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Industrial relations and social dialogue**

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VP/2016/001/0107**

**Working title:
“Mental Health in Construction Work”**

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**Lead applicant: EFBWW
Co-applicant: FIEC**

Description and work programme of the project

“Mental Health in Construction Work”

CONTENT:

1. Introduction
2. Goals of the project
3. Links with the objectives and priorities of the budget heading and other EU-policies
4. Partners and staff involved
5. Timetable of activities

1. Introduction

Good working conditions and quality work are two sides of the same coin and today it is broadly recognized that in this relation various parameters are influencing the overall work situation. Work processes are made of interactions between people, between the worker and the machinery, of exchanges of information and psychological systems, to name just a few combinations. This mentioning of the various parameters of influence already shows the complexity of today's working processes.

It is furthermore undisputed that we have experienced a (gradual) switch from physical to more mental activities, from individual work activities to more interactive processes and from standardised to more flexible work arrangements.

All these aspects, together with other external factors (economic crisis, employment instability, etc.), have an effect on our occupational activities and the psycho-mental strain. Principally, the above-mentioned changes can, on the one hand, improve the knowledge base in today's occupations, they allow (and demand) to continuously adapt to new work arrangements and are based on continuous learning. On the other hand, these changes can have unexpected and undesirable side-effects.

Over the years, as an effect of these developments, we have been witnessing a growing occurrence of psycho-mental illnesses in European countries. Health insurances are reporting about a growing share of absenteeism based on this type of diseases. The Austrian Social Security Institutions published a report

(<http://www.hauptverband.at/portal27/portal/hvbportal/content/contentWindow?contentid=10007.728936&action=2>)

stating that over the last two decades the number of psychosocial illnesses has continuously increased and in total tripled. What is of relevance in this respect is also the character of psycho-social illnesses. They are in tendency chronic and result in long periods of absenteeism. The German state health insurance is documenting an average of 25.2 days for each sick leave caused by psychosocial illness.

(http://www.aok-bv.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/2015/index_14199.html)

Being aware of the importance of psychosocial well being at the workplace, the European Commission published a Green Paper in 2005 on "Improving the mental health of the population – Towards a strategy on mental health for the European Union" (Com[2005]848). Later, on 12 and 13 June 2008, under the title "Together for Mental Health and Well-Being", a High Level Conference took place in Brussels. The problem was also highlighted in both Community strategies for OSH at workplaces, COM[2007]62 final published in 2007 and the "Strategic Framework" (COM[2014]332 final) published in 2014. Equally, the European Parliament showed great concern and paid strong attention to the issue. A Resolution on Mental Health was adopted on 19 February 2009 and in its Resolutions on the last two Community strategies for occupational safety and health, Parliament each time highlighted the subject.

The high importance of the topic is also proven by the decision of the OSHA Agency in Bilbao, by choosing the topic of psychosocial risks for their 2014 – 2105 campaign in which both FIEC as well as the EFBWW were campaign partners.

Workers and employers are equally concerned and therefore the topic, even though it is highly complex and not easy to deal with, was put on the agenda of the European social partner organisations and other institutions already a long time ago. In 2006, the cross sectorial social dialogue (ETUC, Business Europe [UNICE], UEAPME and CEEP) agreed on an autonomous framework agreement on work-related stress.

Already on 10 January 2006, the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) and the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC), agreed on a joint declaration on this topic. Additionally, they supported a research study on “Stress in the European construction sector: up-to-the-minute?” published in 2004. (CLR Studies 3, CLR/Reed Business Information)

Undoubtedly, the reason for an individual illness can have various grounds i.e. internal/individual reasons and external reasons and it can be difficult to determine which ones are clearly work-related. Taking this into account the European OSH-Agency in its campaign drew the conclusion that occupational health activities should focus on work related aspects and not on the individual person (see also page 16 of the campaign guide). FIEC and the EFBWW also consider an approach (as presented by the EN 10 075 standard) focusing on the work related aspects as promising because these aspects can be directly influenced by the social partners on company level.

To understand the complexity of the issue one needs to take into account the main characteristics of construction work, which have implications on occupational safety and health. Unlike other (stationary) workplaces, a construction site and each of its workplaces are continuously changing and requires collaboration between workers of various professions and occupations. These characteristics have implications on occupational safety and health. Construction comprises a high number of different occupations. This creates a strong need for co-operation between their respective activities; construction activities are executed under ever changing climate conditions, construction itself is permanently changing the environment (distinct to many other industrial and work activities). Construction is furthermore confronted with various types of technology, often not standardised, and a broad range of machinery. Construction work is also confronted with short deadlines and high expectations of clients.

To develop tailor made approaches for the evaluation and reduction of psychosocial hazards, all these aspects have to be examined, also taking into account questions such as qualifications, the design of the respective task, etc. A thorough evaluation of these aspects are a precondition for the design of useful evaluation tools and for establishing appropriate risk reduction measures. We intend to subcontract the research part of the project.

