

SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMMES

Improving occupational  
safety and health in SMEs:  
examples of  
effective assistance



European Agency  
for Safety and Health  
at Work



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occupational safety  
and health in SMEs:  
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## FOREWORD

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The European Union's 19 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employ over 66 % of Europe's working population and are the main job creators, but also record an overproportional 82 % of all occupational injuries, even rising to about 90 % for fatal accidents. A main reason for less favourable occupational safety and health (OSH) conditions in SMEs is their lack of knowledge and resources to manage their working environment properly.

The administrative board asked the Agency to address this information gap and, based on experiences with programmes and schemes in the EU Member States, to prepare an information report about how support to SMEs can be provided in a successful way. This project forms part of a wider range of SME-oriented activities, which include a large number of good practice projects co-funded under the Agency's SME subvention scheme <sup>(1)</sup>.

These actions will contribute to the special information portal, which the Agency is preparing in order to encourage improvements in the working environment in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The case-study report presents an overview of 18 initiatives and programmes carried out in 14 Member States and including a broad variety of good practice examples, from well-known concepts to innovative schemes, covering national, regional and sectoral levels. These voluntary initiatives are aimed at different target groups, support enterprises in campaigning as well as carrying out risk assessments, or provide guidance for specific occupations or expert assistance. They are also addressing a wide range of risk factors.

The reader can find within this summary report information on the data sources, methodology and contacts. Furthermore, Chapter 5 presents the initial lessons learned and the major findings on how to make such support successful and effective in the long term. An evaluation of the transferability to other Member States has also been included in the considerations.

Furthermore, the report includes opinions of key stakeholders such as company management, worker representatives, safety and health experts, authorities and representatives of the developers of the schemes.

It is intended for a broad audience, in particular those who may be involved in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises throughout Europe, trade

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<sup>(1)</sup> 'Promoting health and safety in European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) — SME funding scheme 2001–2002', European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2003, available at <http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/other/20030408/en/sme.pdf> and dedicated web site [http://agency.osha.eu.int/sme/index\\_en.htm](http://agency.osha.eu.int/sme/index_en.htm)

associations and unions, and OSH specialists in preventive services, and also addressing authorities' interest in an effective implementation of OSH regulations and policies on a European/national level.

The Agency would like to thank the Agency Topic Centre, Marie-Chantal Blandin and Marie-Amélie Buffet from eurogip, Kirsi Kumpulainen from the FIOH and all the organisations which participated in this report for sharing their experiences. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work would also like to thank the national focal points and network groups for providing important knowledge and supporting contacts on the case studies and for their valuable comments and suggestions with respect to the report.

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2003**

# 1.



## INTRODUCTION

In order to address the special need of SMEs for support to manage their occupational safety and health conditions properly, different SME assistance schemes have been developed and implemented in the 15 EU Member States.

### **At least three good reasons to act**

If all the players concerned with the prevention of occupational injuries and diseases are mobilising to help SMEs improve their health and safety situation, this is because they have become aware of the major implications of such an improvement.

At least three reasons can be put forward to justify an initiative targeting SMEs:

- These enterprises employ over 65 % of employees in Europe.
- Governments count on them to create and develop employment in Europe.
- Their situation with respect to health and safety is far less favourable than that of larger enterprises.

### **SMEs employ over 65 % of Europe's working population**

The European Union has more than 19 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which represent more than 99 % of all non-agricultural businesses <sup>(2)</sup>.

SMEs do not form a uniform group of enterprises. The European Commission's Recommendation 96/280/EC of 4 April 1996 gives a common definition of small and medium-sized enterprises based on three criteria: the number of employees (less than 250), the level of business (annual turnover less than EUR 50 million or annual balance less than EUR 43 million) and independence (not over 25 % controlled by a large firm). This definition will be slightly adapted with respect to the last two criteria by 2005 <sup>(3)</sup>.

In practice, it is chiefly the criterion of number of employees that is used to distinguish between an SME and a large firm in the Member States. Within the SMEs, a distinction should be made between:

- micro-enterprises with a workforce of less than 10 employees;
- small enterprises with a workforce of between 10 and 49 employees;
- medium-sized enterprises with a workforce of between 50 and 249 employees.

Micro-enterprises account for over 93 % of all SMEs in Europe, small enterprises for 5.9 % and medium-sized enterprises for 0.8 % <sup>(4)</sup>.

SMEs employ more than 74 million people in Europe, i.e. about 66 % of the entire working population of Europe, and this employment rate can be as high as 87 % in some countries. The average number of employees for enterprises in Europe is six.

<sup>(2)</sup> Data provided by the Enterprise DG, see [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/sme\\_definition/presentation.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/presentation.pdf).

<sup>(3)</sup> Amended by the Commission recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, COM(2003) 1422 final.

<sup>(4)</sup> Observatory of European SMEs 2002, 'SMEs in Europe. Including a first glance at EU candidate countries', [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/analysis/doc/smes\\_observatory\\_2002\\_report2\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/doc/smes_observatory_2002_report2_en.pdf).

### Number of enterprises and employment by size class in EU-15 in 1998 <sup>(3)</sup>

| Enterprise size class            | Number of enterprises | Percentage | Number of workers | Employment (%) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Micro<br>1–9 employees           | 18 040 000            | 93.1       | 38 360 000        | 33.8           |
| Small<br>10–49 employees         | 1 107 025             | 5.9        | 21 320 000        | 18.8           |
| Medium-sized<br>50–249 employees | 155 646               | 0.8        | 14 870 000        | 13.2           |
| Large<br>>250 employees          | 37 416                | 0.2        | 38 680 000        | 34.2           |
| TOTAL                            | 19 340 087            | 100.0      | 113 230 000       | 100.0          |

### SMEs are the main job creators <sup>(4)</sup>

Small and medium-sized enterprises are key drivers of economic growth and job creation in Europe.

It should also be noted that the trend regarding the number of enterprises in Europe is characterised by the dynamism of micro-enterprises (one to nine employees) and the corresponding employment.

During the 1990s, both the number of enterprises and the number of employed persons increased across the EU. This was the case for both SMEs and large enterprises. But, although the number of large enterprises increased, overall they accounted for a smaller proportion of total employment in 1998 than in 1993 and the average number of employees per enterprise decreased slightly from 6.4 to 6.0.

This trend is also marked, in sector terms, by increasing tertiarisation, with strong growth in the number of enterprises and jobs in the sectors of operational business services, such as security and cleaning, professional services, consulting or information technology (IT), especially due to the expansion of the 'new economy', and other services such as healthcare and personal services.

### SMEs are more accident-prone than large enterprises

According to the latest European statistics published by Eurostat, it is in micro-enterprises that the risk of fatal accidents is highest, while the risk of accidents with work stoppage of more than three days is highest in small enterprises (10–49 employees).

The rate of occurrence of accidents with a work stoppage of more than three days in nine predominant sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply, construction, wholesale and retail repairs, hotels and

<sup>(3)</sup> Source: Observatory of European SMEs, Sixth report, Executive summary, Enterprise DG, European Commission 2000, available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/analysis/doc/exsum6\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/doc/exsum6_en.pdf).

<sup>(4)</sup> 'SMEs in focus — Main results from the 2002 Observatory of European SMEs', Enterprise DG, European Commission, available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/analysis/doc/execsum\\_2002\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/doc/execsum_2002_en.pdf).

**Occupational injuries in nine sectors <sup>(7)</sup> in the EU countries and Norway in 1999 according to corporate size <sup>(8)</sup>**

| Enterprises                     | Occupational injuries with absence >3 days |                              | Fatal accidents                        |                          |
|---------------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
|                                 | Proportion (%)                             | Number per 100 000 employees | Number of deaths per 100 000 employees | Proportion of deaths (%) |
| Self-employed without employees | 5.2  | 2 309                        | 3.6                                    | 8.1                      |
| Micro 1–9 employees             | 25.2                                       | 3 886                        | 6.4                                    | 36.9                     |
| Small 10–49 employees           | 28.6                                       | 5 218                        | 6.1                                    | 28.7                     |
| Medium-sized 50–249 employees   | 23.9                                       | 4 085                        | 3.1                                    | 15.4                     |
| Large > 250 employees           | 17.1                                       | 3 254                        | 2.4                                    | 10.8                     |

restaurants, transport and communications, financial intermediation, real estate business activities) is higher in SMEs of all types than in large enterprises.

The situation is even more contrasting for fatal occupational injuries: the rate of occurrence of such accidents is highest in micro-enterprises of the sectors in focus.

Why do SMEs record a proportionally greater number of occupational injuries? The reasons for this are numerous and well known.

The sectors of activity in which SMEs have the highest rates of employment are reputedly dangerous: construction, wholesale and retail trades, hotel and catering sector, transport. These sectors account for 99.9 % of the SMEs.

To this can be added the lack of knowledge concerning occupational risks and the applicable regulations, lack of training, lack of time and resources, absence of contact with representatives of OSH organisations and the labour inspectorate — or a certain suspicion regarding these bodies — absence of internal consultation structures, poor appreciation of the cost of an occupational injury or occupational disease, etc. In general, the involvement of SMEs in the prevention of occupational risks and the improvement of working conditions remains weak and the implementation of measures very often depends entirely on the personality of the owner.

Recent studies indicate an increasing interdependency between enterprises, putting greater pressure on subcontractors and companies, often SMEs, to perform <sup>(9)</sup>. This includes a tendency to outsource sometimes high-risk tasks to

<sup>(7)</sup> Nine NACE branches: agriculture, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply, construction, wholesale and retail repairs, hotels and restaurants, transport and communications, financial intermediation, real estate business activities.

<sup>(8)</sup> Source: 'European social statistics — Accidents at work and work-related health problems — Data 1994–2000', Eurostat, 2002.

<sup>(9)</sup> 'New forms of contractual relationships and the implications for occupational safety and health', European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2002, available at <http://agency.osha.eu.int/publications/reports/206/en/index.htm>.

the increasing number of SMEs in the service sector. Larger companies are usually more able to organise an OSH infrastructure than the smaller companies and the existing infrastructure has difficulties in getting through to the self-employed individuals. Mainly large and innovative firms recognise OSH management not just as a cost, also as a benefit.

Hence, assistance to SMEs for matters of occupational health and safety is a challenging task. The challenge is also to make OSH a benefit for them.

## Examples of good practice in assistance to SMEs

This report presents 18 examples of good practice to assist SMEs in the Member States of the European Union for OSH improvements. The actions described are very different from one another, both as regards the players implementing them and the target aimed at or the means employed.

### Widespread mobilisation

Given the magnitude of the challenge, it is not surprising to observe that a large number of OSH players are mobilised to provide assistance to SMEs: authorities at the national, regional and local levels, labour inspections, prevention services, insurance organisations for occupational injuries and diseases, trade associations and trade unions.

To identify better the level on which action takes place, the 18 cases have been grouped under three categories: actions carried out on the national level, on the regional level and on the sector level.

#### National level

##### *OSH assistance to SMEs (Austria)*

This assistance programme, an SME-specific preventive service based on legal requirements, which has been offered free to SMEs, was launched in 1999 to improve the situation in these companies in the area of occupational risks. In 2001, of the 288 851 SMEs, 24 000 production units adopted the proposed approach and 146 000 hours of counselling were provided. In all, 70 % of the SMEs indicated that their expectations regarding assistance had been fulfilled.

##### *Risk management for SMEs (Finland)*

The aim of the project was to improve overall knowledge in the different areas of risk management among the staff of the Finnish SMEs. To achieve this, a holistic risk-management toolkit was developed. The project reached 82 % of the SME employees to be trained. The number of trainers trained was six times higher than originally planned. Establishing a risk-management forum, which has promoted the toolkit and monitored its maintenance and further development since 2001, has ensured the sustainability of the project.

