

The Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO) was established in 1989. Its aim is to improve working conditions and develop opportunities for all member enterprises and to foster economic growth.

NHO is made up of 15,800 member organisations. Most are small enterprises – 91 per cent have fewer than 50 employees and many of them are family owned. More than half of NHO members (52 per cent) come from service industries such as tourism, crafts, media and research. The others (48 per cent) are from industries like oil and building.

Goals and strategies

NHO is working towards:

- Putting the spotlight on health, safety and the environment
- Raising politicians' awareness of working life in small businesses
- Reducing the burden of red tape
- Securing more flexible working arrangements

The NHO's Working Environment Fund

Annually, NHO's Working Environment Fund grants up to 40 million NOK to support projects aiming to improve the work environment in Norwegian business and industry. It is stressed that the experiences made from the projects will be spread out to other enterprises and businesses that may find them useful. NHO claims that the fund will increasingly stress projects emphasising the importance of the workplace as a positive health promoter.

NHO Projects

NHO runs a number of projects in conjunction with the authorities, research institutions and trade unions. Examples of these include:

■ **EGA-DUA**

This is a joint project between NHO and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions (LO). Emphasis is placed on involving employees in the day to day running of the business and results show that staff take an active interest in how the business operates. A great interest has also been shown in creating a health promoting work environment and good quality production processes.

■ **Good health makes good business**

This project looked at how effective, relevant HES (Health, Environment and Safety) could be brought to SMEs. 60 small businesses took part in the project and methods of tailoring HES to the needs of small organisations were developed.

■ **Reducing sick leave (SYPRAS)**

The focus here was on reducing absenteeism and improving well-being and productivity. Businesses from four different fields worked together to identify "best practice".



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HES work in the federations

The Working Environment Fund finances HES consultants within the federations. Together the federations and the HES consultants work to create a better and more health promoting work environment in the member organisations.

The following activities are being carried out:

n *National Federation of Norwegian Fish and Aquaculture Industries (FHL)*

This organisation represents 542 members. It looks after their interests relating to trade policy, wages, working conditions and HES. Several concrete projects and initiatives are taken in the field of multi-cultural work environment in the fishing industry, establishment of environment committees, EGA-DUA projects including four enterprises and a joint HES project in Båtsfjord involving seven pilot enterprises.

n *Norwegian Hospitality Association (RBL)*

The Norwegian Hospitality Association (RBL) is the unifying organisation for enterprises within the Norwegian hospitality sector. RBL has approximately 2,250 members with a total of close to 50,000 employees. 96 per cent of the member enterprises have less than 50 employees - 85 per cent have less than 20 employees. In several projects they are working out guidelines and information focusing on how to perform a good practice regarding the work environment.

n *Federation of Norwegian Building Industries (BNL)*

BNL looks after approximately 3,000 member organisations. About a third have less than five employees. BNL employs three HES consultants who have extensive experience in health, safety, the environment and quality assurance and can help member enterprises with advice on how to make HES work and how to achieve good results from it and guidance on occupational health services and HES legislation.

n *Federation of Norwegian Food and Drink Industry (NBL)*

NBL organises conferences, runs projects, offers consultancy and prepares and sells various HES material. The relationship between the working environment and sick leave is one of the most pressing issues it deals with.

Valuable and productive projects

Many of the projects have used HES as a tool for improving competitiveness. Good health and a good working environment are important factors in increasing productivity and profitability. There is also a potential for making considerable savings by improving HES standards. NHO stresses the importance of identifying effective measures and passing this information on to as many of the member organisations as possible. SMEs often experience problems in handling vast amounts of red tape. Many projects have addressed this and work is in progress to develop

simpler systems for SMEs.

The EGA-DUA project, which NHO and the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions are working together on, involves 25 enterprises in different business areas. The project focuses on ways of making work more health promoting.

Reaching SMEs

The workload is heavy in most SMEs and employees are used to shouldering responsibility and performing a number of roles. In order that employees feel encouraged to participate actively in projects, they must be realistic and meaningful and the aims have to be credible. It is important to develop individual solutions that suit individual enterprises.

WHP in SMEs: looking to the future

NHO wants to prioritise initiatives that emphasise the workplace as a health promoting arena. It is of major importance to pass on good initiatives so that other businesses can benefit from them. Examples of positive initiatives include:

- n Developing methods of helping older employees to remain in employment as long as possible
- n Helping employees on long-term sick leave to return to the workplace wherever possible rather than having to rely on benefits
- n Developing workplace initiatives that will benefit employees both physically and mentally via individual and organisational adjustments.