

ADDRESSING PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS IN THE RETAIL AND WHOLESALE SECTOR

JOINT PROJECT REPORT
ON BEST PRACTICE



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Foreword

Retail and wholesale is built on people: as a sector we employ 29 million people in a wide range of jobs, and rely on their dedication to quality and good customer service to make our businesses a success. We are therefore firmly committed to the physical and psychological health, safety and wellbeing of all our staff.

We were therefore pleased that EuroCommerce and UNI Europa have been able to collaborate in commissioning a project to research and produce this useful guide, based on the results of a survey of members and affiliates. This has been able to pinpoint a number of areas of risk in ergonomics, stress at work and psychosocial problems, and set out examples of innovative ways to tackle these issues in social partnership, improving workers' wellbeing and safety. These included initiatives to avoid unnecessary strain when stacking shelves, identifying risk hotspots in stores, reducing repetitive strain from staying in one position, and designing stores to reduce the risk of customers subjecting staff to verbal or even physical violence, and providing professional psychological support and advice where staff have experienced this.

We recommend the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn from it in this guide to companies of all sizes and areas of business. We hope that managements and workers' representatives will find in the examples useful pointers for ensuring that staff can work in a safe and secure environment. Doing so can help staff perform at their best, and businesses provide the service which they need to attract and retain their customers.



Christian Verschueren

*Director-General
EuroCommerce*



Oliver Roethig

*Regional Secretary
UNI Europa*

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Methodology

The initial stage of the study focused on an analysis of a survey carried out amongst EuroCommerce members and UNI Europa affiliates, based on questions agreed by the steering committee (representatives from both EuroCommerce and UNI Europa as the recognised social partners for the retail and wholesale sector, their respective social dialogue chairs as well as experts from ULB). The questionnaire was drafted by the experts and submitted to the European social partners for approval; proposals and comments from the social partners were included in the final version of the survey.

In total, twenty-eight responses were received. Among them, twelve originated from EuroCommerce affiliates (five federations, seven companies) and sixteen from UNI Europa members (eight federations, eight companies), reflecting greater union participation than that from employer federations.

To create an appropriate comparison tool between Member States, an overview was drafted for each country from information provided by national social partners. The results of the survey were then contextualised using this national data. This illustrated the situation at the European level in the retail and wholesale sector in the fields of ergonomics, stress and psychological risks at the workplace.

In order to offer a concrete analysis of how both countries and companies have found solutions to issues raised by the results of the survey, several thematic case-studies have been carried out (ergonomics, stress and psychological risks at the workplace).

Eight examples of best practice were selected (four for ergonomics and four for stress at work and psychosocial risks). These were selected on the basis of innovation, how far they responded to particularly serious issues identified by respondents, and as examples of efficient and successful social dialogue.

Visits to the selected companies or federations were undertaken in order to better understand the case study and to interview a wide range of company employees, such as the management, human resources, workers and their representatives. Interviews were conducted on the basis of an interview guide, where questions were grouped around guiding themes to ensure a good flow from one topic to another.

The objectives of the interviews were to better understand the process leading to the creation of the practice, the phases of testing and the phases of implementation. Moreover, the study also examined the transferability of practices. Finally, the assessment of the whole process was analysed. The questions were designed to address the specificities of the sector.

Each case study presented has been influenced by the actions led by OSHA at the global level and through the social dialogue at the sectoral level. The end goal was to provide the opportunity for the most innovative and pertinent projects to be widely disseminated at different levels, such as the level of national federations, the European level for the commerce sector and the global level (OSHA) for issues related to health and safety.

Executive Summary

EuroCommerce and UNI Europa, the recognised social partners for the retail and wholesale sector at EU level, have decided to strengthen their cooperation and exchange best practice on issues related to health, safety and wellbeing of retail and wholesale employees at the workplace with the objective to develop an effective cooperation with the relevant EU bodies such as the OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health at work).

For this purpose, EuroCommerce and UNI Europa, with European Commission support, have decided to commission a project dedicated to health and safety through three main thematic axes:

- Ergonomics (mainly musculoskeletal disorders);
- Stress at work (work-related stress leading to absenteeism, staff turn-over and physical stress);
- Psychosocial risks (including third party violence and mental health risks).

In the framework of this study, a survey was launched among EuroCommerce members and UNI Europa affiliates that have developed innovative initiatives addressing health and safety issues. The objectives of the survey were to identify the main issues in the retail and wholesale sector concerning ergonomics, stress at work and psychosocial risks as well as the major challenges for the future.

Despite a wide range of information, training and risk assessments in all the participating countries, the results of the survey show that issues linked to the three themes are still prevalent. These issues include musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and stress-related health problems, which lead to absenteeism and work-related illness.

In order to raise awareness of the extent of problems in ergonomics, stress and psychosocial risks at work, the social partners for the retail and wholesale sector decided to develop a toolkit based on examples of best practice from selected European Union Member States.

The present guide is a selection of best practice implemented by social partners. All of these practices have a direct and measurable impact on risk reduction and health improvement. Their success is linked to an active collaboration between employers and employees or their representatives in the project. Both parties have been part of the development, pilot phases and evaluation period.

The innovative projects selected in this study can be widely disseminated at European level through the OIRA tool under the OSHA.¹ Several cases included in this guide are based on the principle of risk assessment. This is seen by the OSHA as key to preventing work-related stress. This can be particularly useful for SMEs, which represent 99% of wholesale and retail companies. European micro and small enterprises need to undertake risk assessment as much as larger companies do.

1. The Online Interactive Risk Assessment (OIRA) is a European online platform to create free and easy-to-use sectoral risk assessment tools for small and micro-companies.

Introduction

According to the 5th European Working Conditions Survey (EWC), the psychosocial and physical environment has a substantial impact on workers' wellbeing.² In this context, retail jobs, which are characterised by high levels of intensity and low levels of autonomy, pose the risk of unhealthy stress levels and, consequently, a range of stress-related illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and mental health problems.

Regarding physical risks, the survey reveals that exposure to posture and movement-related risks is highest in the retail sector. According to the French Institute Evrest in 2011, physical constraints are strong in the retail sector: 72% of workers' jobs involve physical effort or heavy workloads, 78.6% repetitive movements, 79.9% to prolonged standing, and 48% walking.³ The sector is generally characterised by high levels of manual handling such as placing products, for example fruit and vegetables, on shelves. A large part of the cashiers daily activity involves manual handling.

