



# *the* Occupational Health Psychologist

Newsletter of the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology

Supporting research, practice and education in occupational health psychology Volume 5 Issue 1, April 2008

## A postcard from Washington

This March a number of Academy members were among the 800 delegates who attended the 7th Work, Stress and Health Conference in Washington, DC. The conference was sponsored by the American Psychological Association, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and our colleagues from the Society for Occupational Health Psychology (SOHP). The focus of this year's conference was *'Healthy and Safe Work Through Research, Practice, and Partnerships'*, with the translation of research into practice a clear focus. The opening session explored this issue through a discussion of how to disseminate our work beyond an academic audience through fostering relationships with practitioners and the media. Two lifetime achievement awards were presented during the opening session, the first to Stanislav Kasl from Yale University and the second to Dov Zohar from the Isreal Institute of Technology.

*Kate Sang, the Newsletter's new editor, writes about her visit to the recent APA/NIOSH/SOHP conference*

There were many sessions I would have liked to have attended, but there were too many and too little time! I was however, able to hear a number of interesting presentations, including those of Academy members. I heard interesting discussions on the impacts of work stress, particularly in terms of health outcomes. A second theme from the conference was a focus on positive aspects of work, rather than the negative i.e. stress. Arnold Bakker, who will be a keynote speaker at the conference at the EA-OHP 2008 conference in Valencia, chaired a fascinating symposium on the engaged worker. This session explored the determinants and consequences of work engagement and also innovative methodological approaches, particularly daily diary studies. Arnold was also kind enough to spare a few minutes to speak to me and be interviewed for the newsletter (see page 9).

Jonathan Houdmont chaired a paper panel session



### ***In this issue:***

EA-OHP summit meeting, page 4  
Valencia conference, page 6  
Award to Tom Cox, page 7  
Interview with Arnold Bakker, page 9  
Risk management in Europe, page 11



discussing the professional development of Occupational Health Psychologists. Jonathan's presentation discussed recent research undertaken to explore the media's representation of work stress, with particular reference to work-related stress court cases. Stavroula Leka, also an Academy member, presented work examining changes in the roles of Occupational Health and Safety Professionals. This presentation was particularly interesting as it drew attention to some international differences; for example, one audience member was surprised that cardiac health was not identified as a key priority for British H&S professionals, as it is in the USA.

Following the second day of the conference the SOHP held a reception for members and those interested in joining (with a free bar!). During the reception, awards were presented to the best articles from the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. The winning article was *Verbal Abuse From Outsiders Versus Insiders: Comparing Frequency, Impact on Emotional Exhaustion, and the Role of Emotional Labor*, by Alicia Grandey and colleagues. The runner up was *Correlates and Consequences of Morale Versus Depression Under Stressful Conditions* by Thomas Britt and colleagues.

After these awards there was a very special moment for many in the room as Professor Tom Cox was honoured for his contribution to occupational health psychology. This inaugural award acknowledged Tom's

contributions to the field of OHP, his leadership in the field, the inspiration he provides for others and the founding of the journal *Work & Stress* and the EA-OHP. Tom was clearly moved to receive this award and I am sure the memory will be one he cherishes.

The final day of the conference began with a poster presentation. This was an opportunity to speak to the authors of the posters and hopefully make some new contacts! After lunch came my turn to present the first phase of findings from my current research project 'Driving out back pain'. The presentation seemed to be well received and I was pleased to see a high turnout for the last session of the conference!

The conference closed with a fascinating closing session. The closing speakers were Eusebio Rial-González (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work), Norbert Semmer (University of Bern), Michelle Robertson (Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety), Marisa Salanova (Juame I University, Spain) and Norito Kawakami (University of Tokyo). There were calls for a more holistic approach to the discussion of health at work, one which would explore both poor health at work and positive aspects of work, a better understanding of the dynamics of the relationships between specific stressors and specific outcomes and the need to relate our work to a broad audience while not compromising scientific rigour.

Overall, I enjoyed this conference. There were many fascinating presentations and my role as a reviewer of the student prize enabled me to see some of the research of those entering careers in OHP. Washington was every bit as beautiful as I had imagined and the hotel was luxurious. I look forward to meeting many of the delegates at the Academy's next conference in Valencia this November!

### **Thinking of contributing to the Newsletter?**

Contributions of all kinds are welcome! See last page of this Newsletter for details.

