DialogueS 3rd Thematic Meeting

Joint Social Employers/EPSU Webinar: Safe and healthy workplaces in Social Services during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of Social Partners

Meeting Report

Date: 09/06/2020 ➤ **Start Time – End Time:** 14:00 – 16:00
➤ **Where:** Online ➤ **Version:** draft to update later

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1. Introduction and welcome

Introduction by

Opening remarks from <u>Maryvonne Nicolle, President of EPSU's HSS (Health and Social Services) committee</u>
- Many social workers felt forgotten
- Lack of protection and funding
    - Lack of available recommendations regarding health
    - Impact of the pandemic carried by a dominantly female workforce (82 % of the workforce), who has to manage their own stress and anxiety caused by the situation, and the anxiety of the people they support.
    - Psychological impact
    - Need to develop social dialogue to protect the wellbeing of users and workers.

Opening remarks from <u>Jiri Horecky, Vice-President Federation of European Social Employers</u>
    - Main challenges faced by employers during COVID-19:
        - Secure protection and safety to their users and employees
        - Secure the provision of basic care with dealing with staff shortages of 20-30 % (caring of children, being sick or in quarantine)
    - Two joint statements from Social Employers and EPSU to call the EU to action.
    - At the present time, we have to manage the consequences of the crisis and to prepare the future
        - Principle goals for the webinar: Share key learnings and new forms of services experienced during the crisis to improve the safety & wellbeing of services users and workers, highlighting the role of social dialogue in this process.

2. Challenges related to safety & health of workers during the re-launching of services

Chaired by
- <u>Sylvain Renouvel, Director of the Social Employers</u>
    - Presentation of the speaker.

The session began with a presentation by
- <u>Elke Schneider, Senior project manager and expert on biological risks at EU OSHA</u>
    - Presentation of the EU guidance on COVID-19 – BACK TO THE WORKPLACE:
        - Actions to minimise exposure to SARS-CoV-2
        - OSHA issues related to COVID-19
    - Main measures for returning to the workplace:
        - Update of risk assessment and taking appropriate measures, considering all risks, including mental health.
        - **Legislation on the management of COVID-19** in the workplace. The legislation is in the biological agents directive and its national implementation.
        - The legislation set up a hierarchy of control measures:
            1. Technical measures
            2. Organisation measures
            3. Personal protective measures

- o The EU-OSHA guidance also includes a set of recommendations regarding other aspects, for example hygiene measures; information and consultation of workers; mental health; vulnerable workers working from home; certification of absence from work; caring of workers who have been ill; teleworking and management of workers who work remotely.
- o Two resources are available for tips and recommendations on teleworking:
  - OSH wiki article: Practical tips to make home-based telework as healthy, safe and effective as possible.
  - MSD database of practical tools and guidance: teleworking.
- o **Conclusions**:
  - Collective protection has to be preferred to personal protective equipment (PPE), to be used only when no other protection available.
  - **Assess risks linked to telework and take relevant measures.**
  - Information on consultation of workers and their representatives is helpful.

In the subsequent Q&A, speakers and participants brought up the following issues
- o **Question**: Regarding the link between occupational health & safety and public health. Do you think that the COVID-19 crisis put the focus on this link, and what do you think about it?
  - **Answer:** It is an important issue that had already been raised. A better contact has to be developed between public health and occupational safety. More awareness of occupational health & safety in the public health is also needed. In some countries there is a clear link between public health and OSH strategies.
- o **Question:** regarding mental health. Which concrete measures can employers take to protect the mental health of their employees?
  - **Answer:** The first step as part of the risk assessment, is to consider the mental load of the employees: created because of the current situation, additional tasks, reduced staffing, etc, in order to put in place measures. There are risk assessment tools on this, that should be applied in the workplaces.

3. The contribution of social partners in ensuring the health & safety of workers and users

Chaired by
Jakob Embacher, Policy Assistant at EPSU
- - Presentation of the speakers and topic of discussion.
- - Highlighted the key role of social partners for occupation health & safety and for the general preparedness of the sector. Social dialogue is important to respond effectively to this kind of crisis.

