



## **HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE - INNOVATION IN RELATIONSHIPS AT ATM**

### **1. Organisations involved**

Public Transport Company of Milan (Italy, ATM - Azienda Trasporti Milanesi)

### **2. Description of the case**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

ATM is the Public Transport Company of Milan that runs public transport services both in Milan and in the other 72 areas in the district, serving about 2.6 million users. ATM has at its disposal 2,600 vehicles and has more than 8,900 employees (8,266 men and 645 women). The company has built an ongoing partnership with the local community, on the basis of the common goal of promoting mental and physical health of workers and citizens. Thus it develops projects aimed at improving general quality of life.

In 2005, ATM created the special DRU-S unit, which is the organisational unit for social services and occupational medicine within human resource management. Since its creation the unit has promoted workers' health and well-being with various interventions.

The DRU-S unit consists of three experts: a welfare worker who is in charge of the unit, a psychologist and a food scientist. The task of the unit consists in managing social services and occupational medicine and in promoting workers' health and well-being through several different interventions and initiatives.

The DRU-S carries out several initiatives focusing on improving communication within the company, by addressing key management capacities and leadership style. Furthermore, the DRU-S develops other individual interventions, e.g. focus groups on sex discrimination and diversity.

In 2009, the DRU-S unit started the project "Health in the workplace. Innovation in relationships" aimed at realising both organisational and individual changes in order to improve communication among all employees and to enhance mental well-being.

Within this project, a so-called "ATM Social System" was established. It provides general guidance on how to implement occupational health promotion interventions and social policies through a bottom-up approach. The first step is to get workers to express their needs within different discussion groups targeting health and well-being at work issues. This is called the "Listening Observatory". Then top management receives the results of those discussions and decides about priorities and the interventions to be implemented.

Subsequently, the events are set out in a monthly internal report which contains a detailed description of the activities.

ATM assembles and annually estimates the number of workers that are taking part in the adopted measures and carries out regular analyses of the interventions in order to ensure ongoing improvement.

An additional part of ATM policy is also oriented at social corporate responsibility. ATM wants to make sure in this way that it contributes in developing a better social environment in which it operates.

## 2.2. Aims

ATM is conscious that employees are a part of its intangible assets and the ATM policies are based on supporting employees and improving their physical and mental health. Thus these policies are aimed at making innovations through new social projects oriented at employee needs and in line with current European policies. The company adopts a proactive approach to well-being and to the mental and physical health of workers at work as well as in their private life.

The main goals of the project are to improve internal communications and thus enhance employee health and well-being. This way ATM hopes to raise motivation at work and to keep sickness-related absence to a minimum.

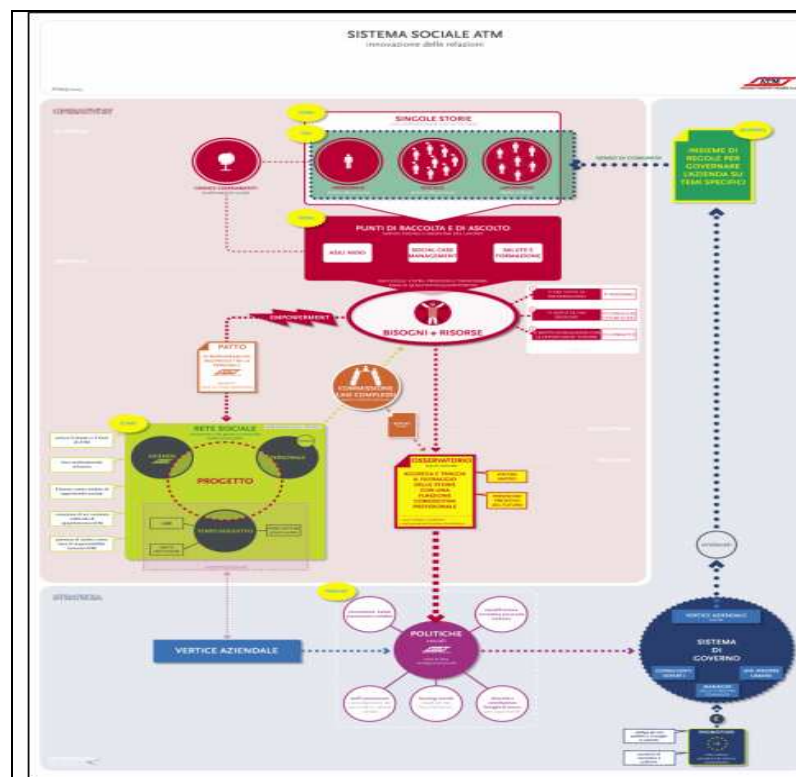
A core part of the project is also to improve cooperation with the local community, healthcare centres (the Italian 'ASL', Aziende sanitarie locali), social security institutions and hospitals in the area.

## 2.3. What was done, and how?

Policies, strategies and actions are based on the above-mentioned "ATM social system" process (see figure 1), which was created in the same year as part of the project "Health in the workplace. Innovation in relationships".

