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# EUPAN/TUNED REPORT OF GOOD PRACTICES AND POLICIES ON WORK-RELATED STRESS IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIONS

**TUNED**





# EUPAN/TUNED COMPILATION REPORT OF GOOD PRACTICES AND POLICIES ON WORK-RELATED STRESS IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATIONS

November 2009

## Background

This report is part of the follow-up to the joint position on work-related stress in central government administrations, adopted by TUNED and EUPAN<sup>1</sup> on 19 December 2008, under the auspices of the French EU presidency.

The topic of stress at work flows from the EUPAN/TUNED work programme within the framework of the 2008-2009 Test Phase of “*an enhanced informal social dialogue*”, introducing “*topics and forms of work in a formal social dialogue*” in central government administrations.

The aim of the joint position and follow-up is to increase awareness and understanding of work-related stress.

It is a recognition of the importance of identifying, preventing and managing problems connected to work-related stress in public administrations. Stress is one of the most common work-related health problems in Europe, with nearly 1 in 3 workers affected across all economic sectors<sup>2</sup>. This is important for central government administrations not only for the health of the many employees in this sector but also because of the role they play in promoting health and safety awareness and good practice. Recent research by the Dublin Foundation on the working conditions in public administrations finds that stress exposure is as prevalent as in other sectors (but with a higher than average level of sick leave than other sectors)<sup>3</sup>.

It is reminded that the joint position was prepared by the EUPAN/TUNED social dialogue working group in the second half of 2008, with the expertise of the European Commission, ETUC, CEEP, the Dublin Foundation and Professor Dômont (French expert on psychosocial health risks). It is based upon the European cross-sectoral agreement on work-related stress of 2004. The text of the joint position is appended to the report.

Under the Czech Presidency, a social dialogue working group met in February 2009 to discuss the dissemination of the joint position follow-ups and a Czech survey on stress at work carried out in the civil service. A number of translations of the joint position were already available at the time of the meeting. As of today, 10 language versions are available<sup>4</sup>. In France and Estonia, it was noted that the joint position has helped launch social partners' discussions on stress in central government administrations.

The meeting agreed to draft a compilation report of examples of good practice and policy in order to provide concrete illustrations of the joint position and help refine lessons learned on how to combat and prevent stress at work.

The cases are not intended to be definitive or to provide detailed technical guidance.

The compilation of cases was made on the basis of agreed criteria, including, as a prerequisite, the involvement of trade unions and employees to identify problems and develop solutions; this is crucial to success, as employ-

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<sup>1</sup> EUPAN is an informal network of the Directors General responsible for Public Administration in the Member States of the EU. TUNED is the Trade Unions' National and European Administration Delegation, representing state sector trade unions affiliated to the EPSU ([www.epsu.org](http://www.epsu.org)) and CESI ([www.cesi.org](http://www.cesi.org)). Their contact person is [nsalson@epsu.org](mailto:nsalson@epsu.org)

<sup>2</sup> European Foundation: Third European Survey on Working Conditions, published in 2001; also quoted by the EU Health and safety agency, 2002 <http://osha.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/020702.xml>

<sup>3</sup> Public administration Fact sheet, May 2009, European Foundation on Improvement of Living and Working Conditions <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/htmlfiles/efo81425.htm> Covers public administration, defence and social security, and excludes education, social and health work, energy and waste supplies (Commission's NACE classification).

<sup>4</sup> Translations in Estonian, German, Greek, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Slovenian are available at <http://www.epsu.org/a/4082>

ees have first-hand experience of the work situation. It was also agreed to give priority to preventive measures, notably “primary prevention” i.e. with a focus on work organisation and working conditions.

Following the meeting, the selection of cases was subject to prior agreements at national level between EUPAN and TUNED members, as a concrete expression of the joint position’s recommendation on social dialogue.

A dozen of case studies were collected and validated by the social dialogue steering group<sup>5</sup>. These cases cover the following 11 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Czech Republic, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

The report was finalised under the Swedish EU presidency at the social dialogue working group meeting of 16 September 2009 and approved at the meeting of 16 November. It is available in English and French.

### Short description of the good practice examples

It goes without saying that good practices cannot be seen in isolation from their broader social and legal context. Indeed, many of the reported examples in this report are part of broader sectoral collective agreements, which were themselves often triggered by EU and/or national legislation and/or cross-sectoral agreements.

For each country case study, some brief information is provided on the implementation of the European cross-sectoral agreement, since it was the basis of the EUPAN/TUNED position. This information is drawn from the 2008 social partners’ implementation report<sup>6</sup>. Whilst the EU health and safety directive 89/391 provides protection for employees’ well being at work, the European agreement of 2004 has proven very useful in reinforcing or introducing specific policy on stress at the national level. It also means that specific initiatives to combat stress at work were initiated recently in many EU countries.

The examples of good practice relate either only to stress or to broader policy on harassment and psychosocial issues. They deal with prevention and reduction of stress factors as well as coping strategies. Most cases underline the link between the risks of stress and potential stress factors such as workload, available resources, employees’ control over their pace of work and working hours, use of IT, and reforms. In terms of tools, they range from:

- assessment of psychosocial risk factors (Sweden, Finland, France, Spain)
- surveys (Austria, Czech republic)
- improving social dialogue, notably information and consultation of employees (Poland)
- guides (France, Denmark)
- pay systems (Finland)
- integration of stress matters in HRM incl. staff evaluation (Austria, Spain)
- stress measurement tools (stress barometer in Denmark, measure of heart beat variability in Finland)
- open health days, counselling, helpdesk (Austria, Poland)
- Joint Service for Prevention and Protection on the Workplace (Belgium)
- tailor-made solutions to unbalanced workloads (Netherlands)
- communication methods to manage stress/conflict situations (Sweden, France)
- information campaigns, specific training on stress

A combination of the above can be found in some of the cases.