##### *Agreements on objectives and prevention contracts in the concrete product manufacturing sector (France)*

This scheme, started in 1988, was designed to help SMEs undertake a true investment programme (equipment and training) by means of an agreement with authorities in order to prevent occupational injuries and improve working conditions. Its implementation has resulted in a net reduction in the severity of occupational injuries among the signatory enterprises. A growing awareness by

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*SME-specific preventive service based on legal requirements*

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*A holistic risk-management toolkit was developed*

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*To help SMEs undertake a true investment programme (equipment and training) by means of an agreement with authorities*

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the trade of the importance of OSH issues has also been noted. Besides, in 2001, representatives of employers and employees decided to engage in a more global preventive approach, called the sectoral participative approach, with the aim of enterprises taking charge of their own OSH problems.

*'Work positive': prioritising organisational stress (Ireland)*

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*Providing SMEs, in all sectors, with guidance on best practice in stress risk management*

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This scheme centred on the development and distribution of an information pack providing SMEs, in all sectors, with guidance on best practice in stress risk management, survey tools for assessing risks associated with work-related stress and practicable advice on how to control them. No impact evaluation has been conducted as yet but some participating organisations have said that the use of the package has allowed them to identify sources of employee work-related stress and, consequently, to develop an action plan.

*Campaign in the ceramic industry (Portugal)*

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*29 projects were presented in the areas of research, information and training*

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This campaign, which is part of the national plan of action for risk prevention, was launched to contribute to the modernisation of companies and to integrate occupational risk prevention into daily management. As part of the action, 29 projects were presented in the areas of research, information and training. The campaign will be assessed through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the projects.

*'Good neighbour' scheme (UK)*

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*This national programme was designed to encourage supportive relationships between large and small firms in managing health and safety*

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This national programme was designed to encourage supportive relationships between large and small firms in managing health and safety. The forums organised were successful (a number of small businesses demonstrated a motivation to enhance their understanding and standards of occupational health and safety) but the evaluation did not make it possible to obtain quantitative results as regards outcomes. Several improvements such as follow-up meetings in order to maintain momentum have been implemented and should provide further means through which cooperation can be developed.

### *Regional level*

*Risk management for SMEs (Belgium)*

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*Should enable small businesses to carry out their own risk surveys and evaluation*

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PreBes, the trade association of prevention advisers in Flanders, has developed a tool, which should enable small businesses to carry out their own risk surveys and evaluation. PreBes has promoted the tool at information sessions with the cooperation of the inspection services. Some 1 500 tools have been sold. The number of participants in the seminars was fewer than expected, which can be explained by the relative inaccessibility of the SMEs and the lack of availability of the SME owners.

*Development of occupational safety and health services tailored to SMEs (Denmark)*

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*To develop a model of occupational health services based on personal contact and a positive approach*

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Given the difficulty in reaching SMEs and the lack of efficiency of the OSH services provided to them, this project was conducted to develop a model of occupational health services for such enterprises based on personal contact and a positive approach. OSH consultants visited 56 % of the SMEs, most of which gave a positive feedback. It has been noted that the SMEs visited are more likely to contact the OSH services. With the help of occupational experts, some companies set up a plan to purchase equipment; others elaborated guidelines for handling chemical solvents.

*Inter-enterprise safety coordinator (France)*

The main objective of this project was to assist SMEs in the meat-processing sector to put into effect new safety principles, aimed at reducing the number of occupational injuries, through regular meetings with a safety coordinator over a one-year period. This action enabled businesses to assess the situation in terms of compliance with safety regulations and to acquire a specific methodology for accident analysis. It also made it possible to make operators aware of prevention, to motivate them and to promote a change in mentalities. In two instances, the number of accidents was reduced. Despite a positive assessment, this project was not renewed as it was only experimental, and also because of new problems in this particular sector (mad cow disease crisis).

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*To assist SMEs in the meat-processing sector*

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*Consultancy network for future SME founders (Germany)*

This project aims at providing future SME entrepreneurs with consultancy services on occupational safety. It comprises three phases: feasibility study (2000–01), general analysis (2002–04), launching (2004). The objectives of the study were to: evaluate the need for introducing the safety/health concept in consultancy for entrepreneurs; develop a process for the implementation of result-oriented occupational accident prevention in consultancy; develop a checklist for entrepreneurs. The study has enabled entrepreneurs' requirements for basic information on OSH to be defined and suitable procedures to be developed.

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*Has enabled entrepreneurs' requirements for basic information on OSH to be defined and suitable procedures to be developed*

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*Integrated approach for spreading safety culture (Italy)*

The objective of this regional initiative (Province of Lucca) was to tackle fatal accidents, making employee training and information a top priority. The programme encouraged the development of a work safety culture in SMEs through the creation of a new position: safety training/information officer at each company. During four months, eight training sessions were given to 115 trainees and 3 000 educational sets were distributed to businesses. It is not yet possible to measure the consequences of the programme directly on the number of occupational injuries incurred in the province.

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*Development of a work safety culture in SMEs through the creation of a new position: safety training/information officer at each company*

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*Safety and support for business (UK)*

The objective of this project was to encourage small and micro-businesses to adopt a proactive approach to health and safety management by providing free services (free health and safety starter pack, free health and safety inspection, not exceeding one hour) and, in addition, priced policy advice and training. Of a target population of 600 companies, 140 had some contact with the project. The free services were very successful. The ongoing nature of the support was appreciated. The initiative demonstrated that short-term (two-year) OSH projects can have an impact on small businesses' priorities. The 'facilitative approach' appears to have been successful in developing links with a significant number of SMEs.

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*Providing free services (free health and safety starter pack, free health and safety inspection, not exceeding one hour) and, in addition, priced policy advice and training*

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**Sector level**

*Alliance for work safety in the dry-cleaning industry (Germany)*

Cooperation was established between two bodies (a trade federation in the sector of environmental protection in dry cleaning and an OSH organisation). The alliance's objective is to get companies to set up their own self-monitoring systems for accident and occupational disease prevention, by providing technical support, exchanges of ideas and experiences and helping companies draw up their health and safety reviews. Companies have to comply with

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*Providing technical support, exchanges of ideas and experiences and helping companies draw up their health and safety reviews*

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certain standards in order to be awarded a label and regular checks at enterprises are being carried out by the alliance. Despite the fact that the number of dry-cleaning companies has dropped, the number of companies which are members of the federation has remained the same. Companies are becoming increasingly aware of the risks existing in the sector.

### *Technical assistance in the printing sector (Greece)*

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*Dissemination of information for better working practices and the promotion of a safer and healthier work environment in the printing industry*

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The aim of this programme was the assessment of occupational risks, the dissemination of information for better working practices and the promotion of a safer and healthier work environment in the printing industry, particularly in SMEs, which are numerous in this sector. The action was successful considering that the study conducted allowed for the first time the examination of a diverse group of physical and chemical parameters in the sector, making it possible to pinpoint the most dangerous areas.

### *Evaluation and prevention of risks in the construction sector (Luxembourg)*

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*SMEs especially appreciated the short illustrated texts related to safety requirements*

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The aim of the project was to supply SMEs in the construction sector with information on legislation and the safety regulations to be applied, and simultaneously to offer them a tool for analysing and preventing potential hazards on construction sites and in workshops. The tool is available online or on a CD-ROM. Between 600 and 800 SMEs from a potential group of 23 000 companies purchased the CD-ROM. SMEs especially appreciated the short illustrated texts related to safety requirements.

### *Branch codes for skilled trades (Netherlands)*

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*Branch codes have now been designed for 10 sectors. By January 2002, the codes were in use in 11 000 companies*

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The development of branch codes (reference work in the form of a booklet in which a series of points for attention are listed for a particular industry in the areas of quality, hygiene, energy, occupational safety and health and the environment) was initiated in response to pressure from public health authorities. These codes are a quality assurance system that provides SMEs with concrete means of fulfilling their social responsibilities and engaging in sustainable business practices, drawing up a checklist of the main aspects to be monitored in terms of quality, hygiene, the environment and occupational health and safety. Branch codes have now been designed for 10 sectors. By January 2002, the codes were in use in 11 000 companies. The level of dissemination varies from 10 to 75 % according to the sector. The degree of application of the codes is growing continually because they are also implemented in vocational training programmes.

### *Workload assessment instrument in the retail sector (Netherlands)*

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*Those who used the tool appear satisfied particularly because it improved communication between all the partners concerned*

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As work pressure is considered a significant problem in the retail trade, TNO Arbeid<sup>(10)</sup> was asked to develop a measurement tool. This tool is a booklet aimed at helping employers and employees identify problems and design easily implemented solutions. The evaluation showed that the use of the tool has been insignificant which points to the fact that work pressure is not perceived as a priority in the sector. Those who used the tool appear satisfied particularly because it improved communication between all the partners concerned.

### *Strategic plan in the agriculture sector in Navarre (Spain)*

The goal of this plan, initiated by the Sectoral Commission of the Navarre Regional Government, was to foster the inclusion of preventive management in

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<sup>(10)</sup> TNO Arbeid seeks and develops innovative approaches to work, organisation, and technology, and draws on its knowledge to address conditions in the workplace.

small farms. Thanks to the plan, farmers participated in training programmes that enabled them to perform by themselves the risk assessment on their premises. Participants could also bring their vehicles to be inspected (80 %). UAGN, a trade association that took part in the commission, decided to hire a prevention expert to promote its own programmes and is considering obtaining grants to adapt all farming equipment in Navarre. Since the plan has generated human resources and a favourable opinion towards prevention, positive effects can be expected over the long term.

*Farmers participated in training programmes that enabled them to perform by themselves the risk assessment on their premises*

### Organisations involved in SME assistance schemes

The table below also shows the initiators of the action and the partners that were associated with it.

| COUNTRY     | CASES   | INITIATORS AND PARTNERS |   |                              |                    | LEVEL OF ACTION |          |        |
|-------------|---|-------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|--------|
|             |   | OSH organisations       | Social partners, trade federations and trade unions | Insurance companies or funds | Public authorities | National        | Regional | Sector |
| AUSTRIA     | OSH assistance to SMEs  |                         |   | I                            |                    | X               |          |        |
| BELGIUM     | Risk management for SMEs  | I                       |   |                              |                    |                 | X        |        |
| DENMARK     | Development of occupational safety and health services tailored to SMEs | I                       |   |                              |                    |                 | X        |        |
| FINLAND     | Risk management for SMEs  | I                       |   |                              |                    | X               |          |        |
| FRANCE      | Inter-enterprise safety coordinator                                     |                         | P   | X                            | P                  |                 | X        | X      |
| FRANCE      | Agreements on objectives and prevention contracts                       |                         | P   | I                            | I                  | X               |          | X      |
| GERMANY     | Consultancy network for SMEs  |                         | I   |                              | I                  |                 | X        |        |
| GERMANY     | Alliance for work safety in the dry-cleaning industry                   | I                       | I   |                              |                    |                 | X        | X      |
| GREECE      | Technical assistance in the printing sector                             | I                       | P   |                              |                    |                 |          | X      |
| IRELAND     | 'Work positive': prioritising organisational stress                     | I                       |   |                              | I                  | X               |          |        |
| ITALY       | Integrated approach for spreading safety culture                        | P                       | I   |                              | P                  |                 | X        |        |
| LUXEMBOURG  | Evaluation and prevention of risks in the construction sector           |                         | I   | I                            | I                  |                 |          | X      |
| NETHERLANDS | Branch codes for skilled trades   |                         | I   |                              |                    |                 |          | X      |
| NETHERLANDS | Workload assessment instrument in the retail sector                     |                         | I   |                              |                    |                 |          | X      |
| PORTUGAL    | Campaign in the ceramic industry  |                         | P   |                              | I                  | X               |          | X      |
| SPAIN       | Strategic plan in the agriculture sector in Navarre                     | I                       | P   |                              | I                  |                 | X        | X      |
| UK          | 'Good neighbour' scheme   | I                       |   |                              |                    | X               | X        | X      |
| UK          | Safety and support for business   |                         |   |                              | I                  |                 | X        |        |

