



*The Directorate General of Health (DGS) organised and implemented the Active and Healthy Life at the Workplace (AHLW) project. Based on WHP principles, its aim was to improve health and well-being at the workplace.*

An experimental programme, it involved a limited number of companies plus local and regional health authorities. The ultimate objective being to motivate a broad range of companies to recognise the benefits of WHP and introduce it to the workplace.

### **Preparatory phase**

In the first place, the DGS selected companies and representatives from the social partners to take part in a national event on WHP.

Following that event a number of activities took place:

- n Visits were made to various firms to evaluate their work environment and assess the conditions there with a view to initiating and implementing a WHP project.
- n The most pressing problems in selected companies were analysed and possible solutions identified.
- n Follow up visits were made to interested enterprises to evaluate the potential for management involvement and workers' participation on a variety of WHP projects and to assess the extent of technical support required.
- n A consensus on criteria for identifying WHP Models of Good Practice was established.

### **Translating theory into practice**

The project was launched at the second National Meeting on Workplace Health Promotion held in Coimbra, in October 1998. A committee made up of representatives from employers associations, trades unions and government delegates was set up to work on the development of WHP activities.

The project's main objectives are:

- n To improve the health of the working population via WHP measures involving the participation of employers, management and employees in all activities right from the outset
- n To identify the elements within the project that successfully promoted the ideal of healthy and active life at workplace.

Before joining the DGS Project, each enterprise agreed to prepare a Health Status Report as a basis for creating, implementing and evaluating a company WHP Project.

### **Areas worked on so far include:**

- n Development of health promotion concepts and principles
- n HP programming and evaluation
- n Better communication
- n Stress management
- n Smoking and passive smoking
- n Nutrition
- n Exercise

***The project has created an arena for developing innovative activities:***

- n Comprehensive "Health Status" reports
- n Workshop sessions for presenting the different initiatives and for evaluating progress in participating organisations
- n Collation of data for identification of main problems within the company and for analysing programmes/methods so that the most successful interventions can be adopted in the future
- n Development of evaluation processes
- n Organisation of Technical Seminars for presentation and discussion on a number of issues.

***Health Promotion and WHP concepts include:***

- n Presentation of company WHP Projects and subsequent evaluation
- n Creating a forum for employer and management involvement
- n Developing participation strategies
- n Marketing
- n Stress management
- n Transactional analysis
- n Nutrition at the Workplace
- n Breast screening at the workplace
- n Passive Smoking at workplace
- n Physical exercise.

***Making significant progress***

Fifteen companies were selected for the project. The five Regional Health Authorities also took part with the aim of carrying out similar activities in the regions.

Each enterprise designed its own WHP initiatives according to the general guidelines proposed by the project co-ordinators, and within the parameters of WHP, identified individual areas they felt needed to be addressed.

Even without adequate quantified data, a number of major achievements are clearly recognisable as a direct result of the Active and Healthy Life at the Workplace Project. These include:

- n Better understanding of WHP and a raised profile for health promotion activities
- n Increased sense of responsibility and motivation among the regional and local health authorities
- n Recognition of the benefits of WHP by participating companies and a desire to communicate these findings to further organisations
- n A sharp learning curve experienced and enjoyed by all the partners involved
- n Opportunities developed for making best use of the Internet.

***Evaluation process***

Evaluation is crucial. The participating companies looked at levels of management motivation and par-

ticipation, employee motivation, participation, and empowerment, health gains and other significant issues related to WHP.

Participants considered the project to be an excellent example of how small businesses could be motivated to introduce good WHP practices into daily routines. Each enterprise carried out their own projects and activities. These were specific to each organisation. This diversity of approach is very encouraging and is a positive step towards meeting the broad range of requirements found within small businesses. It was accepted at the start that the successful WHP models and processes developed should be useful and transposable to other situations and this seems to be the case. Tried and tested Models of Good Practice can be applied on a broader scale.

***Looking to the future***

Following regular evaluation throughout the project a final assessment will take place in 2001 and a national conference organised for the presentation of the results. A written report will also be compiled.

There are plans for the project to be continued and extended to a large number of enterprises throughout the country in the near future.