The fact that many of the cases reported are recent means that it is too early to assess their impact.

<sup>5</sup> The Social Dialogue Steering group consists of TUNED and EUPAN representatives from the EU troika countries as well as EPSU and CESI secretariats.

<sup>6</sup> Please see [http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf\\_Final\\_Implementation\\_report.pdf](http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_Final_Implementation_report.pdf).

For some cases, however, explicit mention is made of quantified results, as for instance in Sweden where the stress index in some agencies or administrations was reduced by half within two years. A large project evaluation is scheduled for the end of 2009. In Denmark, the reduction of stress levels among state sector employees is being monitored through the “stress barometer”.

In the Netherlands, a series of pilot projects have targeted workplaces where the workload can be more easily identified and where employees have less influence on their workload, as in prison services. This choice may help draw some conclusions on measuring workload and risks of stress. In Finland, the employee’s right to request an evaluation of his/her mental and physical workload has been subject to a broad awareness campaign in 2008. In Spain and France, both cases will be used in the context of pending negotiations of sectoral collective agreement on stress.

Some cases indicate that solutions go beyond health and safety policy, as for instance the results from the Czech survey which recommend better anticipation of change in administrations and better training on the use of IT. The French guide underlines the importance of ensuring appropriate human and financial resources to carry out the work, as a basic starting point for a healthy working environment. This means that the type of prevention planning needs to take into account the fact that work organisation in the public sector depends on public employment policies which are themselves linked to public budgetary constraints<sup>7</sup>.

The Austrian case makes the important point that developing a policy on stress at work is likely to raise employees’ expectations, and that there is a risk of disappointment if there is no follow-up. This is why, from the outset, discussions in Austria focused on the conclusions that could be drawn to facilitate follow-up to a nationwide survey on stress.

Little mention is made of equality and diversity, one of the agreed good practice criteria, (i.e. gender differentiation in reporting stress; risk factors such as sexual/racial harassment, unsatisfactory work/life balance arrangements, job/sectoral segregation). The Finnish case, however, which relates to additional pay bonuses in higher risk occupations in the police forces, points out that the notion of “risk” should also be considered in women-dominated sectors or occupations. Whilst equality issues were integrated in the general discussion on stress and harassment issues prior to the drafting of the French guide, the latter does not provide specific information on this. The Czech survey includes a gender breakdown of the responses.

Additionally, experts have warned that return to work, if not properly managed or if the causes of stress persist, constitutes renewed exposure to the risks. This is an aspect that could be further developed as return to work should be properly managed and might entail both rehabilitation and change in working environment.

### **Main lessons learned: Dutch, French and Swedish case studies**

Whilst long-lasting effects of the reported cases may remain difficult to assess, some common lessons can be learned. In order to identify what these lessons may be, some 50 EUPAN and TUNED delegates discussed<sup>8</sup> three of the compiled case studies in greater depth.

The discussion focused on success factors, what could have been done differently and follow-up/evaluation.

The three case studies presented were as follows (please see the presentations of the cases at <http://www.epsu.org/r/62>):

tackling workload in three prison services, as part of the implementation of a collective agreement on stress at

- ✓ work in the Netherlands;
- ✓ stress prevention guide in agriculture ministry, France;
- ✓ reducing sickness levels at Växjö University, part of the Go for Health project, Sweden.

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<sup>7</sup> Professor Dömöt, note on stress at work and its consequences, 2009, available in French

<sup>8</sup> This discussion took place during the 8<sup>th</sup> EUPAN/TUNED social dialogue working group on 16.09.09, Stockholm

*A combination of the following success factors were identified by the participants:*

1. Identification of the problem of stress
  2. Regulatory frameworks and good understanding of them
  3. Good quality of social dialogue at all levels
  4. Shifting from an individual approach to a positive cultural change
  5. Training of management
  6. Resources and follow-up
- **Identification of the problem of stress:** In the Dutch case, the key factors were proven excessive workload, employer's legal obligation to respond to it and need for employees to regain control over their workload. The French case was triggered by the murder of two labour inspectors and a major reorganisation of the civil service. For the Swedish case, the main motives were reducing sickness level and promoting a good social dialogue in the workplace.
  - **Regulatory frameworks and good understanding of them:** The 1989 health and safety EU directive, the 2004 European agreement and national legislation (e.g. French law of 2002 on harassment) and/or collective agreements provided the regulatory framework for the projects.
  - **Good quality of social dialogue at all levels:** Both the Swedish and Dutch cases were based on a broader collective agreement. In the 3 cases, social partners were involved from beginning to end and from central to workplace level. This requires good coordination of the different levels.
  - **Shifting from an individual approach to a positive cultural change:** The French and Dutch cases aim at supporting both an individual and a collective approach focusing on work organisation. Although Go for Health is a broad programme with all kinds of measures, the chosen example was more focused on individual tools to cope with stress, although with an emphasis on working time. A central motto for the three cases was to convince the staff and management that positive change is possible.
  - **Training of management:** Linked to the above, the integrating of prevention or treatment tools on stress in human resources management need to be supported by well-trained management including middle-management.
  - **Resources and follow-up:** The French case was directly geared towards health and safety committees at the workplace charged with implementing the guide. They have to report results by the end of 2009. It is interesting to note that the guide, as well as the EUPAN/TUNED joint position, will feed into the ongoing social partners' negotiations on health and safety in the state civil service, which is a good result in itself. The Swedish example was one of the many projects financed by the Go for Health scheme; resources were plentiful, including hiring external expertise, and helped ensure a diversity of projects with continuous support from the overall project management. From 2005 to 2008 the sickness rate for central government decreased by 33%, from 5.2% of available working time to 3.5%. At the Växjö University, at least 2 cases of burnouts were avoided thanks to the project. Registering working time proved useful to identify unpaid-overtime. Evaluation of the project was integrated from the start (conference scheduled for October 2009). The Dutch case intentionally focused on workplaces where the workload can be more easily measured. Whilst it is too recent to assess long-term effects, solutions put forward by the trade unions relate to decreasing or reorganizing workload, staff competence development and additional staffing.

