

Press release

The Eurogip Discussions
Addictive conduct and occupational risks in Europe:
a matter of concern

How to prevent the work-related risks resulting from the abuse of alcohol, drugs or narcotics? This was the central question of the Eurogip¹ Discussions on Friday 20 October, which brought together representatives of the European Commission and of several European countries: **Germany, Belgium, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland**. Although there is a cruel lack of epidemiological research to establish a link between the use of such substances and occupational injuries, all the participants recognised that the subject was indeed a matter of concern in the countries and the enterprises represented.

Prevention is often a long-term process, because it involves changing behaviour patterns. And the subject is still often taboo and hard to discuss, especially since, being on the boundary between occupational health and public health, it affects the private sphere, and well-meaning colleagues often cover up for a person who has a problem.

The participants in the Eurogip Discussions agreed how important it is to circulate information to all the employees. Several of them, moreover, described training initiatives targeting the employers (Ireland), management (Switzerland) or employees (public transport sector in Germany). A consensus was also reached concerning the multi-disciplinary response required in case of problems. While the support of management is essential, the medical department has a predominant role to play, in cooperation with Human Resources, the trade union representatives, etc., but also outside specialists: non-profit organisations, psychologists, specialists in addictology, etc.

At the Community level, Jorge Costa-David, principal administrator of the European Commission's DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, has announced that the action plan to combat alcohol abuse would include an "occupational health" section.

Proceedings are available (in French only): see Publications in the French section

¹ Eurogip is a public interest grouping (*Groupement d'intérêt public*) set up by the French National Health Insurance Fund for Employees (CNAMTS) and the National Institute for Research and Safety (INRS) to work on the European aspects of occupational risks