Therefore, EuroCommerce and UNI Europa, as social partners for the retail and wholesale sector, have decided to strengthen their cooperation and exchange of best practice on issues related to health, safety and wellbeing of retail and wholesale employees at the workplace as an important part of their work programme from 2014 onwards. The objective was to develop an effective cooperation with the relevant EU bodies such as the OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health at work).

In parallel, the social partners have already developed successful cooperation on third party violence. For example, an initiative called "STOP IT!" was launched with a toolkit to directly help employees and employers improve safety in the workplace.⁴ This was an awareness raising programme and was based on best practice on how to deal with the issue of violence from customers at the workplace.

Furthermore, on 16 July 2010, EPSU, UNI Europa, ETUCE, Hospeem, CEMR, EFEE, EuroCommerce, CoESS, representing the social partners of the retail and wholesale, private security, local government, education and hospital sectors reached an agreement on multi-sectorial guidelines aimed at tackling third party violence and harassment at work.⁵ These guidelines complement the cross-sectoral Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work of 26 April 2007.⁶

To complement these initiatives, EuroCommerce and UNI Europa, with the support of the European Commission, have decided to implement a project dedicated to health and safety through three main thematic axes:

- Ergonomics (mainly musculoskeletal disorders);
- Stress at work (work-related stress leading to absenteeism, staff turn-over and physical stress);
- Psychosocial risks (including third party violence and mental health risks).

In the framework of this project, social partners exchanged views on the new EU Strategy on Health and Safety at Work published by the Commission to better protect workers in the EU from work-related accidents and diseases.⁷ The goal of this study was to allow national representatives of employers and employees to benefit from social dialogue at the European level. The study also facilitated the development of a toolkit based on best practice from European Member States regarding ergonomics, stress and psychosocial risks at work.

The present guide conveys a selection of practices proposed by social partners from across Europe as a result of a survey of members and affiliates of EuroCommerce and UNI Europa. The main objectives of the survey were to identify key issues in the sector related to ergonomics, stress at work and psychosocial risks, on one hand, and to identify innovative

2. Eurofound (2012), *Fifth European Working Conditions Survey*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/fr/publications/report/2012/working-conditions/fifth-european-working-conditions-survey-overview-report>

3. Évolutions et relations en santé au travail (2011), *Rapport sur les employés du commerce*, http://evrest.alamarge.org/_docs/fckeditor/file/Outils%20Evrest/Rapports%20par%20Secteurs%202011/COMMERCE%202009%202010.pdf

4. EuroCommerce, Uni Europa (2009), *Stop it! Third party violence in commerce. A Toolkit*, Brussels, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5145>

5. EPSU, UNI Europa, ETUCE, Hospeem, CEMR, EFEE, EuroCommerce, CoESS (2010) *Multisectoral guidelines to tackle third-party violence and harassment related to work*, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=896&newsId=896&furtherNews=yes>

6. ETUC/CES, BUSINESS EUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP (2007), *Cross-sectoral Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work*, <https://www.etuc.org/framework-agreement-harassment-and-violence-work>

7. European Commission (2014) *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on an EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020*, COM(2014) 332, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0332>

actions implemented in response to these issues, on the other hand. These examples have been chosen for three reasons: innovation, responsiveness to serious concerns held by survey respondents and as illustrations of social partnerships aimed at improving the protection of those working in shops.

In drafting this toolkit to promote of a healthier and safer working environment in the retail and wholesale sector, the social partners wish to:

- Develop a specific sectoral approach for the prevention of stress, ergonomics and psychosocial risks based on existing good practice successfully implemented at national and local level;
- Raise awareness of the specificities of health and safety in the retail and wholesale sector and the need to adopt a common prevention approach;
- Make a joint contribution, as social partners, to the ongoing OSHA campaign on psychosocial risks;
- Provide practical support to small companies in the retail and wholesale sector to ensure better compliance with health and safety rules.

This handbook is intended to be a practical tool to be widely disseminated with a focus on SMEs. The European social partners for retail and wholesale hope that their members and affiliates and employees in large, medium, and especially, small companies, representing 99% of companies in the retail and wholesale sector, will benefit from experience reflected in this guide.

CHAPTER 1

Major issues and challenges identified

For this study, a survey was launched among EuroCommerce members and UNI Europa affiliates. The objectives of the survey were to identify the main issues in the retail and wholesale sector concerning ergonomics, stress at work and psychosocial risks as well as the major challenges for the future. The main results of the survey concerning the three themes (ergonomics, stress at work, and psychosocial risks) are presented below.

In all the participant countries, there is extensive information sharing, training and health-risk prevention through risk assessments linked to the three themes. Companies and unions disseminate information for all employees, mainly through online courses but also, more traditionally, union meetings, bulletin boards, leaflets and public information campaigns.

This is complemented by targeted training, such as through the Internet via online courses, videos or seminars. Communication campaigns on prevention are also conducted in several countries. These focus on taking the right action and ensuring good posture through radio adverts, in-store posters, and specific awareness campaigns to prevent musculoskeletal disorders.

Despite all these efforts, the survey shows that issues linked to the three themes remain, and lead to absenteeism and work-related illness. Thus, it is useful to examine the major issues and challenges identified by respondents for each theme.

Ergonomics

In the survey, respondents were asked to choose the three most problematic issues concerning ergonomics and physical conditions on the basis of the following list:

- Dust or smoke;
- Noise;
- Dangerous chemicals, detergents, solvents;
- Very hot or very cold temperatures, draughts;
- Vibrations;
- Repetitive postures and movements;
- Uncomfortable or static postures and movements;

- Lifting and movement of heavy objects without mechanical aid;
- Repetitive one-sided manual movements during work;
- Inappropriate ventilation in the working environment.

The results of the survey show that both employers and employees alike see lifting and movement of heavy objects without mechanical aid as the major problem in ergonomics. The second major issue identified by both parties is repetitive one-sided manual movements during work. Repetitive postures and movements are also seen as challenging as well as uncomfortable or static postures.

The survey also demonstrated that unions and employers' federations evaluated the risks related to ergonomics in the same way. Using the scale of 1 (extremely serious) to 5 (not serious), both evaluated the risks related to this theme as very serious or serious.

Challenges

For the majority of employers and employees participating in the survey, the major ergonomic challenges in the retail and wholesale sector are linked to heavy loads, repetitive postures and movements, and work-related musculoskeletal disorders.

To resolve these problems, respondents suggested introducing new equipment and materials, including specific solutions to address the needs of an ageing workforce in the retail and wholesale sector.

At the organisational level, respondents shared the view that job rotation was a good example of risk prevention for health, as well as the creation of multidisciplinary teams, with the participation of Health, Safety and Environment teams in the store's layout project phase or in new process design.

