



Geneva Social Observatory Activity Report

Second Quarter
June 2009

Mission

The Geneva Social Observatory (GSO) was established in Geneva, Switzerland in 2004 as a non-profit association. The aim of the GSO is to provide a neutral setting for dialogue on pressing social issues, such as HIV/AIDS and social responsibility, diabetes and social responsibility, and corporate social responsibility and trade. In order to have substantive discussions on these issues, the GSO believes that multiple points of view should be consulted, which is why representatives from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, academia, governments and international intergovernmental organizations are invited to take part in the GSO meetings and events.

Activity Report

This activity report is developed on a quarterly basis for the Friends of the GSO, who support the Observatory through donations, sponsorship of specific projects, in-kind support, and/or participation in GSO events.

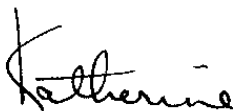
Dear Friends of the GSO,

Three exciting events have taken place this quarter: the first meeting of the Friends of the GSO at the Annual General Assembly on 15 May and workshops in Warsaw, Poland on 2 June and in Lake Abant, Turkey on 20 to 21 June. The workshops were organized as part of the process to adapt and implement the Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness in those two countries. More details about these two events can be found in the pages that follow as well as on the projects pages of our website, www.gsogeneva.ch. Our thanks to Merck/MSD for an unrestricted grant in 2009 and to the EU and the ILO for supporting the GSO outreach activities.

The inaugural meeting of the Friends of the GSO took place over lunch and was attended by representatives from Geneva-based non-governmental organizations, professional associations, international organizations, diplomatic missions and businesses as well as consultants and interested individuals. The President-Elect of the GSO, Ms. Deborah Vorhies was introduced and started the meeting by inviting Friends to give their ideas about the issues that the GSO could be addressing and how. The discussion proved to be a helpful one and a number of interesting proposals emerged. Participants confirmed the need for such a forum as the GSO and even suggested that the association be renamed to extend its scope as a global social observatory. Social concerns in Africa that could benefit from the GSO approach were raised. The neglected interests of workers in the informal economy, in small and medium sized enterprises, mental health concerns, stress in the workplace and trade and labour issues were talked about. Promotion of the greater involvement of civil society in governance was also discussed at some length.

The GSO Committee is grateful to the Friends of the GSO for their ongoing interest, ideas and expertise. The challenge now is to find ways to turn good initiatives into tangible and well-resourced projects. We encourage you to continue and to expand your support for GSO as we build on good practice and move into new areas. For more information on how to contribute, please visit the "Support GSO" page on our website at www.gsgogeneva.ch or write to me at contact@gsogeneva.ch.

Thank you,



Katherine Hagen
Executive Director, Geneva Social Observatory

Diabetes and Social Responsibility

Success in Poland and Turkey

June was a busy month for the GSO with meetings taking place in Warsaw, Poland on 2 June 2009 and in Lake Abant, Turkey from 20 to 21 June to adapt and implement the Workplace Strategy on Diabetes and Wellness in workplace settings in the two countries.

The Warsaw meeting

The meeting in Warsaw was convened by the GSO together with the Central Institute for Labour Protection – National Research Institute (CIOP-PIB) in Warsaw. It was part of a comprehensive effort by the GSO to adapt the Workplace Strategy to Polish workplaces. The CIOP-PIB invited the participants, prepared a Polish translation of the Workplace Strategy, provided the venue for the meeting, and arranged for interpretation between Polish and English. In the event 32 people took part in the meeting representing health institutes, labour institutes, private companies, diabetes associations and the Polish Ministry of Health. Our thanks for the excellent support of Dr. Anna Popielawska, the Head of the International Cooperation Division, Dr. Daniel Podgorski, Deputy Director for Management Systems and Certification, and Dr. Mariola Borowska from the International Cooperation Division.

The day was organized into presentations on: the current status of the diabetes epidemic in Poland; on the international situation; on the multiple benefits of adopting and implementing the Workplace Strategy; and on ways to implement it. This was followed by group discussions focused on three questions to do with how the Workplace Strategy could be implemented in specific workplace settings, what support is needed to take the next steps and what else can be done to make it happen. The discussion resulted in a set of recommendations that identified, among other things, identification of stakeholders, detailed guidance on activities, a breakdown of the costs involved, revision of regulations and standards and awareness raising.

Following the success of the meeting follow-up activities are planned in Poland that build on the relationships established with the formation of a planning group to carry out pilot projects in specific workplaces.

The Lake Abant seminar

The two day seminar in Lake Abant, situated half-way between Ankara and Istanbul was organized together with the office of the International Labour Organization in Ankara. Our thanks to Gulay Aslantepe, the Director of the ILO Ankara Office and to Professor Ruchan Isik for logistical support and professional expertise in organizing this seminar. The seminar was preceded by a press conference organized by Merck/MSD in Turkey featuring Dr. Sema Akalin, President of the Turkish Society of Endocrinology and metabolism. The seminar itself followed, with presentations focused on the Turkish context followed by group discussions. We were fortunate on that occasion to hear addresses by Dr. Gojka Roglic, Medical Officer for Diabetes at the World Health Organization, Dr. Sema Akalin, and Dr. Seyda Ozcan, General Secretary of the Diabetes Nursing Association. There was good participation from medical professionals, nurses in particular and from diabetes associations and labour institutes. The Turkish employers' association was well represented at the seminar, and follow-up activities with the association are being planned.

The recommendations from seminar participants tended to emphasize the importance of the distinction between workplace-related health care and the emphasis on prevention and wellness programmes, which may require a new legislative framework as well as new terms of reference for health care professionals in the workplace. Another important emphasis was on the need to establish the cost effectiveness for employers of this new approach to workplace health care. Participants expressed interest in the project proceeding with a series of pilot projects with to address these issues.



Seminar Participants, Lake Abant, Turkey, 20 to 21 June 2009

Documents related to the Diabetes and Social Responsibility Programme can be found on the GSO website, www.gsogeneva.ch. If you are interested in obtaining further information and/or would like to contribute to the Programme please send us an email at contact@gsogeneva.ch.



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