Several measures have been implemented within the "ATM Social system" approach to improve the balance between the working life and private life of all employees. The possibility of flexible working hours is given to all employees that don't have to work determined hours due to shifting reasons. Further on ATM established services for child care, such as three day-nurseries for employees' children. Besides the three day nurseries there exist two-day nurseries which were set up together with the Milan city council for children of both employees and of other city residents.

Figure 1: ATM Social System



Source: Human resource management – DRU-S - ATM S.p.A. Milan, Italy (TM)

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ATM takes into account the individual, social and work dimensions of its employees. ATM established a differentiated system for dealing with employees queries. Expressed worries of employees are managed through specified information channels and a counselling system covering all offices and working sites of ATM. These strategies aim to improve the internal social climate, and both mental and physical health in the workplace, through tasking into consideration employees' needs and planning and realising adequate interventions.

Promoting well-being and social inclusion for all employees is the core element of ATM policies which are put in place by human resource management and the DRU-S unit. Measures implemented are covering 7 different areas:

1. Social case management,
2. Health promotion courses,
3. Dealing with post-traumatic stress: *a posteriori* interventions,
4. Work-life balance and psychosocial relationships at work,
5. Staff involvement & cooperate social responsibility
6. Social housing.

## 1. Social case management

This policy aims to develop human resources, listen to workers' needs and requirements, foster healthy working and living conditions (work-life-balance), and offer predictive analyses. To this end, ATM has set up services for free medical consultation with the internal doctor and free counselling by the "Listening Observatory", which listens to, analyses and aggregates the stories that workers tell voluntarily if they feel they are in need of help. All workers are not only allowed but also encouraged to use the services offered by the "Listening Observatory. "Cases" are difficult situations that reduce the personal and professional capacities of workers and that might affect their mental and/or physical health. Examples are shortage of housing, lack of good interpersonal relationships at work, not feeling comfortable with regard to required skills and work experience, getting separated, having financial problems and facing difficulties related to the consumption of alcohol or drugs.

The scope of the "Listening Observatory" covers not only social services and occupational medicine but furthermore dedicates itself to:

- listen to workers' needs,
- report monthly and anonymously on observed issues,
- analyse these situations,
- make a qualitative and quantitative analysis of hazardous events.

Problems of workers are dealt with in different ways, always adapted to their special situation. Sometime trainings on professional skills or on how to deal with difficult psychosocial situations might be helpful. Other occasions require organisational changes like for example reduced working hours or making use of extended child care with help of the facilities offered by ATM. Some cases also resulted in a change of workplace, requested by the employees.

With ATM having committed itself to keeping workers at work, the experts from the DRU-S unit analyse employees that are not able to cope with their job requirements. They investigate the conditions of the workplace and try to find a suitable solution.

DRU-S informs the workers that they can freely access the services of the unit, and disseminates and promotes activities aimed at improving their physical and mental health, through various information channels, which are: the company intranet, messages sent via email, news on the company website and the monthly reports, by means of which the unit sets out concrete cases.



## 2. Health promotion courses

The policy concerning health promotion and disease prevention includes education and training, aimed at acquiring both awareness and knowledge through courses dedicated to nutrition and chronic diseases. For workers whose work may put third parties at risk, like drivers, special courses on alcohol and drug abuse are given.

## 3. Post-traumatic stress: a posteriori interventions

Special measures have been adopted to deal with cases of stress due to trauma (accidents, suicides and violence in the workplace) with post-traumatic stress rehabilitation, rehabilitative treatment and psychiatric interventions.

This type of intervention regards the care of the mental health of workers, and since 2008 the DRU-S team has addressed the related cases by putting them into the framework of social case management, because they originate from unforeseen events and need subsequent intervention.

Other workers who suffer from mental health problems can ask for free counselling from the psychologist of the DRU-S unit; the psychologist listens to these workers, guides their path to recovery and, through short counselling sessions, provides them with helpful advice, or directs them to the ATM internal services dedicated to implementing the company's social policies.

## 4. Work-life balance and psychosocial relationships at work

ATM is interested in workers health and well-being. The company developed its policy regarding this topic with top-down and bottom-up inputs that originate both from workers and managers of ATM. The final outcome is that all the inputs are intermixed to create the right balance between the tasks and duties of management and the needs and requirements of workers. Within this approach ATM has established its own ethical code and "Top-down declaration": by the means of this declaration, top management undertakes to meet workers' needs and to take charge of resolving these needs. Above mentioned day nurseries and an experimental programme on working from home have been created due to this policy.

In 2009, ATM initiated some focus groups for both sexes dedicated to employees with a parental healthcare role, giving them the possibility of exchanging their working hours. More than a 100 employees participated in this programme.

Another service established was a family friendly network on the ATM intranet. All workers can participate by providing or finding on the intranet answers to parental and family needs, such as suggestions and advice, or offers and exchanges of services.

Another measure affecting equal opportunities was a steering committee that was created by DRU-S unit. A group of individuals responsible for matters affecting the well-being and mental health of workers was created. The group is lead by an "Equal Opportunities Manager" and is managing activities of laboratory training, training courses for managerial staff and general trainings for enhancing social skills. Some courses are especially dedicated psychosocial well-being and concern relationships among all employees, who can contribute to changes by recounting their personal experiences.