*What could have been done differently?*

The Dutch case had to overcome some initial divergences of objectives between trade unions and management whose main objective was to reduce cost. Through discussions in the steering group, involving both sides, the objective of improving health and safety at the workplace was agreed. That said, ongoing government plans on reducing prison service staff remained in the background.

The Swedish case mentioned that the national trade union confederation, representing professionals and academics, was not as supportive as the local trade unions despite the project being set up by representatives for trade unions and employers in central government administration. This hurdle was overcome as the project went along. It was also said that in the future it would be worth investing even more in a bottom-up approach as well as exploring the possibility of involving the School of Management and Economics, based at the Växjö University.

In the French case, a lot of time was spent on setting up the social partners' working group in 2004 and drafting the guide in 2008. That said, taking the time to assess the extent of the problem and identify solutions was probably necessary for both sides to reach a common ground. Despite the comprehensiveness of the methodology, some identified stress risk factors would deserve further thinking, such as the quality of management. Last, there have been some difficulties with the health and safety committees, some of which felt the guide's factsheets were too theoretical. The guide, however, is to be adjusted and enriched by real life situations rather than offering a ready-made solution.

#### *To conclude*

Following on from the EUPAN/TUNED joint position on stress at work, the exercise of collecting relevant examples within a shared common framework and allowing for in-depth discussions proved to be useful. It also shows that the topic is yet to be exhausted, especially when it comes to ensuring and measuring the long-term effects of the policy on combating stress. The collective will to tackle this health and safety matter remains a major challenge.

As far as specificities of central government are concerned, clearly tackling stress at work is as relevant an issue as in other sectors. However, the impact of major reforms of public administrations remains a central feature of our sector. In addition, the impact of the global economic crisis on government administration puts an extra emphasis on strategies to tackle and prevent stress at work, especially when reorganizing or reducing the workload. Staffing issues and training of management are part of the long-term solutions. It makes it all the more valuable to continue exchanging information on this matter. We hope that this report will contribute to making the case for investing in a good work environment, even in times of economic austerity.

We are very grateful to the EUPAN and TUNED members who provided us with their country examples and took part in social dialogue working group meetings. We express our sincerest thanks to the experts who presented the case studies on 16 September, namely Jan Willem Dieten (Abvakabo, public sector trade union, Netherlands), Françoise Thévenon Le Morvan (agriculture ministry, France), Erik Wallander (Go for Health, project coordination team, Sweden), and Maria Gruvstad (personnel department, Växjö University, Sweden).

We also extend our thanks to Professor Alain Dômont for his precious advice.

Additional information and the presentations mentioned above are available online:

- [www.eupan.eu](http://www.eupan.eu)
- <http://www.epsu.org/r/62>

# Austria

## Nature of the good practice or policy

- Survey conducted by the Austrian Federal Chancellery among all Federal employees in 2007.
- Trade union helpdesk (GÖD)

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

Joint guidelines were adopted in May 2006 by the inter-sectoral social partners to put the European agreement into practice at the workplace. These guidelines explain the main content of the agreement and point to the activities/measures that already exist in Austria (e.g. work-life balance, stress prevention within the workplace, health promotion, and re-integration of groups outside the labour markets). These guidelines together with the jointly agreed translation of the agreement are attached to a social partner publication on stress (*"Impuls-Broschüre"*) and made available on the joint social partner web-feature "work and health".

## Scope

Federal Chancellery, Ministries and governing bodies

20,000 civil servants from all occupational groups responded to the questionnaire

## Involvement of social partners

- The survey was drafted and conducted and results analyzed in close consultation with the Civil Service Union (GÖD)
- The helpdesk is a trade union initiative with the support of the employers

## Description

### *Survey*

- The survey collected views about workplace satisfaction, career perspectives, image, work-life balance and staff appraisal interviews, with some concrete questions on work-related stress. The employer side and GÖD both informed staff about the survey using the respective media available to them in a coordinated process. 20,000 civil servants from all occupational groups participated in the survey, which revealed both positive aspects and areas for improvement. In particular, positive aspects included the high level of job satisfaction among all groups, the friendly working atmosphere reported throughout all areas and the excellent work-life balance (e.g. due to attractive working hours). Areas for improvements related to workloads (in some cases, a great deal of pressure, but also unutilised potential), managerial culture and a lack of optimism regarding employees' personal career opportunities.
- The results of the survey were reported in detail. In addition to a report made to the Council of Ministers, the information obtained from the staff was well publicised by both the employer (in particular, publications on the Federal intranet) and by GÖD (nationwide GÖD magazine and webpage).

### *Trade union help desk*

- The trade union helpdesk is designed not only to give advice to employees who are facing individual stressful conflict situations at the workplace but also with an emphasis on prevention. In this context, seminars are offered to members of staff councils on the basis of a cooperation agreement between GÖD and the Federal government. It is worth noting that the helpdesk is run by the deputy president of the union.
- These consultations are designed to ascertain whether there has been any violation of civil service employment law and whether legal action is required. Individuals seeking advice also receive assistance in helping them cope more effectively with stressful situations in their working environment. At the request of the staff member, the union representative can also contact the relevant department with a view to solve the conflict. Advice is also provided for civil servants who, in their capacity as office managers or heads of de-



partment, are responsible for personnel issues and who either need or desire assistance in dealing with staff members.