### **Forthcoming events**

Keep up to date with forthcoming occupational health psychology events on the 'International' pages of the European Academy's website at [www.ea-ohp.org](http://www.ea-ohp.org).

Your attention is drawn to two exciting events that have been announced for 2008 and 2009:

**EA-OHP conference:** 12-14 November 2008, Valencia, Spain

**SOHP/APA/NIOSH conference:** 4-7 November 2009, San Juan, Puerto Rico

# CONTENTS

- 1 POSTCARD FROM WASHINGTON**, by Kate Sang
- 3 EDITORIAL**, by Kate Sang
- 4 "ACROSS THE POND": EA-OHP Summit Meeting**, by Irvin Sam Schonfeld and Jonathan Houdmont
- 5 ACADEMY NEWS**
- 6 EA-OHP CONFERENCE, VALENCIA 2008**
- 7 NEWS**
- 9 INTERVIEW WITH ARNOLD BAKKER**, by Kate Sang
- 11 DEVELOPING A PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPE: PRIMA-EF**, by Stavroula Leka, Tom Cox, Aditya Jain and Juliet Hassard
- 13 BOOK SERIES**
- 14 ACADEMY INFORMATION**
- 15 GUIDELINES ON SUBMITTING TO THE NEWSLETTER**

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## Editorial

Welcome to your latest issue of the Occupational Health Psychologist. This issue sees a change to the look of the newsletter and to its editorial team. Paul Flaxman has stepped down as Editor of the newsletter and I took over in February 2008. I am sure we would all like to thank Paul for his sterling work on the newsletter in the past. The rest of the editorial team have asked me to pass on their thanks for his support and hard work and I would personally like to thank him for his help during the handover time.

I, along with several Academy members, attended Work, Stress and Health 2008 in Washington DC in March. This was a fascinating conference and a fantastic opportunity to visit a beautiful city. My 'Postcard from Washington' tells you little more about the conference and my experiences there. This issue of the Academy's newsletter includes information on the forthcoming EA-OHP conference in Valencia (where I hope to meet many of you). Further information about the conference can be found on page 6. The call for abstracts is open until the 25<sup>th</sup> April. Thanks must go to Jonathan Houdmont for keep us informed of latest conference developments.

Arnold Bakker was kind enough to speak to me during the Work, Stress and Health 2008 conference. In his interview he tells us how he got started in Occupational Health Psychology and why he feels a need to examine the positive health outcomes of work. Arnold also offers some useful advice to those at the start of their career in OHP. I would like to thank Arnold for his time and I hope to conduct similar interviews for future issues of the newsletter.

Stavroula Leka and her colleagues at I-WHO (University of Nottingham, UK) have recently been awarded a grant to further understanding of European best practice in managing psychosocial risks and hazards in the work place. Their research report published here tells us more about this project and how they plan to carry it out. Our thanks go to Stavroula and her colleagues for using the newsletter to tell us all about this work.

I hope that the publication of this article will encourage other readers to contribute short pieces to the newsletter. We are happy to publish brief research papers, reflections on practice, reviews of work being undertaken by groups or institutions and reports of OHP developments that may be happening in your country. Further guidelines on submitting contributions can be found on the last page of the newsletter.

Our next issue will be published during the summer. Until then I, and the rest of the editorial team, hope you enjoy reading this issue.

**Kate Sang, Editor**

On behalf of the Editorial Team.

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## EA-OHP summit meeting

By Irvin Sam Schonfeld and Jonathan Houdmont

*From now on the newsletters of SOHP and EA-OHP will each allocate space to a report from the other organisation, to be called 'Across the Pond'. This report is the first of those articles.*

On March 6, 2008 at the APA/NIOSH/SOHP Conference on Work, Stress, and Health in Washington, DC, the executive committees and other involved members of the Society for Occupational Health Psychology and the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology held a summit meeting. The gathering was the latest in an ongoing series that began at the EA-OHP Dublin 2006 conference. The main discussion points and outcomes of interest to members are presented here.