Respondents proposed raising the awareness of employees through training in adopting appropriate postures. According to some of them, NAPO⁸ movies developed by various safety institutions, e-learning, videos were some of the most efficient ways to achieve this goal. However, this support should reflect to the tasks which workers actually do.

8. NAPO is a cartoon character. They feature characters in the world of work, faced with safety issues. NAPO is an original idea conceived by a small group of OSH communications professionals in response to the need for high quality information products to break down national boundaries and address the diverse cultures, languages and practical needs of people at work.

The results of the survey showed that risk assessment is seen as a major challenge. Training store managers to assess health and safety risks for their employees is one solution. As a result, companies should be able to assess risks by identifying dangerous situations and proposing improvements to avoid or limit risks linked to physical activities. Therefore, training should be improved, especially for health and safety representatives, on employees' statutory rights as a means to prevent risks.

In several countries, the participation of different experts in risk assessment are seen as key. Risks can be identified by internal technician teams specialised in safety issues and potential occupational illnesses by specialised experts in occupational medicine. Employees should be trained in basic health surveillance for symptoms of occupational illnesses and in correct use of personal protective equipment. Consequently, risk assessment should involve safety specialists as well as company doctors and training should be provided to employees at all levels and at different periods of their working life.

Nevertheless, this mixed composition of experts is not present in all countries, and these issues are sometimes handled by external stakeholders. Efforts are required in the retail and wholesale sector for better employee participation in the management of health and work-related risks.

Finally, the introduction of new technologies can prevent musculoskeletal issues, for example customer self-scanning. With this system, the role of the cashier is to support customers in their operations. For some respondents, this has been a positive evolution for cashiers; they can therefore avoid repetitive movements and move around more than at a cash desk. However, it could also lead to a decrease in the number of cashiers. Moreover, whilst self-scanning is less physically demanding for employees, it requires multi-tasking which could also lead to an increase of stress.

More generally, the results of the survey show that in most organisations, work-related ill-health receives much less attention than safety. This is a challenge that should be taken into account and a better balance between health and safety issues should be found.⁹

Stress at work and psychosocial risks

In the survey, respondents were asked to identify the three major issues related to stress at work from the following list:

- Frequent change of work;
- Great amount of work /pressure of time;
- Unclear expectations of work performance;
- Uncertainty (i.e. unstable schedule, precarious contracts, etc.);
- Lack of social support at workplace;
- Night work / shift work;
- Other (please specify).

According to the majority of respondents from UNI Europa and EuroCommerce, the primary source of stress at work was workload and time pressure. The second was uncertainty defined as an unpredictable schedule, precarious contracts, etc. and the third was unclear expectations. Frequent change of work and night work/shift work were also seen as serious factors of stress at work.

When respondents were asked to assess the risks related to the theme generally, unions and employers' federations assessed the risks in the same way (very serious and serious).

Concerning main psychosocial risks, the respondents had to identify three major issues from the list below:

- Psychological harassment (including bullying in the workplace);
- Sexual harassment (verbal or physical interaction of a sexual nature);
- Threats and violence (third party);
- Work including demanding interaction with clients;
- Other.

Respondents strongly linked psychosocial risks to psychological harassment, demanding interaction with clients, threats and third party violence.

In evaluating the seriousness of these risks, it was difficult to provide a balanced analysis, as the unions responded more than the employers. However psychosocial risks are mainly seen as either very serious and serious.

9. According to the majority of unions' respondents.

Challenges

One of the major challenges identified by respondents for stress at work, seemed to be related to excessive time pressure linked to workload. Uncertainty was also identified, for instance flexible working hours, restructuring or the use of new technology.

Home deliveries also create pressures with constraints of deadlines for customer delivery. Rural areas also generate distinct problems where long distances have to be covered with tight deadlines to respect.

According to the majority of union respondents, prevention of ill-health related to stress at work and psychosocial risks needed more attention than at present. Prevention is often organised as part of the overall management of health and safety, illustrated by the growth of wellbeing and "resilience" training. This training mainly focuses on individual workers rather than on better organisation of work.

Stress at work and psychosocial risks require effective risk assessment. Employees or their representatives should be involved in the assessment of risks to better voice their concerns and suggestions. Furthermore, SMEs should be encouraged to engage more in ill-health prevention.

In the light of these problems identified in the retail and wholesale sector, the two following chapters are devoted to the presentation of model practices selected from the survey. These can provide concrete examples of how countries and companies have found solutions to issues linked to the three main themes of the study. These can provide a practical tool for employees and employers in the retail and wholesale sector to improve safety in the workplace.

CHAPTER 2

Best practice in ergonomics

An efficient way to avoid and prevent back and shoulder pain:

SHELF STACKING TABLE AND SHELF STACKING PLATFORM - CARREFOUR, FRANCE

Why the project was implemented

In the retail and wholesale sector, workers have to stack goods on shelves several times a day. This involves bending to pick up products and lifting heavy weights from the ground to the top of the shelves. These repetitive movements lead to musculoskeletal disorders. These are mainly caused by physical factors (handling boxes, the weight of boxes), postural factors linked to loading and discharging pallets in the stores, and placing products on the shelves.

Objectives

In order to avoid musculoskeletal disorders, Carrefour (France) created a special shelf stacking table and platform. The main objective was to avoid bending the back or knees by keeping the load at the same level as the worker because the device was height adjustable.

Description

Carrefour's working group on health and safety worked on MSDs, drawing on the expertise of engineers, members of the Health and Safety department, a store manager, a regional director, employees and two representatives of the Occupational Health Representative.

Once issues were identified, engineers proposed solutions for pilot testing. The shelf stacking table was developed in line with a national recommendation on the improvement of conditions for shelf stacking. To date, several versions of the table have been developed. Carrefour also wished to anticipate potential problems which could lead to legal proceedings. The company is also active in anticipating future national recommendations and implementing possible improvements.



A useful technical support: the tool combines a platform for goods and a table support for parcels, both of which are variable in height. This facilitates the placing of products on shelves by reducing the effort required by employees. It is especially useful for goods placed on higher shelves. The tool also allows employees to sit down whilst placing products on the lower shelves. Overall, this reduces the risk of MSDs.

The equipment was piloted in five different stores. After tests involving different workers and members of the working group, the table was modified. Firstly, the table was adapted to the needs of smaller people by adding a step. After further feedback from workers, a platform was added to the table in order to allow workers to place objects on it. The final change incorporated the table and the platform into one piece of equipment. With this new equipment, employees were able to put products on lower shelves sitting on the platform to avoid bending their back. The testing period lasted 18 months.

Results

Shoulder and back pains leading to illness-related absenteeism decreased as a result. The table will now be distributed in all Carrefour's supermarkets and hypermarkets.

Carrefour was a key player in the establishment of the AFNOR¹⁰ standard for this equipment.

The use of this equipment requires training and organisation, which will be conducted jointly with the Health and Safety Committee.



The equipment is useful for customers and the replenishment of good weighing less than 15 kilograms. The tool reduces strain on shoulders by providing a static support for the parcel.

10. AFNOR: the Association Française de Normalisation (French Organisation of Standardisation), which represents France in the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO).

How to prevent musculoskeletal disorders:

FORKLIFT ERGONOMICS PROJECT – KESLOG OY, FINLAND

Why the project was implemented

Keslog is one of the largest providers of logistics services to the trading sector in Finland, for both companies of its own Group as well as companies outside. Keslog has around 1400 warehouse workers and 150 forklift drivers.

Warehouse work is physically very demanding. Most of this involves is lifting, mostly by hand. This puts particular strain on the back and shoulders. It used to be considered that driving a forklift was less demanding than other jobs, such as handling goods from shelves. However, where people with physical problems were moved to forklift jobs, their conditions did not improve.

The forklift did not give the right support for employees with back or shoulder pain. The seats were unsuitable and the control panels had few adjustments. As a result, sickness absence increased rapidly. Employees made the employer aware of their problems, and it was decided to improve the equipment.

Objectives

The main goal was to improve health at the workplace and to ensure the working capabilities of employees, in particular by modifying the forklift design to decrease back and shoulder pain.

Description

Through the social dialogue process, employees contact their industrial safety delegate if there is a health issue. He or she in turn informs the employer. In this case, the industrial safety delegate started negotiations with the employer to improve the situation for forklift workers.

In cooperation between the importer of the forklifts and the factory engineers, two pilot designs were made and implemented in Vantaa, the biggest storage unit of the company. Employees were closely involved in the pilot and their comments collected. Smaller changes were made immediately at the site: the seat was changed as well as the control panels.

Instructions were transmitted direct to the factory and they were incorporated to the new machines. Further changes have been implemented after several

assessments over a few years. The occupational safety and health representative of the company was part of the overall project. Today all the forklifts have been changed in all storage units belonging to the company.

Results

Sickness absence decreased by around 50% and overtime work decreased as well. The effects were immediate with shoulder and back pain disappearing. Forklift workers were more committed and productivity increased. Employer and employees interacted more and the overall wellbeing increased.

The company culture moved towards more interactive dialogue, with employees able to suggest improvements of their working conditions. Employees whose suggestions are selected by the management board are financially rewarded. The improvement of the forklift device came from an employee suggestion under this scheme. Finally, the forklift factory benefited from a much improved forklift design.

Mapping the workplace for slip or trip hazards: USDAW RISK MAPPING TOOL - UNITED KINGDOM

Why the project was implemented

In the United Kingdom (UK), thousands of people suffer serious injuries as a result of slipping or tripping at work every year. According to the Health and Safety Executive, slips, trips and falls from height cause well over half of the serious injuries in the workplace and account for nearly a third of reportable injuries which result in absences of a week or more; in retail there are nearly 2,400 such injuries reported every year. This particularly affects workers who handle, lift or carry goods.

Objectives

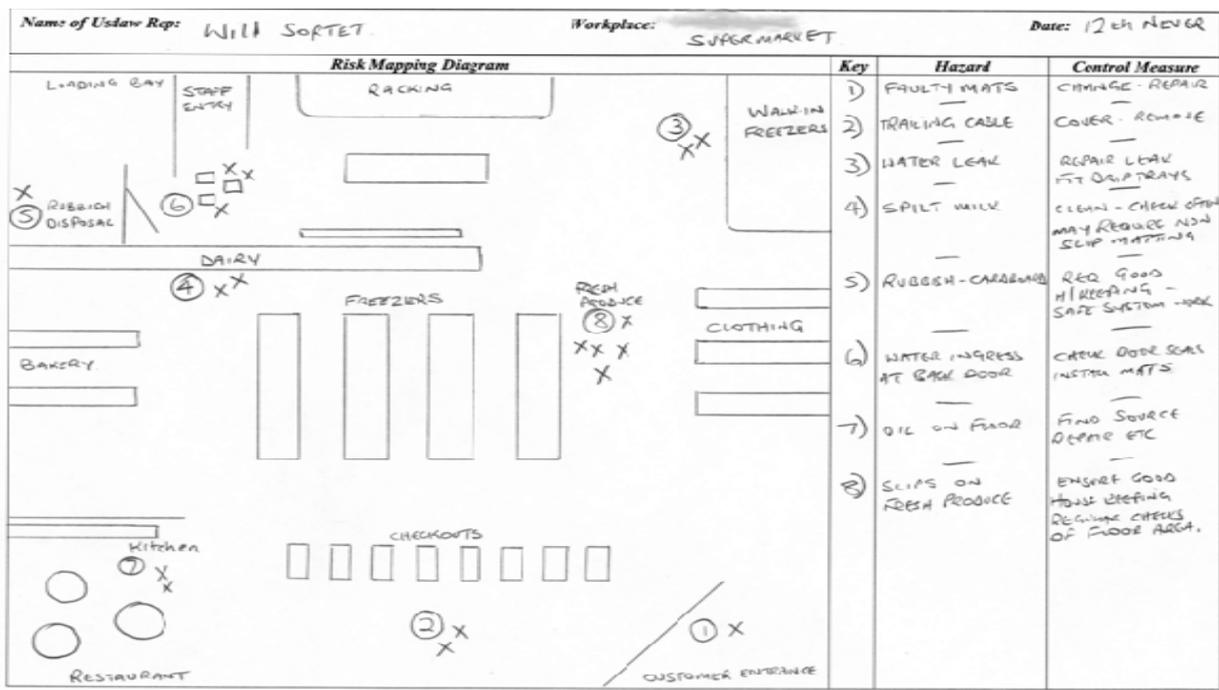
The risk mapping tool was designed to help managers and workers identify the main slip and trip hazards in the workplace, where they occurred and what caused them. It was based on work by health and safety representatives at various food manufacturing factories where slips and trips were a major cause of injury.

Description

The Usdaw risk mapping tool was developed in 2003, adapting mapping techniques already widely used by unions. The tool draws on the experience and knowledge of employees, and also gives a visual means of measuring progress in eliminating or controlling the causes of accidents.

Union representatives are involved in mapping the workplace via a simple diagram, which records reported accidents. These representatives also discuss with workers on the shop floor incidents that have happened and were not reported, either because they were minor or because employees fear reporting for various reasons. The cause of the problem is also discussed. The result is a map of identified hotspots.