I: Initiator of the action      P: Partner of the action      X: Level chosen for categorisation

*Broad scope of actions*

Most of the actions described specifically target SMEs, sometimes even the smallest of them. When this is not mentioned explicitly, it should be noted that the sectors of activity concerned consist virtually exclusively of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Most of the actions have a general scope: they aim at improving health and safety conditions in the enterprises. More rare are actions which directly target the prevention of a particular risk.

| COUNTRY     | CASE  | SCOPE            |             |                               |                   |                              |                           |                    | FOCUS           |          |                   |              |
|-------------|---|------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------------|--------------|
|             |   | Regarding sector |             | Regarding size of enterprises |                   | Regarding risks addressed    |                           |                    | Worker oriented | Trainers | Employer oriented | Other group? |
|             |   | Sector oriented  | Broad scope | Restricted to SME             | For all companies | Restricted to specific risks | Covering a range of risks | Covering all risks |                 |          |                   |              |
| AUSTRIA     | OSH assistance to SMEs  |                  | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  | X               |          | X                 |              |
| BELGIUM     | Risk management for SMEs  |                  | X           |                               | X                 |                              |                           | X                  |                 |          | X                 |              |
| DENMARK     | Development of occupational safety and health services tailored to SMEs |                  | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  |                 |          | X                 |              |
| FINLAND     | Risk management for SMEs  |                  | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  | X               |          |                   |              |
| FRANCE      | Inter-enterprise safety coordinator                                     | X                |             | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  | X               | X        | X                 |              |
| FRANCE      | Agreements on objectives and prevention contracts                       | X                |             | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  |                 |          | X                 |              |
| GERMANY     | Consultancy network for SMEs  |                  | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  |                 |          | X                 |              |
| GERMANY     | Alliance for work safety in the dry-cleaning industry                   | X                |             |                               | X                 |                              |                           | X                  | X               |          | X                 |              |
| GREECE      | Technical assistance in the printing sector                             | X                |             |                               | X                 | X                            |                           |                    | X               |          | X                 |              |
| IRELAND     | 'Work positive': prioritising organisational stress                     |                  | X           | X                             |                   | X                            |                           |                    | X               | X        | X                 |              |
| ITALY       | Integrated approach for spreading safety culture                        |                  | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  |                 |          | X                 |              |
| LUXEMBOURG  | Evaluation and prevention of risks in the construction sector           | X                |             |                               | X                 |                              |                           | X                  | X               |          | X                 |              |
| NETHERLANDS | Branch codes for skilled trades   | X                |             |                               | X                 | X                            |                           |                    |                 |          | X                 |              |
| NETHERLANDS | Workload assessment instrument in the retail sector                     | X                |             |                               | X                 |                              |                           | X                  | X               |          | X                 |              |
| PORTUGAL    | Campaign in the ceramic industry  | X                |             |                               | X                 |                              |                           | X                  | X               | X        | X                 |              |
| SPAIN       | Strategic plan in the agriculture sector in Navarre                     | X                |             |                               | X                 |                              |                           | X                  |                 |          | X                 | X            |
| UK          | 'Good neighbour' scheme   | X                | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  | X               |          | X                 |              |
| UK          | Safety and support for business   |                  | X           | X                             |                   |                              |                           | X                  |                 | X        | X                 |              |

Finally, the assistance programmes described in the report can address various actors in the enterprise: employers, employees, or again instructors. The table above presents the general framework of each action and the target groups concerned by it.

### *Diverse strategies and tools*

Improving the state of occupational health and safety in SMEs is a general problem, but given the diversity of the situations encountered, there is no unique solution to this problem.

The assistance schemes described in the report correspond to two different strategies:

- Provide SMEs with external support at national, local and sector levels in their efforts to improve the work environment, in particular by informing them about legislation and helping them implement it.
- Reinforce the internal self-supporting capabilities of SMEs, notably to help them take responsibility themselves for the health and safety of their employees.

External assistance for SMEs can be provided via various instruments: CD-ROMs providing information on legislation in the area of occupational health and safety, information campaigns on occupational risks in a given sector, intervention by specialist advisers on OSH in the workplace, etc.

Reinforcing the internal capabilities of enterprises will generally involve the training of staff, employers or the safety manager within an enterprise, or the production of tools for self-assessment of risks.

These strategies are highly complementary and are often combined in implementing a given action, as shown by the following table.

# Improving occupational safety and health in SMEs: examples of effective assistance

|             |   | Financial support | GUIDANCE | Technical guides | Training manuals | Other information manual (folders, etc.) | CD-ROMs | FAQ services | Risk-assessment tool | TRAINING AND INFORMATION INTERVENTIONS | Training of workers | Training of OSH professionals | Training of employers | Workshop seminars | Campaigns/support in campaigning | WORKPLACE INTERVENTIONS | Technical risk assessments/support in risk assessment | Advice on solutions | Expert assistance to implement solutions | Part of legal inspection procedure |
|-------------|---|-------------------|----------|------------------|------------------|--|---------|--------------|----------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| AUSTRIA     | OSH assistance to SMEs  |                   |          |                  |                  |  |         |              |                      |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   | X                   | X  |                                    |
| BELGIUM     | Risk management for SMEs  |                   |          |                  |                  |  | X       | X            | X                    |  |                     |                               |                       | X                 |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| DENMARK     | Development of occupational safety and health services tailored to SMEs |                   | X        |                  |                  |  |         | X            | X                    | X                                      |                     |                               |                       | X                 |                                  | X                       | X   |                     |  |                                    |
| FINLAND     | Risk management for SMEs  |                   | X        | X                | X                |  |         |              | X                    | X                                      | X                   |                               | X                     |                   |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| FRANCE      | Inter-enterprise safety coordinator                                     | X                 |          |                  |                  |  |         |              | X                    | X                                      | X                   | X                             |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   | X                   | X  |                                    |
| FRANCE      | Agreements on objectives and prevention contracts                       | X                 | X        | X                |                  |  |         |              |                      |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   | X                   |  |                                    |
| GERMANY     | Consultancy network for SMEs  |                   |          |                  |                  |  |         |              |                      |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   | X                   | X  |                                    |
| GERMANY     | Alliance for work safety in the dry-cleaning industry                   |                   |          |                  |                  |  |         |              | X                    |  | X                   | X                             |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   | X                   | X  |                                    |
| GREECE      | Technical assistance in the printing sector                             |                   | X        |                  |                  | X  |         |              | X                    |  |                     |                               |                       | X                 |                                  | X                       | X   |                     |  |                                    |
| IRELAND     | 'Work positive' prioritising organisational stress                      |                   | X        |                  |                  |  |         |              | X                    |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| ITALY       | Integrated approach for spreading safety culture                        |                   | X        |                  | X                | X  |         |              | X                    |  | X                   | X                             |                       |                   |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| LUXEMBOURG  | Evaluation and prevention of risks in the construction sector           |                   | X        |                  |                  |  | X       |              |                      |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| NETHERLANDS | Branch codes for skilled trades   |                   | X        | X                |                  |  |         |              | X                    |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| NETHERLANDS | Workload assessment instrument in the retail sector                     |                   | X        | X                |                  |  |         |              | X                    | X                                      | X                   |                               |                       | X                 |                                  |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| PORTUGAL    | Campaign in the ceramic industry  |                   |          |                  |                  |  |         |              | X                    |  |                     |                               |                       |                   | X                                |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| SPAIN       | Strategic plan in the agriculture sector in Navarre                     |                   | X        | X                | X                | X  |         |              | X                    |  | X                   | X                             |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   |                     |  | X                                  |
| UK          | 'Good neighbour' scheme   |                   |          |                  |                  |  |         |              | X                    |  |                     |                               |                       | X                 | X                                |                         |   |                     |  |                                    |
| UK          | Safety and support for business   |                   | X        | X                |                  | X  |         |              |                      |  |                     |                               |                       |                   |                                  | X                       | X   | X                   | X  |                                    |

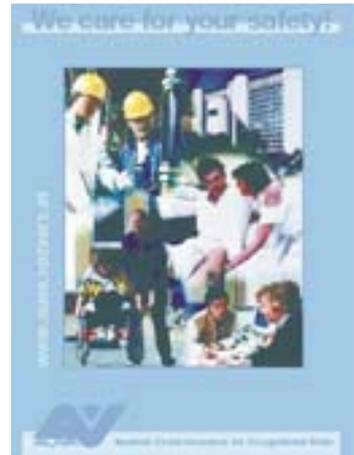
# 2.

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ACTIONS TAKEN AT THE  
NATIONAL LEVEL

## 2.1. AUVASICHER: A PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE OSH ASSISTANCE TO SMEs — AUSTRIA



### Key points

- AUVA <sup>(1)</sup> assists businesses in all questions related to occupational safety and health, to adapting the working process and the workplace accordingly, to individual protection and to all relevant rules, regulations and standards.
- Objectives of the AUVASicher programme: substantial reduction in the number of workplace accidents and in occupational illnesses, two thirds of market share and customer satisfaction.

At the request of the legislature, AUVA, which is the main organisation providing insurance against occupational risks in Austria, set up an assistance programme in 1999 dealing with occupational health and safety directed towards SMEs. The free preventive services are related to an amendment introduced in 1999 into the framework law on occupational safety and health issued in 1994 (*ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz*). Under the name of AUVASicher, this programme is intended for companies with fewer than 50 employees (of which there were 288 851 in 2001). But, above and beyond this 'formal' aspect, it is anticipated that its implementation will result in a real improvement in the situation in these companies in the area of occupational risks.

<sup>(1)</sup> Austrian Insurance Organisation for the Prevention of Industrial Accidents and Occupational Illnesses.

## Background

The adoption of the framework directive into Austrian law brought about broad changes in the legislation dealing with health and safety in the workplace.

In Austria, the mandatory provision of occupational health and safety services was introduced by the law providing for protection of workers (ANSchG) that came into force on 1 January 1973 for companies with more than 750 employees. An amendment in 1982 lowered the threshold to 250 employees. Finally, on 1 January 1995, in accordance with a staggered timetable, this was extended progressively to all companies, which were required to use a prevention service. Thus, since 1 January 2000, all companies without exception are targeted. The smallest companies can call, without charge, on the services of AUVA. The ordinances issued by the Ministry of Labour have defined the training required by the occupational health and safety experts.

The law has provided for three alternatives for the provision of preventive services:

1. The employer contracts a safety officer and an occupational physician whom he pays.
2. The employer uses the free services of an insurance accident-prevention centre.
3. The employer himself provides a safety facility in accordance with the 'company manager' model (*Unternehmermodell*) and ensures the provision of occupational health service by choosing solution 1 or 2.

The AUVASicher programme corresponds to the second of these three possibilities.

The idea to entrust AUVA with this task was developed and implemented by Parliament, the main reason being that AUVA has great competencies and experience in the field of prevention. In addition, the objective was to avoid adding to the financial burden of small enterprises.

Since the launch of the programme on 11 January 1999, AUVASicher's assistance has been offered free to all companies with between 1 and 50 employees, and mainly to very small companies (employing fewer than 10 employees), which represent 70 % of Austrian SMEs.

## Ambitions of the campaign and goals to be reached

The AUVASicher programme envisages three objectives, the main one being a substantial reduction in the number of workplace accidents and in occupational illnesses.

In fact, the situation in SMEs is particularly problematical in this regard. Other than this main objective, AUVA has set two other goals to be attained:

- AUVASicher should cover two thirds of the companies involved (within five years). This is a particularly ambitious challenge if one takes into account the fact that the majority of the companies are very small enterprises (about 170 000 production units have only one or two employees). To address the situation, AUVA has publicised its new services to SMEs by mailshot. Furthermore, the employers' associations have relayed the message to their members. There were also phone marketing actions, inserts, wireless and TV reports and interviews, and special meetings for the enterprises concerned.