### **Follow-up**

Based on the survey results that were discussed with the trade union representatives, a compendium was prepared in close cooperation with the trade union on how to make best use of the staff appraisal interview, in order to match the objectives of the organisation with the potential of the employee. This important tool of HR management should also serve as a means to reduce work-related stress. To this effect, an instructional film for employee appraisals, an important instrument for developing a positive managerial culture as well as a web-based training module were made available by the Civil Service Directorate General of the Federal Chancellery. Other joint activities will be carried out to promote awareness and use of the Internal Federal Job Exchange. This service provides employees of the Federal Public Administration with information about career opportunities. In conjunction with the legal obligation to allow federal public employees to change jobs within the Federal Public Administration, the Job Exchange allows federal public employees to actively (re) design their careers. These two parameters can help employees to avoid stress when changing job or career.

# Belgium

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Establishment of a central unit, EMPREVA, within the federal administration's Joint Service for Prevention and Protection on the Workplace (JSPPW).

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

The joint service has been established by the Royal decree of 11 March 2005, which was itself based on the national law of 4 August 1996 on the well-being of all employees at work.

Belgium was one of the first EU countries to have introduced specific measures to combat stress at work in a national collective agreement in 1999, which was in line with the European agreement.

In 2007, the national collective agreement was transposed into a decree so that its application could be extended to employees working in public administrations. The Decree obliges employers to analyse and identify all situations which might entail a psychosocial burden. Aspects such as work content, working conditions and work relationships must thereby be taken into consideration. Furthermore, potential psychosocial burdens stemming from contact with third parties must also be examined. It also allows for interventions where necessary by the labour inspectors and foresees penal sanctions in case of infringements.

## Scope

All federal state administrations (approximately 80,000 employees).

## Involvement of social partners

The Royal Decree of 11 March 2005 was taken in consultation of the trade unions.

Empreva is managed by a Management Committee, composed of representatives of the affiliated members and delegates of the three representative trade unions

## Description

The aim of Empreva is to guarantee the well-being of all federal personnel in the affiliated institutions of the federal administration. The service is made up of the internal prevention services of the affiliated members and the central Empreva unit.

Empreva is managed by a prevention adviser who is also in charge of the JSPPW. It is composed of 3 departments:

1. The medical unit, with its prevention advisers/occupational doctors, takes care of the health supervision of the federal personnel. The health supervision aims to improve and preserve workers' well-being by preventing work-related risks.
2. The multidisciplinary unit provides the internal prevention services of the affiliated federal services with advice and support on:
  - \* ergonomics
  - \* health and safety at the workplace
  - \* psychosocial aspects of work (work-related stress)<sup>o</sup>
  - \* work safety
3. The administration unit, charged with coordination and administration.

Assigned to assist the affiliated federal authorities with the safeguarding of the well-being, safety and health of

their personnel in the workplace and to contribute to the improvement of working conditions. Empreva seeks to be a recognized and appreciated partner in improving the well-being in the workplaces of affiliated services for employers and employees as well as for the different prevention services.

### **Measured effects**

Further information is available at:

[https://portal.health.fgov.be/portal/page?\\_pageid=56,15006531&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL#visie](https://portal.health.fgov.be/portal/page?_pageid=56,15006531&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL#visie)

# Czech Republic

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Workplace Survey in the civil service sector (Occupational Safety Research institute, Prague)

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

The content of the European agreement was integrated via amendments into the new labour code (Law n° 262/0226 Coll. of 21 April 2006, in force since 1/1/2007) which obliges employers to create safe working conditions and to adopt measures for assessing, preventing and eliminating risks. However, it should be noted that future amendments of the labour code may be made to further integrate the European framework agreement, if agreed by the social partners.

The national union centre, CMKOS, included the issue of stress in its recommendations to negotiators for collective bargaining for the year 2008. The Confederation of Industry will concentrate its efforts on the sectors most affected by stress at work like retail, hospitals, services etc. The EUPAN-TUNED common position gave the Czech social partners in the civil service an opportunity to publicise the methodology of the survey and results. It was also useful for ensuring continuity between a priority issue at national level and social dialogue at EU level

## Scope

All state sector employees

## Involvement of social partners

The survey was commissioned by the Czech Ministry of Interior, which is in charge of the central government administration. Trade unions were involved in the drafting and dissemination of the questionnaire.

## Description

The survey aimed at assessing the degree of stress exposure and main causes from the employees' points of view.

A questionnaire with 88 questions was sent to all employees, covering issues not only of stress at work as such but also mobbing/bullying, injury and illness.

5,045 employees, 66% of whom were women, responded to the questionnaire, out of a total of 100,000 employees in central government

## Summary of research results

Overall, civil servants and public employees are satisfied with their work (80-90%), which they find interesting (81%), with clear guidance about what is expected from them (91%). Bullying and mobbing is not perceived as an issue by 80% of employees, neither is sexual harassment by 95%, nor sex and age discrimination by 87% of employees.

However, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the communication at work and recommend better anticipation of change. The introduction or upgrading of IT coupled with reforms aimed at reducing the number of staff are important causes of stress. 81.7% are unsure or have doubts about their work career and 43% have concerns about job security. A large minority report constant heavy workload due to job reductions, reorganization and conflicting agendas and activities. More women work with PCs than men (90% compared to 80% of men), more women than men report eye fatigue (78% compared to 64% of men) and MSD, musculoskeletal disorders (74% compared to 58% men).

## Follow-up

The trade unions call upon the employers to engage in a discussion on the best ways to deal with the problems identified in the survey.

# Denmark

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Sectoral collective agreement implementing the EU agreement on stress at work, including information meetings, guide and stress barometer.

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

The European cross-sectoral agreement was implemented via collective bargaining by social partners in the state sector in 2005. Implementation was undertaken via the renewed Cooperation Agreement, which now stipulates that cooperation committees must lay down guidelines for workplace measures in order to identify, prevent and handle work-related stress. It has also been implemented via collective bargaining at local government and regional level (respectively in 2005 and 2006).

## Scope

All state sector employees

## Involvement of social partners

A central joint agreement stipulates that “The joint cooperation committees have to create guidelines for workplace measures against stress at work.”

