

Media Release
For Immediate Release

WORK-RELATED STRESS

PIETÀ, 26.10.2011 - Over the last decade, work-related stress has been consistently identified within the European Union, as one of the major workplace concerns. In fact work-related stress represents a huge cost in terms of both human distress and impaired economic performance.

The effects of stress can be good or bad. Managing stress well can help a person to handle better the next encounter, but if poorly managed, stress can lead to physical and further psychological health problems. Work related stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the job requirements do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. A person's reaction depends on how he perceives the event - what is considered stressful by one person might not be so considered by another. Many factors influence one's perception of events such as attitudes, skills, personality, current situation, other events or other people in one's life.

Nowadays it has been recognised that work-related stress is the second commonest cause of work-health related health problems after back pain. Up to 25% of workers across Europe complain of stress at work, while 50% to 60% of all working days lost are due to stress.

Few countries in Europe have enacted specific legislation dealing with work-related stress. For this reason a Framework Agreement on work-related stress has been signed by ETUC, UCIN, UEAPME and CEEO on the 8th October, 2004. This agreement between the social partners' representatives at EU level identifies explicitly what is permissible under the existing EU rules. The aim of this agreement is to increase awareness and understanding of work-related stress, and to provide employers and workers with a framework to identify, manage and prevent problems related to stress at work. It is the responsibility of all employers to

address problems created by work-related stress by carrying out an overall risk assessment and by adapting specific measures targeted at identified stress factors. On the other hand, workers are bound to comply with preventive measures and rules determined by their employer. In every Member State, it remains the responsibility of the organisations representing employers and workers to ensure the implementation of this so-called Framework Agreement.

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 the society as a whole.

As part of the activities of the European Health and Safety week which this year falls between the 24th and 28th October, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority in collaboration with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work will be organizing a half day seminar on Work-related Stress on Friday 28th October 2011 at the Dolmen Resort Hotel, Qawra. The key-note speaker during this Seminar will be Dr Rial Gonzales who is the Head of the Prevention and Research Unit of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. Representatives of unions and employers will be delivering speeches on their respective roles in implementing the framework agreement on stress at the place of work. The Hon. Dr. Peter Micallef, Parliamentary Assistant in the Ministry for Health, the Elderly and Community Care will close the Seminar.

For further information about occupational health and safety visit <http://www.ohsa.org.mt>.