

Corporate Social Responsibility and Psychosocial Risk Management at Work

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, psychosocial risk management, work-related stress, workplace violence, harassment, bullying

Introduction

Today, with increasing globalisation, greater environmental and social awareness, the concept of organisations' responsibilities beyond the purely legal or profit-related aspects has gained new impetus. In order to succeed, business now has to be seen to be acting responsibly towards people, planet and profit (the so-called '3Ps') (European Commission, 2001).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is 'a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis' (European Commission, 2001). CSR is also about business ethics, core values and a corporate culture that promotes responsible behaviour. The social dimension of CSR is relevant both to the external social responsibility of companies towards their community, society and the planet but also their internal responsibility towards their own workforce. This covers socially responsible practices concerning employees relating to their safety and health, equal opportunities and access to work, working conditions, investing in human capital, managing industrial change and financial control. As European companies increasingly engage in global markets, the adoption of ILO core labour standards in CSR is particularly important.

Aim

This guidance sheet has been developed on the basis of the European framework for psychosocial risk management (PRIMA-EF) and aims to add clarity to the link of CSR with psychosocial risk management and to provide organisations with a list of key CSR indicators in relation to psychosocial risk management at the enterprise level.

CSR and Psychosocial Risk Management

Looking after the workforce and developing its capacity (mentally, socially, etc.) have strategic importance for organisations and society alike. Addressing psychosocial risks and promoting well-being in the workplace context also fall within the remit of CSR. Work-related psychosocial risks refer to aspects of the design and management of work and its social and organisational contexts that have the potential for causing psychological or physical harm. They have been identified as one of the major contemporary challenges for occupational health and safety and are linked to such workplace problems as work-related stress and workplace violence, harassment and bullying. Work-related stress is experienced when the demands of the work environment exceed the employees' ability to cope with (or control) them. It is estimated that work-related stress costs about € 20bn a year in lost time and health bills; 3-4% of the GNP for Europe. This impact on society shows that huge economic interests, both of companies and society are at stake. Work-related stress is among the most commonly reported causes of illness by workers (European Foundation, 2007) affecting more than 40 million individuals across the European Union (EU). The same survey showed that 6% of the workforce had been exposed to threats of physical violence, 4% to violence by other people and 5% to bullying and/or harassment at work over the past 12 months. The following guidelines and indicators will be useful to organizations for the development of responsible business practices to manage psychosocial risks.

Key CSR Guidelines for Psychosocial Risk Management

Make sure the strategic importance of the management of psychosocial issues is recognised

To develop top management support the strategic relevance of the management of psychosocial issues needs to be clarified. A first step is to



develop a business case which clarifies the health and business benefits, both in terms of potential cost reductions and added value. Strategic value can be added when the management of psychosocial risks contributes to the realisation of the company's strategic aims, e.g. to become an employer of choice and for creating an innovative company culture.

Integrate psychosocial issues in strategies, plans and processes for organizational development

When an organisation's development goals are clear, it is possible to assess what requirements in terms of work organisation, work processes, staffing, new competencies (that need to be developed), working environment, etc. will be essential for their realisation. As organisational development goals require a timeframe of some years, and are associated with changes in work organisation, work processes, etc. changes can be anticipated. Psychosocial issues can be included from the start in the design of work processes and in decision-making thereof. In this way lessons learned from dealing with psychosocial risks can be taken into account in organisational development. This is likely to lead to much more effective prevention, while saving costs and delivering strategic added value to the enterprise.

Organize a good balance between implementation of systems, internalization of values, and organizational learning processes

The management of psychosocial issues and risks requires systematically planned activities. These activities can and should be integrated in the management systems the company has to manage risks in general, e.g. via integrating it in health and safety management systems, or in the planning and control cycle or other existing procedures. The management of psychosocial issues and risks is also about ethics and values, about doing the right thing, i.e. creating awareness, promoting responsible behaviour and walking the talk. As part of their CSR policy companies can raise awareness or provide training to their employees about corporate values and how to deal with ethical dilemmas. Values and ethical dilemmas related to psychosocial issues can easily be integrated into such CSR approaches. This cannot be achieved without individual and collective learning processes.

Be aware of the business impact of psychosocial risks

Health in itself is rarely seen as a primary business interest. However, the health of employees does often strongly influence business. While the primary concern of workers is the management of the impact of business activities on psychosocial risks and their health, the primary concern for management is often the impact of psychosocial risks and ill-health of employees on the business. A comprehensive consideration of both aspects is important.

Engage with stakeholders, traditional as well as non-traditional

The greater the involvement of key stakeholders, the more likely it is that the management of psychosocial risks will be and remain of strategic importance to the enterprise. Traditional stakeholders include trade unions, employer organisations, government agencies, occupational health services, researchers and academics. Non-traditional stakeholders include social security agencies, health insurers, families/partners, NGOs, health care institutions, customers/clients, shareholders, communities, employment agencies, media, actors of the judiciary system and business consultants. As several of this non-traditional stakeholders have a clear (financial) interest in the prevention of psychosocial problems this offers a range of opportunities that is hardly explored today.

CSR indicators for psychosocial risk management at enterprise level

Area	Indicators
<i>Integration into systems and structures of business operations</i>	<p>The enterprise has management information on psychosocial risk management (as part of normal business control or a management system in place).</p> <p>The enterprise has a policy to address (prevent, reduce, control) psychosocial risks (and comply with legal obligations).</p> <p>The system for managing psychosocial risks is also relevant and used in cases of reorganisation and restructuring.</p> <p>The enterprise has a code of conduct for violence, harassment and bullying.</p> <p>The enterprise has systems for raising harassment, bullying or other psychosocial issues confidentially.</p> <p>The enterprise has systems in place that address diversity issues and work-life balance issues.</p> <p>Guidance on the prevention of psychosocial risks and the promotion of mental health is available to workers.</p>
<i>Integration into company culture</i>	<p>Managers are trained and developed to prioritise psychosocial issues and address them openly as a preventive measure.</p> <p>Training on psychosocial risks is provided to all employees as a preventive measure.</p> <p>Workers' representatives are actively involved in preventive efforts on psychosocial risks.</p> <p>Workers' representatives are trained in psychosocial risks as a preventive measure.</p> <p>Notification of incidents (e.g. violence and harassment) is encouraged (rewarded, not leading to blame).</p> <p>Open discussion of psychosocial issues is encouraged with attention also to diversity issues and work-life balance.</p> <p>In addition to precautions taken, workers are alert to deal with unexpected stressful or violent situations.</p> <p>There is active, open internal and external communication on psychosocial problems and preventive actions (transparency).</p>
<i>Integration into learning and development of the organisation</i>	<p>All incidents on violence and harassment are recorded, analysed and the lessons learned are communicated.</p> <p>Individual workers get feedback on problems notified and solutions proposed or implemented.</p> <p>Psychosocial risk management interventions are evaluated.</p> <p>Information from psychosocial risk management and evaluation of psychosocial risk management interventions is used as a vehicle to promote individual and organisational learning and development.</p>
<i>Integration into dialogue with stakeholders and training</i>	<p>The enterprise has a reporting system in place on psychosocial problems, that is linked to internal planning and control cycle and to external reporting (e.g. in the CSR report).</p> <p>Psychosocial risks are regularly addressed in discussions between management and workers' representatives.</p> <p>The enterprise has identified their main stakeholders on psychosocial issues (both internal and external) and has regular dialogue with them.</p>
<i>Explicitly addressing ethical aspects and dilemmas</i>	<p>Workers are trained to use conflicts at work in a positive way (to overcome problems and turn them into productive experiences).</p>

More Information

www.prima-ef.org

LEKA, S., COX, T. (Eds.). The European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management: PRIMA-EF. I-WHO Publications, Nottingham, 2008. ISBN 978-0-9554365-2-9.

LEKA, S., COX, T. (Eds.). PRIMA-EF: Guidance on the European Framework for Psychosocial Risk Management. WHO, Geneva, 2008. Available at: www.prima-ef.org

CSR EUROPE: www.csreurope.org/pages/en/wellbeing.html

ENTERPRISE FOR HEALTH: www.enterprise-for-health.org/index.php

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. 'Promoting a European framework for CSR', Green Paper, European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, 2001. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/soc-dial/csr/greenpaper.htm

EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS. Fourth European Working Conditions Survey. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2007. Available at: www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/surveys/index.htm

HSE (Health and Safety Executive, UK). Promoting health and safety as a key goal of the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda. Research Report 339, 2005. Available at: www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr339.htm

ZWETSLOOT, G., STARREN, A. Corporate social Responsibility and Safety and Health at Work. European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004. Available at: <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/210/view>

Contact

Professor dr Gerard Zwetsloot

TNO Work & Employment [and special professor at I-WHO, University of Nottingham]

P.O. Box 718, NL 2130 – AS, Hoofddorp, Netherlands

T. + 31 23 554 9449

F. + 31 23 554 9303

E. gerard.zwetsloot@tno.nl

Dr Stavroula Leka

Institute of Work, Health & Organisations, University of Nottingham, Level B International House, Jubilee Campus, Wollaton Road, Nottingham NG8 1BB, UK

T. +44 (0)115 8466662

F. +44 (0)115 8466625