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*'The AUVASicher programme was launched on 11 January 1999. The interesting aspect is that we were able to take part in the preliminary debates before the introduction of the new legislation while making concrete arrangements for the implementation of the new law in the form of a project.'*  
(Peter Vavken, AUVA)

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To increase its market share, AUVA has started regional mailings combined with telephone follow-up.

The reason for setting this two-thirds market share objective is as follows: on the one hand, AUVA would like to assist most of the small enterprises; on the other hand, private security technicians and occupational doctors would like to cover a sufficient share of the market.

- The companies making use of AUVA's services should be satisfied with the service they receive. To achieve this aim, AUVA has set up, since the start of the programme, a decentralised (for maximum proximity to the companies) type of care system and regularly conducts surveys amongst its customers to measure their degree of satisfaction.

It is important to underline that, for AUVA, the three set objectives are taken as a whole and with reciprocal effects. A reduction in the number of accidents by itself in a small segment of the market cannot be considered a success per se; the quality of the advisory services offered is not a panacea if the customer is not satisfied with the product, if he does not take the actions recommended or if he no longer makes use of the programme. By the same token, a high level of satisfaction in the companies does not meet the objectives if the number of accidents does not decrease.

### Scope of the action

The implementation of the AUVASicher programme rests on two main principles:

- Proximity to the member companies. To achieve this, a prevention centre has been set up in each *Land*.
- Quality of the services offered. To this end, and to standardise the services, all the personnel involved (employees or contractors of AUVA, technicians or doctors) have received suitable training.

Implementation of the programme took about nine months.

#### *A prevention centre in each Land*

A centre has been set up in each *Land*, incorporated into existing AUVA operations. The administrative personnel working in the centres arrange meetings, allocate the missions each month and generally ensure that the programme is followed up.

AUVA's technicians are equipped with a portable computer, a printer incorporated into the attaché case and the necessary measuring tools. The basic principle is that they visit companies close to where they live to restrict travelling time as much as possible.

In order to respond to demand from companies, AUVA has had to use not only its own employees but also, mainly, external independent prevention and medical personnel. A framework contract has been agreed with the doctors' representatives under which the occupational doctors, who sign an individual contract with AUVA, provide the assistance required. For safety aspects, calls for tenders have been issued and technicians have been recruited under contract. Thus, in 2001, the AUVASicher programme has involved 270 experts: 130 safety technicians and 140 occupational doctors. Of these 270 experts, almost 60 are employees of AUVA and just over 210 are independent contractors.

*Software support for the programme*

In order to obtain a uniform level of service and quality, all the experts involved have been trained in the system and in the organisational model of the AUVASicher programme.

Software has been designed for the entire system:

- it allows a risk assessment of the company and its facilities to be made;
- it takes into account the criteria needed for the company visits;
- it provides an immediate print-out of the minutes after the company visits using the data collected by the prevention agents;
- it automatically offers dates for company visits within the lead-time required and provides existing reports;
- it helps to reduce considerably the administrative costs involved in paying the contractors;
- it allows for a centralised database to be set up of those companies that are using the service and of those that are no longer taking advantage of it;
- it is compatible with the different forms of communication via the Internet.

**Results and evaluation of the campaign**

In 2001, at least 43 500 production units adopted the proposed approach; 270 occupational technicians and doctors paid by AUVA provided some 146 000 hours of counselling.

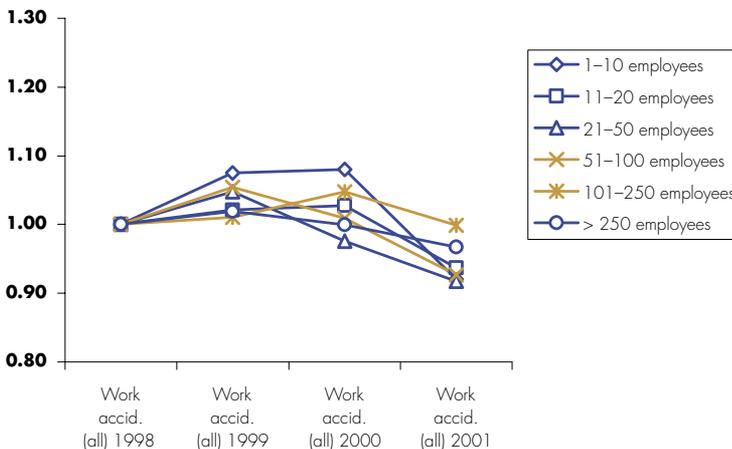
Since the establishment of the AUVASicher programme, a net reduction in the number of occupational accidents has been noted in the member companies.

During the year 2001, AUVA specialists made 87 000 visits to production units. Sometimes, doctors and technicians visited firms together but, most of the time, there were separate visits.

The programme, which started in January 1999, is still running.

The system has been in place for too short a time to make an overall judgment of its success but the first results obtained have, nevertheless, been encouraging.

*'When considering the statistical data concerning the number of occupational accidents between 1998 and 2001, the nice thing is that the figure for the year 2001 was lower than that for 1998, for all categories of businesses (i.e. for businesses of all sizes).'* (Karl Koerpert, AUVA)



The above figure shows the development in the number of occupational accidents (in the strict sense, i.e. workplace accidents) as compared to 1998, which is the baseline. Note that 1998 is the year before the AUVASicher programme was introduced. According to AUVA statistics (based on accidents reported by AUVA customers), the total number of workplace accidents increased between 1998 and 1999 for businesses of all sizes. However, after 1999, this number has been decreasing. In 2001, the number of accidents was less than that of 1998 for all business sizes. The AUVASicher programme may have contributed to this reduction in the number of work accidents. According to AUVA, the difference between the 2001 figures and the maximum value of preceding years was between 5 and 16 %, depending on the business size. During this period, the most notable reduction in the number of accidents was registered for businesses with up to 50 employees. In those companies with 21 to 50 employees, the number of workplace accidents has decreased since the beginning of 1999.

In companies with 11 to 20 employees, the number of workplace accidents has decreased by one half between 2000 and 2001.

Likewise, in the smallest companies, a significant reduction has taken place since the beginning of 2000.

However good these results may seem, it is important to note that other factors may have contributed to the reduction in the number of work accidents and that possibly they are not exclusively linked to the AUVASicher programme.

In 2001, the market share was as follows:

| Business size      | Market share (%)<br>2001 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 to 10 employees  | 29.1                     |
| 11 to 20 employees | 65.4                     |
| 21 to 50 employees | 75.5                     |

AUVA also seems to have done well in attaining the other two objectives that it had set. In fact, when asked about their level of satisfaction, over 70 % of the Austrian SMEs indicated that their expectations regarding care had been fulfilled.

**Customer satisfaction**  
Allgemeine Unfallversicherungsanstalt (AUVA)

**Were your expectations met as regards counselling?**

|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Fully:          | 76.83 % |
| Sufficiently:   | 21.19 % |
| Partly:         | 0.32 %  |
| Insufficiently: | 0.04 %  |
| No answer:      | 1.62 %  |

**How would you rate the usefulness of the AUVASicher assistance for your company?**

|                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| Very useful:     | 51.90 % |
| Rather useful:   | 43.80 % |
| Not very useful: | 1.66 %  |
| Of no use:       | 0.54 %  |
| No answer:       | 2.10 %  |

As regards the target of two thirds of the market, one can consider that, overall, it has been attained, even if the results are variable based on the size of the operation. A large part of the market has been captured by the companies employing 21 to 50 employees. A significant part of the market has been captured by the companies employing 11 to 20 employees. In contrast, the results are less good for companies with 1 to 10 employees.

The difficulty with production units with 1 to 10 employees is that most of them only have one or two employees and that business is not pursued 12 months a year. These enterprises are hardly reached and motivated by publicity. However, when the two-thirds market share target is not reached in businesses with one or two employees, the objective is considered not to be met.

**Identified success criteria**

Several elements can explain the success in implementing the AUVASicher programme.

Certainly one determining factor is that the assistance is free of charge.

This programme is not financed by the State but rather by the contributions paid by all Austrian enterprises insured against occupational accidents by AUVA. The accident insurance contribution represents 1.4 % of an employee's salary.

The fact that AUVASicher provides a service which is close at hand, and which is supported by an organisation that is recognised in the country as reliable and competent, weighs heavily in its favour. At the same time, its flexibility allows it to react and to adapt itself well to the needs of the companies which its specialists visit. Finally, regular measurement of the level of satisfaction in member companies allows the application of any corrective measures needed over time.

**Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The adaptation of this type of programme to other countries seems difficult. To obtain comparable success in other countries, the programme would require the support of a national organisation like AUVA, which has a solid base and is recognised throughout the entire country.

**Further information**

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## 2.2. RISK MANAGEMENT FOR SMEs — FINLAND



### Key points

- General development in the risk management of SMEs is needed.
- Small-scale enterprises need a holistic toolkit that would not concentrate just on some specific risk types, but would be able to deal with different sorts of risks in a coherent manner.
- The developed risk-management toolkit could be transferred easily to other countries with some modifications for local conditions, for example legislation, authorities and contact addresses.

Studies indicated that SMEs needed a holistic tool set that would not concentrate just on some specific risk types, but would be able to deal with different sorts of risks in a coherent manner. Therefore, this 'Risk management for SMEs' project was carried out in Finland during 1996–2000.

The 'Risk management for SMEs' project was coordinated by the Technical Research Centre of Finland (VTT). The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, and the Tampere University of Technology have been active in the development work and provided training together with the VTT.

Several governmental bodies are closely linked with enterprises. Authorities determine the safety and environmental requirements and control how they have been implemented in practice. Other governmental bodies give support and promote the establishment and growth of new companies.

Safety authorities, together with insurance companies, took the initiative which led to the project, and both have played key roles in the steering committee. The Ministry of Trade and Industry was also contacted because of its active role in commercial and industrial life, and it has been active in the steering committee almost from its inception. The Ministry's interest is in the consideration of risks related to SMEs when deciding on the potential aid to them. In particular, it is to promote the overall knowledge about business risks and skills in risk management.

The Federation of Finnish Enterprises, as well as insurance companies have been important links in the effort to reach SMEs in different branches and

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*'The steering committee was rather large, but all participants represent complementary views, knowledge and links to SMEs. This has led to many constructive discussions in the steering committee and has resulted in a well-guided project.'* (Research Scientist Päivi Mikkonen, VTT)

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geographical areas. Later, a new organisation, the Federation of Bookkeeping Companies, was invited to join the steering committee in order to complement the competence areas and distribution channels.

The work was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish Work Environment Fund, and insurance companies.

### Background

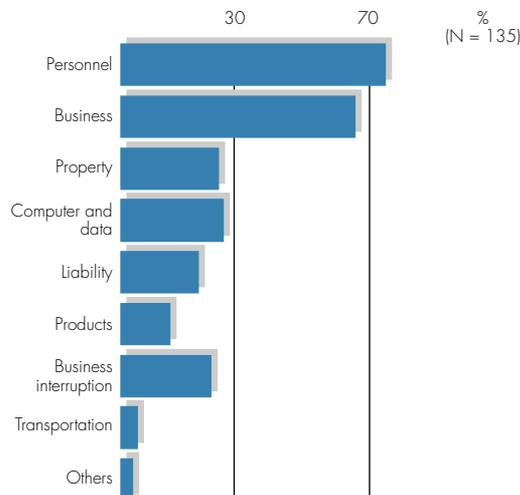
Finnish enterprises tend, as a rule, to have a fairly small staff: in 2000, nearly 99 % had fewer than 50 employees. In a small enterprise, risks may not be fully understood. The initiative to plan the survey and the project originated from insurance companies and safety authorities. They both considered SMEs to be an important group in society. They also considered the number of SMEs to be too big to be able to provide sufficient consultancy or inspection.