## Description

In the State sector, the social partners also published an extensive guide for the local cooperation committees' work concerning work-related stress in June 2006, as a follow-up to their agreement. The guide contains specific advice to the committees on their tasks in this field, as well as descriptions on how to identify, handle and prevent work-related stress. During the collective bargaining round in 2008, the social partners confirmed that the psychosocial working environment, including work-related stress, continues to be an important focus area by accepting a number of new initiatives, including the launch of a campaign entitled “From stress to well-being”.

It is worth mentioning the role of the joint Cooperation Secretariat, which is as follows:

- Helps promoting the work of the joint consultation committees through comprehensive information
- Provides advice for both management and employee representatives in the committees with respect to cooperation issues
- Provides training of committee members
- Hosts a website on cooperation issues, including the joint guide on work-related stress and specific cases and examples from state sector workplaces

## Lessons learned - Tax administration

- Inclusion of all - at an early stage - in identifying problems in relation to work-related stress
- Ensuring sufficient time to discuss the subject, including the distinction between “positive” and “negative” stress
- Managers' active involvement and support
- Making stress policy an integrated part of daily life

## Follow-up by social partners

- Information meetings for cooperation committee members
- Guide for cooperation committees on work-related stress (published in June 2006)
- ‘The Stress Barometer’ (ongoing test of tool to measure stress).

For more information, please see the presentation of the Danish case made at the EUPAN/TUNED social dialogue working group on 9 September 2008, available at: <http://www.epsu.org/a/3949>

# Finland

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Information campaigns and Measuring stress at work

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

*The Industrial Safety Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act* preceded the European agreement on stress at work in Finland. However, cross-sectoral social partners agreed on joint recommendations for preventing and managing work-related stress in 2007. The aim was to increase understanding and awareness of employers and workers and to provide methods for identifying and managing work-related stress. They were widely disseminated by both sides via different sources and channels. They describe what stress is, how to recognise it; the duties of employer and employee; how to prevent stress; employer's duty to interfere if someone is overloaded with work; and duty to try to find the underlying causes etc.

## Scope

Across central government

## Involvement of social partners

Yes

## Description

In the beginning of 2000, after amending the Finnish Industrial Safety Act / legislation, there arose a need to develop measuring systems of stress at work, so that the employee's right to request an examination of his / her mental or physical workload could be implemented.

In the autumn 2008 the Centre for Occupational Safety and social partners organized a joint tour during which the representatives and experts of these organizations informed both employees and employers about stress at work, and delivered a publication on how to control work-related stress (available at [http://www.ttk.fi/files/942/TTK\\_stressiesite\\_B5\\_5.pdf](http://www.ttk.fi/files/942/TTK_stressiesite_B5_5.pdf), only in Finnish). In the joint publication, the approach to work-related stress is preventive and comprehensive. The comprehensive development of the workplace is the main tool in the strive for "the qualified work place" and recognising and preventing work-related stress. The components of "a qualified workplace" are:

- ✓ developing cooperation / social dialogue,
- ✓ competence and working capacity,
- ✓ working environment and community,
- ✓ working conditions,
- ✓ employment safety,
- ✓ wage systems and
- ✓ working time arrangements.

The importance of an appropriately sized workforce is also recognised

### Specific Examples:

Some salary systems can include a so-called element / factor of "*working conditions*". At the initiative of the trade unions, employees should be compensated if physical or mental risk factors at work cannot be prevented or eliminated. For instance, in 2004-2005, an additional payment was introduced in the pay system of the police forces *and of the Customs* to compensate for the unavoidable risks in that field ("field pay/benefit/extra"). The trade unions argue that this has implications for gender equality objectives, and are now asking that pay systems in women-dominated sectors or occupations are also assessed in light of the notion of risk factors.

In the occupational healthcare unit of Kuopio University, Professor Veikko Louhevaara and his team have

developed a system for measuring mental and physical workload. This measuring system, developed by ergonomists, is called Firstbeat technologies.

The well-being analysis developed by Firstbeat Technologies assesses a person's mental and physical workload and recovery. Recovery may be impaired by prolonged stress, physical overload or a state of imbalance of the organs caused by illness, sleep problems, defective nutrition or heavy use of alcohol. The development of the method is based on studies on athletes' overtraining.

Measurements of heart rate variability are carried out either individually or in groups, usually in order to solve an identified problem. The measurements usually take 24-48 hours depending on the type of work and requirement for evidence. A measurement is always accompanied by a questionnaire in which the person assessed estimates his or her stress level and capacity and possible threats to well-being. A diary kept by the person enables subsequent verification of different factors during the assessment period.

Diverse results of the assessment will be discussed face to face. During the feedback, the individual's overall situation and factors contributing to workload are considered and compared with his or her personal experience. The feedback is provided by occupational health professionals or professional involved in work development, who are well acquainted with the measurement method. For the persons assessed, the feedback motivates both individual improvements and wider development measures at the workplace. The improvements are initially supported by a low threshold i.e. starting with small and relatively easily achievable changes.

For more information, please contact [sari.tiainen@myontec.com](mailto:sari.tiainen@myontec.com) or consult [www.myontec.com](http://www.myontec.com)

### **Measured effects and Follow-up**

- It is too early to assess the impact of the information campaign
- In the assessment of stress management, measurement of heart rate variability has received only positive feedback from both the employees and employers. The method has now been introduced to new occupational groups.

# France

## Title

Guide to prevent and manage situations of stress and harassment

## Nature:

Guide elaborated and adopted by the social partners

## Legal context, including the impact of the European framework agreement

In France, the European cross-sectoral agreement was transposed by social partners in 2008.

In its introduction, the guide refers to the social conference on working conditions, which launched the discussion on work-related stress in order to implement the framework agreement in France. It also refers to the report commissioned by the social conference in this framework, submitted the 12 March 2008. The report proposed a launch of pilot projects in the Civil Service and recommended that technical Committees and Hygiene and Safety Committees launch discussions between representatives of the staff and the management. The joint position helps reinforce the importance of the topic of stress at work and the benefits of developing a social dialogue approach. Social partners are currently negotiating an agreement on health and safety.