By clearly plotting the risk hotspots, the more common causes of slip or trip hazards in workplaces were easily identified, such as rainwater leaks at the back door of a store, floors at entrances which were not effective at drying customers' feet, uneven floors or stairs, etc. This made it easier to resolve these issues.



The example below illustrates the Usdaw mapping tool.

Results

The implementation of the tool has led to a reduction of injuries by up to 50% within 12 months because it helped to clearly identify and eliminate risks of trips and slips. The tool made a significant impact in raising awareness of the seriousness of such hazards because a more accurate picture emerges of the working environment. Moreover, the tool leads to more practical and sustainable solutions by giving a visual indication of the risks. Consequently, workers are engaged in developing the answers. One of the reasons for the success of the tool is its adaptability to the working environment. It can be used easily by union representatives in different contexts, such as a shop, a factory and with local managers.

The tool was adopted in 2007 by the UK's Health and Safety Executive and a slightly modified version of the tool is available on their website based on the same principles. The tool has been transferred from one sector to another, for example in the construction sector.

How to reduce heavy loading and repetitive postures: MODULAR CHECKOUT DEVELOPMENT – METRO CASH AND CARRY, GERMANY

Why the project was implemented

A cashier's activity is characterised by continuous handling, one-side strain, scanning of heavy or bulky items and the pressure to ensure correct payment. As a result, cashiers suffer musculoskeletal disorders, which leads to absenteeism and work-related illness.

Thus, it was necessary to find a more flexible, sustainable and ergonomic layout. This led to the implementation of a project of checkout harmonisation in order to solve ergonomic issues linked to repetitive gestures and handling of heavy items. An additional objective was harmonisation of cash desk design in the different countries in which METRO operates.

Objectives

The aim of the project was to improve ergonomics for cashiers through changing positions and assistance in the scanning process. The development of a new checkout environment was also aimed at helping cashiers to serve customers faster and more efficiently.

Description

A modular approach was chosen with thirteen modules including barriers and merchandising. The modular approach allows the adoption of different work positions, such as standing, with a sitting aid provided. The touchscreen can be adjusted to personal needs, the scanning unit is highly sensitive and allows handling in a comfortable position by the cashier.

The payment module is used in a standing position. The employee can stand with their feet close to the furniture and the unit. Scanning can be handled using the sitting aid if the cashier finds it comfortable to do so.

To resolve ergonomic issues, the module base can be adjusted to different heights to take account of the cashier's characteristics.

Several pilots of the project were implemented and closely monitored. The movements of cashiers and customers were recorded and evaluated. Visits from the project group, including local specialists, sought feedback from cashiers and adjustments were made reflecting this.

The new modular checkout was introduced with trials to ensure a smooth and effective instore implementation.

Results

The modular checkout led to an improvement of the ergonomic working environment. The design is adaptable to regional/country differences in the physical and ergonomic characteristics of staff.

Comments and feedback from cashiers have shown that the new design matched the main requirements and led to an improvement in the handling of items and the payment process.

CHAPTER 3

Best practice on stress at work and psychosocial risks

Preventing stress at work and psychosocial risks:

A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CALL CENTRE - CARREFOUR FRANCE

Why the project was implemented

Workers in the retail sector, particularly cashiers, are often exposed to violence from customers or even more traumatic events, such as robberies. They need help and support after such incidents. In 2010 Carrefour, a major company in the French retail sector, decided to develop a partnership with the INAVEM Institute,¹¹ which helps victims by working with associations assisting victims, providing information and awareness raising among professionals and the public.

Staff can benefit automatically from this support after robberies and traumatic events occur in stores. For up to 48 hours after the incident, workers also have access to a psychologist.

In 2012, Carrefour decided to create its own support structure for workers, with the launch of a specific hotline.

Objectives

Carrefour opened a call centre in 2012 to provide support to staff as well as their families. Access to a psychologist was also provided for traumatic events in both their work and private life.

A leaflet advertising Carrefour's psychological and social call centre for employees.

11. INAVEM: Fédération Nationale d'Aide aux Victimes et de Médiation (the National Federation of Support to Victims and Mediation).

Description

Workers who are victims of violence or who need psychological help can contact the hotline, which is open 24/7. They can discuss their problems with qualified psychologists by phone, Internet chat or email. The call is anonymous and confidential.

After two years, the nature of the request showed a focus on issues linked to financial problems, housing issues, etc. As a result, advice on a broader range of issues has been provided to workers since 2015.

Workers have the opportunity to call the hotline and talk with qualified social workers or have psychological support. An adviser receives all calls and after listening to the caller, directs them to a psychologist or a social worker, according to the nature of the request. The social worker opens a file for the employee and can help in various ways such as with relationships with the public administration, resolving financial problems or providing support when there are life changes (divorce, separation, professional transfer, etc.) or a need for information on social services.

Results

The call centre has been a success and all 110,000 people working for Carrefour have access to it. The hotline also allows the company to gain feedback on the wellbeing of its workers. The main issues raised by employees were related to relations with management and recognition at work. Systematic anonymous reporting allows the company to recognise issues which would remain invisible without this system.

This information has had an impact on the way the company works: it has led to several action plans addressing various topics, including general company policy and agreements to improve the social health system.

NOUVEAU

Nouveau service d'accompagnement social

Carrefour met gratuitement à votre disposition un nouveau service d'accompagnement social pour vous apporter des réponses adaptées à votre situation.

Une équipe d'assistants sociaux vous accompagne dans vos difficultés personnelles ou professionnelles, si vous :

- rencontrez des difficultés financières
 - Conseil à l'aménagement du budget
 - Information sur le surendettement
- vivez un changement de situation (séparation, divorce, mutatis...)
 - Conseils et informations sur les démarches administratives à entreprendre
- vous intéressez sur vos droits aux aides sociales
 - Recherche et mise en œuvre de solutions pour sortir d'une situation difficile comme la perte de logement, les factures impayées (edf, lycées...)

N'attendez pas, contactez le

N° Vert 0 800 30 50 23

ANONYME - CONFIDENTIEL - GRATUIT

En complément, et pour recueillir des difficultés personnelles ou professionnelles, vous bénéficiez de soutien psychologique à distance.

Les chèques Qualité de Vie au Travail de Pysya vous renseignent de manière anonyme et confidentielle.

En cas d'urgence, grâce à une équipe dédiée, d'été à l'été vers le soutien psychologique ou le service social.

7j/7 et 24h/24 pour le soutien psychologique.

6h/7j et 24h/24 pour le service social.

ou par internet chat et mail pour le soutien psychologique sur www.pysya.fr

Espace bien-être (Team d'assistant(e) Carrefour - Mail de passe - carrefour)

Ces services sont assurés par les instituts sociaux et les psychologues du Cabinet Pysya diplômés et inscrits au code de déontologie de leur profession.

A poster advertising the new services that Carrefour's social call centre offers, including financial advice.

How to prevent stress at work linked to violence:

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THIRD PARTY VIOLENCE – USDAW AND THE BRITISH RETAIL CONSORTIUM

Why the project was implemented

Third party violence has been recognised as a work-related health and safety problem in the UK since the 1980s. The Health and Safety Executive published guidance for retail employers as long ago as 1995, explaining what employers should do to meet their obligations to staff. However, by 2001 the guidance had become out of date and the members of the union, Usdaw, were concerned that levels of violence and abuse were rising, both from customers and from criminals.

While third party violence is a work-related hazard, it is different from other hazards covered by health and safety law. Violence and abuse is carried out by members of the public and is largely associated with other crimes. Therefore, in 2002, Usdaw in association with employers, decided to implement the Freedom from Fear campaign. Since the campaign was launched, Usdaw have worked with major retail employers, the police and politicians to make workplaces safer for all staff and customers.

Objectives

The goal of the project was to prevent and combat violence and abuse carried out by members of the public through a community-wide campaign.

Description

A major part of the campaign has been to promote respect for shop workers, who are often exposed to verbal abuse. Enlisting the support of the shopping public in standing up for workers against a violent and abusive minority is a key aspect. Every year the union holds a "Respect Week" during which members are encouraged to set up street stalls or run store events to get the message across to customers.

The other aspect of the campaign is to protect shop staff from violence. This involves working with employers to ensure their duty of care obligations under health and safety law are met. However, it also needs local authority environmental health officers, who enforce health and safety laws in shops, to use their enforcement powers to ensure employer compliance.



A poster promoting Usdaw's campaign to protect retail employees from third party violence.

Usdaw therefore decided to work with all stakeholders including employers and the National Retail Crime Strategy Group which brings together retail employers, the union, local business crime partnerships, the police and Government. These stakeholders have been brought together at four national summit meetings to share good practice and identify future challenges.

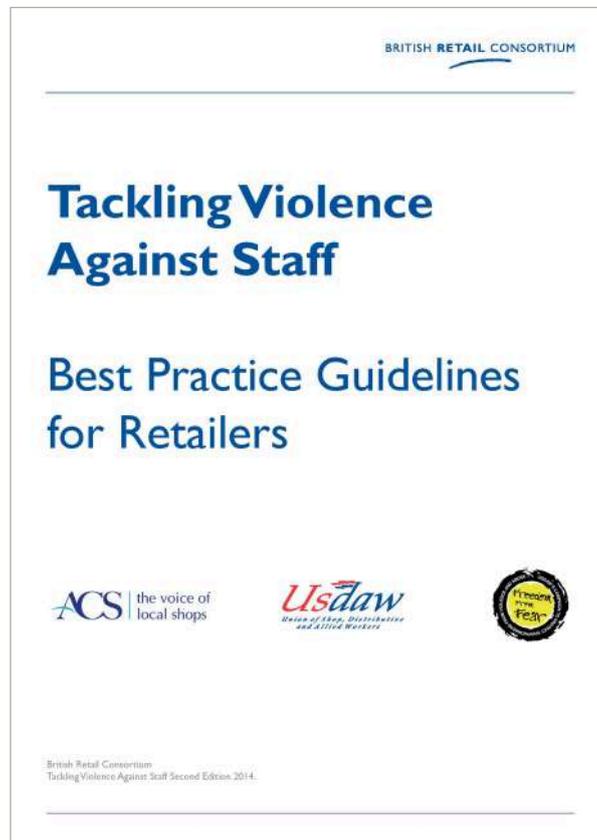
Usdaw's collaboration with the British Retail Consortium has resulted in the development of Best Practice Guidelines for their members (2014 is the latest version). The Guidelines include standards on senior management support, physical design of the work environment, practical measures to prevent violence, training (including conflict management training), reporting procedures and post-incident support.

Results

Following the launch of the Freedom from Fear campaign, the overall trend of reported violence and abuse in the annual Retail Crime Survey conducted by the British Retail Consortium decreased. In particular, larger retail companies found that more serious incidents fell.

However, there are still over 10,000 physical attacks a year, with a much higher and more difficult to measure number of incidents of threats and damaging verbal abuse. The union's research over the last 10 years suggests that there is also a major problem of under-reporting – even when it involves physical attacks.

As a result, it is necessary to improve safety by measures adapted to the needs of each store. The use of CCTV can be useful in helping the police apprehend offenders. Layout of the store can be also very important in reducing risk, especially the height and location of the counter or the layout of shelving. Training is essential to help staff to react when an incident occurs, using appropriate security measures.



British Retail Consortium's 2014 guidelines on 'Tackling Violence Against Staff,' in cooperation with Usdaw and the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS).

How to deal with threatening situations in stores:

WEB-BASED TUTORIAL FROM THE UNION PAM
AND THE FINNISH COMMERCE FEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS

Why the project was implemented

The project was implemented by the Employers' Federation after an increase in incidents involving violence, or threats of violence, especially in small stores. This followed a legislative change allowing the opening of stores at night until 11PM and in some cases, all night. The number of robberies in stores rose, especially at weekends and late in the evening. Employers felt that employees needed more training to prevent and cope with difficult situations.

The project gathered experts from the Employers' Federation, the Union and the safety officers of the three largest companies in retail and wholesale in Finland. Additionally, elements of the tutorial were inspired by the European Social Dialogue outcome against Third Party Violence (2009).

Objectives

The goal of the tutorial is to train staff on how to recognise threatening situations, how to prevent the escalation of a threatening situation and how to react should they, despite this, find themselves in a violent confrontation.

Description

The tutorial has been accessible via the Internet to all employees and employers since 2011. It begins with general instructions on conduct that will help prevent a threatening situation (smile, friendly attitude, etc.)

The tutorial gives instructions about identifying potentially difficult or threatening customers or situations, and how to act when facing suspicious behaviour, alerting the manager, the security system for lone workers, etc. The tutorial gives examples of some specific situations that could happen in a store, including drunken customers, shoplifting, robbery and armed robbery. Once the situation is identified, there are instructions on how to behave with difficult customers such as avoiding showing tension or fear. It stresses the paramount importance of acting to avoid putting oneself in danger.

