Background, recommendations and effects of HIRES

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High Level Conference

Investing in well-being at work:

Addressing psychosocial risks in times of change

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Antecedents of HIRES

• „Managing change“ (DG Employment 1998) commission chaired by Pehr Gyllenhammar (CEO Volvo); specific focus of requested regular company reports: health in a changing workplace
• Social convoy and sustainable employability (SOCOSE) (DG Research, 2000-04)
• ILO-SSER (N. Rogovsky): Socially sensitive restructuring
• Several DG Employment projects (MIRE, IRENE et al.):
  – Monitoring innovative Restructuring in Europe (MIRE 06-07): First health recommendations
SOCOSE: Social convoy in occupational transitions


1. Normalization of counselling
2. Early intervention
3. Company-based employability policies
4. CSR beyond actual employment: Active social plans & OP/RP
5. Networking among social actors
6. Improving the quality of counsellors and interventions
7. Successful elements of transition counselling
8. Information and communication strategies, etc.
Main results of the qualitative empirical study of SOCOSE with 250 employees in five EU countries:

Kieselbach, Bagnara, De Witte, Lemkow, Schaufeli (Eds.). (2009).

Coping with Occupational Transitions. An Empirical Study With Employees Facing Job Loss in Five European Countries.

Wiesbaden: VS - Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.


www.vs.de
WHO Social determinants of health (2008)

- Social protection across the life course: People need protection in case of specific shocks such as ... loss of income or work.... This includes extending social protection to those in precarious work, including informal work....(ES, p.10).
- To create a socially inclusive framework for policy-making
- Being included in the society in which one lives is vital to the material, psychosocial and political empowerment that underpins social well-being and equitable health (p. 24).
- „Health impact assessment of inequity as a standard prerequisite“ can be used as an analogy for HIRES
- Health impact assessment of restructuring and the development of a concept how to deal with it should become a standard prerequisite for companies undergoing major restructurings
Restructuring risks for individual and organizational health: The business case

**Organizational factors**

**Dimensions of change**
- work task changes
- work group changes
- increased working time
- staff reductions
- salary cuts
- enforced flexibility
- short-term contracts
- duration of insecurity

**Legitimacy of change**
- crisis prevention or short-term profit?
- redundancies as a last resort only?

**Procedures of change**
- delayed communication of changes
- veiled and non-participative decision making procedures
- unfair distribution of changes

**Individual psychosocial effects**
- perceived job insecurity (qualitative and quantitative)
- perceived organizational unfairness
- lower commitment
- decreased motivation, confidence, concentration and persistence on task
- decreased self regulatory resources

**Individual health effects**
- increased stress
- sleeping disorders
- burnout
- changes in health relevant behaviours (drug abuse, unhealthy diet, lack of physical activities)
- work related accidents
- musculoskeletal morbidity
- cardiovascular morbidity and mortality

**Organizational health effects**

**Short term**
- absenteeism
- ‘presenteeism’
- negative reputation effects: decreased sales
- unintended turnover (creamimg-off)
- mobbing
- negative work climate
- decreased productivity
- decreased quality of products

**Long term**
- long term sickness rates of victims & survivors
- negative reputation effects: attractive-ness as employer

Health in Restructuring: Innovative Approaches and Policy Recommendations
Lessons from the HIRES case studies

- Socially sensitive enterprise restructuring (like the ILO-SSER concept demonstrates) is a first step to secure individual health during restructuring.
- “Healthier restructuring” needs conscious stakeholders, especially shareholders and leaders.
- Organisational change is always a potential stress factor: Restructuring often comes with redundancies.
- Employees stress levels as early warning signs indicate the need for health specific prevention efforts.
Lessons from the HIRES case studies

- Health monitoring and prevention need to be coordinated on the basis of concrete protocols
- “Healthier restructuring” needs a proactive health policy
- A proactive health policy needs collaborative health management within the organisation
- External collaborations can be indicated to guarantee a proactive health policy
- Organisational restructuring and related health effects can have major impacts also on the community level
HIRES Recommendations

1. Monitoring und evaluation
2. Direct victims: redundant employees
3. Survivors’ reactions and organisational performance
4. Role of managers responsible for restructuring
5. Organizational anticipation and preparation
6. Subjectively experienced justice and trust
HIRES Recommendations

7. Change communication plan
8. Protecting contingent and temporary workers
9. New directions for Labour Inspectorates
10. Strengthening of Occupational Health Services
11. Specific support for SMEs
12. New initiatives in Europe:
   - CSR > Health in Restructuring
   - WPHP as routine
   - Employability/career change
Why health awareness in restructuring?

Insensitive ways of restructuring can lead to

- counterproductive loss of productivity in general
- „creaming-off effect“ of the most productive parts of the staff
- high impact on „public health“ at a community level
- loss of innovativeness, commitment and productivity of the survivors
- reluctance of employees made redundant to return to work after the recovery of the business cycle
- deterioration of the corporate profile with lower attractiveness for future job applicants
What made HIRES so effective?

- Composition of the expert group
- Consistent interest and support from DG EMPL in the theme once it had developed
- Mix of expertise of a totally new group (academics, professionals, political activists, social actors, international organizations)
- Diverse but specific background of experts
- Thorough discussions and communication within the group
- Sound scientific basis of the report
- Dissemination in diverse scientific and professional communities
- DG EMPL strategy of clustering of results (Follow-up projects)
- Last not least: The actual crisis
The HIRES group

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