## Description of the practice:

The origin of the guide stems from a discussion, in 2004, launched by the bipartite Committee for Hygiene and Safety of the Ministry (CHSM) on the situations of stress and harassment. The committee conducted a survey within a sample of departments and educational institutions, the results of which were disseminated in March 2007.

Following the analysis of the survey results, a working group « Stress » was created in order to write a guide of how to prevent and manage the situations of stress and harassment. This group included both staff and administration representatives. The guide was approved by the CHSM. All the structures of the Ministry have to define and present measures that are to be established in order to prevent stress and, if necessary, deal with the existing situations of stress.

The guide is aimed toward managers, staff representatives, representatives of Health and safety structures and staff.

It is conceived as a manual that identifies cases of stress and harassment to better manage and deal with them. It is composed of 24 sheets divided into 3 parts:

- **General information on stress, violence and harassment:** figures, definitions, analytical methods of stress, effects on health, indicators and alert indicators, legal responsibility, and context within the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing;
- **Information and methods of how to prevent psychosocial risks:** principal factors of stress, quality of the management, recognition, definition of missions and priorities, organisation and content of the work, information, communication and training, career opportunities, stress factors, and assessment of stress as a psychosocial risk;
- **Information and tools to manage stress situations:** conflict working relations, workload within the structure, restructuring or reforms of the structure, problems linked to management, harassment, bullying or aggression, stress behaviour, who to contact, and procedures to implement.

## Scope:

Ministry of Agriculture and Fishing

## Involvement of social partners

A working group, involving staff representatives and trade unions.



**Taking into account the specificities of central government administration:**

The document refers to possible consequences of reforms in terms of stress.

**Implementation/follow-up:**

Each structure of the Ministry is asked to add the examination of this document to the agenda of one of the two meetings of the Committee for Hygiene and Safety, and to define the provisions in order to prevent and treat situations of stress.

**Measured effects**

To be defined through our correspondent of the Ministry of Agriculture.

**Link:**

Report available in French:

[http://agriculture.gouv.fr/sections/publications/bulletin-officiel/2008/bo-n-42-du-17-10-08/note-service-sg-srh6536/downloadFile/FichierAttache\\_1\\_fo/SRHN20081233Z.pdf?nocache=1134040585.85](http://agriculture.gouv.fr/sections/publications/bulletin-officiel/2008/bo-n-42-du-17-10-08/note-service-sg-srh6536/downloadFile/FichierAttache_1_fo/SRHN20081233Z.pdf?nocache=1134040585.85)

For more information, please see the more detailed presentation made at the meeting of 16 September 2009, available at: <http://www.epsu.org/r/62>

# The Netherlands

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Pilot projects in the framework of a collective agreement

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

Since January 2007, amended health and safety legislation stipulates that tailor made solutions should be reached at sectoral or company level, and that it should include work-related stress. At sectoral or branch level, so-called 'Arboconvenanten' are concluded by the social partners. In these agreements there is a focus on the health and safety risks that are specific for the sector or branch and on the necessary actions to prevent the occurrence of these risks, including in the public state sector.

As the Dutch social partners concluded that the implementation of this agreement in the Netherlands will be the most successful when work-related stress is integrated in the dialogue or in the consultation between management and work councils, they finalised a revised version of an existing brochure on the subject in September 2006, within the framework of the Labour Foundation. In order to facilitate this dialogue, the brochure is targeted especially at managers, work councils and trade union representatives.

Apart from a description of work-related stress and how it can be recognized, the brochure also offers a model of how to analyze, prevent or reduce work-related stress. Furthermore, the brochure provides references to relevant and applicable law texts and the addresses of some institutions that can provide more help. The brochure is available on the Labour Foundations' website ([www.stvda.nl](http://www.stvda.nl)).

## Scope

Budget Inspectorate (Finance Ministry) (2 pilots)  
Directorate Public Relations Health Ministry (1 pilot)  
General Prison Service (3 pilots)  
Central Financers Directorate Education van OCW (2 pilots)

## Involvement of social partners

Yes (collective agreement)

## Description

In the framework of the collective agreement, central government 2007 – 2010, a number of pilot projects on working pressure & stress were initiated under the heading of the Labour Market & Education fund. It is focused at pilot organisations with quantitatively measurable "production" and structured working processes, where employees have little regulatory/adjustment possibilities to regulate their workload, but also covers other organisations. The pilot projects aim at finding remedies to a reported unbalance between workload and assessable workload and to restore balance.

## Follow-up

It is too early to assess the project

For more information, please see the more detailed presentation made at the meeting of 16 September 2009, available at: <http://www.epsu.org/r/62>

# Poland

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Introduction on social partnership

### Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

The trade union “Solidarność” (NSZZ “Solidarność”), one of the three representative trade union organisations<sup>9</sup>, has taken the initiative to disseminate the European Agreement and has started to implement activities with a view to preparing a national collective agreement on work-related stress. The project “Stress at work as a supranational problem for employees and employers – the methods of combating the phenomena through exchange of good practices”, co-financed by the European Commission, has been prepared and implemented jointly by the National Commission of the NSZZ “Solidarność” and the Economic Fund – linked to the Commission. The project has consisted of four activities; workshops, international conferences, elaboration of the publication, including good practices concerning combating stress, and so called “negotiating workshops” for the Polish social partners as part of the preparations relating to the (national) agreement on work-related stress.

