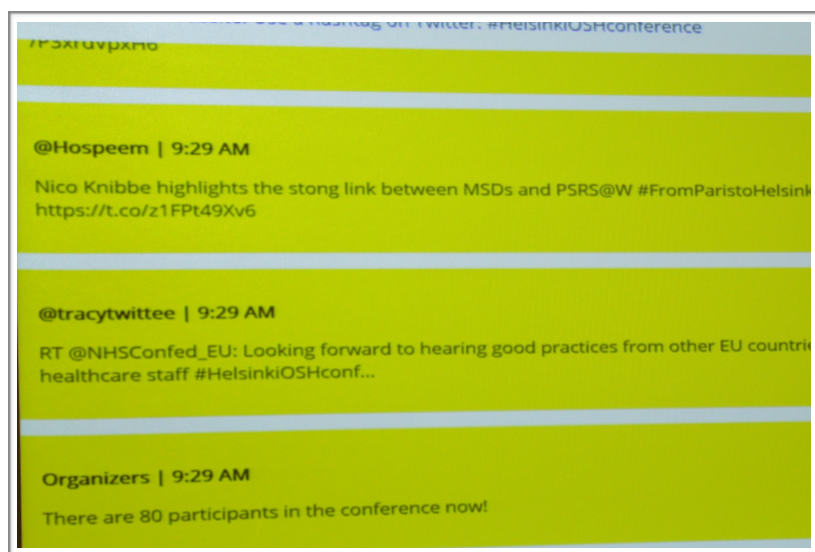
"Small positive effects on job-related resources can be achieved in each job and in each work community. Each positive effect is followed by the next positive effect and the next"

S. Koskensalmi.



Representatives from EPSU, HOSPEEM and DG EMPL participating in the closing panel put great emphasis on the need to take actions in the hospital sector without further delay, to continue to raise awareness about PSRS@W and to better implement existing guidelines and tools.

All the presentations are available on the dedicated [HOSPEEM](#) and [EPSU](#) webpages and the relevant material collected on PSRS@W is available [here](#). The recording of the conference is available [here](#).



In order to ensure interactivity, a message wall was used during the conference, enabling participants to actively contribute by asking questions to the speakers and making comments on the presentations.



Acknowledgements :

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