### *Conference coordination*

One of the meeting's key objectives was to enhance the coordination of the activities of both organizations as well as members' benefits. Agreement was reached that the organizations will run international



Lef-right: Birgit Greiner, Peter Chen, Irvin Schonfeld, Tom Cox, Stavroula Leka, Evelyn Kortum, Aditya Jain, Gwen Keita, Joe Mazzola, Bob Sinclair, Mo Wang, Robert Henning, Yueng-hsiang (Emily) Huang, Chris Cunningham, Steve Sauter, Carrie Bulger, Janet Barnes-Farrell, Jonathan Houdmont (behind camera).

conferences on alternate years to ensure a well-paced and accessible conference calendar. As such, the next SOHP/APA/NIOSH conference will take place in November 2009 (Puerto Rico), followed by an EA-OHP conference in March 2010 (possibly Rome). The 2011 SOHP/APA/NIOSH conference is scheduled for March of that year, to be followed by an EA-OHP conference in the spring of 2012 (possibly Zurich). The possibility of an eventual joint conference outside Europe and North America was also discussed and held to be an objective worthy of further investigation.

### *Reciprocal journal subscription rates*

Discussion also centred on the question of whether it might be feasible to offer SOHP and EA-OHP members discounted individual subscriptions to both Work & Stress and the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology. Taylor & Francis, publisher of Work & Stress, has agreed, in principle, to offer SOHP members individual subscriptions to the journal at the same discounted rate as currently offered to EA-OHP members. SOHP intends to liaise with the American Psychological Association to investigate whether a reciprocal arrangement might be possible in respect of the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology.

### *International Coordinating group*

In recognition of the rapid pace at which the discipline of occupational health psychology has developed in recent times and the challenges presented by such change, it was agreed to re-establish the International Coordinating Group (ICG-OHP). The ICG was first established almost a decade ago with the aim of coordinating international developments in research, education and professional practice. However, in the intervening years the ICG has existed in the shadow of the discipline's North American and European representative bodies. A web domain has been purchased for the ICG ([www.icg-ohp.org](http://www.icg-ohp.org)) which will initially include representatives from EA-OHP, SOHP, APA, NIOSH, Work & Stress and the Journal of

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Occupational Health Psychology. It is anticipated that one of the ICG's main activities will involve supporting the establishment of new regional representative bodies and the coordination of their activities on the international stage alongside those of established groups.

### *Joint research*

A landmark was achieved at the Washington conference with the first piece of joint EA-OHP – SOHP research taking place. Together, the EA-OHP Education Forum with the SOHP Education and Training Committee disseminated a survey to all conference participants that sought to define a core educational curriculum for OHP. The survey further aimed to identify core competencies of professional practice in the domain. The survey was supplemented with a round-table discussion. Both elements are to be repeated at the EA-OHP Valencia conference in November 2008. The research is considered important for the possible future development of program

accreditation and professional licensing arrangements.

### *Newsletters*

The imperative for excellent networks for the communication of SOHP and EA-OHP activities was highlighted by the meeting. It was agreed that individuals and organizations should be encouraged to post messages for the OHP community to both the SOHP and EA-OHP ListServe distribution lists. Agreement was also reached on the coordinated publication and dissemination of the SOHP and EA-OHP newsletters. As a first step, each newsletter will contain an 'across the pond' column charting recent developments in each constituency. Both organizations also agreed to update their website links to one another's websites and to maintain 'forthcoming events' sections.

### *Next meeting*

The next SOHP - EA-OHP summit meeting will be at the EA-OHP conference in Valencia in November 2008.

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## Support offered for developing regional chapters

Over the last few years, a number of regional networks have started to emerge informally within the Academy. Such networks have the key task of creating links among OHP specialists within a region and with the local community. One of these is the Irish Chapter (IEA-OHP), which has been successful in promoting OHP in Ireland through local seminars and other initiatives. For information, contact Birgit Greiner, University College Cork, Ireland: [b.greiner@ucc.ie](mailto:b.greiner@ucc.ie).

The Academy External Relations team can provide initial financial support to new Chapters to kick-start their activities. Up to €1,500 will be made available for the support of Chapter initiatives (maximum €500 per application). If you are considering organising a national or regional event or group under the auspices of the Academy, please contact Maria Karanika-Murray ([maria.karanika-murray@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:maria.karanika-murray@nottingham.ac.uk)).

For additional details please go to:

<http://www.ea-ohp.org/News/index.asp>.

## Have you told us about your expertise?

The Academy is developing a database of expertise among its members. This database will (1) help boost the exchange of knowledge and possible collaborations among members and (2) be used by external organisations that seek to identify OHP experts through the Academy.

