

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stress at work

A new global epidemic?

How companies address this emerging risk factor?

Stress on the job is more and more recognized as one of the most significant challenge corporations have to confront with. The World Health Organization (WHO) rates stress as a global epidemic, since this is an issue of growing concern also in developing countries. Indeed, the workplace has changed dramatically due to globalisation of the economy, use of new information and communication technology, growing diversity in the workplace and an increased mental workload. In addition, corporations have been heavily impacted by the recent economic and financial crisis and they have gone through quite many organisational changes that may lead to an increasing level of stress factors. Numerous surveys and statistics confirm that costs linked to work related stress are high.

Companies are at the core of this challenge. On one side, the work organisation and environment is one of the causes for stress, on the other side, stress related consequences can severely affect one of the most important intangible assets that companies have: the human capital.

This research investigates the level of awareness and the approach of large European and North American companies to work-related stress.

The study provides a comparative analysis on commitments and practices developed by European and North American companies in support of occupational stress management and summarises their corresponding performance by sector of activity and country of origin. The research also explores the possible correlation between a social dialogue covering stress prevention and companies' efforts in this sense. Similarly, this study explores whether stress management is part of an inclusive CSR risk management strategy and search for correlations between companies' commitments, their actions and the results achieved in terms of absenteeism rate, considered, by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work as one of the factors that can describe job stress.

Vigeo also identified a list of companies that demonstrated, through their management processes, innovative practices to prevent stress at work.

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