2. Goals of the project and deliverables

The project partners believe that a better dialogue could support not only a better understanding of the overall topic and the mutual understanding of each other's views and concerns, but could also help establish a structural exchange of information. We are aiming at a more profound understanding of pathways for solutions that take into account the specific situation of construction work and changes within the various work processes/occupations, equally taking into account the high number of small enterprises in our sector and the specific conditions linked to subcontracting. In this respect, we consider the envisaged research into changes of working and framework conditions as crucial. However, already today there are good examples available that deal with psychosocial risks on company level. We are aiming to also include these in our research and to promote the knowledge obtained.

The goals of the project are to:

1. Present (some) existing concepts
2. Collect good examples and practical approaches
3. Run research on changes in construction work and its framework conditions
4. Work out a concept for an “Evaluation Tool/guidelines” for helping construction companies to assess and reduce psychosocial risks at work, focussing, amongst others, on the specific conditions in micro and small enterprises

On a second level, the project aims at fostering discussions and activities at national level. We are aware of the fact that in many countries, the resources to deal with this subject are very much restricted. Additionally, there are seldom other institutions or structures providing sector specific approaches or solutions. The research shall improve the stakeholders’ understanding of the subject and good practice examples shall allow social partners on company level to practically deal with the issue.

Complementary to the listed deliverables, we are aiming at designing a precise dissemination and follow-up activity plan, guaranteeing a lasting impact of the project.

The project partners intend to organise a one-day workshop (dealing with goals 1, 2, and 3) in the beginning of the project and a final conference to present deliverable 4. Goal 3 shall be subcontracted to a professional institute/organisation.

The planned deliverables are the following:

- A “Handbook” collecting information on goals 1, 2, and 4 – published in 8 languages and containing probably 26 pages (A4)
- A research report (goal 3) published in English only – maximum 100 pages (A4)

3. Links with the objectives and priorities of the budget heading and other EU policies

As pointed out in the introduction, this project application meets the concerns of European policy makers, is in line with various programmes and policy action of the European Commission and meets some of the core activities supported by the call for Proposals VP/2016/001.

This action fully fits within the objectives of the European Commission’s Call For Proposals (‘Support for European Social Dialogue – VP/2016/001’). The contents and goals of the project are clearly related to some of the main objectives and priorities of the call, i.e:

- Changes in employment and work related changes but also the anticipation of change
- Quality of work
- Health and safety at work
- Active ageing and healthier and longer working lives

The action is focusing on the quality of work and especially the health conditions in work processes. By giving access to a better understanding of the complex relations of the work organisation and its effects on psychosocial risks, it will be possible to improve the quality of work and reduce absenteeism. By this, the action is also directly contributing to healthier and longer working lives and meets therefore the EU core policy area of demographic change.

The research, by dealing with various drivers of change, will allow us to anticipate further changes in construction work.

The action is a part of the social partner work programme of the construction industry for 2016 to 2019 and builds on previous discussions within the social dialogue construction. We underline that the project is aiming at a better social dialogue in an area which is not always easy to deal with both in companies and between organisations.

This application is clearly in line with the EC Communication (COM[2014]332 final) on 'A strategic framework on health and safety at work 2014 – 2020'. More particularly, the project intends to involve stakeholders in discussions and co-operation on several of the seven strategic priorities pointed out by the Communication:

- Contributing to national strategies in a clearly localized area,
- Facilitating compliance with OSH legislation by presenting specific solutions
- Tackling the problem of demographic change by improving the ergonomics of machinery
- Contributing especially to the strategic objective of an ageing workforce and the prevention of work-related diseases

The Commission Communication also calls for the active collaboration of social partners with the aim of enhancing job quality in order to support productivity and competitiveness. Challenges to be addressed include the capacity to put in place effective and efficient risk prevention measures. Once again, in the area of psychosocial workplace hazards, social partners can show their capacity to find responses which meet both workers' and companies' interests. Contributing to a better understanding of the topic and presenting tailor-made approaches for specific work constellations, the project is also contributing to a sustainable industry in Europe and therefore, meets vital aspects of the EU 2020 strategy.

4. Partners and staff involved

a. Involvement of social partners at European level

The European sectoral social partners for the construction sector, namely the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW) and the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) will be partners in this project.

The EFBWW will manage and coordinate the project and both social partners will jointly execute the project activities and the decision-making processes regarding all relevant aspects of the action.

The research part of the project shall be subcontracted.