We have posted a survey on the Academy's website that will help us identify the rich expertise represented in the Academy and will facilitate the exchange and development of knowledge and practice.

If you would like to complete the survey please go to:

<http://www.ea-ohp.org/News/index.asp>

For further information on the database of expertise please contact Maria Karanika-Murray:

[maria.karanika-murray@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:maria.karanika-murray@nottingham.ac.uk)



**European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology  
8th Conference**  
University of Valencia, Spain  
12-14 November 2008  
[www.ea-ohp.org](http://www.ea-ohp.org)

## **FINAL CALL**

**Abstracts are now being accepted for  
papers, posters, symposia and workshops.**

**Submission deadline: 25 April 2008**

Submission instructions may be downloaded from  
<http://www.ea-ohp.org/Conferences/index.asp>

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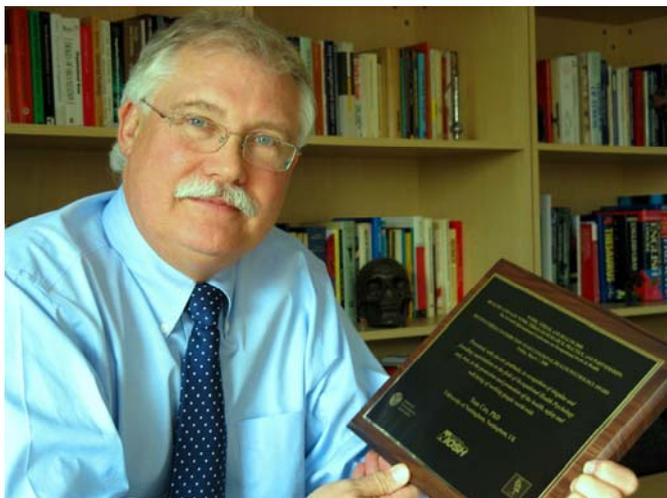
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## Academy President Receives Award



Left: Tom Cox with the plaque, which reads: "Presented, with sincere gratitude, in recognition of singular and founding contributions to the field of Occupational Health Psychology and, thus, to the protection and promotion of the health, safety and well-being of working people world-wide".

The American Psychological Association, the US National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the Society for Occupational Health Psychology have jointly presented EA-OHP President, Tom Cox, with an award for "Distinguished Contributions to Occupational Health Psychology". The award was made at the Work, Stress and Health conference in Washington, DC, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

Presenting the award, Captain Greg Lotz, Director of the Division of Applied Research and Technology at NIOSH, cited Tom's contributions to the development

of research on work-related stress, for his founding roles in the establishment of the journal Work & Stress and the European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology, and his tireless efforts to promote the discipline internationally through research, education and professional practice.

Receiving the award, Tom thanked the awarding bodies as well as colleagues past and present for their support. He said that he had always thought of the Institute of Work, Health and Organisations as a family, and over the years, through the journal Work & Stress and then the Academy, and now with colleagues in the US, and other parts of the world, that family had grown and strengthened. OHP is now a large international family, united in its commitment to making a difference to the health and safety of all working people.

Photo by Mary Tisserand

## E-mail distribution list

In 2006, the Academy introduced a free email-based distribution list. The objective was to enable those with an interest in occupational health psychology to keep up to date with Academy activities and to promote information sharing between colleagues from around the world. Since that time the number of subscribers to the list has grown considerably and the list has developed into a valuable forum through which people engage with the discipline and its community of researchers, educators and practitioners.

Belonging to the list is rather like sitting in on a discussion – you can join in the conversation, start a discussion or simply listen – all from your regular email account. You can choose to receive messages as they are sent or in a weekly digest.

The list serves a variety of purposes. To date it has

been used for the discussion of work and projects, to share news, for collaborations, conference announcements, information requests and simply to keep in touch with colleagues. Subscribers may also wish to use the list to disseminate their latest publications or announce new research activities.

### How to subscribe

In three easy steps you will be able to send and receive messages on all manner of topics related to occupational health psychology.

1. Visit the website of the EA-OHP distribution list at <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/EA-OHP.html>
2. Follow the on-screen instructions to join to the list. This only takes a couple of minutes.
3. Once you have joined, you may send messages to the list by emailing [ea-ohp@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:ea-ohp@jiscmail.ac.uk).