Statistics show that in Finland there were 119 187 work-related accidents during the year 2000. The size of the company is an important factor. There are more accidents in enterprises which have 31 to 50 workers than in those which have less than 10 or more than 50 workers. In all, 500 000 workers are estimated to be working in hazardous workplaces.

In Finland, more than 10 % of enterprises that began their operations in 1995 went bankrupt within three years. With the increase in the new technologies and the growth in the amount of subcontractors and teamwork, enterprises have to take more responsibility for their risks. New simplified risk-management methods and the ability to understand the entity of risk management in small and medium-sized enterprises are needed to strengthen the competitiveness of small enterprises through better preparedness against risks.

In order to plan the 'Risk management for SMEs' project, a survey was carried out together with the Federation of Finnish Enterprises. A questionnaire on the biggest risks and the areas where risk management should be improved was

Figure 1: The most significant risks according to SMEs



sent to 1 211 SME members of the federation. Over 10 % of the recipients replied. According to the responses, personnel and business risks were considered to be the most important. In the area of personnel risks, losing a key person due to one cause or another was considered to be the most critical. In the area of business risks, changes in demand, disturbances in financial flows, and changes in exchange rates were considered to be the most important.

Similar responses were noted when the need to improve current risk management was queried. One important exception was for property risks where the need for improvement was rather low. This area seems to be well covered by insurance although it is considered to be an important risk. Correspondingly, computer and data risks were considered to be areas where more development is needed.

One important conclusion based on the survey was that general developments in the risk management of SMEs are needed. The development of new methods and tools together with training would not be enough. Important requirements for the use of new tools are, among other things, knowledge and motivation. It is also important to consider how risk management is integrated with other existing operations within companies.

The preliminary study carried out in 1995 indicated that SMEs needed a holistic tool set that would not concentrate just on some specific risk types, but would be able to deal with different sorts of risks in a coherent manner. Therefore, this 'Risk management for SMEs' project was carried out in Finland during 1996–2000. A very wide range of organisations, including research institutes, insurance companies, social partners and authorities, participated in the project.

The project included the creation of a toolkit for risk management for SMEs. The tools support risk management at workplaces including:

- hazard identification;
- evaluation of magnitude of risks;
- planning of control measures;
- follow-up.

## Aims and goals

The aim of the project was to improve SMEs' and their employees' possibilities to anticipate changes in the business environment by training and developing risk management. Risk management in SMEs was developed so that:

- employees are considered as a valuable resource in risk management;
- employees are trained and motivated to participate in risk management.

Risk-management procedures and methods are developed to enable participation. Risk management will be a conscious and continuous activity to assess and improve the operational preconditions of SMEs.

The project was carried out in two phases. The aims of the first phase were as follows:

- Development of risk-management procedures, methods and tools for SMEs to enable collaboration and participation of employees.
- Transfer of the risk-management procedures, methods and tools to SMEs.

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*'The main aim was to improve the overall knowledge in the different areas of risk management among the personnel in the Finnish SMEs.'*  
(Research Scientist Päivi Mikkonen, VTT)

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- Training to improve risk-management knowledge in SMEs. The aim was to train 250 persons.

The aims of the second phase were the following:

- Development of Internet application for risk management in SMEs.
- Development of additional risk-management procedures, methods and tools for SMEs for risks not covered in the first phase of the project.
- Continue to provide training and marketing to SMEs and their stakeholders. The aim was to train 365 persons. In addition, the aim was to train 90 risk-management trainers.

### Scope of the action

Existing structures of SMEs are supported in the project by giving SMEs the means to manage their risks with a simple and straightforward method. The use of the method does not require OSH expertise and is applicable by anyone. Because of the simplicity of the method, the threshold to start assessing risks with it is low. The method can also be used without previous training, but brief training makes the assessments of risks more precise and accurate from the start.

The initiative supports OSH by giving SMEs a risk-management method which is simple and easy to use and also applicable for large companies, public organisations, etc. The method is directly applicable to fulfil requirements concerning risk assessment, total quality management (TQM) and other relevant systems. Thus, the method will make the first step of beginning a risk assessment in an SME much easier to take. Also, the fact that the method may be used by SMEs themselves even without special training contributes to this ease of use. The simplicity of the method will make it easy to disseminate.

The risk-management tools developed in the project are based on the risk analysis methods and the risk-management culture that have been developed in large enterprises and especially in the process industry. The SMEs' most significant risk areas are covered. The risk areas are:

- Personnel:
  - who are key persons;
  - the importance of professional skills;
  - workers' working ability;
  - leadership etc.
- Production quality and safety of the manufacturing process.
- Business:
  - how to work with subcontractors;
  - marketing;
  - price fixing;
  - taxation;
  - change of generation etc.
- Contractual liability (interruption risks, project risks, etc.).
- Environment (environment risks, criminal offence risks, etc.).
- Information security.
- Fire safety.

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*'For example, safety inspectors may advise use of the method or some relevant part of it when inspecting the OSH structures in companies.'* (Research Scientist Päivi Mikkonen, VTT)

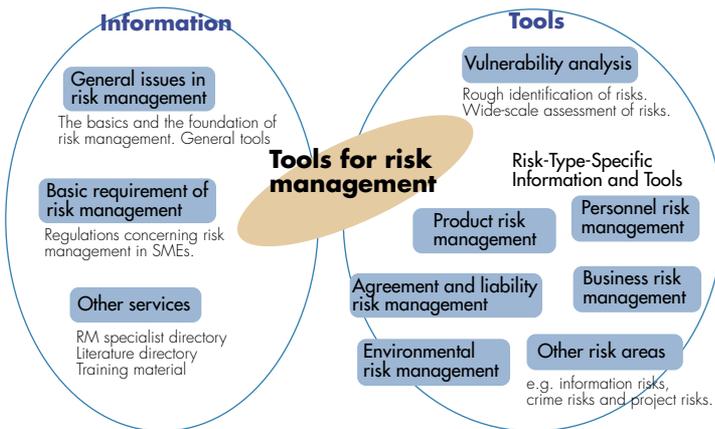
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The tool set is designed to support self-assessment ideology. All the tools are logically and systematically used in the same way. Therefore, it is easy to start with the most urgent risk area and gradually spread the risk-management work to new areas.

The tools are available as three different products (Figure 2):

- **Risk-management tools** are a set of folders with all the tools produced within the project. The folders are designed as a risk-management data bank for companies. It can be tailored, reduced, or complemented to meet the company's own needs.
- The **basic risk-management package** contains the most central tools. The basic package is often sufficient for the needs of a small company as such, and it is easy to complement later.
- The **trainer's folder** contains instructions and tools for arranging risk-management training in SMEs.

Figure 2: Tools for risk management



The risk-management toolkit provides practical tools and easy-to-read information for the development of risk management in SMEs. Getting started has been made easy: elements of risk management have been grouped into small sections that can be covered with a reasonable amount of work. In this way, the process is set in motion with very little investment. Results can start to show quickly. Where necessary, risks are examined more thoroughly so that important aspects do not go unnoticed. Workplace risks should be managed as a collective effort.

The **toolkit** contains various tools:

- **Booklets:** These are instruction books and workbooks. The instruction books are intended as background material for the topic in question. The workbooks allow a more in-depth examination of risks. Booklets have associated info/work cards.
- **Work cards:** These are tools to help implement a particular area of risk management. Work cards contain checklists or risk charts that include some topic information.

- *Info cards*: These are short summaries on specific areas of risk management. Info cards are a good way to start familiarising yourself with the subject. Some info cards link to work cards.
- *Trainers' guide*: Contains info cards with instructions for risk-management training in SMEs. The support material is intended for trainers and supervisors of group work.

These types of risk-management tools for SMEs did not exist before the project.

### Results and evaluation

A comprehensive toolkit for risk management in SMEs was developed. The SMEs most significant risk areas, such as personnel, production, business, contractual liability, environment, information security and fire safety are covered. Occupational safety and health is an essential part of the toolkit and it was one of the starting points for the project. The project, however, did not only concentrate on OSH issues. The toolkit was developed in such a way that the same approach can be used in all areas of risk management.

As a part of the project, 530 companies were trained to use the toolkit (on the Finnish scale, this is a lot), of which 86 % were small companies (under 50 employees). Of these companies, over 100 were involved in the development of the 'Risk management for SMEs' toolkit. Over 1 400 persons have been trained in SME training.

Number of SMEs involved in the project during 1996–2000

| Number of employees | Phase 1 SMEs | Phase 2 SMEs | Total SMEs | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1–10                | 45           | 266          | 311        | 58         |
| 11–50               | 46           | 103          | 149        | 28         |
| 51–100              | 11           | 34           | 45         | 8          |
| 101–250             | 4            | 27           | 31         | 6          |
| TOTAL               | 106          | 430          | 536        | 100        |

The main sectors involved were as follows:

- Industry: metal, electric, wood-processing, rubber, food, etc.
- Service companies: bookkeeping, real estate, engineering office, etc.
- Trading companies: restaurant, shops, etc.

In all, 622 trainers have been trained, and they have distributed the toolkit to their own clientele. The tools have been found to be so practical that 42 risk-management and expert organisations have formed a common forum that has the mission of taking the toolkit further and deeper into the Finnish society.

### Identified success criteria

The project's success was measured by the number of persons trained during the project. The project reached 82 % of the original goal for employees trained. The number of trainers trained during the project was 622, which was six times more than originally planned. Another success factor was the

development of the risk-management toolkit and its publication both in printed and electronic format. Sustainability of the project was an important feature. Establishing a risk-management forum, which is a network of organisations in the field of risk management, ensured this. This forum promotes the risk-management toolkit and monitors its maintenance and further development. The forum has been operational from the beginning of 2001.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The toolkit could be transferred easily to other countries with some modifications for local conditions, for example legislation, authorities and contact addresses. The toolkit has also been used in bigger companies. Risk-management consultants have also been very interested in the toolkit.

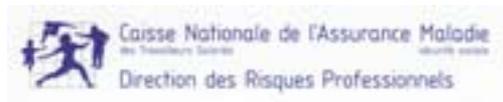
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## 2.3. AGREEMENTS ON OBJECTIVES AND PREVENTION CONTRACTS IN THE CONCRETE PRODUCT MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY — FRANCE

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### Key points

The major success criteria of this scheme are:

- The voluntary character of the approach since it is the chief executive who decides to undertake preventive measures by signing the contract with the Regional Health Insurance Fund (CRAM).
- The amount of financial aid granted to the enterprise by the Regional Fund.
- The close association of employers and employees of the sector involved in the definition of goals to be reached.
- The assistance of the Regional Fund to the enterprise for the initial assessment.

In France, in the concrete product manufacturing sector, i.e. a high-risk sector, a two-level system has been developed to create incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises to implement prevention measures.

- At the national level, a document called the 'convention nationale d'objectifs' (national agreement on objectives), prepared by the employers and trade unions of the sector under consideration, has been signed by the National Health Insurance Fund for Employees (CNAMTS) and the occupational branch involved, in this case the Concrete Industry Federation (Fédération de l'industrie du béton). This agreement mainly defines the prevention goals to be attained and the priority measures to be taken.
- At the regional level, any enterprise in this sector that agrees to preserve and improve the health and safety of its employees signs a prevention contract with the Regional Health Insurance Fund (CRAM). Under this contract, the enterprise agrees to make specific investments and/or carry out measures, according to a precise schedule. In return, the Regional Health Insurance Fund agrees to participate in the financing of this programme up to a given amount.

The assistance provided to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the occupational sector is aimed at technical and organisational aspects, namely through the assessment of the situation before the campaign is launched and advice given during the programme. A financial contribution may be granted.

In principle, all SMEs manufacturing concrete products are concerned. When it first started in 1988, the scheme was applicable to all enterprises with less than 300 employees; this limit was brought down to 250 employees in 1998, then to 200 employees in 1999.