Furthermore, in the second half of 2008, all-Polish Trade Union Alliance (OPZZ), publicized the European Agreement through a common declaration of social partners on preventing and counteracting work-related stress. In the declaration, social partners committed to taking all possible initiatives aiming at making both employees and employers more sensitive to the importance of limiting stress at work, such as identification of the factors causing stress at the workplace, evaluation of the level of stress, introduction of solutions to reduce the negative influence of the identified factors, and exploration of the methods and techniques of work-related stress management. This declaration provides guidelines and rules of cooperation on how to further implement the European Agreement.

## Scope

Tax Chambers and Tax Office

## Involvement of social partners

Yes

## Description

Coping with work-related stress is developed through an introduction on social partnership, including the involvement of the personnel and trade union representatives in the planning and provision of services to employees in order to promote transparency of decisions concerning personnel, and at the same time to promote the involvement of the employees in human resources management and working environment management.

Keeping in mind that only satisfied employees are fully able to realise goals and identify themselves with their workplace, it is recognised that management has the responsibility for ensuring a healthy and safe workplace. They have involved the personnel in the process of recognizing and eliminating dangers by building a relation based on common trust and support. Systems of internal communication (open communication reaching all employees) and the model of so called “participatory management” (employees are part of the management - for example in projects, task forces, process co-ordination – in a different role and to a different degree) plays a significant role. Non-financial motivational programs such as away-days for personnel, are also organised in order to minimize the level of stress at work and create better interpersonal communication.

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<sup>9</sup> The forum of the social dialogue in Poland is the Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs, focused especially on: labour law, public finances and mechanism of determining pay in the public sector. There are three representative trade unions in the Commission: Independent Self-Governed Trade Union “Solidarność” (NSZZ “Solidarność”), All-Polish Trade Union Alliance (OPZZ) and Trade Union Forum (FZZ), as well as four representative employers organizations: Polish Employers’ Confederation (KPP), Polish Confederation of Private Employers (PKPP), Polish Artisan Association (ZRP) and Business Centre Club – Employers’ Union (BCC – ZP). The Government is represented by the representatives of the Council of Ministers, appointed by the Prime Minister.

Another important aspect is the systematic analysis of training needs. Training events, both internal and external, enable the employees to be more assertive and self-confident in their relations with service users and allow them to implement their tasks without stress.

In 2006-2008 employees took part in training on how to cope with work-related stress, organized by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. The training included interpersonal relations and personal skills, organizational stress, stress management, coping with stress, presentation skills and public speaking.

### **Follow-up**

The social partnership led to a number of decisions and actions:

- facilitating direct communication between employees and the management (intranet; news bulletins, one-to-one meetings with management, mail boxes for staff suggestions)
- clarification on scope of duties, tasks and competences, prioritization,
- implementation of clear criteria of job evaluation, management rules and promotion, vacancies (internal recruitment process before advertising jobs outside)
- ensuring employees' participation in the change process through team work, looking for solutions through discussions and joint explanation of decisions taken,
- reactions to suggestions on improving working conditions,
- elaboration of guidelines on combating mobbing,
- managerial staff support in cases of difficult situations with service users
- employees' surveys on work conditions, work organisation and internal communication are being conducted on the regular basis. The employees' remarks and suggestions are used during the process of planning development activities.

# Spain

## Nature of the good practice or policy

Listing psychosocial risks in order to prevent stress

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

The European Framework Agreement on work-related stress was incorporated into the so-called "AINC", a large cross-sectoral agreement. The AINC serves to inform and recommend actions to trade union and employers' representatives at lower bargaining level. Wherever relevant, they can integrate these action into sectoral collective agreements, thereby providing legal effect. Furthermore, there is a Follow-up Commission whose task is to verify the results obtained and highlight possible difficulties related to implementation. Both joint and separate initiatives were taken to disseminate the European Agreement in Spain, including publications of general or sector-specific guides. Several collective agreements (with provincial or regional scope) were concluded over the past years dealing with prevention of psychosocial risks and work-related stress including companies with contracts with public administrations to manage old people's homes, day-centres, 24-hour women's centres, public home-help services in the Valencia Regional Autonomy (regional scope) 2007-2010, Cataluña Collective Agreement for social action with children, young people, families and other at risk (regional scope) 2008-2009 and the inter-professional Agreement on Work, Health and Safety for collective Bargaining in Castilla La Mancha (regional scope) 2008-2009.

## Scope

### Involvement of social partners

Yes

### Description

Focus on prevention, with the work organisation serving as point of reference

Psychosocial risks were discussed and agreed on in the bipartite labour risks prevention technical commission (2007)

It was recognized that work organization and the content and execution of tasks must be taken into account as part of psychosocial risks. Risks factors include:

- physical environment;
- working time and autonomy;
- participation/ control ;
- workload;
- content of work
- clear definition of roles and responsibilities;
- social environment;
- career development;
- valuing workforce;
- training
- mainstreaming approach

The specificities of central government administrations are clearly mentioned in relation to the recently reviewed basic statute of public sector employees.

### Follow-up

Negotiations to turn this document into a collective agreement (binding rules) may take place at a later stage. One of the main objectives is to review the evaluation process in order to include stress and psychosocial risk in the compulsory evaluation.

# Sweden

## Title

Go for Health (Satsa Friskt)

## Nature of the good practice or policy,

Joint social partners' project set up in 2003 (16M € budget) to support government agency efforts to improve the working environment and reduce sick leave. The program is focused on the following five areas:

- Organization, leadership and participation
- Information Technology
- Rehabilitation
- Threats and violence in the workplace
- Health and safety

Go for Health is one of the major projects within the Central Government Social Partners' Council. The Council is a joint body that supports government agencies in implementing core issues from central agreements and joint positions.

## Legal context, including the impact of the European cross-sectoral agreement on stress at work (2004)

Preceding the agreement, legislation requires employers to systematically investigate working conditions and assess risks of ill health. This is done in cooperation with health and safety representatives every year. Stress risk factors assessment is compulsory.