## NIOSH information resource on organisational measures

By Leslie MacDonald, NIOSH

A website from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the USA has been developed to assist researchers and practitioners in identifying instruments for organizational assessment (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/workorg/tools/>).

The Website hosts a searchable database, features lists of resources on work organization assessment methodology (e.g., measurement handbooks), and provides links to national workplace surveys.

By facilitating the exchange of information about organizational assessment tools, this information resource aims to enhance research to improve our

understanding of the associations between work organization and worker safety, health, and well-being. Expansion of the database and Website content is ongoing.

Users and developers of work organization measures are encouraged to nominate instruments and content for consideration. Information about the nomination process can be found on the Frequently Asked Questions section of the Website.

Leslie MacDonald ([lmacdonald@cdc.gov](mailto:lmacdonald@cdc.gov)), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Cincinnati, OH, USA.

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## Work & Stress news

By the Work & Stress editorial team

The next edition of Work & Stress, which will be published shortly, will include a report by Siw Tone Innstrand and colleagues from Norway on a longitudinal study of reciprocal relations between work-family interaction and burnout. There will also be a paper by Debby Beckers and colleagues in The Netherlands on whether the relationship between overtime work and wellbeing is influenced by the compulsory versus voluntary nature of the work. They also look at the relationship with rewards for overtime.

In another paper, Karina Nielsen and colleagues from Denmark and the UK examine the effects of transformational (or creative, visionary) leadership on the wellbeing of employees and the possible mediating effects of perceived work characteristics such as role clarity and the opportunity for development.

Pat Sikora and colleagues from the US look at downsizing and alcohol use, in a cross-lagged longitudinal examination of the spillover hypothesis. They were interested to examine the possible link between workplace stress and alcohol use and abuse. Using a combination of a survey, biomarkers and sick

leave data, Ann-Sophie Hansson and co-authors from Sweden and the US report a longitudinal study on the effects of organisational change on health, satisfaction and sick leave. They draw attention to the need to look at the impact of change from a number of different perspectives.

These papers will soon be available online via the Work & Stress website.

### *Special issue on work engagement*

As you may know, we are currently editing a forthcoming special issue on work engagement, with Arnold Bakker, Michael Leiter, Wilmar Schaufeli and Toon Taris as guest editors. The topic of engagement is timely and highly relevant, since recent studies have shown positive relationships with health and organizational performance. The call for papers appeared in August 2007 and by the deadline at the end of the year we had received 16 submissions.

At present all the papers have been reviewed by the team of guest editors and external experts, and the authors have received feedback on their submissions. At present it is not yet known which papers will ultimately be included, but – given the overall quality and wide range of the submissions – we are confident that the research published in this issue will contribute to both theory and practice in the area of work, stress and well-being. An editorial article will bring all the engagement articles together. The special issue is scheduled for Work & Stress part three (2008).

# Interview with Arnold Bakker

By Kate Sang, editor of *the Newsletter*

In this issue we are very fortunate to have an interview with Arnold Bakker, who is full professor at the Department of Work and Organizational Psychology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Arnold's areas of interest include work engagement, burnout, crossover, work-family balance, and diary research. He co-developed the job-demands resources model and co-authored the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Arnold has published widely in international journals and books and has developed several internet tools. In addition he will be one of the keynote speakers at the EA-OHP conference in Valencia during November. Here, Arnold tells us about his conceptual and methodological interests as well as giving some advice to those at the start of their career in OHP.

### *How did you end up doing this kind of work?*

I undertook my PhD in the Netherlands, focusing on persuasive communication, which is unrelated to what I am doing now. However, I think I use some of the insights I gained. Although I have a master degree in organizational psychology, it is more or less a coincidence that I re-entered the field of work psychology. My Professor – Bram Buunk from the University of Groningen – is a close friend of Wilmar Schaufeli, Professor of Work and Organizational Psychology in Utrecht. Bram told Wilmar that he should hire me to do work on burnout. That was back in 1996. After that I obtained an Associate Professor's position and then for two years I continued to do research on burnout, but I was thinking about what is the other side of the coin. What about the people who do not have burnout? We estimate that 4% of the workforce in The Netherlands has clinical burnout, but that would mean that 96% of all employees do not. There might be another extreme to well-being that is more positive. So in '98 we started to develop a questionnaire to assess work engagement and then we looked at its causes in the work environment (job demands and resources), its consequences in terms of performance and absenteeism, and later on we looked at individual difference variables and we made models to predict work engagement. So that in a nutshell is how I started out.