Since the implementation of this scheme, four national agreements on objectives have been signed (each for a four-year duration), 224 prevention contracts have been established and the French social security system has devoted EUR 7 714 810 to this campaign.

## Background

This form of assistance provided to SMEs falls within the scope of the contractual policy implemented by the social security system (occupational injuries and illnesses department) since 1988, in order to create incentives for these enterprises to invest in the prevention of occupational risks and improve the working conditions of the employees in the sector in question.

It takes into account the fact that SMEs — accounting for a proportionally higher rate of injuries than large enterprises — are generally not very well covered by prevention campaigns and often do not have the necessary means — in the form of both human and financial resources — to implement prevention measures.

The goal is to help them undertake a true investment programme in order to prevent occupational injuries by granting financial aid to compensate for part of the expenditures incurred.

In the concrete product manufacturing sector, the major risks of injuries are related to automated systems and to mechanical and manual handling; there are often serious risks (parts of the body being crushed), or even fatal risks, due to presses, impacts or falling parts.

Other risks are occupational illnesses (dermatitis due to concrete and oils, deafness, lower back pains and musculoskeletal problems) as well as road accidents.

## Ambitions and goals

This assistance programme has two goals: a reduction in the number of occupational injuries and illnesses listed for the sector in question (see above) and an improvement in the working conditions of the employees.

The national agreements on objectives do not fix quantitative objectives to be reached, but they do define qualitative objectives and priority actions to be implemented.

Since July 1988, when the first agreement was signed, the goals have remained unchanged even though they have been more precisely defined:

- Information and training of employers and employees (managers, supervisory staff and operators) in the prevention of occupational injuries and illnesses.

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*'To bolster the impact of prevention contracts, the social partners of the sector decided, in 2001, to solicit the support of the French social security system for a more global approach to prevention called the "sectoral participative approach".'*  
(Mr Guelfucci, Employees' representative at CTN)

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- Appointment of an inter-company safety agency or subscription to a counselling organisation with expertise in prevention.
- Integration of safety aspects when designing workplaces and products in order to reduce risks at the time of manufacturing, storage and in-plant maintenance, as well as during handling on the building site.
- Improvement of the work organisation and operating modes used during product manufacturing.
- Improvement of personnel safety during maintenance operations.
- Improvement of product handling conditions.
- Elimination or reduction of physical risks endangering the workers' health, in particular noise.

To these first goals, others were added:

- In 1998:
  - organisation of the safety function;
  - improvement in the safety of isolated workers.
- In 2002:
  - reduction in the number of musculoskeletal problems;
  - development of measures to limit the risk of a road accident for employees.

In addition, the national agreements specify priority measures to be taken to achieve the defined goals; each individual contract has to adapt these goals to the enterprise's specific needs.

Among others, the following measures are listed as priorities:

- Increasing prevention awareness among chief executives and managerial staff.
- Redesign and layout of workplaces in order to eliminate or reduce the risks related to automated systems, electrical work, and storage, as well as harmful nuisances such as noise, vibration, dust, fumes and heat.
- Redesign and layout of production equipment.
- Improvement in handling conditions by using mechanical devices, reduction in loads and packaging.
- Installation of alarm systems for isolated workers (since 1998).
- Design and development of maintenance organisation and implementation of corresponding measures (since 1998).
- Training of a safety officer in preventive measures and basic regulations (since 1998).
- Ergonomic studies and improvement in manufacturing processes to reduce repetitive strain injury (RSI) risks (since 2002).
- A study of the exposure of employees to road risks and implementation of measures to reduce risk situations (since 2002).

### Scope of the action

Between 1988 and 2002, 224 prevention contracts were established: 73 under the 1988 agreement, 65 under the 1993 agreement and 86 under the 1998 agreement. This number may seem limited considering the number of firms concerned in this sector (close to 1 400 in 1988, just above 1 100 in 1998), but it is interesting to note that the percentage of firms having signed such a

contract has been increasing: starting at just 5.2 % under the 1988 agreement it went up to 7.8 % under the 1998 agreement.

A total of 8 229 employees benefited from the first three agreements; depending on the year, between 11 and 14 % of the employees in this industrial sector have been covered by the assistance scheme.

An important trend is that, as years pass by, the contracts are signed by smaller and smaller enterprises; this is particularly true for the 1998 agreement, under which a larger number of contracts were signed but covered a smaller number of employees.

The following table shows the level of financial aid provided for the SMEs involved under the first three national agreements.

|                   | Amount of investment made by enterprises (EUR) | Amount of advances paid by social security (EUR) | % participation from social security |
|-------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| From 1988 to 1993 | 10 200 000                                     | 2 559 666  | 25                                   |
| From 1993 to 1997 | 12 800 000                                     | 3 199 032  | 25                                   |
| From 1998 to 2001 | 8 100 000                                      | 1 956 112  | 24                                   |
| TOTAL             | 31 100 000                                     | 7 714 810  | 25                                   |

Under prevention contracts, social security's participation is on average 25 % of the cost of capital investment. This participation may appear high, particularly when compared with other sectors of activity where it is just above 20 %.

### Results and evaluation of the action

An assessment was carried out after the implementation of the first three national agreements. In addition to the quantitative data mentioned above, these assessments concerned more qualitative criteria, in particular an evaluation of preventive measures implemented to eliminate or reduce targeted risks.

Among the most frequently implemented measures were the following:

- Installation of mechanical systems (hoists and lifting grabs) or availability of lift trucks, pallet trucks or shop cranes to prevent the risks related to manual handling.
- Development of work platforms equipped with guard-rails to prevent the risk of falling from a height.
- Repair of floors and establishment of traffic lanes to prevent the risk of falls on the same level.
- Fitting out, modification and/or replacement of equipment to reduce risks, notably mechanical risks associated with machines.
- Installation of collection systems for extracting solvents, welding fumes or aerosols to reduce chemical nuisances.
- Installation of dust removal systems to reduce nuisances related to dust.

- A set of measures (machine enclosures, acoustic treatment of buildings, sound-proofing of hydraulic motors, etc.) for the prevention of noise pollution.
- Measures to improve the safety of maintenance operations.
- Installation of various pieces of equipment (in particular video cameras and intercoms) to improve the safety of isolated members of staff.
- Improvement of lighting and temperature conditions.
- Training courses aimed at employees (rescue, first aid, movements and posture, safe driving of machinery, electrical accreditation).

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*'Prevention contracts have helped trigger greater awareness among organisation directors. Growing awareness by the people in the trade of the scope of healthcare and safety problems facing our sector and of the size of the task ahead to improve the situation more generally has been achieved largely thanks to prevention contracts.'* (Jean-Pierre Elguedi, Secretary-General of the Concrete Industry Federation)

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The introduction of prevention contracts has undoubtedly contributed to an improvement in the health and safety as well as in the working conditions of employees in the enterprises involved. No impact study was conducted specifically for the concrete product manufacturing sector but the overall study carried out at the national level in 1999 to evaluate the effects of prevention contracts signed between 1988 and 1998 clearly showed that the implementation of the various prevention measures had resulted in a net reduction in the severity of occupational injuries among the signatory enterprises.

Another positive effect is the awareness by the trade of the importance of safety and health issues familiar to this sector and the extent of the work to be accomplished to improve the overall situation.

This growing awareness resulted in a widespread campaign to recruit safety officers and in the setting-up of training for these officers; 120 were trained in 2001 and 80 attended training in 2002.

In addition, in 2001, in order to reinforce the impact of prevention contracts, the sector's employers and trade unions, i.e. representatives of employers and employees, decided to engage in a more global preventive approach, with the support of social security, called a participative approach by sector, consisting, for a coordinated set of measures, in having enterprises take charge of their own safety and health problems.

### Identified success criteria

The major success criterion of this scheme is probably the voluntary character of this approach, since it is the chief executive who decides to undertake preventive measures by signing the contract with the Regional Health Insurance Fund. This commitment implies a primary awareness on his part of the need to improve the enterprise's situation in terms of occupational risks.

Another determining factor for the success of the scheme is the amount of financial aid granted to the enterprise by the Regional Fund.

In addition, it should be stressed that the employers and employees of the sector involved (trade unions and associations) have been closely associated with the definition of goals to be reached and measures to be implemented. Therefore, the text of national agreements is well suited to the real situation 'on the ground', and it is clear that texts were revised between 1993 and 2002 to take into account the new problems being reported.

Lastly, the fact that the Regional Fund provides assistance to the enterprise for the initial assessment (evaluation of risks) and performs a yearly follow-up of progress on the contract is undoubtedly another factor ensuring the success of the programme specified contractually.

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*'The fact that the Regional Health Insurance Fund assists companies with the initial analysis and each year monitors execution of the contract is most certainly a key factor in the success of the programme defined by the contract.'* (Claude Aufredou, Director of the Safety and Working Conditions Department at the concrete industry's research centre)

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### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The answer to this question is undoubtedly positive; national agreements on objectives have existed in a large number of other sections of the economy and, since the scheme was implemented, they have resulted in more than 18 000 prevention contracts being signed up to 31 December 2001.

Originally aimed at enterprises under the general regime of social security (industry, commerce and services), this scheme is now being extended to firms belonging to other regimes, notably farms and hospitals.

To provide a real incentive to prevention, the system should, however, be granted a sufficient allocation of funds. Currently, the annual budget that may be allocated to the financing of prevention contracts represents 0.6 % of the contributions paid by enterprises for occupational injuries and diseases (i.e. EUR 42.8 million for 2002).

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## 2.4. 'WORK POSITIVE': PRIORITISING ORGANISATIONAL STRESS — IRELAND

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### Key points

- The resource pack aims to provide small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with a systematic approach to managing stress in the workplace.
- It aims to provide SMEs with cost-effective, practical advice and guidance on techniques for managing risks associated with workplace stress.
- The resource pack is generically applicable, i.e. it is potentially of relevance to a wide range of SMEs, irrespective of the sector within which they operate.

The scheme, commissioned by the Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA, Ireland), is part of a nationwide programme on workplace stress risk management in Ireland and Scotland.

The information pack is aimed at assisting SMEs in managing risks associated with work-induced stress. The rationale underlying the production of the package was that, due to limited resources, when compared with larger organisations, small businesses would benefit from an information pack that provided practicable advice on how to manage work on this important public health issue.

Participation in the scheme is voluntary. Copies of the information pack are made available to SMEs through an established network of relevant professional bodies, employers' associations, trade associations and functionally equivalent bodies at a cost of EUR 30.

### Background

The 'Work positive' information pack was jointly developed by the Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA, Ireland). It provides SME managers with a step-by-step guide on how to assess and control work-related stress. It was designed to be applicable to SMEs in a wide range of sectors.

Building upon established stress audit tools and principles of effective health and safety management (developed by the British Health and Safety Authority, 1997), at its core, the approach sought to develop a self-assessment toolkit for

SMEs. The 'Work positive' information pack is designed to provide organisations (SMEs), which are unlikely to enjoy established in-house expertise, with a pragmatic approach to work-related stress risk assessment and management.

The 'Work positive' information pack allows SMEs to:

- raise awareness of the importance of work-related stress issues in their organisation;
- derive a benchmark measure of existing stress risk-management systems;
- derive a measure of prevailing levels of stress within their organisation;
- assess the risk associated with identified sources of work-related stress;
- identify suitable work-related stress risk-control measures.

In short, the 'Work positive' information pack provides SMEs with guidance on best practice in stress risk management, survey tools for assessing risks in the workplace and practicable advice on how to control them.

The 'Work positive' package was launched in March 2002. The HEBS and HSA are currently actively promoting its use in Scotland and Ireland respectively.

### **Ambitions and goals**

The HEBS and HSA identified the potential for developing a resource package to provide SMEs with the necessary information to adopt a systematic approach to managing workplace stress.

