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IMPACT OF DEPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE
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European Business and Community Leaders Launch new Charter to Target Depression in the Workplace

Sunday Times Business Person of the Year for 2013 and CEO of Royal Mail, Moya Greene and Lord Gus O'Donnell, GCB lead the call for business leadership in the fight against depression

London, October 09, 2014 – Today, business leaders from across Europe will meet to launch a Business Charter that aims to prevent the disabling effects of depression among employees and reduce the burden of depression on employers. More than 30 million people in Europe are affected by depression, most of whom are working age. ¹

The Charter, based on six key principles that share workplace best practice, is being unveiled at the first European Business Leadership Forum to Target Depression in the Workplace, hosted by Barclays in London.

“We know that depression has a huge economic impact, costing European employers an estimated £77 billion¹ a year and now it's time to act,” said Moya Greene, CEO of Royal Mail. “Guiding companies across Europe to implement best practices which manage the effects of depression will help to increase employee productive capacity and, more importantly, lighten the burden of depression on employees and their families”.

The Business Charter encourages the development of company policies, programmes and practices to target depression. It has been endorsed by major employers who form the advisory group of the Leadership Forum: Barclays, BT Group plc, H. Lundbeck A/S, Luxottica, Nature Publishing Group, Ogilvy & Mather, Royal Mail Group Ltd and Unilever. The Charter has also been developed with support from the Federation of International Employers.

A series of pilot projects to support the practical implementation of the Business Charter by other European organisations will be undertaken by employers including Royal Mail Group Ltd, BT Group plc, Barclays, Ogilvy and Mather and H. Lundbeck A/S.

Lord Gus O'Donnell GCB, former UK Cabinet Secretary and non-Executive Chairman of Frontier Economics said: “Depression is a workplace issue that is both prevalent and destructive, yet many employers do not know how to tackle the problem. We believe this Charter is an important step towards validating workplace policies and practices so we know what really works when supporting employees who are dealing with the effects of depression”.

Depression, the leading cause of disability worldwide, affects 350 million people and has a direct impact on company profit due to presenteeism (attending work whilst ill) and absenteeism (taking time off work).²⁻⁴ One in 10 employees take time off work due to depression, with 36 working days lost per depressive episode.⁵

(Target the Impact of Depression in the Workplace is made possible via an educational grant provided by H. Lundbeck A/S. H. Lundbeck A/S has provided secretariat support for the Forum meeting.)

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The cognitive symptoms of depression - concentration difficulties, indecisiveness, and/or forgetfulness - are present up to 94% of the time in an episode of depression and cause significant impairment in work function.⁶ People with depression report on average 5.6 hours per week of total health-related lost productivity time more than those without depression.⁷

Business Leadership Forum Chairman Bill Wilkerson, who has been at the forefront of engaging business executives on the issue of depression in the workplace in Canada, will host future Forum meetings in Rome, Brussels and Berlin in 2015. Commenting on the initiative, he said: "We hope to see European employers coming together to support and sign up to the Charter, encouraging better management of depression and the promotion of good workplace mental health in companies across Europe".

Further information on the *Target the Impact of Depression in the Workplace* initiative can be found at www.targetdepression.com, where the Charter will soon be made available for those organisations who wish to sign up. For a copy of the full Business Charter in advance, please contact targetcampaign@ogilvy.com

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Notes to Editors

About the European Business Charter

The European Business Charter to Target the Impact of Depression in the Workplace sets forth six pragmatic principles to help employers get started or sustain efforts to help reduce the effects of depression on the working populations of Europe and on the EU economy.

Principle one: A Healthy, Prevention-Focused Workplace

Principle two: An Informed and Understanding Workplace

Principle three: A Well-Trained, Responsive Workplace

Principle four: An Open, Safe and Secure Workplace

Principle five: An Adaptive, Supportive Workplace

Principle six: A Workplace with Ties to Community Care and Key Influencers

References

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3. European Pact for Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2008
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7. Stewart WF, *et al.* *JAMA*, 2003;289(23):3135–3144

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