### *Can you tell me about any projects you are currently involved in?*

We have recently undertaken seven diary studies on work engagement. For example, we did a study in Greece, where we looked at the daily work engagement of employees in fast food restaurants over five consecutive days, and we looked at its causes in terms of support from the supervisor, team climate, and autonomy. Next to the measurement of how engaged were the employees during the day, we looked at the financial performance of the restaurants, so we could use daily work engagement to predict daily financial results...so that is one study that shows that if job resources change daily we might have a daily change in financial performance. In another study we looked at engagement of flight attendants going away to an international destination and how the bonding and the support people give to each other on the outbound flight influences efficacy, work engagement and performance on the inbound flight. Those are the kind of effects I find really interesting

### *What led you into looking at diary studies?*

With diary studies you can look at more dynamic changes in how people feel and behave, and in a short period of time you can have several measures and see how things evolve. Whereas if you want to do that with normal studies you need to do longitudinal work...we have also published several longitudinal studies, but we know the problems. One of the problems is the long term stability of constructs. For example, if you are tired now we know you will be tired five years later. We did that with burnout and we know that the stability coefficient is .50, which means that 25% of how tired you feel in 5 years is dependent on how tired you feel now. So it is a strategic choice because it is very difficult to look at causal effects

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over time if you use longitudinal studies. Also, diary studies show that how you feel on a certain day influences what you do on the next day. There are different ways of treating that data, but I think that with such studies you can get fantastic insights. There are not many people using diary study designs yet.

***Would you say that work engagement is the area of OHP you are most interested in?***

I am also doing some work on peak experience, but engagement is my favourite. I am particularly interested in processes, so I am doing a whole line of research looking at cross-over and contagion and how this comes about – we have a process model trying to find out what the drivers are of engagement and what the consequences are. Interesting questions might be “Can there be too much engagement?” “Can engagement turn into burnout?” “What is the difference between workaholism and engagement and how does it affect performance?” This is what I find interesting – and I have learned that it is very important not to forget the negative side of well-being when you examine the positive side.

***How do you think the profile of OHP could be raised?***

I don't know what other colleagues do internationally because this isn't something we have spoken about, but I go into practice. I speak to, and collaborate with, many occupational health professionals. We have a job-demands resources model, and we applied that so that practitioners have an online system where employees fill out questions and they receive feedback. This feedback is directly usable by the participants in the study – they can see how engaged they are and how they differ from a norm group. I also give presentations at conferences for practitioners.

Further, together with Wilmar Schaufeli I edited a student handbook for OHP in Dutch where people from all universities in The Netherlands are involved in its writing, and it is used in many courses. I find it a lot of fun to do these things that we don't get credit for as scientists...we only get points if we have international publications, but we have to share knowledge with students, professionals and practitioners so that they can use it. I think it is important to give interviews to newspapers and magazines so that you can inform the lay person. They are very interested in how you stop stress and burnout and so forth. Not all scholars like to do this because it costs you time but if you are able to do it then I would say you should. You can learn how fascinating it can be to use the science of OHP...you can reach those making decisions, so it is not about

marketing yourself but really about demonstrating how companies can reduce absenteeism and turnover...you should learn how to explain yourself in simple ways and you can make a difference to so many employees' lives.

***What advice would you give to somebody at the start of their career in OHP?***

Read a lot, read around topics you are very much engaged with, no matter what it is. But focus on things you like a lot. Work hard and finish your studies in that area and pick up skills you can use. Then you can become an expert in that topic, maybe it is repetitive strain injury or how to engage the workforce or how to prevent absenteeism...I have noticed that if you are enthusiastic and give concrete examples to new students for example, you can become a consultant, or you can become an absence manager or whatever. Students are often not aware of the range of opportunities available to them. So, my advice would be, go into a specific domain, dive into it, read articles and use the internet, become an expert and try and help the world either in practice or in science.

***What is the best piece of advice you have ever been given?***

Good question! I don't know who, but somebody once told me 'keep it simple'. Even though I am doing very fancy modelling work and statistics I think what is very important is that you start simply – the bottom line is that we look at positive and negative factors in the work environment. You can explain that to the lay manager, because they are used to thinking about financial results and targets.