The 'Work positive' scheme is designed to encourage SMEs to adopt a proactive approach to work-induced stress management. As such, it contrasts with traditional *post hoc* approaches to stress management, such as individual counselling or training. A proactive approach to stress management presents a new challenge to SMEs which typically have little in-house knowledge or expertise in this area. The scheme aims to provide SMEs with cost-effective practical advice and guidance on techniques for managing risks associated with workplace stress.

The 'Work positive' scheme aims to:

- raise levels of awareness amongst owners and managers of SMEs of the need to assess, manage and control work-induced psychological stress amongst their employees;
- provide SME employers with practical advice on assessing and managing work-related stress risks.

The specific objectives of this project were to:

- assess the information needs of SME employers on work-related stress risk management;
- develop a draft information pack aimed at owners/managers of SMEs to assist them in assessing and controlling risks associated with work-induced stress;
- as part of the information pack, develop a draft stress risk-assessment toolkit designed to be administered by SMEs with limited technical knowledge or expertise in work-related stress issues;
- pilot and refine the information pack by assessing its utility in assisting workplace stress risk control in a sample of SMEs;

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*'The only issue that arises is how organisations can get senior management commitment to tackling stress. "Work positive" provides an information leaflet for managers that details their legal and moral duties as well as the costs associated with ignoring the issues.'* (Rebecca Lancaster, Entec)

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- publicise and distribute the developed (final version) of the 'Work positive' information pack, via an established network of SME-related professional and sector-based employers' associations.

### Scope of the action

'Work positive' is designed to operate as a voluntary scheme for SMEs to assist managers in assessing and controlling risks associated with work-related stress. The resource pack which constitutes the core product of the initiative is designed to provide employers with a means of measuring levels of stress amongst their workforce and to assist them in identifying suitable risk controls/intervention strategies. The resource pack is generically applicable, i.e. it is potentially of relevance to a wide range of SMEs, irrespective of the sector within which they operate.

The 'Work positive' stress management assistance scheme is targeted at SMEs, based upon the premise that smaller organisations are least likely to have in-house experience or knowledge suitable for dealing with stress control and management. This factor was a key motivation for the scheme. A secondary objective of the project's sponsors was to use the scheme to raise levels of awareness of the need to control risks associated with workplace stress amongst SMEs.

The HEBS and HSA commissioned the development of the 'Work positive' information package. The package was developed with the assistance of a pilot sample of 24 small and medium-sized businesses. Participating organisations were volunteers, identified through an established network of HEBS and HSA contacts.

The development of the 'Work positive' resource pack was undertaken in four stages:

#### *Stage 1 — Development of a stress-management 'benchmark' performance measure*

This measure is a checklist audit tool for use by SME managers. It is designed to provide a baseline for SMEs of variables with potential to cause employee stress. The measure has 10 categories, which can be used to assess organisational performance, for example 'organisational change', 'human resource management' and 'fairness in interpersonal relationships'.

#### *Stage 2 — Development of the stress risk-assessment measure*

This measure is a self-completion questionnaire for employees. It is designed for use within individual businesses, to provide SME managers with a measure of employee stress. The measure provides a score on a range of salient structural and work organisational influences with potential to contribute to workplace stress. The questions are designed to address aspects such as 'job design' and 'workload'.

#### *Stage 3 — Development of the resource pack*

The measurement tools developed at Stages 1 and 2 are supported by a resource pack containing guidance for SME employers on managing workplace stress and interpretation of the data gathered by the benchmarking and risk-assessment tools.

The information pack is designed to guide SME employers through the stress risk-management process. This can be summarised in terms of the five key steps outlined below.

- Step One: Raising staff awareness, and demonstrating organisational commitment to effective stress management.
- Step Two: Benchmarking the status of an organisation’s stress risk-management practice and controls — including a review of sickness absence and staff turnover records.
- Step Three: Identification of risks to employees — using the risk-assessment survey measure.
- Step Four: Interpreting data generated at Steps 2 and 3 with a view to identifying and implementing work-induced stress risk-management solutions.
- Step Five: Evaluating developed stress risk-management solutions and reviewing the residual risk(s) — revisit the findings from the risk-management benchmarking exercise and consult employees.

In the first instance, a draft resource pack was developed/evaluated based upon feedback from a sample of 10 SMEs from a range of business sectors. This was done to ensure that the format, style and content meet SME employers’ needs. This evaluation resulted in a number of detailed modifications to the format and content of the ‘Work positive’ information pack, following which the final version of the package was developed.

*Stage 4 — Launch of the ‘Work positive’ initiative (March 2002 to present day)*

The final version of the ‘Work positive’ information pack was launched by the HEBS and HSA in March 2002, and continues to be distributed to SMEs through relevant professional bodies, and employers’/trade associations.

No formal evaluation of Stage 4 has been conducted at the time of writing, although there is an intention of this taking place in the future.

The following table provides two examples where the ‘Work positive’ resource pack was implemented, and key stressors were identified:

| Industry              | Identified priority issues  | Actions taken  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Library               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullying and harassment</li> <li>• Poor communication</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for identifying and investigating harassment were introduced.</li> <li>• New communication channels were opened, including newsletters and circulating minutes of meetings.</li> </ul> |
| Mobile communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback on performance</li> <li>• Lack of involvement in decision-making</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New performance appraisal system was introduced.</li> <li>• Suggestion boxes were introduced and feedback on suggestions provided.</li> </ul>   |

**Problems encountered**

A number of unforeseen problems were encountered in the development phase. Significant issues include the following:

- The information pack was designed to be self-supporting. However, a number of organisations required assistance in interpreting the results generated by the assessment tools provided in the pack. Attempts have been made to address this issue by adding further instructions to employers in the current version of the information pack.
- Greater difficulty was experienced in identifying and enrolling participants in Ireland than in Scotland. It is believed that the greater take-up in Scotland may be associated with the presence of a more established communication network between companies and health-promoting agencies.
- A number of participating organisations reported that some of their employees were sceptical about the project.
- A number of participating organisations reported that some of their employees felt that their managers did not provide sufficient feedback on results arising from the risk-assessment survey.

### Results and evaluation of the action

Evaluation was an integral part of the development process for the 'Work positive' information pack. To date, there has been no formal evaluation of the take-up of the package, or with regard to its impact upon enhancing standards of stress risk management in SMEs. However, there are plans to conduct an impact evaluation at a later date.

The approach to the development of the 'Work positive' information pack was characterised by an iterative process of evaluation at each stage.

Following the revision of the measures based upon the results of Stages 1 and 2, a resource pack was developed. This was designed to provide SME managers with a set of instructions for administering and interpreting the output from the benchmarking and risk-assessment tools, referenced to relevant supporting guidance on best practice in stress risk management.

The information packs were sent out to a second sample of 10 SMEs. Utility and usability issues were evaluated by obtaining feedback from managers in each of the participating SMEs. This evaluation exercise resulted in a number of suggestions for detailed improvement to the packs.

The final version of the information pack comprises a colourful, attractively presented, user-friendly document, supplemented by a CD-ROM.

There has been no formal evaluation of the impact of the 'Work positive' information pack since its launch; however, it is anticipated that the HEBS will conduct an evaluation in the future. Evaluation of the utility of the information pack was, however, an integral part of the development process. The Midland Health Board has rolled out the pilot to its 7 000 staff, using 'Work positive'.

The case study evaluation, conducted in Stage 3, highlighted a number of benefits to participating SMEs of using the 'Work positive' package.

Use of the 'Work positive' package is said to have allowed participating organisations to identify sources of employee work-related stress. For example, one organisation 'identified poor communication, personal staff safety issues, undervaluing of staff and poor work environment as potential sources of work-related stress'. This information was used by the company to develop an action plan to address the issues raised.

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*'The resource pack led to some improvements in our work environment. The risk-assessment questionnaire raised questions that we had not previously considered as important factors in stress management. We now have regular feedback from senior management and communication around the company has improved generally.'* (Employee, participating company No 1)

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*However, an employee from another company felt that identifying the issues was the easy part: 'The main problem that we encountered was the question of how we should assimilate the knowledge. The package did not offer a lot of support on what to do once the data had been collected.'* (Employee, participating company No 2)

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## Identified success criteria

The HEBS and HSA were very active in the development and launch of the 'Work positive' resource pack in their respective countries. Whilst the 'Work positive' resource pack is reported to have been well received, it seems clear that the extent of its impact hinges upon how well it is disseminated and distributed to SMEs; for example, in Scotland the pack has been disseminated through an established network of professional bodies and other functionally equivalent organisations.

The SMEs which took part in the development of the 'Work positive' package were volunteers, and arguably had an established interest in work-related stress issues. The 'Work positive' package is reported to have assisted these organisations in managing work-related stress risks. The participation of these organisations has been of great benefit in fine-tuning the resource pack to ensure that it meets the needs of SMEs in general.

The active involvement of representatives of the target population in developing risk communication material represents good practice. This is commendable as user/target audience consultation is an issue that is frequently overlooked by risk communicators.

## Is the method/process/action transferable?

Assuming sufficient resources are available to meet the necessary development costs, the method for developing packages, such as 'Work positive', aimed at SMEs, would be generalisable to other health and safety management/risk issues, in a wide range of organisational/national settings.

The 'Work positive' package itself has the potential to be applicable in other national contexts, although care would be necessary where there is a need to translate questionnaire items used in the risk-assessment survey into other languages.

The following suggestions are provided for any parties intending to develop or disseminate a similar type of information pack:

- The information pack approach in general — Suitably qualified social science researchers would need to be engaged to develop measures of the type generated for the 'Work positive' information pack. Similarly, suitably qualified researchers would need to be engaged to pilot the information pack to assess its suitability and relevance to the target audience(s).
- 'Work positive' information pack specific — Where there is a need to translate the package, such that it can be applied to non-English-speaking populations, suitably qualified social scientists should be engaged to ensure that the survey measures within the package remain reliable.
- For initiatives of this type to be successful, it is desirable to have an established distribution network to disseminate the developed package, for example via trade and/or professional associations.

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*'The organisations involved [...] developed action plans based on the findings of the risk assessment. Many organisations commented on the general improvement in morale resulting from the "Work positive" consultation process between employers/management and employees. There are plans to revisit the organisations to establish any long-term effects from the intervention.'* (Rebecca Lancaster, Entec)

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**Further information**

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## 2.5. CAMPAIGN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING CONDITIONS IN THE CERAMIC INDUSTRY — PORTUGAL



### Key points

- The campaign aimed to encourage the improvement of working conditions and to foster the implementation of the new legal requirements stemming from the framework directive.
- It sought to have innovative and effective strategies for integrating occupational risk prevention identified and developed in the overall framework of the modernisation of companies.
- The sectoral approach enabled the campaign to join all sectoral forces over a given period of time and stimulate the participation of partners.

The ceramic sector is as old as humanity. For thousands of years, techniques did not change and the main risks were known, namely those related to silica and to heat. Industrialisation over the last two centuries has not only introduced new materials but also new ways of organising work.

The Portuguese ceramic sector underwent great transformations during the last decade: a process of industrial restructuring incremented its volume in business terms by 140 %, and completely changed the production process, the technology used, and the composition of the labour force. But, it is still made up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs, representing nearly 95 % of the total companies in the industry).

The industry is located mainly along the shore in the North, Centre, Lisbon and Vale do Tejo regions.

In economic terms, the sector accounts overall for nearly EUR 900 million of the gross national production, and for 10 % of the European ceramic industry. The relative weight of the ceramic industry in the Portuguese manufacturing industry can be grasped when considering that it accounts for 2.5 % of the gross value of total production and 2.8 % of all exports.

