



# **Mental health in the workplace**

## **Dortmund / 18 March 2020**

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# WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS AT WORK 1/3

- We spend a lot of time **at work**
- Workplaces present an important forum to identify and support existing **mental health needs**
- Work can be very positive for mental health (**and vice versa!**)
- Poor working conditions & quality of work : additional risk factors for **mental health**

# WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS AT WORK 2/3

- Persistence of stress can lead to other **problems and diseases (Chronic fatigue, burnout, musculoskeletal or cardiovascular diseases)**
- **Negative impact** on job satisfaction, morale and performance (i.e. absenteeism, presenteeism)
- **Negative impact** on productivity and health of the organisation
- The costs of poor mental health for individuals, employers and society are **enormous**

# WHY MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

## AT WORK **3/3**

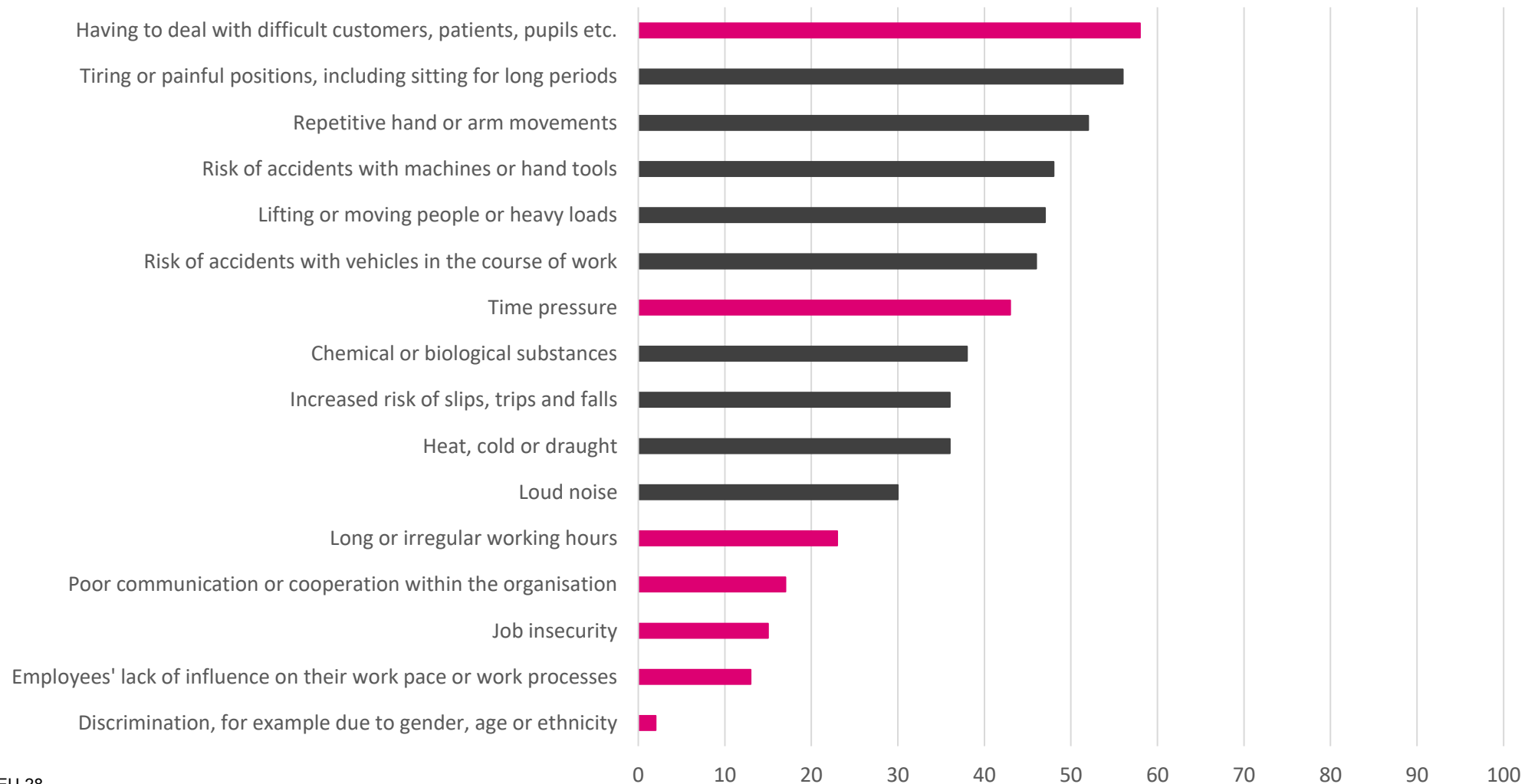
- **1 in 6 people** across EU countries has a mental health problems (84 million people)
- Overall costs related to mental ill-health are estimated to exceed **4% of GDP** across the 28 EU countries (EUR 600 billion)
- **1.6% of GDP** (or EUR 240 billion) in indirect costs related to labour market impacts (lower employment and lower productivity)
  - Absenteeism and lower productivity: EUR 42 billion in EU countries
  - Costs of presenteeism: EUR 23 billion

# UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND ITS RISKS 1/3

- **Work-related stress:** harmful physical and emotional response caused by an **imbalance** between the perceived demands and the perceived resources and abilities of individuals to cope with those demands.
  - Dynamic interaction between the individual and the environment
  - Stress is not a challenge
  - Not a disease, yet first sign of a problem
- **Psychosocial hazards/risks:** those aspects of the design and management of work and its social and organisational contexts which have the potential for causing psychological or physical harm.

# UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND ITS RISKS 2/3

## ESENER-2 – Risk factors present in the establishment (% establishments, EU-28)



Base: all establishments in the EU-28.

Note: psychosocial risk factors shaded in pink.

Source: [2014 ESENER-2 survey by EU OSHA](#)

# UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND ITS RISKS 3/3

## Psychosocial risks

Poor work design, organisation and management

Unfavourable social context of work

## Work-related stress

Demands at work are beyond worker's capacity to cope with them


## Negative outcomes

Emotional  
Cognitive  
Behavioural  
Physical and mental ill-health


## Non work-related factors

major life events, serious illness, bereavement, etc.


# HOW TO SUPPORT A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE ? 1/3



★ Make an organisational commitment to mental health at board level, encourage senior executives to speak up and champion positive mental health.




♥ Create a culture of openness: mental health should not be a taboo subject at work, it should become a topic of conversation and a focus for shared activity (a walk, a shared lunch, a talk on how to look after your own mental health when under pressure, an informal meeting...).



★ Find ways of measuring the mental health and wellbeing of workforces and report to top level management and board level.



♥ Training on mental health for employers, front line managers and employees (identify, initiate conversation, support, respond appropriately, direct to professional counselling support).



♥ Consider reasonable adjustments for employees experiencing severe or longer term mental health problems (which can often be managed by making small, sometimes temporary, adjustments to working schedules or other adaptations at work).



## THINGS THAT MATTER



The manager's attitude towards the employee is the single most important factor that has a substantial impact on workers' mental health. Having a good manager can help employees to cope better with work-related stress or mental ill health.



# HOW TO SUPPORT A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE ? 2/3

- **Create a culture of openness:** mental health should not be a taboo subject at work, it should become a topic of conversation and a focus for shared activity
- Make an **organisational commitment to mental health** at board level, encourage senior executives to speak up and champion positive mental health
- Find **ways of measuring the mental health and wellbeing of workforces** and report to top level management and board level
- **Training on mental health** for employers, front line managers and employees
- Consider **reasonable adjustments** for employees experiencing severe or longer term mental health problems

# HOW TO SUPPORT A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE ? 3/3

## REWARD IS CRUCIAL

It may be linked to salary, but more broadly refers to the respect and esteem in which the person is held in the workplace.