***What have you enjoyed most about Work, Stress and Health 2008?***

We happened to get here a day early so we went to the Capitol and saw the House of Representatives at work. There were not too many people there but I found it very interesting to see democracy at work. At the conference I have met several people I know through the literature, who I have met at previous conferences or with whom I have had email contact. The best part is when you see a presentation and you and your colleagues have the same questions or comments about it afterwards, so you are amongst peers. That is the reason conferences are very exciting, interesting and energising.

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***Arnold Bakker will be a keynote speaker at the Academy's conference in Valencia this November. He is also a co-editor of the forthcoming special edition of Work & Stress on engagement (see page 8).***



*Stavroula Leka and her colleagues from the Institute of Work, Health and Organisations discuss a new project examining European best practice in the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace.*

## **Developing a Psychosocial Risk Management Framework for Europe: PRIMA-EF**

By Stavroula Leka, Tom Cox, Aditya Jain and Juliet Hassard, Institute of Work, Health and Organisations, University of Nottingham, UK

**P** psychosocial risks are among the major contemporary challenges for occupational health and safety and are linked to such workplace problems as work-related stress, violence and bullying. Work-related stress alone affects more than 40 million individuals across the European Union (EU), costing an estimated €20bn a year in lost time and health bills.

### ***Psychosocial risk management – State of the art in Europe***

The International Labour Office (ILO) has defined psychosocial hazards in terms of the interactions among job content, work organisation and management, and other environmental and organisational conditions, on the one hand, and the employees' competencies and needs on the other. Those interactions that prove to be hazardous influence employees' health through their perceptions and experience.

In the last decade, many organisations have developed measures and programmes to assess and manage psychosocial risks at work. International organisations, as well as the European Union and national bodies have published reports on ways to deal with psychosocial risk factors. Both general guidelines and basic steps in a risk control cycle have been provided as well as more detailed accounts of various measures.

A number of significant developments towards the prevention of mental ill-health at work and the management of psychosocial risks have also been achieved at the policy level in the past years. In the EU, these include the 1989 EC Council Framework

Directive on the Introduction of Measures to Encourage Improvements in the Safety and Health of Workers at Work, 89/391/EEC (Official Journal of the European Communities, 32, No L183, 1-8) as well as two collective agreements signed by European social partners on work-related stress and on workplace violence. On the basis of these, a new EU risk prevention culture has since been established, combining legislation, social dialogue, best practices, corporate social responsibility, and building partnerships.

However, there exists a gap between policy and practice that prevents its effective implementation (Levi, 2005) and the promotion of occupational mental health and well-being at work. There are a number of reasons for this gap. For instance, there is lack of awareness across Europe that is often associated with a lack of expertise, research and appropriate infrastructure. Also, the responsibility for understanding and managing the interface between work, employment and mental health varies greatly across countries. Furthermore, a comprehensive EU framework to manage psychosocial risks and promote mental health at work has been lacking due to poor knowledge and scarcity of resources. This shortcoming has been recently addressed by the EC and funding has been provided through the 6th Framework Programme to develop a European Psychosocial Risk Management Framework (PRIMA-EF). This aims to promote harmonization in the area of psychosocial risk management and enhance best practice through recommendations and evidence-based guidance that will enable stakeholders to implement them to

improve the quality of working life.

## **Psychosocial Risk Management – European Framework**

In January 2007, the Institute of Work, Health & Organisations (I-WHO), together with seven key partners, was awarded a €750,000 grant to develop a European Framework on Psychosocial Risk Management (PRIMA-EF). Dr Stavroula Leka and Professor Tom Cox are leading this research programme which also involves ISPESL (Italy), BAuA (Germany), FIOH (Finland), TNO (Netherlands), CIOP (Poland), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the ILO's DIALOGUE programme. This collaborative policy-orientated research programme has a special focus on work-related stress and workplace violence (including harassment, bullying and mobbing). Its objectives are:

- to review available methodologies to evaluate the prevalence and impact of psychosocial risks at work and work-related stress;
- to identify appropriate means of collecting sensitive data in relation to these issues;
- to develop international standards and indicators on stress and violence at work;
- to develop detailed recommendations and evidence-based best-practice guidance on the management of these issues at the workplace; and
- to disseminate the results of the project to stakeholders and social partners including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Overall, five outputs will be produced during the project linked to the project objectives:

### **1. A European framework for psychosocial risk management (PRIMA – EF)**

This includes the development of key principles for psychosocial risk management and best practice criteria. The early definitions of these principles have provided a frame of reference throughout the project that will enable its implementation. In addition, the framework will enable the promotion of a directive, integrative approach in relation to the management of work-related stress and violence and harassment issues at work in Europe. This will, in turn, lead to progression beyond the current state of the art by enabling effective translation of knowledge into practice.

