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Van: Media@etuc.org
Verzonden: donderdag 28 juni 2012 15:35
Aan: Veerle Solia
Onderwerp: ETUC Press release



European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

ETUC uses platform in Copenhagen to call strongly for a new European health and safety strategy

Brussels, 28 June 2012

Speaking in Copenhagen at the Danish Presidency's conference reviewing the EU's current occupational health and safety strategy, the European trade union movement has called for an ambitious European agenda on workplace health and safety, particularly EU action on work related cancer and musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs).

In preparing the official evaluation, the Commission's consultants have drawn attention to the need for a new EU strategy, but thus far the Commission have completely ignored the fundamental role of labour inspectorates, safety representatives and prevention services. For the trade union movement, and as demonstrated in recent studies,^[1] these systems are a determining factor in successful occupational safety and health practices.

“The crisis cannot be used as an excuse to deregulate health and safety rules or delay action on hazardous substances killing tens of thousands of workers a year in Europe”, stated ETUC Confederal Secretary Judith Kirton-Darling before the conference. “It is in a crisis, that worker protection must be strengthened to avoid long term health damage which will increase the cost to the public purse and the workers concerned”.

With one-third of European workers are affected by musculo-skeletal disorders, and the figure rising as a result of the crisis, the ETUC and European trade union federations have called jointly for urgent action from the Commission.

“We have to have better engagement in tackling the impact of rising precariousness at work in Europe, this labour market trend is driving the increase in stress and work-related diseases”, Laurent Vogel Coordinator

of the workers group in the European Advisory Committee on health and safety stated in his address to the conference.

- ETUC resolution on new OSH strategy (December 2011): <http://www.etuc.org/a/9506>
- ETUC and ETUF call for action on MSDs (June 2012): <http://www.etuc.org/a/10069>

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) exists to speak with a single voice, on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 10 industry-based federations.

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