

Statement by the European Social Dialogue Committee in Central Government Administrations

10/12/2013

Towards well-being at work in central government administrations as part of a new EU occupational safety and health strategy framework

1. The social partners in the EU social dialogue committee for central government administrations (hereafter the Committee) have adopted this statement with a view to setting out health and safety priorities in their sector and contribute to the ongoing debate on a new EU strategy on occupational safety and health (OSH).
2. The Committee solemnly recalls that the protection of health and safety at work is a fundamental worker's right and a fundamental employer's duty, both recognized by the ILO conventions, the European Union treaty and the 1989 health and safety framework directive. Economic consideration cannot justify derogations of this right.
3. The social partners consider that the definition of health and safety goes beyond the avoidance of accidents and prevention of disease to include all aspects of workers' well-being
4. The social partners note that the EC OSH strategy 2007-2012 has played a positive role in keeping health and safety high on the national agendas of social partners, raising awareness on emerging health and safety risks and new diseases.
5. The social partners want to pay attention to the impact on working conditions of major developments in our sector such as restructuring, ageing workforce, the search for efficiency, rising demands on service quality and availability. They stress the need for information and training of workers involved in those developments. They reaffirm their will to deal with these matters through the social dialogue.
6. The Committee calls upon the Commission to maintain and improve an EU multiannual strategy on health and safety, pursuant to TFEU article 153. Such a policy strategy should have a broad scope encompassing both public and private sectors, physical and mental health, and be precise enough for regular monitoring of progress and flexible enough for sectoral adaptations via negotiations or legislation. As part of this strategy, the role of labour inspectors and other administrations charged with OSH and of health and safety workplace representatives in developing a preventive approach to health and safety at work must be given top priority.
7. In light of the above, the following priority areas are identified that will be further developed as part of the new work programme 2014-2016 of the Committee:
 - ✓ Following up on the adoption of a new EC strategy on occupational safety and health;
 - ✓ Reducing and preventing work-related diseases, (such as musculoskeletal disorders), psycho-social risks (e.g. stress, "burn-out" and related diseases), sick leave, absenteeism or presenteeism. Not starting from scratch, the Committee will follow up on its work in the context of the informal social dialogue including a joint statement on combatting stress at work (2008) and compilation of good policies (2009)¹. The Committee will discuss its possible participation in the ongoing multisectoral work (social partners in local and regional government, security services, amongst others) on third party violence at work following the adoption of guidelines to tackle third party violence

¹ <http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/stresscompilx.pdf>

and harassment at work (2010)². It will exchange good practices and policies on training and awareness raising of all staff including management and middle-management, on identification of psycho-social risks, changes in work organisation and e.government;

- ✓ Analysing compliance and enhancement of social dialogue and workers participation as key factors in a sound occupational health and safety policy both for prevention and cure. In this regard, the role of OSH representatives and trade union representatives will be better supported including through vocational training, recognizing the appropriate rights and facilitating easy access of OSH information and advice for all employees;
- ✓ Exchanging good practices on managing different age groups and career paths with a view to ensuring well-being at work until the end of the career;
- ✓ Reviewing recent developments with working time arrangements.

² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=896&furtherNews=yes>