The session began with a presentation by
Fréderic Hyacinthe, Director General, Apei des 2 Vallées (FR)
- - Presentation of the pandemic management by the association.
- - The association manages 25 services in Aisne, with the different stakeholders.
- - Challenges faced:
  - o Shortage of equipment and face masks
  - o Lack of clear instructions
- - Principle measures taken:
  - o Daily crisis unit meetings
  - o Transparency and responsiveness daily communication
  - o Psychological support unit for both users and staff

- **Conclusions:** Key learnings during and after the pandemic
  - o Transparent communication system between employers and employees to manage the crisis. Organised meetings with staff representatives to provide them with full information and to discuss the crisis management.
  - o Training of staff - Information and training of people with disabilities.
  - o Take advantage of lessons learnt during this crisis to prepare the future and potential new crisis.

Giancarlo Go, from FPCGIL (IT)
- Presentation of two agreements for the prevention and safety of public and private health workers for Covid-19 emergency. It aims to recognize the fundamental importance of the National Health Service during the emergency and in the future.
- The agreement provides:
  - o Establishment of a Committee composed of the Ministry of Health and CGIL, CISL and UIL.
  - o Standards of protection: use of PPE, in compliance with the indications of the technical-scientific bodies.
  - o Health Surveillance
  - o Staff recruitment
- The agreements cover several aspects from financial resources to health and safety measures.

Tim Kind, Policy Advisor, Actiz (NL)
- Presentation of the analysis on the management of the COVID-19 crisis.
- General patterns observed by ActiZ during crisis:
  - o Trust in National Policies
  - o Building an information architecture for employers
  - o Organizing the continuity of services during the crisis
- Main measures to ensure the continuity:
  - o Availability and distribution of scarce resources
  - o Safety and wellbeing of service workers and users
  - o Simplifying flows of service users
  - o Simplifying flows of (potential) service workers
  - o Minimalising bureaucracy, building trust
- Key learnings in the Netherlands:
  - o Take into consideration from the beginning long term care and other social services.
  - o Social Dialogue, innovative and effective collaboration to tackle this crisis and potential future crisis.
  - o Importance of learning and sharing challenges and initiatives on COVIC-19 in other countries.

Jonas Nilsson, responsible for workplace safety, Kommunal (SE)
- Presentation of the Swedish collective agreement for emergency situations.
- The purpose of the agreement is to provide flexibility in terms of work obligations, working hours and conditions. In return it provides more favourable compensation for employees.
- The collective agreement determines:
  - o Employees in the emergency services have a fixed hourly salary;
  - o Regulations regarding the resting time;
  - o Separate document that states who is responsible for the working environment.

o **Conclusions**: This collective agreement shows the importance of social dialogue in times of emergency situations, it provides an interesting balance for employers and employees.

4. Conclusion

Concluding remarks by, Maryvonne Nicolle, President of EPSU's HSS committee EPSU
- Key message from this webinar:
    - o "The social services sector must be fully part of the be public health policy."
    - o Key role of social dialogue in social services. It is needed that employers' and employees' representatives work together to develop solutions, measures and initiatives to protect workers. This leads to a higher quality of services and protection of users.
    - o Improve working conditions to tackle the shortage of workers.
    - o Work together to encourage the EU Institutions to do more to protect social services workers and users.
    - o Important to put more focus on social dialogue in social services sector.

Concluding remarks by Sylvain Renouvel, Social Employers
- Key messages from this webinar:
    - o More and better cooperation between health care and social services sector is needed.
    - o During this pandemic employers and employees have a common goal, to protect users and workers.
    - o At European level, the Social Employers together with EPSU, sent a [joint statement](#) and a [joint letter](#) to the Commissioner Nicolas Schmit on Covid-19 effects on the sector and the support needed to face the crisis.
    - o This need for a better support from the EU and the member states is highlighted in the current campaign of EPSU and the Social Employer, together with the EU NGOs representing social services providers, #WeAreEssentialServices and #IAmAnEssentialWorker.
    - o Better support at all levels should allow the provision of available, affordable quality social services, a goal closely linked to staff working in safe and healthy workplaces in a context of a reinforced wellbeing at work.

- **Next steps**: The Social Employers and EPSU will continue working together to raise awareness and demand the support the sector needs to be able to face the current challenges and consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, but also already known challenges such as the ageing of the European population, which will increase the needs in terms of services and workforce.

The 3rd Thematic Meeting was closed at 16:00.

Supporting Documents
- Agenda
- Presentations:
    - o Elke Schneider, Senior project manager and expert on biological risks at EU OSHA
    - o Fréderic Hyacinthe, Director General, Apei des 2 Vallées
    - o Giancarlo Go, from FPCGIL
    - o Tim Kind, Policy Advisor, Actiz
    - o Jonas Nilsson, responsible for workplace safety, Kommunal