



USHU Newsletter

Stress @ Workplace

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Betty Diana VARGYAS
EUD Zambia
CLP HU candidate



Karoly SOOS
EUD Bosnia & Herzegovina
CLP HU Elected Member



EQ is the new IQ!

USHU requests management to invest much more in promoting **emotional intelligence (EQ)** as a key skill to mitigate stress

As the EEAS Mediator indicated not so long ago: **"there are too many colleagues that are stressed, anxious, angry or feeling unjustly treated - a lot of suffering and much of it preventable"**.

USHU wholly supports this assessment and confirms that in third countries: **"there are additional stresses and complications in Delegations and that is why it is no surprise that 60 % of harassment cases we have to deal with came from Delegations"**.

Both COMM & EEAS Staff Surveys are raising alarm bells and staff are communicating persistently that more attention must be paid to their wellbeing.

USHU advocates strongly for **Institutional Culture Changes** to promote a healthy working environment, where unnecessary stress at work is reduced through promoting a range of management skills that value both empathy and efficiency, through the use of modern tools that can flexibilise the working day and through encouraging a climate of mutual respect where the office is an inviting space and not a threatening one for any colleague.

How to detect Stress in the workplace

Work-related stress occurs when the demands of the job exceed a staff member's ability to cope with them. **A poor psychosocial work environment can have demonstrable negative effects :**

- Burnout, difficulty in concentrating and making more mistakes, problems at home, drug and alcohol abuse and poor physical health, particularly cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal problems.
- Worsening overall work performance, increased absenteeism, presenteeism (being present at work for more hours than required, as a manifestation of job insecurity, even when ill)

Staff experiencing prolonged stress at work have a higher probability of developing mental and physical health problems. Psychosocial risks that can arise from poor management as well as a poor social context at work are caused by:

- excessively demanding work/insufficient time to complete all;
- conflicting priorities and lack of clarity over the staff role;
- mismatch between job demands & staff skills - underusing



- skills can cause stress just as much as overstretching them;
- lack of involvement in decisions that affect staff and a lack of influence over the way the job is done;
- lack of support from management and colleagues, poor interpersonal relationships;
- psychological or sexual harassment in the workplace — the victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening behaviour of superiors or colleagues;
- unbalanced distribution of work, rewards, promotions or career opportunities;
- ineffective communication, poorly managed organisational change and job insecurity;
- difficulties in reconciling work and home commitments.

There is no one recipe to eliminate stress however there are ways to mitigate and reduce it. Nowadays our life and work pattern is much faster, more complex and increasingly demanding. The environment is ripe for even greater stress in workplace so managers and colleagues need to be one step ahead and find solutions on time.

MORE RESPECT, more patience, more soft management skills are needed to demonstrate empathy, encourage trust and to express appreciation more frequently.

Permanently uneven, individual workloads are no longer justifiable - responsibility to ensure a fair distribution is not a luxury but a requirement. Regular recognition of successful work must be communicated in order to incentivate better.

We are both champions and victims of new technologies. The information and Communication Overload in the Digital Age is evident everywhere. Traditional communication patterns are becoming less used as colleagues prefer to send an email than pick up the phone or visit a colleague to talk over work issues or just socialize for a few minutes!

Decreasing budgets for social events add salt to the wound. This robs staff in Delegations of the few moments where they had genuine "person to person" contact behaviour.

Leadership and Empathy help reduce work-related stress and avoid psychosocial risks.

Management has an undeniable responsibility for implementing a plan to prevent/reduce psychosocial risks. HQ can provide the guidelines and managers should adhere to them and adapt them to Delegation contexts. Understanding staff difficulties outside the workplace may also be important to foster a supportive working environment.

Similar to other skills, good leadership and people management skills can be learned and improved upon. A good leader inspires colleagues and motivates them to fulfil their potential. S/he is open and approachable and understands the strengths and weaknesses of each team member, challenges and encourages them to work towards shared goals and to take responsibility for their work.

Get the best from your team TODAY & ensure a healthy, STRESS-FREE workplace!



Contact US-HU

POSTAL ADDRESS:
Rue Joseph II, 70 Bureau / Office
01/140
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
PHONE: + 32 (02) 298-79-65

FMB: REP PERS OSP USHU
REP-PERS-OSP-USHU@ec.europa.eu

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www.us-hu.eu

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