## FAIRNESS IS KEY

Positive feelings of equity and fairness lead to increased satisfaction and motivation as well as commitment to work.

## LOOK AT THE WORKPLACE CULTURE

The organisational culture of the workplace – communication, leadership and clarity of role and structure of the workplace – can greatly affect the mental health of employees.

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS DECISIVE

Tensions between home and work have consequences for a person's mental health. Conflicting demands of work and home, a lack of support in the workplace for personal commitments, or a lack of support at home for work commitments can increase the risk of developing a mental health problem.

## PAY ATTENTION TO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

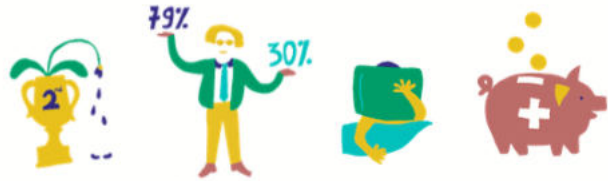
Inadequate, inconsiderate or un-supportive supervision, poor relationships with co-workers, bullying, harassment and isolation increase the risk of a mental health problems. There is also some evidence of a relationship between supervisory style (e.g. authoritarian, laissez-faire) and employee satisfaction.

# HOW TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE?



A mentally healthy workplace promotes positive mental health and wellbeing, actively works to prevent harm to employees' mental health and wellbeing and supports workers experiencing mental ill health.

## DID YOU KNOW?



Work-related stress is the second most reported work-related health problem in Europe. Around half of European workers consider it to be common in their workplace.

79% of European managers are concerned about stress in their workplaces but less than 30% of workplaces in Europe have procedures for dealing with it.

Mental health problems have become one of the leading causes for absenteeism from work and early retirement all over the European Region.

Unrecognised mental ill health which does not result in sickness absence is much more costly than days lost through people taking time off work.



Unaddressed mental ill health is responsible for a significant loss of potential labour supply, high rates of absenteeism, sickness absence and reduced productivity at work.



The causes of mental ill health may not only be associated with work but may be due to events or circumstances outside the workplace which can accumulate and cause distress.

Psychosocial risks arise from poor work design, organisation and management, as well as a poor social context of work, and they may result in negative psychological, physical and social outcomes such as work-related stress, burnout or depression.



The good news is that psychosocial risks can be prevented and managed regardless of business size or type. There is good evidence that inexpensive mental health promotion programmes in the workplace are cost effective!



The main psychosocial risk factors reported by employees in Europe are high or unmanageable workload, unrealistic expectations, role ambiguity, organisational changes, low job satisfaction and personal accomplishment, lack of recognition, unsuitable work-life balance, poor interpersonal relations and support at work, and workplace violence, including harassment and bullying.



Mental health is strongly related to the socioeconomic circumstances of people's lives. Poverty, unemployment, poor working conditions, substandard housing and poor education reduce well-being, as well as significantly increasing the risk of mental ill health.

# HOW TO SUPPORT A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE?

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- Find ways of measuring the mental health and wellbeing of workforce, and report to top level management and board level.
- Consider reasonable adjustments for employees experiencing severe or longer term mental health problems (which can often be managed by making small, sometimes temporary, adjustments to working schedules or other adjustments at work).
- Training on mental health for employers, front line managers and employees (Identify, initiate conversations, support, respond appropriately, direct to professional counselling support).

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Inadequate, inconsistent or un-supportive supervision, poor relationships with co-workers, bullying, harassment and isolation increase the risk of a mental health problem. There is also some evidence of a relationship between supervisory style (e.g. authoritarian, laissez-faire) and employee satisfaction.

Sources: EU-OSHA, OECD, World Health Organisation, International Labour Organisation, Department of Health, London, Centre for Mental Health  
More information at: [www.mhe-eme.org](http://www.mhe-eme.org)



MHE infographic: How to support a mentally healthy workplace?



**Thank you for your attention!**