

## **HIGHLIGHTS TIC Council Webinar on “Work-related musculoskeletal disorders in times of COVID”**

### **TIC Council - DEKRA Occupational Health and Safety Webinar Series: Work-related musculoskeletal disorders in times of COVID**

On 13 April, the TIC Council and DEKRA jointly hosted a virtual panel on Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSD's) in times of COVID as part of a new Occupational Health and Safety Webinar Series.

This first webinar served as an awareness-raising initiative and support to the EU-OSHA's 'Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load 2020-2022' to prevent and manage MSD's in the workplace. According to the EU Labour Force Survey, MSD's continue to be the most prevalent type of work-related health problem experienced across all sectors and demographics, therefore heavily impacting businesses, economies and society as a whole. With high-level speakers from the TIC industry (DEKRA), the private sector (Siemens) and the EU Institutions (EU-OSHA), our panellists provided a cross-sectoral perspective on the health risks posed by MSDs and the lessons learnt from the pandemic. Ultimately, this fostered a healthy exchange of best practices and solutions to prevent MSDs in the future.

Our virtual panel moderated by Mrs. Hanane Taidi, TIC Council Director General, began with an insightful presentation from Dr. Christa Sedlatschek, Executive Director of the European Agency for Safety & Health at Work (EU-OSHA) into the rationale behind the 'Healthy Workplaces Campaign' initiative. She stressed that whilst MSDs can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender or industry they can nevertheless be successfully tackled. Dr. Sedlatschek provided examples of the valuable work EU-OSHA and its Official Partners are achieving in preventing MSDs through awareness-raising initiatives, promoting risk assessment and proactive management. Therefore, improving knowledge of both new and emerging risks and how the reintegration and retention of workers suffering from chronic MSDs can be managed in practice. The upcoming proposal for the 'Health & Safety at Work EU Strategic Framework 2021-2027' sets out to address multiple primary risk factors responsible for causing MSDs namely: physical, mechanical, individual, organisational and psychosocial factors. In addition, it aims to improve preparedness for future crises that may arise, digitalisation, IT tools and to facilitate better communication.

The role of COVID-19 in compounding the problem of MSDs was highlighted by Dr. Ralf Franke, Global EHS (Environmental Protection, Health Management, Safety) Head of Siemens, who shared several the key challenges that Siemens has encountered as a multinational organisation in managing the physical and mental wellbeing of its organisation's 250 000 workers over this past year. To counter MSDs, which cause 20-25% of the absenteeism rate, Siemens has put in place numerous measures. These range from the more commonplace, providing ergonomic equipment, informative resources, and live-stream workouts, offering training and consulting for workplaces and supporting colleagues with online health services to the more innovative, active piloting digital solutions or ergonomic risk assessment tools with AI capabilities. He underlined an important paradox that whilst the pandemic has exacerbated the acute problem of MSDs and in particular

psychosocial issues, it has in parallel triggered a willingness to implement workplace health measures to increase support for employees.

Our final speaker and co-organiser, Mr. Sebastian Bartels, Senior Vice President, Head of Global Business Line HSE & Sustainability at DEKRA provided the perspective of the TIC sector to clarify how ergonomics can be a powerful factor in increasing performance and employee's engagement within the corporate culture. Mr. Bartels noted that the pandemic has accelerated development in leadership style, increasing trust and communication between employers and employees. Citing the 2021 DEKRA Work Safety Report, a representative survey conducted to establish the effects of home working conditions on employees and on businesses, he shared several poignant findings concerning the age and gender of those most affected by MSDs and possible explanations for these outcomes. He also highlighted the close correlation between rapidly rising rates of psychological disorders caused by MSDs increased absence rates and the resulting in direct and indirect economic costs for businesses. As such, DEKRA recommends assessing and evaluating factors including an employees' remote working and the general ergonomic situation in addition to their psychosocial risk factors and providing adequate technology, processes and information, personal support, and qualifications to increase the productivity of the workforce through improved health and wellbeing.

### Speakers

- **Dr. Christa Sedlatschek** - Executive Director of **EU-OSHA** (European Agency for Safety & Health at Work)
- **Dr. Ralf Franke** - Global EHS Head of **Siemens**
- **Sebastian Bartels** - Senior Vice President, Head of Global Business Line HSE & Sustainability of **DEKRA**

To learn more, please click to access the webinar recording [here](#).

The presentation of the webinar can also be found [here](#).

As TIC Council continues to provide thought-provoking presentations on the current market trends and legislative developments around conformity assessment, check our [list of webinars](#) to learn more.

### *About TIC Council*

TIC Council is a global association representing over 90 international independent third-party testing, inspection, certification, and verification organizations. The industry represents an estimated one million employees across the world with annual sales of approximately USD 200 billion.