



## **How to tackle drink & drug problems at work**

Small and medium businesses across Wales are being invited to access a new set of guidelines to help deal with employees whose drink or drug intake might affect their work. In Wales more than half a million working days are lost each year as a result of alcohol related problems. Though difficult to quantify, this has been estimated to cost employers in Wales up to £120 million per year.

Representatives from seven European countries have united on a project to produce a comprehensive information and training resource, which has been led by work2health Ltd, a Wales based workplace health and wellbeing company.

The Leonardo Foundation, part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, funded a project called Mepmis – Maximising Employee Potential by Minimising the Impact of Substances – to provide managers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to take appropriate action.

The result is a dedicated website, an electronic learning package for managers and a comprehensive face-to-face training course geared to addressing a culture which is globally costing organisations and economies many millions in absenteeism, under-performance and workplace accidents.

The Mepmis project brought together seven partners based in the UK, Ireland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland which includes specialists in organisational and employee performance. Over the last two years, they have looked at legislation, literature, company policies and practices and what support is currently available to organisations in different countries and have distilled best practice into an e-learning and on-site training resource for managers.

Although these resources can be used in any size or type of organisation, they will be particularly useful for those small and medium enterprises (SMEs) who wish to achieve the Welsh Government's Small Workplace Health Award, the national mark of quality for health and wellbeing aimed at organisations employing fewer than 50 people.

Both the electronic learning package and the face to face training offer guidance on developing an appropriate policy for your organisation, identifying signs and symptoms of the inappropriate use of alcohol and / or drugs and how to find solutions to common problems associated with alcohol and drug use.

John Griffiths of work2health Ltd, the project leader, said "We spoke to managers and occupational health and safety professionals from businesses in Wales and asked them what they perceived as their main challenges in this area and what they felt they needed in terms of information and support. It is one of the key personnel issues they feel least equipped to deal with.

He added "This is a complex issue; the problem cannot be ignored but employers who think they can simply dismiss workers or force them to undergo testing at work without developing and implementing proper policies, procedures and training are likely to run into trouble." One of the

main aims is to build skills; many companies do not possess the tools to enable their managers to deal with substance use at a corporate level. That's the value of this new resource."

Full details can be found at [www.alcoholdrugsandwork.eu](http://www.alcoholdrugsandwork.eu)

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