

EPSU advocates for sustainable investments in the occupational safety and health of public service workers

(18 June 2019) In order to bring in the trade union views, EPSU participated to the third panel of the public hearing "Summary of the costs and benefits of investments in occupational safety and health" organised by the European Economic and Social Committee on 17 June 2019 in Brussels, alongside representatives of employers' organisations (Business Europe) and civil society organisations (Mental Health Europe; European Youth Forum). The purpose of the event (cf. [agenda](#)) was to present and discuss the draft report (SOC/623) of the homonymous study group for which Teresa Tiszbierek functions as president and Adam Rogalewski as rapporteur. On 29 May 2019 the EPSCO Council had adopted [conclusions](#) on "The changing world of work: reflections on new forms of work and implications for the safety and health of workers", a document to which a number of speakers referred to.

The European Agency for Health and Safety at Work (EU-OSHA) in recent years has undertaken research which clearly illustrates the benefits of investment into occupational health and safety (OSH), including the 2017 report "[Investing in occupational safety and health for successful and sustainable businesses](#)", the report "[Occupational safety and health is good for you and good for business](#)" issued in the same year and the 2014 report "[Investing in OSH - how benefits beat the costs](#)". For Belgium the report shows that "Every euro invested in prevention measures can save a company up to 2,89 Euro", for Germany - with data from the German Statutory/Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) "that every euro invested in OSH saves 2,20 euro. His conclusion: 'OSH prevention is an investment for companies". The second study quoted above concludes that an investment into occupational health and safety is beneficial as it 1) reduces the risk of injury or accidents, 2) reduces the number of sick days taken and/or long-term absence, 3) reduces or avoids accident- and illness-related costs, 4) reduces the burden on national health services, 5) helps manage accident/work injuries insurance costs, 6) safeguards the future of the company's workforce and last but not least 7) increases employees' productivity and motivation. The first study claims that -

according to estimations - work-related injuries and illnesses result in the loss of 3.9% of all work years globally and 3.3% of those in the EU and concludes that "it's not just businesses that benefit - improved productivity and a healthy workforce are good for the economy and society as a whole." All these findings are fully shared and supported by EPSU.

The insights from these studies were also the starting point for EPSU's contribution (cf. [presentation](#)) which included illustrations from the health care sector and the EU-level hospital sector social dialogue (committee), focused on main concerns and problems from both a trade union and a public services perspective and i.a. highlighted the need for safe and effective staffing levels and the problem of understaffing in labour inspectorates.

The final version of the EESC opinion (uploaded in [EN](#)), adopted on 17 September 2019, can be accessed [here](#) in all official EU languages.

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