

Health prevention in the workplace

Challenges and prospects

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The persistence in France of a high level of workplace accidents (sick leave, accidents, occupational illnesses, deaths) has led the ESEC to address the issue of prevention in occupational health.

Health at work faces new challenges

Workers are confronted with forced changes such as health crises, climatic and technological upheavals, the rise of remote working, and the increase in platform-based self-employment. These changes have negative effects on their health: exposure to more intense temperatures or accelerated rhythms, stress related to certain managerial practices, information fatigue, etc. In addition, mental health problems are one of the major challenges in occupational health: since 2022, mental illnesses (20%) have overtaken musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs - 16%) as the reason for time off work¹.

The ESEC highlights the proven lack of a culture of occupational risk prevention in France compared with some of its European neighbours and calls for the necessary improvement of working conditions by making greater use of primary prevention.

How can effective and comprehensive prevention be ensured?

Each individual has only one health. Prevention must, according to the EESC, be considered as a global **interdisciplinary approach** aimed at creating a **working environment favourable to the health** of women and men, whatever their place in organisations. To this end, it advocates breaking down the barriers between approaches to public health, occupational health and environmental health. This study aims to raise awareness that prevention is a real **lever for social and economic performance** and that occupational health is an 'asset' shared by all those involved in the company. The aim is to encourage work communities to put people back at the centre of organisations.

¹ 2022 annual absenteeism barometer – malakoff-humanis

In 2023

1,287
work-related
deaths

555,803
workplace
accidents

47,434
occupational
illnesses

Source :
Assurance Maladie 2024

Over 20 years
(2001-2019),

-27,2%
workplace
accidents
for men

+41,6%
workplace
accidents for
women

Source :
ANACT 2022.

Mobilise and take action for physical and mental health prevention at work

STUDY

1 TRAINING ALL THOSE INVOLVED

While the 2020 National Interprofessional Agreement on Occupational Health has emphasised prevention and monitoring and the number of occupational health physicians is falling sharply, **the ESEC recommends**

- Strengthen and expand training in occupational health and environmental health in medical studies and extend it to all health and primary prevention professionals
- Extend training to other beneficiaries, in particular social dialogue actors (employees and employers) in companies and the civil service

2 IDENTIFICATION AND PREVENTION BY SUPPORTING EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

In order to strengthen the culture of prevention and improve the consideration of all risks, **the ESEC calls for**

- The adoption of a gender-based approach to risk identification (including those related to global warming) and prevention (based on the single document for the assessment of occupational risks - DUERP)
- Strengthening support for employers, particularly very small enterprises, in their prevention efforts

3 ANTICIPATING THROUGH SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND LISTENING

Because employees are best placed to talk about their work, working conditions and health issues as they relate to their actual work situations, **the ESEC proposes**

- To include the principle of listening to workers among the general prevention principles of the labour code (article L.4121- 2)
- To negotiate on the balance of professional and personal life at the level of branches and companies, including in the public services

POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR FUTURE DEBATES:

In the continuity of its work, the ESEC proposes nine avenues for reflection for future debates between social partners and for society as a whole, including:

- How can managerial practices be reconsidered so that they contribute more to the quality of life at work?
- What responsibility do principals have in terms of health and safety at work, particularly with regard to subcontracted personnel?
- What lessons can be learned from the practices of gender and diversity mix within work groups on good health and performance at work?

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