Following the European agreement, joint agreements were signed in 2005 and 2006 respectively for the private and public sectors. These agreements serve as a guideline when initiatives are taken to identify and prevent or manage work-related stress. However, the agreements allow the necessary flexibility, whereby social partners are free to decide how to implement them (collective agreements, plans of action, policy documents, guidelines, educational programmes, etc.).

## Scope

50 government agencies

## Involvement of social partners

All activities of Go for Health are based on cooperation of the social partners, locally and at the central level. The entire project Go for Health is itself managed by a joint steering group. Local projects involve the social partners at agency level, often through joint steering committees, who are involved in the design as well as the implementation of the project.

## Description

The focus is clearly on prevention and/or coping strategy,

- Case study in prison, Kalmar: communication model to prevent violence, seminars
- Improving information and consultation between management and personnel: ESF Councils: seminars on stress, interactive theatre, preventive dialogue on stress, career coaching, health check-up with follow-up plans. This reduced the stress index from 14% in 2004 to 7% in 2006
- IT project: mismatch between IT and organizational demands/requirements: 2 day workshop on the problems and opportunities of increased use of IT: the Swedish National Board of Student Aid, "usable and useful IT support" both for employees and users

## Implementation, evaluation/effects:

Effects, results and fulfilment of objectives have been followed up at project level during the programme period. Each agency is responsible for ensuring that an independent evaluation is carried out at the local level.

A general evaluation of Satsa Friskt has been carried out which showed that participating agencies overall has perceived Go for Health as a useful and functional initiative. Some of the more specific results mentioned in the evaluation are:

- New action plans and procedures have been developed concerning health and work environment
- Increased knowledge, awareness and interest in health and fitness among employees
- Problems relating to work environment and health have been identified
- Indications of ill-health are observed at an earlier stage

**Follow-up: Final conference in October 2009**

For more information, please see the more detailed presentation made at the meeting of 16 September 2009, available at: <http://www.epsu.org/r/62>.



**Joint position  
of EUPAN and TUNED  
On work-related stress in central  
government administrations**

**In the framework of the social  
Dialogue test-phase 2008-2009**



## **1. Background**

Acting in the framework of their joint work programme 2008-2009 (Social Dialogue Test Phase), EUPAN<sup>1</sup> and TUNED<sup>2</sup>:

Recognize that work-related stress is a serious occupational health and safety hazard with important human, organisational and financial implications;

Consider the directive 89/391 on safety and health of workers at work and the European cross-sectoral Framework Agreement on stress at work (2004);

Recognize the duty of public authorities and employers to promote and enforce a safe and healthy working environment in cooperation with workers and trade unions;

Recognize that a good working environment is a precondition for healthy and attractive work places and for ensuring quality and efficiency in carrying out the job.

## **2. Objectives**

The aim of the present joint position is to increase the awareness and understanding of work-related stress within central government administrations to identify, prevent and manage problems of work related stress.

## **3. Description of work-related stress<sup>3</sup>**

Stress is a state, which is accompanied by physical, psychological or social complaints or dysfunctions and which results from individuals feeling unable to bridge a gap with the requirements or expectations placed on them. The individual is well adapted to cope with short-term exposure to pressure, which can be considered as positive, but has greater difficulty in coping with prolonged exposure to intensive pressure.

Moreover, different individuals can react differently to similar situations and the same individual can react differently to similar situations at different times of his/her life.

Stress is not a disease but prolonged exposure to it may reduce effectiveness at work and may cause ill health.

Stress originating outside the working environment can lead to changes in behaviour and reduced effectiveness at work. All manifestations of stress at work cannot be considered as work-related stress.

## **4. Identifying work-related stress in central government administrations**

Identifying whether there is a problem of work-related stress requires a prior analysis of risk factors such as the ones identified in the European cross-sectoral agreement, including work organisation, working conditions, communication and subjective factors.

Furthermore, social partners in central government administrations can agree to establish indicators identifying work-related stress, taking into account their context (e.g. pace and scope of reforms,

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<sup>1</sup> EUPAN is an informal network of the Directors General responsible for Public Administration in the Member States of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> TUNED is the Trade Unions' National and European Administration Delegation, representing state sector trade unions affiliated to EPSU ([www.epsu.org](http://www.epsu.org)) and CESI ([www.cesi.org](http://www.cesi.org)) and, based on country majority representativity criteria, GÖD-FCG, SLOVES and KSZSZ. The contact is [nsalson@epsu.org](mailto:nsalson@epsu.org)

<sup>3</sup> Extract of the description given by the European Framework agreement on work-related stress (2004)

possible tensions in the relationship with the public, work/life balance, demographic change, mismatch between resources and public service mission, quality of social dialogue).

## **5. Measures for preventing, eliminating and reducing problems of work-related stress**

On the basis of a prior risk assessment, different measures may be put in place or reinforced by social partners in cooperation with health and safety structures, such as:

- Take into account both physical and psycho-social risks in the context of risk prevention approaches
- Training of managers, workers and their representatives
- Management and communication measures
- Individual and team support
- Information, consultation and participation of workers and their representatives in change processes
- Improvement of working conditions
- Take into account gender equality and diversity

## **6. Implementation and follow-up**

EUPAN and TUNED will launch appropriate measures to promote the joint position (translation, dissemination...) from January/February 2009;

They will identify and promote interesting practices and good policies (June 2009);

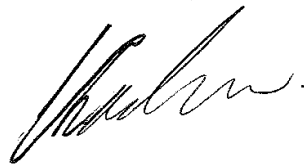
They will evaluate the results and study the perspectives in December 2009.

This joint position does not constitute valid grounds to reduce the general level of protection afforded to workers in the field of this joint position.

Paris, 19 December 2008



Paul PENY  
Chair EUPAN  
Director General  
for Administration  
and the Civil Service  
France



Charles COCHRANE  
Chair TUNED  
Secretary, Council of Civil Service Unions  
(CCSU)  
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Charles Cochrane and Paul Peny after signing the joint document.

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