The first part is dedicated to prevention, advising staff to report any suspicious behaviour before anything happens. Also minimising the amount of money in the cash desk and implementing a safe till area are good preventive measures.

The tutorial gives details on how to catch a shoplifter safely and suggests what to do after a threatening incident, such as closing the store, calling the police, reporting the incident to a manager, a co-worker or a security guard. This part of the tutorial calls for interaction at the workplace, finding out what specific instructions have been introduced by the management. It also gives recommendations on seeking help from occupational health services for mental trauma.



The welcome page of the third party violence online tutorial.



The tutorial shows potential threatening situations with customers in the shop.

Results

The tutorial is simple, easy, quick and aimed at open discussion in the workplace. New workers in the sector have access to the tool and it is still in use five years after its launch in 2011.

According to the Federation of Employers, the tutorial is very popular, with over 11,000 people accessing it on their website. Some users are companies but some are also students in vocational education. It means that people coming into the retail and wholesale sector have often already used the tutorial and their feedback is very positive.

It is difficult to quantify the number of employees who have used the tutorial, as there is no specific data collection. However, every couple of years, advertisement of the tutorial is renewed, reminding the employees of the opportunity to use it.

One of the positive aspects of the tutorial is that awareness of the threat of violence in stores has grown and is being taken seriously. The tutorial underlines that the issue of violence can be addressed. People can be trained to recognise difficult situations, to react after an event, and take care of victims. It also helps smaller employers with limited resources for training to teach their workers how to prevent, identify and react to the threat of violence.

A good way to decrease stress and improve relations with customers: IMPLEMENTATION OF A SINGLE QUEUE – CARREFOUR, FRANCE

Why the project was implemented

Retail staff are often exposed to abuse from customers who become impatient waiting in a long queue before accessing cashiers. Violence and verbal abuse towards staff is a serious occupational health issue as well as a safety problem. As a result, Carrefour decided to optimise client waiting time by creating a single queue.

Objectives

The goal was to diminish pressure on the cashier by minimising the queue at each cash desk in order to have a better distribution of work. The single queue allows easy closure of cash desks when cashiers are leaving or on a short break. The overall objective is to better address clients' needs through efficient organisation.



The single queue at a Carrefour store.

Description

A single queue allows customers to be guided to the first available cash desk. Clients still have the opportunity to choose a single queue or the traditional system (where customers can go and queue at individual cash desks). Customers waiting in the single queue are informed about the free cash desk according to a number on a screen. When the number appears, they go immediately to the available cashier. As a result, the cashier is more relaxed as there is no pressure in front of the cash desk.

Results

The single queue concept was a success. A survey showed 53% of consumers thought the new system quicker than the traditional cash desk. 40% found the system easy to understand, and 23% thought the queue well organised.

Cashiers, on the other hand, felt that the single queue enhanced the flow of customers at the cash desk (68%). 82% thought that their work was improved. Among them, 22% considered that the single queue allowed a better relationship with clients, and 77% believed that conditions of work were improved because of better distribution of clients amongst the cash desks. It allowed them to have breaks whenever they wanted without the obligation to wait for another cashier, because it was possible to close the cash desk temporarily.

However, the pilot showed that customers needed to be informed about the implementation of the single queuing system, leaflets and direct information by staff were given in advance of the launch. The single queue is only suitable in large stores where the distance between cash desks and shelving is at least 4.5 metres.



The customer waiting in the single queue is notified about the available cash desk by the screen.

CHAPTER 4

The role of social dialogue between employers, employees and trade unions

At each stage of the aforementioned case studies, a social dialogue was undertaken in order to take into account the opinions and attitudes of both employees and employers and/or their representatives. This impact can be assessed at different levels.

Collective participation at the initiation stage of the project allows all actors to be involved in its design. This study showed in many cases active collaboration between employers and employees from the beginning. Some projects were the initiative of employers who invited the unions to work on the project, such as the case in Finland for the tutorial. Whereas some projects were at the unions' initiative and employers were invited to collaborate, such as the Freedom from Fear Campaign in the UK. The initiator can also be an employee, as in Finland for the forklift project. Involvement of employees in the projects from the outset leads to a more interactive dialogue within companies and an overall increase in wellbeing, because employees see changes being made with their active participation.

The involvement of both sides is also significant during the testing phase. Employees and employers can improve the project once it is implemented and in use by the employees. The cooperation of employers and employees at the implementation of a pilot and in the assessment of the accessibility and sustainability of the project matters. The opinion of both sides is important for the correct implementation and the final outcome. The reasons for the success of the selected innovative projects are strongly linked to cooperation between employers and employees or their representatives at all the stages of the project. Both sides have been part of the design and pilot phases, the evaluation period and implementation. The views of the employees were taken into account through feedback at different development stages of the project. Involving employees in the selection of equipment and the implementation of processes is also a good way to prevent risks.

Finally, it appears that the implementation of an active health and safety policy has a positive impact on social dialogue in general. For example Finland's forklift case study, where the implementation of a project initiated from employees leads to greater wellbeing within the whole company. This is also the case in France where projects become part of general negotiations. Four years after the launch of a health

directorate at Carrefour, the company developed an active policy to prevent and reduce ergonomic issues and psychosocial risks as part of a holistic approach to improve health and safety at work. According to Carrefour, this policy has had a positive impact on the relationship between employers and employees. During annual mandatory negotiations between unions and employers, health was at the top of the agenda. As a result, this led to the introduction of access to a social worker via a hotline to help resolve psychosocial risks at work and in the area of ergonomics, the shelf table.

CHAPTER 5

The importance of transferability

In the framework of European Social Dialogue, transferability of the projects is of central importance. Many companies operate in both their home country and other European Member States. The question of how an innovative project can be transferred is therefore crucial to improving performance and wellbeing, and should be analysed at several levels.

Firstly, the capacity of the company to transfer an innovative project from one store to another in the same country is important. Some practices can be transferred easily as they do not require specific training. This is the case for the Internet tutorial on violence in Finland, as it is only necessary to follow simple instructions on a computer. It is also the case for the hotline in France which is easily accessible through a free telephone number. In Finland, the forklift project was disseminated in all the Finnish warehouses belonging to the company without any specific training, as the changes only concerned the seat and guidance on use.

However, sometimes transferability requires extensive change and an explanation of why the change is required. This is the case for METRO with the cash desk modular project which was implemented in all its stores in Germany and in some other European countries. For some cashiers, it was not easy to adapt to standing instead of sitting, even if the majority saw the added-value from an ergonomic perspective. In this case, explanation of the benefits of the project was required.