A project steering group of eight people will be established. The two partners, assisted by their affiliates, will execute the overall project activities as well as the preparation and running of the two larger gatherings. They will also jointly work on the preparation and dissemination of the project deliverables and accompany and evaluate the research work.

b. Involvement of the social partners and members at national level

The role of the social partners, members of EFBWW and FIEC, at their national level will be on the one hand to disseminate and promote the project results and, on the other hand, to prepare and participate in the respective workshops. Some national affiliated federations will contribute with good practice examples. Additionally, they will be represented in the project steering group and, by this, be directly involved in the collection and evaluation of concepts on psychosocial risks, the design of the 'Evaluation Tool/guidelines' and the research activities to which we expect some contributions from the national social partners as well. We consider the active involvement of some national members of both European social partner organisations as crucial for the project. Furthermore, we like to encourage national affiliated organisations to improve the social dialogue in their respective country.

c. External Expertise

External expertise will be mobilized for the initiating workshop at the beginning of the project.

d. Activities to be sub-contracted

- The research activities on the character and changes in construction work shall be subcontracted. We will subcontract a) the coordination of the research activities, including the drafting and finalization of the research report and b) national reporting from 6 to 8 countries.
- Interpretation, translation of texts, design of the "Handbook" and printing of material shall be subcontracted.

For all activities listed under d., the participating partners do not have sufficient in-house capacity or equipment required. Subcontracting these activities is therefore more efficient and finally less cost intensive.

5. Timetable of activities

For carrying out the action, we will establish a Steering Group. This Steering Group shall consist of eight members, four each from EFBWW and FIEC. The EFBWW will be the overall co-ordinator.

The project partners intend to undertake this project according to the following work-plan and timetable.

Before each of the steering group meetings, the coordinator will arrange the necessary preparatory activities, i.e. preparing and sending invitations, documents and further information relevant for the respective meeting. Working language for the steering group meetings is English. The first workshop will work with simultaneous interpretation into six languages the final conference with eight.

Preparatory phase

In a first step, the project partners will appoint the eight members of the steering group. During the preparatory phase of the project, the Steering Group will fine-tune and agree on the work-plan and the individual activities. Both partners will use the preparatory phase to establish contacts to national affiliated organisations and experts (especially prevention institutions) to mobilize expertise.

The EFBWW in cooperation with FIEC will prepare, communicate and launch a tender for the subcontracting of the research activities. The deadline for bids shall be set before the first steering group meeting, allowing us to present an evaluation of received bids at the first steering group meeting.

1st Steering Group - 2nd month

- Agreement on the work-plan and confirmation of the project timetable
- Tender for the research activities, bids and their evaluation
- Agreement on structure, content and responsibilities for the one-day workshops
- Discussion on aspects for a dissemination plan
- Selection of occupations and countries for the research
- Draft invitation letter to present good practice examples
- Reporting on EU activities in the area

2nd Steering Group - 5th month

- Detailed preparation of the workshop
- Discussion on internal reporting and evaluation activities
- Reporting to the European social dialogue
- Presentation and discussion dissemination plan
- Possible reports on national information or activities related to the project topics
- Updating on EU activities in the related area
- Design of the research activities - to be discussed with the contractor
- Nomination of national research partners

One-day workshop - 6th month

Aim of this workshop is to:

- Gather various stakeholders (social partners and other experts) and experiences, providing contacts for the research and looking for good practice examples
- Present the project, its concept, the aims and expected deliverables
- General information on psychosocial risks
- Receive information about the EU discussions on psychosocial hazards at workplaces (for example Commission; Social Partner agreement; EN 10075; Bilbao Agency)
- Deal with the specifics of various type of construction work

30 Participants

6 languages

Invitation (translation)

Presentations (maybe five) (translations)

Main activity

The main activity will be to

- Evaluate and report on various approaches of psychosocial hazards at workplaces
- Following discussions at EU-level
- Working out an Evaluation and risk reduction Tool/guidelines for psychosocial risks in the construction sector
- Collecting good practices
- Carrying out the research
- Preparing the deliverables
- Preparing the final conference
- Dissemination and planning of follow up activities

3rd Steering Group - 8th month

- Evaluation of the 1st one-day workshop
- Status report on research activities
- Status report about the various chapters of the “Handbook” and evaluation of the draft concept and content of the “Evaluation Tool/guidelines”
- Discussing further dissemination activities
- First internal evaluation report

4th Steering Group - 16th month

- Presentation of the draft research report
- Finalisation of the “Handbook”
- Reporting on the respective dissemination activities – including further planning of dissemination activities
- Reporting (including timelines) on the coming activities: finalisation of documents, translation, proofreading, layout printing)
- Preparation of the final conference

Final Conference - 21st month

Aim of this conference is to:

- Present the deliverables
- Present research results
- Present dissemination activities and jointly consider with the participants possible action on national/company levels
- Brainstorm on follow-up action and how to ensure a lasting impact of the project
- Launch a press release

60 participants

8 languages

Invitation (translation)

Presentations (five) (translations)

Press Release (translation)

Follow-up phase

A main focus during this follow-up phase is the further dissemination of the project results and the thorough consideration what type of follow up activities are suitable to guarantee the highest possible impact of the project results.

5th Steering Group - 22nd month

- Second report on the project evaluation
- Discussion on the draft project report for the European Commission
- Reporting on joint and individual dissemination activities and planning the future dissemination activities
- Discussing possible follow-up activities, including the presentation of the concept and results to other sectors and stakeholders