

EESC Public Hearing
***Summary of the costs and benefits of
investments in occupational safety and health
(OSH): a civil society's view***

17 June 2019

Brussels

**A trade union perspective – Contribution by the
European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)**

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1) What can trade unions/social partners and public services do to improve OSH?

Trade Unions/Social Partners

- Actively use the European Pillar of Social Rights (principles 10 “Healthy, safe and well-adapted work environment” & 8 “Social dialogue and involvement of workers”) for joint initiatives
- Renew commitments to prioritise investments in health and safety measures, tools and structures across all levels of social dialogue and collective bargaining, including in training for OSH and OSH services
 - Rationale 1: Return-on-investment impact: every EUR 1 invested in OSH generates a return of EUR 2.2
 - Rationale 2: Workers’ participation pays off
- Trade unions to promote and/or demand the use of comprehensive risks assessments (and involve workers and their representatives) => Need to pursue a multi-dimensional approach when “designing” working conditions, work organisation, work equipment and managerial behaviour

1) What can trade unions/social partners and public services do to improve OSH?

Trade Unions/Social Partners

- Work together to identify emerging or new OSH risks and to develop strategies, measures, tools and legislation/regulation to effectively address them
 - Digitalisation/robotisation/use of artificial intelligence (AI) => TU response: involve workers and their representatives and/or trade unions in the design and in negotiated solutions (e.g. collective or workplace-based agreements)
 - Changing forms of provision of services, e.g. homecare (e.g. with insufficient lifting aids for elderly persons) and working time
 - Increasing numbers of workers treated (rightly or wrongly) as self-employed, and who could fall outside existing OSH regulation
- Work together and contribute to the work of the relevant legislators at EU-level – including in the context of social partner consultations – to elaborate strategies, measures, tools and legislation/regulation to effectively prevent or reduce OSH hazards in particular in relation to MSD, PSRS@W and carcinogens and mutagens, the three main causes for injuries, sickness (absence), reduced working capacities, accidents and deaths

1) What can trade unions/social partners and public services do to improve OSH?

Public Services

- EPSU does not see important differences when it comes to the benefits of investment in OSH and the enforcement of OSH rules and procedures in the private and the public sector
- There is one exception though, namely that the money for the investments in OSH in public administrations and in other public services also comes from public sources – taxes or social contributions – and insofar not even has an impact on the possible gains/profit margins of enterprises

2) Which are the main concerns/problems from the trade union or public services perspective?

Trade Unions/Social Partners

- Work overload
- Understaffing
- Work intensification
- Use of ICT technologies, e.g. telework, in a way that they create stress and/or anxieties due to ICT-based monitoring surveillance tools
- New forms and/or places of services provision
- Lack of supporting devices / protective equipment
- Non-coverage/non-reporting of psycho-social risks and stress at work (PSRS@W)
- Need for a more consistent EU-level recognition of occupational diseases

2) Which are the main concerns/problems from the trade union or public services perspective?

Public Services

- Risk/reality of non-effectiveness of labour inspection due to understaffing of labour inspectorates

3) Which good practices could be shared by trade unions/social partners?

- Elaboration of joint guidance, e.g. on the prevention and reduction of psycho-social risks and stress at work (PSRS@W), third party violence (TPV), an ageing workforce, etc.
- Identification of joint projects, strategies and measures between EU-level and national sectoral social partners
- Negotiation of autonomous/framework agreements which can be turned into EU-legislation (e.g. Dir 2010/32/EU on the prevention of injuries from medical sharps)
- Coordination (ideally alignment) of contributions by EU-level employers' organisations and trade unions to social partner/public consultations

4) How can OSH contribute to workers' wellbeing, business profit and social saving?

- Benefits of investment in OSH
 - Reduces the risk of injury or accidents
 - Reduces the number of sick days taken and/or long-term absence
 - Reduces/avoids accident- and illness-related costs
 - Reduces the burden on national health services
 - Helps manage accident/work injuries insurance costs
 - Safeguards the future of the company's workforce
 - Increases employees' productivity and motivation
 - Supports the prolongation of healthy and safe working careers / Allows a reduction of workload-related burnouts and early retirement
- Promotion and use of social partners of participatory approaches at workplace, sectoral, national and EU-level