Work-related stress has been identified as a concern for both employers and workers. It can potentially affect any workplace and any worker, irrespective of the size of the company, field of activity, or form of employment contract or relationship.

For the purposes of this Agreement, stress is being defined as 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 unreasonable requirements or expectations placed on them.

Tackling stress at work can lead to greater efficiency and improved occupational health and safety, with consequent economic and social benefits for companies, workers and society as a whole.

The Social Partners in Malta, taking note of their obligations as member organisations of the Signatory Parties to the original Framework Agreement on Stress, are hereby signifying their intent to continue raising awareness and understanding about the extent and magnitude of the problem and to promote initiatives amongst stakeholders and duty holders by which stress at work can be recognised, prevented and eliminated or controlled.

Whilst recognising the complexity of Work Related Stress, the Social Partners in Malta also recognise the urgent need to be proactive in this field, and to promote and ensure that are taken, within the limits of each party’s statutory role and according to the specific parameters of the law, those measures that are indicated to be taken.

For this purpose, the Social Partners in Malta are also agreeing to:

1. Promote a mix of collective and, or individual specific measures targeted at identified stress factors or as part of an integrated stress policy encompassing both preventive and responsive mechanisms.

2. Push forward the need for the development of company specific Work Related Stress Policies, that reflect the needs of both the company and its employees – a model policy is included in this document as Annex 1.
3. Educate in, provide information about, and train their own respective officials and representatives in:
   a. the extent and magnitude in general of the problem,
   b. the detection of early signs of Work Related Stress,
   c. the need to take preventive measures against Work Related Stress,
   d. the systems in place, both at a national and the enterprise level that assist workers who are suffering from the effects of Work Related Stress.

4. Use their own resources to organise awareness raising activities on a regular basis that highlight the importance of Work Relates Stress and its impact on the nation, the economy, enterprises and workers and on society in general.

5. Promote the sharing of resources between enterprises so that the largest possible number of workers is covered.

6. Promote Risk Assessment as a tool that can be used at enterprise level to address Work Related Stress. Such a Risk Assessment exercise shall include the analysis of factors such as work organisation and processes (working time arrangements, degree of autonomy, match between workers skills and job requirements, workload, etc.), working conditions and environment (exposure to abusive behaviour, noise, heat, dangerous substances, etc.), communication (uncertainty about what is expected at work, employment prospects, or forthcoming change, etc.) and subjective factors (emotional and social pressures, feeling unable to cope, perceived lack of support, etc).

7. The representatives of employers shall on their part promote the benefits of clear communication channels within enterprises so that the enterprise objectives and the role of individual workers are made clear and understood whilst ensuring adequate management support for individuals and teams or groups of workers, matching responsibility and control over work, improving work organisation and processes, working conditions and environment.

8. The Social Partners agree that where the required expertise inside specific work places is insufficient, they shall discuss the possibility of engaging or calling upon the services provided by competent external services.
9. The Signatory Parties to this Agreement agree to evaluate and review the Agreement any time after the five years following the date of signature, if requested by any one of them.

On its part, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority agrees to continue taking initiatives to raise awareness about Work Related Stress, and to continue its cooperation with, and to provide assistance to the Social Partners in Malta, especially by making available information and guidance on the subject of Work Related Stress, its elimination or control.

Signed by:

___________________  ___________________  ___________________

___________________  ___________________  ___________________

___________________  ___________________  ___________________

Today, the xx of Xxxxxxxx, 201X, at the offices of ___________________________
ANNEX ONE

MODEL POLICY ON WORK RELATED STRESS

Introduction

We at ________________________ (Name of Company) are committed to protect the health, safety and welfare of all our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. To enable individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work, reasonable and appropriate improvements to the working environment will be made and suitable support will be provided to those whose health and well-being are being affected by work-related stress.

This policy will apply to everyone in the Company. Managers are responsible for the implementation of this policy and ________________________ (Name of Company) will provide adequate resources to enable Managers to implement the Company’s stress management strategy.

Policy Aims

The aims of this Policy are to establish an effective and consistent approach to the prevention of work-related stress throughout ________________________ (Name of Company) and to provide support where cases of stress are identified.

This will be achieved by:

- raising awareness within the Company on stress, its causes, and methods of prevention and control;
- identifying all workplace stressors through the carrying out of appropriate risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- providing support for the management of personal stress levels, and for this purpose, the Company will provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by work and, or external factors.
- the sensitive and planned management of return to work, following sickness absence.
(Name of Company) will amend those work practices, as far as reasonably possible, that are shown to lead to stress and will promote a culture of open communication on all matters that can affect occupational health and safety, including stress at work, and will also promote good practices that are conducive to achieving the objectives of this policy.

The Company will consult with Workers’ Health and Safety Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.

**Arrangements and Responsibilities**

The organisational arrangements through which this policy is to be effective, and roles and responsibilities of individuals, are set out below.

The effectiveness of the arrangements is dependent upon a constructive partnership being established and maintained between the Company, its Management, and individual employees.

**Role of Management**

(i) Managers are responsible for:

- Implementing the Work Related Stress Policy for employees under their managerial control
- Ensuring that, when risk assessments are implemented, they address the hazards relating to occupational stress so that they are included in risk assessment exercises and shall implement recommendations arising out of such risks assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensuring that reasonable steps are taken to minimise the potential for exacerbating risks arising from occupational stress, not only by developing good communication but also by fostering an open and supportive environment in which stress can be discussed.

(ii) Managers should take steps to ensure that other employees in their Departments or Sections, who have management or supervisory roles, understand the nature and causes of stress, how to identify it, and means of prevention or reduction.
Managers should act to identify symptoms of stress at an early stage, provide support to staff who are undergoing difficulties and encourage referral to the providers approved by the Company ___________, whilst ensuring a sensitive and understanding approach to such cases.

In addition, Managers should:

- Ensure good communication between Management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure that all members of staff under their responsibility are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Monitor workloads and working hours to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that members of staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.

(If the Company has its own health and safety set-up, then the following roles should be assigned to the health and safety personnel; in other cases, these roles need to be assigned elsewhere. This applies also in the case of any other section that is not present within any particular Company).

Occupational health and safety section

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress.
- Liaise with whoever has been entrusted by the Company to carry out risk assessments so that hazards and risks associated with Work Related Stress could be identified, measured and controlled.
• Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their Management on a planned return to work.

• Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

• Inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

**Human resources**

• Give guidance to Managers on the stress policy.

• Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.

• Advise Managers and individuals on training requirements.

• Provide continuing support to Managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

**Employees**

• Raise issues of concern with their Workers’ Health and Safety Representatives, supervisors, Managers or occupational health personnel.

• Individual members of staff are encouraged to support colleagues and, as appropriate, raise with Management all cases where colleagues are displaying signs of stress.

• Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

The Company accepts its responsibility to provide a supportive environment for dealing with Work Related Stress issues; on the other hand, employees must take responsibility for raising their concerns as early as possible in order for the Company to investigate and resolve genuine problems.

**Workers’ Health and Safety Representatives**

• Workers’ Health and Safety Representatives are to be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design, as well as on the identification, elimination and control of stress at work.
- Workers’ Health and Safety Representatives will be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process.
- Workers’ Health and Safety Representatives will be encouraged to conduct joint inspections of the workplace on a regular basis to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

Signed by

Managing Director: Workers’ Health and Safety Representative

Date: Date: