

Jukka Takala

Closing speech for the closing event of EW2007

I am sure that everyone gathered here in the Euskalduna Conference Centre would agree that today's presentations, speeches, workshops and discussions have proved immensely informative and enjoyable. Speaking personally, I have learned much new information about MSDs: trends, experiences and good practices from various countries, sectors and perspectives. I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to all the people who have helped make today such a success. (Pause for applause.)

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work's 'Lighten the Load' campaign for 2007 is now at an end. But the work and efforts to avoid MSDs will certainly need to continue. Hundreds of events over the past year have ensured that the campaign has made headlines around Europe. If over the next few years we see fewer lives blighted by MSDs, then the campaign can be judged a success.

As one campaign ends, so another will soon be starting. Risk assessment is the focus of our next campaign, which we will officially launch in Brussels in June. Our message is simple: risk assessment is the starting point of any risk management.

The coming campaign will continue the tradition, but it will be nevertheless somewhat different from our campaigns in the past. The biggest change will be that we decided to start running our campaigns over a two-year cycle, maintaining the annual European Week in October each year and embracing all the features which have contributed to the success of the previous European campaigns.

But why moving to a two-year cycle? Well, we believe that we – you and us – will have:

- First, more time for participation, for implementation and follow-up. Let's just take the Good Practice Awards. By moving to a two-year cycle and holding the Award ceremony in early 2009, we will have more time to actually promote the good practices identified – not only among our stakeholders and occupational safety and health experts, but also in the media.
- Secondly, we will have more time for partnership – partnership with all of you and maybe new partners we haven't identified before. As a decentralised campaign relying to a very large extent on the support of intermediaries to stimulate activities in the Member States, preparation of the ground is crucial. In recent years, the Agency has taken steps in this direction by organising meetings with EU-level stakeholders and other potential campaign partners in Brussels at the beginning of each campaign. If we could – with your help – mirror these efforts at national and regional level, the risk assessment campaign could be lifted to a completely new level of partner involvement. And maybe you want to note down already our special "stakeholder engagement event" which will take place on 10 April in Brussels and which will be mirrored in all Member States – please contact the Agency Focal Points in your countries...

(Pause and slowing down...)

Coming to an end, (pause...) let me thank you again...

(Interruption from the pantomime group and stilt walkers, who correct how Dr Takala stands in a funny way.)

...well, as our friends here remind me, I know that poor working postures are one of the major causes of MSDs, ...

... Perhaps it is time to close the day's proceedings. Drinks and food are waiting outside and we all deserve some relaxation and entertainment after a day of intensive work... So please, everybody, join me, our fantastic moderator Katya Adler ... and my friends, the ergonomic specialists (points to pantomime group and stilt walkers) — outside in the exhibition area...

(Katya Adler joins in, thanks everybody for the 'wonderful day' and says goodbye. The pantomime people and stilt walkers leave the stage for the floor and point the way to the drinks reception.)

End