### **2. An analysis of social policies, legislative frameworks and associated infrastructure and guidance across Europe in relation to psychosocial risk management, work-related stress and violence and harassment at work**

This will enable discrepancies in awareness and understanding to be identified so that a specifically targeted campaign using the project tools can be initiated on completion of the project. This analysis will be supplemented by recommendations and guidance on social dialogue and key stakeholder involvement in the management of psychosocial issues at work, and an analysis of the relationship of corporate social responsibility with occupational health and safety issues and in particular psychosocial risk management.

### **3. An analysis of available methodologies to evaluate the prevalence and impact of psychosocial risks at work**

This analysis will then be followed by the integration of the different methodologies under a framework of international standards and indicators on stress and violence at work; that will also be relevant to high risk worker groups and occupational sectors and gender issues.

### **4. A comprehensive review and analysis of case studies of evidence-based, best practice interventions**

This will take place across occupational sectors, worker groups, enterprise sizes and European countries in order to develop practical intervention tools and methods for use at the enterprise level, with a special emphasis on SMEs.

### **5. Detailed recommendations and evidence-based best-practice guidance on the management of these issues at the workplace**

Guidance and recommendations will be developed for different stakeholder groups including employers, trade unions and occupational health experts.

The project findings will be disseminated through the Directorate General for Employment & Social Affairs of the EC, the WHO and the ILO. In addition, findings are being disseminated through workshops, scientific papers, conferences, presentations to stakeholders and social partners and the websites of the consortium partners and liaison organisations of the programme.

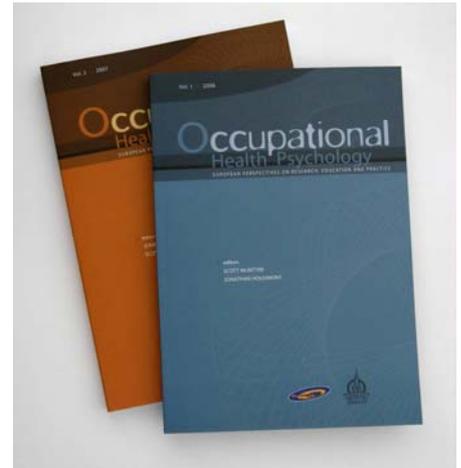
More information about the project can be found at [www.prima-ef.org](http://www.prima-ef.org)

More information about I-WHO can be found at [www.nottingham.ac.uk/iwho](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/iwho)

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Volumes I and II are available now at [www.nup.com](http://www.nup.com). Volume III will be launched at the Academy's 2008 conference in Valencia, Spain (12-14 November).



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# *the Occupational Health Psychologist*

## **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

Please find below general guidelines for submitting articles for future issues of the Occupational Health Psychologist. We are keen to publish many different kinds of articles, and we hope this will encourage submissions from all our members. We welcome articles from students, new researchers, practitioners, as well as long-standing members of the Academy.

We aim to publish three issues per year (Spring, Summer and Autumn).

### **OHP Research / Practice**

We welcome short reports (of no more than about 1200 words) of research findings, practice issues, case studies, brief literature reviews, and theoretical articles. This could be a valuable opportunity for you to disseminate information on your work to both academics and practitioners. When writing these reports please make them as accessible as possible to the broad readership of the newsletter.

### **OHP Briefings**

We also welcome overviews of your OHP-related activities, or those of your research group, consultancy or organisation. This type of article provides a useful insight into the sort of work that is being undertaken across the OHP world community. Additionally, this section enables the communication of policy developments that may have implications for OHP research, practice and education in your country. We would ask that such articles are between 1000 and 1500 words.

### **Other articles**

We welcome news, conference announcements, open letters to your fellow occupational health psychologists regarding any OHP related topics, and brief summaries (in English) of OHP issues that have been reported by your national news media.

To accompany all contributions we welcome appropriate photographs

**Please email your questions or contributions to  
The Editor, Kate Sang:  
[K.J.C.Sang@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:K.J.C.Sang@lboro.ac.uk)**

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