Eurofedop Seminar
Health and Safety at work
Bratislava (Slovakia), 13-15.06.2019

Short Report

The seminar was hosted by SLOVES, the Slovak Trade Union for Public Administration, member of Eurofedop from Slovakia.

It was built around three main subjects: health and safety at work within the context of an aging workforce; healthy workplaces – manage stress; and health and safety at work within the context of new forms of work.

As a result of better healthcare, the European population is aging and so does the European working population. Life expectancy is on the rise and governments take this as an argument to raise the pension age so that they can save on pension costs. But insufficient account is taken of the capacity of people to continue working until the legal retirement age. In public services, there are sectors such as the Police, Defence, Prisons and Healthcare, where the impact of age on workers plays a clear role and Eurofedop calls for governments to work out and implement policies making it possible for civil servants to continue working in good health until their legal retirement age.

Stress at work is not unusual and does not have to be a problem. It becomes a problem when it makes people feel uneasy, no longer able to duly perform their tasks at work. It is important to find out what caused stress. It does not have to be work-related, private life can also be a factor for stress at work. More than a collective issue, it is an individual issue and therefore requires an individual approach.

The employer has the responsibility to create a working environment where workers feel comfortable and able to perform the tasks required of them. Prevention and training are main keys in the fight against stress. Support and encouragement help. Health and mental well-being are good for the individual as well as for the organisation.
The introduction of new technologies in the world of work is no longer in the experimental phase but raises questions as to the forms of work it creates. Atypical forms of work, flexible work, liberalisation of the working market are matters of concern to the trade unions. The control of those kinds of work is difficult or does not exist at all. Moreover, to an important extent, social security protection fails. The task of social dialogue will be to relieve the tension caused by new forms of work.

Trade unions will have to develop their own policies and an important tool with this aim will be to develop good international relations. Jobs will disappear, but new jobs, new branches of industry will be created. Workers will have to continuously develop new skills to keep up with the latest technological developments.