

PRESS RELEASE

According to available research evidence there are significant problems with successful training on various health issues for low educated workers leading to widening gap in knowledge and health habits with higher educated workers. This leads to social and economical consequences to those workers with lower education level (Low educated employees – LEE) as well as to poor health. For our countries it means that opportunities and personal chances for access to well-being for those with less education in the contemporary labour market are slimmer leading to further increase in social and health costs.

In order to tackle these issues and to provide practical suggestions on how to improve training on various health choices for workers with low education level project entitled **“Strengthening transversal competences of low educated employees concerning their health choices in the context of changing labour market” (Project LEECH, grant agreement 14222-LLP-2008-PL-GRUNTVIG-GMP)** has been carried out in four EU Member States, namely Poland (The Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine as the Project coordinator), Latvia, Slovenia and Spain.

Project LEECH aimed at understanding differences between low educated and well educated workers in more detailed way and preparing the recommendations for tailored adult health education aimed at LEE.

To provide that the Project LEECH:

- identified specific ways of perceiving health and its determinants, characterized health literacy, knowledge and beliefs concerning personal health choices through a questionnaire-based study conducted on representative samples of workers from four participating countries;
- collected and formulated recommendations concerning effective methods of approaching LEE with health education;
- identified educational framework available to workers that could be used for introducing healthy lifestyle education strengthening transversal competences of LEE;
- prepared a set of workshop educational materials and a manual for trainers regarding health education for LEE;
- trained a group of 120 educators/trainers in the Project countries.

The studies carried out during this project supported by previous results have shown that group of low educated employees in many situations constitute a specific and difficult recipient of health education and promotion projects. At the same time the variations within members of this group and differences among project countries are significant.

Generally speaking project has confirmed that less educated employees' perceive their health condition to be worse more often than those with higher education level. It is also evident that employees with lower education are more careless about their health and less often try to limit sugar and fat consumption or look after their physical fitness and are also less often undertaking medical check-ups to prevent diseases. Low educated employees also more often admit that they neglect their health at workplace on everyday basis. In workplaces they are more often of the opinion that they do not have to bother to comply with occupational health and safety regulations if there are no penalties for disregarding them.

Strengthening transversal competences of less educated employees concerning their health choices in the context of changing labour market

Project number: 142222-LLP-1-2008-1-PLGRUNDTVIG-GMP; grant agreement: 2008-3466/001-001

Low educated employees has different preferences on the way how they would like to acquire knowledge and skills concerning health – most popular choices were:

- a) radio and TV (72% of those participating choose this option),
- b) face-to-face meetings with specialists advising appropriate ways of taking care of health (63%)
- c) various festivities (61%).

On the other hand this group is hardly achievable by internet as only 25% admitted this option as interesting to them. In general also the reading is not the right way to approach this group of employees however there are significant differences among Project countries, e.g. Latvians are less found with reading than Slovenians.

More to this many of the low educated employees (43% which is almost twice as many as in the better educated group) were of the opinion that it is better to know less about their health.

Among the main Project conclusions it shall be mentioned that low educated employees appear to be difficult recipients of health education and health and workplace promotion. At the same time preferences of this target group are clearly dependent on the socio-cultural conditions related to the place of residence, education, social and economic background. As for the comparison to the better educated employees, the low educated differ when it comes to: acceptable sources of health information, general beliefs about trainings dealing with this subject and fact that different situations and factors may negatively affect their decisions whether to participate in such events.

More detailed information could be found in the Project LEECH manual titled “**The low educated employees towards health – challenges for health education**” (Editors *Elzbieta Korzeniowska, Krzysztof Puchalski*, Published: *Riga Stradins university, Latvia, 2010*) that contains most important Project LEECH findings that could be used for tailoring the health related education for low educated workers.

We hope you find this information useful for your work and we will be happy if you could assist us in bringing this information to wider audience.

For further information on the project and its results you can visit one of the following websites (*leave only one for national press releases*):

- www.promocjazdrowiawpracy.pl, www.imp.lodz.pl (English and Polish version of the project web page)
- www.ivadis.es (Spanish version of the project web page)
- www.cilizadelo.si (Slovenian version of the project web page))
- www.rsu.lv/ddvvi/leech (Latvian version of the project web page)

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