

The Commission's Initiative on WRMSDs

***Second phase consultation of European
social partners and future developments***

The ETUC on the Offensive against MSDs

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BACKGROUND

WRMSDs: one of the major OSH problems in Europe

- **MSDs account for 53% of all work-related diseases in the EU-15**
- **The most often work-related health problem resulting in lost days and permanent incapacity to work**
 - 49.9% of all more than 3 days absences from work
 - 49.2% of all 2 weeks or more absences
 - about 60% of all reported cases of permanent incapacity

(source: 1999 LFS "Ad hoc module on accidents at work and work-related health problems", Eurostat)

BACKGROUND

WRMSDs: a major cost burden for industry and society

- Available cost estimates of MSDs put the cost at between 0.5% and 2% of GDP
- MSD responsible for up to 40%-50% of the costs of all work-related health issues
- With ageing EU active population, prevalence rate of WRMSDs among older workers may result in increasing costs!

BACKGROUND

WRMSDs are on the increase in the EU

■ Some reference data (EU-27)

(source: Fourth European Survey on Working Conditions, 2006, European Foundation Dublin)

- **Occurrence of exposure to risk factors: ergonomic risks are the most commonly reported risk at work**
 - Repetitive hand or arm movements (62.3%)
 - Tiring or painful positions (45.5%)
 - Heavy loads (35%)
 - Vibrations (24.2%)
- **Perceived work-related health problems: WRMSDs are the most often reported work-related health symptoms**
 - Backache (24.7%)
 - ❖ Muscular pains (22.8%)

The Strategic Framework of the EC's initiative on WRMSDs

- **Commission Communication COM(2002) 118 final – "Adapting to change in work and society: a new Community strategy on health and safety at work 2002-2006"**
- **First phase consultation of the social partners on work-related MSDs**
 - Launched by the Commission in November 2004, in compliance with article 138(2) of the EC Treaty
 - 11 European social partner organisations transmitted their views: divergence between workers and employers organisations as to the practicality of further community legislation
 - Adoption of a « Framework of action » by the agricultural social partners in November 2005

The Strategic Framework of the EC's initiative on WRMSDs

■ Second phase consultation of the social partners on WRMSDs

- Launched by the Commission in March 2007, in compliance with article 138(3) of the EC Treaty
- Global approach (regulatory and non-regulatory elements) advocated:
 - New individual directive to simplify and integrate the current EU legal framework
 - Several outreach initiatives (all players involved: ACSH, SLIC, Bilbao Agency, sectoral social dialogue)
- European Social Partners were asked to express their views on:
 - The content of the envisaged regulatory and non regulatory initiatives
 - Their intention to start a negotiation process under articles 138(4) and 139 of the EC Treaty

The Strategic Framework of the EC's initiative on WRMSDs

- **Second phase consultation of the social partners on WRMSDs**
 - 8 single European social partners organisations replied
 - Joint responses by the European social partners in the sectors of agriculture and telecommunications
 - Divergence between employers and workers organisations confirmed

Replies to the second phase consultation

■ Employers not in favour of new legislation

- A single text covering all types of WRMSDs would be unrealistic because of their multifactoral nature
- WRMSDs already largely covered by the current EU legal framework
- Emphasis to be put on more effective implementation of the existing legislation

■ Workers in favour of new legislation

- Advocate a limit-value-approach
- Psychosocial aspects to be considered
- Support global approach (regulatory and non-regulatory)

Replies to the second phase consultation

■ Joint responses

- Agriculture sector
- Telecommunication sector

Next steps

■ Extended social and economic impact assessment

- Preliminary study by a contractor (call for tenders launched in July 2007 – study available in 1-year time after signature of the contract: end 2008)
- Based on this study, Commission may be delivering its final IA report in 2009

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for your kind
attention