## 5. Cooperate social responsibility

ATM has created regional networks among workers involved in voluntary and social services in order to support their participation in solidarity activity programmes. Those programmes are sponsored and encouraged by the company's top management.

In 2008, ATM started to cooperate with Telethon Italy, the second biggest biomedical charity in Italy, whose mission is to advance biomedical research towards the diagnosis, cure and prevention of muscular dystrophies and other human genetic diseases. It was founded in 1990 and inspired by

other Telethons in the USA and France. In December 2008 and January 2009 ATM worked together with Telethon Italy. ATM employees of all levels participated by giving up 1 hour of their work time to fund-raising for Telethon at ATM points.

Since 2008, ATM has participated in a project called «Urban-Regional Sustainable Projects and Human Security». The project has a focus on sustainability and energy saving and thus aims to share resources and skills with other cities. For that purpose, ATM has encouraged employees to volunteer for participating in this project. Other local companies also take part in the activity, such as A2A (from the energy sector), AMSA (operating in waste management), and Fiera Milano (exhibition organisation), and committed themselves to transfer their know-how and to share their experiences and knowledge. The results will be presented on the 2nd Expo Milano 2015 under the topic “Feeding the planet. Energy for life”.

## 6. Social housing

**Figure 2: Social housing**



Source: <http://www.morguefile.com/archive/display/178520>

The company established the experimental project “Social housing” dedicated to vulnerable groups of workers affected by the housing shortage, such as migrants and legally separated workers. Workers in urgent need of a new home can be provided with the temporary solution of moving to one of the company’s flats.

## 2.4. ***What was achieved?***

ATM makes qualitative and quantitative analysis of the results of the interventions in the workplace. Qualitative analysis mainly is positive. Employees express a great satisfaction with the different measures offered. Less positive feedback is rare, however when it occurs, it’s always used to improve the service and such finally results in more satisfaction as well.

Quantitative results are listed in the following:

### Social case management

Cases dealt with every year numbered:

- 129 in 2005;

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- 161 in 2006;
- 252 in 2007,
- 233 in 2008,
- 15 up to July 2009.

## Health promotion courses.

Participants in these training activities numbered:

- 230 in 2005,
- 1243 in 2006,
- 864 in 2007,
- 247 in 2008, and
- 180 up to May 2009.

“Wellbeing and nutrition” courses are held for newly recruited drivers and craftsmen. Participants in these courses numbered:

- 183 in 2007,
- 106 in 2008, and
- 24 cases up to May 2009.

## Work-life balance and psychosocial relationships at work

ATM created 2 nurseries and manages a third (for 68 children) and the families concerned numbered 21 in 2005; 3 in 2006; 29 in 2007; 50 in 2008 and 68 in 2009.

Home working involved 5 workers in 2009.

## Post-traumatic stress: a posteriori interventions

The work started in 2008 with 3 cases and, up to July 2009, 1 case.

## Cooperate social responsibility.

At the end of 2008 and at beginning of 2009, ATM workers gave 1 hour of their working time to participate in fund-raising at ATM points. At the end of the initiative, workers said that they were pleased to have shared this experience with their colleagues, which was an opportunity to be socially responsible. Workers also expressed satisfaction about the opportunity to consolidate relationships between with colleagues of all levels.

## **2.5. Success factors**

ATM is not only offering interventions on the individual level but also integrated various policies that support a healthy culture in general within the company. Those policies respond to the current company situation by preparing strategies aimed at health promotion, disease prevention, work-life balance, innovative measures for the professional training, involvement of employees in solidarity programmes, management of vulnerable groups of workers etc.

This approach enables employees to follow a holistic healthy lifestyle and to ask for help whenever they meet difficulties within their private or their working life. Furthermore not only the human resource department and the DRU-S support the interventions, the system is based on full backing of the management and managers are also actively integrated by attending courses and trainings. This way it is made sure, that the healthy spirit can consolidate at all levels within ATM.

Another success factor is the broad approach taken by ATM. Supporting health in the workplace is combined with attention to the working environment and community involvement.





## **2.6. Further information**

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## **2.7. Transferability**

All of these actions can be adapted by other big companies, also from other sectors, because of their general nature. Small and medium sized companies might not find all interventions suitable for them, since some aspects like the social housing and the nurseries are cost expensive while others depend on a bigger workforce like for example the possibility to exchange working hours.

Other special interventions, like e.g. the interventions after traumatic events are of course of special interest for companies whose employees have a certain probability to experience such situations.

Encouraging and motivating staff to participate in joint cooperate responsibility actions is an intervention easily conducted by every kind of company. Beside being active and helping to improve environment or supporting the community, this measure also improves the company image and helps to enhance interpersonal communication and relationships between the employees.

## **3. References, resources:**

- <http://www.atm-mi.it>
- <http://www.milanoexpo-2015.com/>
- [http://www.milanoexpo-2015.com/pdf/344521\\_Two\\_projects\\_that\\_Milan\\_offers\\_to\\_the\\_world.pdf](http://www.milanoexpo-2015.com/pdf/344521_Two_projects_that_Milan_offers_to_the_world.pdf)