The issue of transferability concerns also the ability to transfer such practices at the sectoral level. Carrefour France has seen its project on ergonomics (the shelf table) recommended by French health and safety inspectors to other companies. As a result, the new equipment was introduced in almost all member companies in the Health Committee of the French Commerce Federation. This is because the table was a positive response to a mandatory recommendation for improvement on conditions of shelf stacking. Carrefour works with a supplier which sells the innovative project to other companies.

For companies or organisations that operate across Europe, the issue of transferability of an innovative project from one country to another can be part of a wider strategy. This was the case for METRO with its cash desk project which was designed in order to respond to different requirements in different countries where the group operates. The aim was to

allow for an adaptation of the concept according to regional or country-specific anthropometric parameters in terms of ergonomics. The modular design approach also allows the possibility to adapt to different situations in stores and to different wholesale store sizes. The design was made flexible in order to be used in different store formats in different countries.

In Carrefour, there has been no systematic transfer of innovative projects at European level. The strategy has been to promote an exchange of best practice in the framework of European Social Dialogue. However, if a country wants to introduce French materials, Carrefour will support the process by sending an engineer. At the level of Carrefour's European workers councils, where union representatives from each country are present, the exchange of best practice is promoted. Experience sharing between health and safety managers in different countries has further scope for development.

Finally, transferability can be considered at the international level. Even if each country has its own rules on health and safety, social dialogue still can have a role to play. It can be achieved, like Carrefour, through the UNI Global agreement, which requires the respect of good working conditions in each country in which European companies operate.

Some of the examples of best practice presented in this guide are easily transferable to SMEs, such as the risk mapping tool or the website tutorial, where retail stores are able to offer access to computers to their staff. However, SMEs often have limited time and resources, lack access to health specialists within the workplace and have partial knowledge of potential health issues. It is therefore very important to improve their access to information and to tailor solutions to reduce health issues to the nature of the SME workplace. The OIRA could be one of the tools that could help SMEs to learn more about the advantages of a proactive approach to health issues and the benefits of risk assessment.

CHAPTER 6

Strong collaboration between social partners and the OSHA campaigns

Through this project the social partners for the retail and wholesale sector want to contribute to the OSHA campaign on psychological risks at the workplace as well as the campaign on Healthy Workplaces for All Ages.

The latter is a campaign aiming at the prevention of work-related accidents, health problems and occupational diseases throughout working life. It is based on a holistic approach including work environment and organisation, training and lifelong learning, leadership, work-life balance, motivation, career development and a “work ability” concept. The campaign identifies risk factors at the workplace such as sedentary work, prolonged static postures, frequent and repetitive hand movements, time pressure, etc. leading to main health problems such as MSDs and stress.

The campaign adopts a comprehensive approach to prevention, integrating OSHA and health protection with health promotion, addressing both work organisation and work environment issues as well as individual risk factors. The objectives are to improve the health and wellbeing of all employees, based on the idea that the health of workers of all ages can be improved.

The collaboration between OSHA and the social partners should give the opportunity to employers and employees from the retail and wholesale sector to benefit from the OiRA tool, which is part of the Healthy Workplaces for All Ages campaign. This online interactive risk assessment is a response to the obligation for employers to manage work-related stress as every other risk to health and safety in the workplace. To prevent work-related stress, employers are required to carry out regular risk assessment in the workplace.

With OiRA, the OSHA seeks to develop and promote practical tools to help micro and small enterprises to put in place risk assessment processes and develop OiRA community sharing tools to share experiences and best practice. OiRA offers a step-by-step approach to the risk assessment process, beginning with the identification of workplace risks, then taking the user through the process of implementing preventive actions, and finally monitoring and reporting risks. OiRA allows companies to tailor the risk assessment to their own specifications by answering a few simple questions concerning first identification of risks. This involves looking

for things at work that have the potential to cause harm, and identifying who might be exposed to such a hazard.

Social partners play an active role in this process, as all OiRA tools have been created by or with the involvement of social partners and/or national authorities. At the European level, the OiRA tools concern various sectors such as cleaning, hairdressing, leather and tanning, maritime transport, private security or sport sector. The present collaboration with OSHA gives the opportunity to the social partners in the retail and wholesale sector to be involved and develop one or more sectoral OiRA tool specifically dedicated to this sector.

The innovative projects selected in this study can be widely disseminated at the European level through the OSHA. Several examples of best practice included in this guide are based on the principle of risk assessment, which is seen by the OSHA as a key to prevent work-related stress. It is essential that European micro and small enterprises undertake risk assessments, and this guide can help them in doing so.

CHAPTER 7

Where to learn more

If you would like further information on the examples of best practice presented in this guide, please use the sources below:

Carrefour – France

“Ergonomics”

“Call centre”

“Single queue”

Contact person: Christophe Labattut (Director, Health at Work, France),
Mathilde Tabary (Group Director, Social Development and Diversity)

Available in: French

Format: France and Group

Website: <http://www.carrefour.com>

KESLOG OY – Finland

“Forklift ergonomics project”

Contact person: Juha Saarinen

Available in: warehouses

Format: ergonomic forklifts for warehouse workers

Website: no dedicated website

METRO Cash and Carry – Germany

“Modular Checkout Development”

Contact person: Jeanette Blume (Technical Operations), Beatrix von Eycken (OHS), Martin Rolff (Procurement),
Wolfgang Thye (IT)

Available in: stores for example in Bulgaria, Belgium, Germany

Format: Modular solution for cash desk

Website: no dedicated website

PAM Union and Finnish Commerce Federation – Finland



"Online tutorial"

Contact person: Erika Kähärä (Pam Union), Riikka Lindholm (Finnish Commerce Federation)

Available in: Finnish

Format: Electronic

Website: <http://koulutus.kauppa.fi/>

Usdaw – United Kingdom *Usdaw*

"Freedom from fear"

"Risk mapping for slips and trips"

Contact person: Doug Russell

Available in: English for both Slips and Trips Risk Mapping and Freedom from Fear

Format: Electronic and paper for both

Website: <http://www.usdaw.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=2db107ca-4d5d-49a2-99dc-16e187a59e71> for Slips and Trips Risk Mapping; <http://www.usdaw.org.uk/Campaigns/Freedom-From-Fear> for Freedom from Fear campaign

OSHA – Healthy Workplaces for All Ages



Contact person: Heike Klempa

Available in: all EU languages

Format: Electronic

Website: <https://www.healthy-workplaces.eu/>

OSHA – OIRA *OIRA*

Contact person: Lorenzo Munar

Available in: all EU languages

Format: online interactive risk-assessment

Website: <http://www.oiraproject.eu>

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