The ceramic sector includes three sub-sectors — construction ceramics, decorative and utilitarian ceramics, and technical ceramics — each with its own

|                    | Number of companies | %   | Number of workers | %   |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|
| Up to 9 persons    | 262                 | 38  | 1 031             | 3   |
| 10 to 19 persons   | 109                 | 16  | 1 509             | 5   |
| 20 to 49 persons   | 171                 | 25  | 5 015             | 17  |
| 50 to 99 persons   | 80                  | 12  | 5 475             | 18  |
| 100 to 199 persons | 39                  | 6   | 5 070             | 17  |
| 200 to 499 persons | 24                  | 3   | 7 040             | 23  |
| 500 + persons      | 7                   | 1   | 4 986             | 17  |
| TOTAL              | 692                 | 100 | 30 126            | 100 |

*The ceramic sector includes three sub-sectors — construction ceramics, decorative and utilitarian ceramics, and technical ceramics — each with its own specificities regarding health and safety hazards*

specificities regarding health and safety hazards. Nevertheless, the common hazards in this industry, as ascertained in various studies, are mainly those tied to impairment due to machinery and ergonomic problems related to the manual and mechanical movement of loads, to design and to postures. Work organisation also poses problems as do shifts and the pace and monotony of the work. No less important are the risks associated with the inhalation of raw material particles (silica, iron oxide, lime, etc.) and harmful dusts (particularly asbestos), metals (such as lead), and toxic chemicals (used in solvents, glues, paints, etc.). Exposure to radiant heat and temperature changes, to high ambient humidity, and to high noise levels and poor illumination is also significant. Illnesses such as pneumoconiosis, dermatosis, and muscle and bone injuries are all associated with this sector, and there is also a high rate of accidents at work.

The lack of structured information on occupational illnesses broken down by sector and of data on accidents at work in the ceramic industry makes it impossible to quantify accidents at work and occupational morbidity in the industry. However, all indirect data point towards a need to launch a campaign focusing on the ceramic sector in order to encourage social partners to improve working conditions and foster the implementation of the new legal requirements stemming from the framework directive.

Led by the IDICT (Instituto de Desenvolvimento e Inspeção das Condições de Trabalho de Portugal, Coimbra Office), a national campaign was launched for the improvement of working conditions in the ceramic industry. The IDICT is a national-level authority organisation for labour relationships and labour conditions attached to the Labour and Solidarity Ministry. Other participants in the campaign were the Ministry of the Economy (Regional Centre), the Technological Centre for Ceramics and Glass (CTCV), the Portuguese Ceramic Industry Association (APICER), the Federation of Unions from the Ceramic Industry of Cement and Glass of Portugal, and the Federation of Workers in the Ceramic, Glass, Extracting, Energy and Chemical Industries (FETICEQ).

### Background and context

The campaign was launched with a view to contributing to the modernisation of companies and to integrating occupational hazard prevention into daily management. In this context, the new legal framework was introduced as a key to fostering the development of new, innovative strategies for prevention integration in the workplace.

The action emerged as a part of the national plan of action for prevention and several **awareness-raising campaigns** were conceived, each targeted at a different sector. These sectoral campaigns aimed to imbue employers, workers and the population at large with improvement in occupational health and safety prevention through information campaigns carried out by sectors and stimulated within the spirit of social dialogue, specifically by the social partners and public entities.

Thus, the development of these sectoral programmes aims to join all sectoral forces over a given period of time and stimulate the participation of partners who are planning intervention in these areas in the future.

A very broad public was targeted: business persons, managers, workers, machinery and equipment manufacturers and suppliers, staff of sectoral vocational training centres, and also public opinion in general.

### Ambitions and goals

In the case of the ceramic sector, the general objectives to be met through the actions were established to effectively improve working conditions in the various sub-sectors in the ceramic industry by introducing improvements in the organisation of work and the material components used in work, thereby promoting both productivity and quality in the workplace while bolstering the value chain in the sector. Other objectives were the promotion of the integration of safety as a concern in business management, and the bolstering of social and institutional partners' intervention capacity in occupational hazard prevention and organisation of work, as well as that of the technical and scientific community and the public administration.

In this context, the actions were aimed at the prevention of risks associated with:

- the way in which workplaces are conceived;
- equipment-related impairment, identifying the existing good practices and procuring research and study of technical solutions;
- the mechanical and manual movement of loads;
- the organisation of work, targeting the elimination of monotonous, repetitive work and readjusting the pace of work.

### Scope of the action

With its four sub-programmes (campaign promotion, information and dissemination, training, and research and investigation), the campaign targeted a very broad segment of the population, not only those already involved in the ceramic industry, but those who were not formerly interested in the health and safety field.

All the partners in the ceramic industry were involved in the signing of a document entitled 'Protocol for a campaign for the improvement of working conditions in the ceramic industry' (*Protocolo relativo à campanha para a melhoria das condições de trabalho na indústria cerâmica*). This meets with the national Accord on Occupational Working, Hygiene and Safety Conditions and against Accidents, signed on 9 February 2001 by the Portuguese Government and all the social partners with representation on the Economic and Social Council.

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*With its four sub-programmes (campaign promotion, information and dissemination, training, and research and investigation), the campaign targeted a very broad segment of the population*

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The slogan of the action is 'Condições de trabalho: melhorar ... inovar' (Working conditions: improving ... innovating'.

'The signatories to this protocol, aware of the need to stimulate the knowledge and awareness-raising regarding the prevention of occupational hazards in the various sub-sectors of the ceramic industry, engage to carry out a campaign focusing on these objectives under the heading "Campaign for the improvement of working conditions in the ceramic industry" and the slogan "Working conditions: improving ... innovating"' (extract from the text of the protocol).

The protocol stipulated that the IDICT was the entity responsible for the definition and promotion of the project, and for lending support to actions carried out by the other partners which, in turn, took on the responsibility for contributing to defining this project in the best technical and strategic terms and for carrying out the campaign for the entire ceramic industry. The IDICT managed the campaign with the support of a technical committee made up of the social partners, the CTCV and the Ministry of the Economy's regional office.

The first category of action (Sub-programme 1 — **Campaign promotion**) involved publishing the campaign in order to involve the mass media and the scientific and technical community, and to arouse the perception, especially by social agents, of the importance of occupational hazards in the ceramic sector.

The second category of action (Sub-programme 2 — **Information and dissemination**) had various aims. The first was to create tools to disseminate information on prevention techniques for the professional risks of the ceramic sector, thereby facilitating the exchange of information and experiences and raising awareness about the relationship between health and safety and productivity and quality of life (this included the logo, stickers, television advertisements, brochures, etc.). An additional objective falling under this category of action was awareness-raising among teachers and students at high-level and university teaching programmes related to this sector. In particular, the aim was to raise the motivation for including health and safety in the curriculum and to bring about favourable conditions for students to write their final projects or thesis on health and safety issues. Lastly, there was also the aim to make students and teachers in vocational tracks aware of the importance of occupational hazard prevention, and to promote the inclusion of these issues in the teaching programmes and students' final course work on occupational hazard prevention issues.

The aim behind the third category of action (Sub-programme 3 — **Training**) was to enable the development of health and safety training for officials, top-level management among employers, and workers and professional organisations. The accent was on supporting the development of teaching materials.

The fourth category of action (Sub-programme 4 — **Research and investigation**) aimed to provide incentives for carrying out research and investigation in the area of risk prevention in the ceramic sector, and to provide support for including prevention issues in top-level research.

These actions are carried out through several entities:

- Some are carried out by the IDICT, such as the 'Presentation of campaign' session and the production of campaign-promotion tools, such as brochures, posters, folders, etc.
- Specific activities are implemented by the General Labour Inspection Office.
- Some are carried out by the IDICT in partnerships, such as those targeted at schools, employers, workers, and professional associations.
- Other activities are carried out by other entities with financial support provided by the IDICT. In this last category, 29 projects were presented and 25 were approved.

### Problems encountered

Unexpectedly, only a few projects had been presented at the end of the submitting period, so an additional period for the presentation of projects was set to March 2003.

### Results and evaluation

While there are not yet data about the results, the campaign allowed the spreading of information by means of the media (press and the television spots), the publication of safety manuals for each of the diverse sub-sectors of the ceramic industry, training actions for officials and leaders of organisations, and making the school community aware of the need of prevention at work.

Some 29 projects were presented in the areas of research, dissemination and training. These will be assessed at the end of the period through quantitative and qualitative analyses taking into account their potential for a ripple effect in terms of action and gaining a greater following.

### Identified success criteria

The sector approach methodology enables innovative and effective strategies for integrating occupational risk prevention to be identified and developed in the overall framework of the modernisation of companies.

In this context, the IDICT must be seen as an 'environment' made available by the State in order to stimulate partners in companies while taking the development of labour relations and working conditions into account.

In so far as working conditions are concerned, this methodology, in addition to fostering social dialogue, contributes to integrating occupational risk prevention into the productive process of business management.

### Is the method/process/action transferable?

The ceramic campaign comes as part of a series of campaigns that have already been carried out successfully. The IDICT has already promoted framework programmes drawn up by strategic objectives and areas of intervention (i.e. civil construction, agriculture, textile and clothing industry).

This action can be transferred to any other sector as long as it involves the social partners and pertinent institutions in its definition, implementation and assessment.

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*The ceramic campaign comes as part of a series of campaigns that have already been carried out successfully (civil construction, agriculture, textile and clothing industry)*

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**Further information**

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## 2.6. 'GOOD NEIGHBOUR' SCHEME — UNITED KINGDOM

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### Key points

- The scheme seeks to extend the cooperation which already exists between larger and small businesses to health and safety issues, i.e. allowing small businesses to learn from larger businesses and thereby improve their standards of health and safety.
- The 'Good neighbour' forum scheme is designed to encourage supportive relationships between large and small firms in managing health and safety.
- This scheme is open to companies operating in any sector.

The scheme is a national programme of the United Kingdom. It is designed to operate at a regional level.

The 'Good neighbour' forum scheme is designed to encourage supportive relationships between large and small firms in managing health and safety. In particular, it aims to build upon existing relationships between large firms and the smaller businesses that are contracted to supply them with goods and services.

This scheme is open to companies operating in any sector. The emphasis is upon improving health and safety standards within small businesses, but is designed to involve large and medium-sized businesses, the focus of the initiative being upon developing relationships between different sizes of company. Participation by businesses is voluntary and there are no fees involved.

The scheme was officially launched in 1997. The scheme is financed, organised and facilitated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) with key partners. The HSE is the national health and safety regulator.

### Background

The 'Good Neighbour' initiative was formulated following extensive consultations with relevant stakeholders.

This scheme is not limited to specific occupational safety and health (OSH) issues. It has sufficient flexibility to address a very wide range of OSH/safety

management issues. Participating companies are encouraged to address those issues that are relevant to them or those issues that gain support through the discussion forums.

In the UK, there are 3.7 million businesses, 99 % of which are small firms. Many of these firms have limited in-house health and safety expertise. Injury rates tend to be higher in small firms, for example, fatal and amputation injury rates in small manufacturing workplaces (< 50 employees) are double those in large workplaces (> 250 employees).

Since the start of the scheme in 1997, 11 forums have been held, each attracting an average of 70 participants from various industrial sectors, i.e. the forums have involved representatives of approximately 770 businesses.

### Ambitions and goals

These are to allow SMEs to learn from the experience of larger businesses in developing effective health and safety management systems.

Many small businesses are involved in the supply chain, providing goods and services to larger organisations. Larger organisations frequently have greater resources to devote to workplace health and safety management. The scheme seeks to extend the cooperation which already exists between larger and small businesses to health and safety issues, i.e. allowing small businesses to learn from larger businesses and thereby improve their standards of health and safety.

The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) strategic plan for 1999–2002 contained a specific commitment to increase levels of awareness and participation in ‘Good neighbour’ schemes amongst large employers by 50 % each year for the period 1999–2002.

The principal aims of the forums are as follows:

- for larger firms to make a public commitment to help smaller organisations with managing OSH issues;
- for the small businesses attending forums to become aware of the range of OSH advice which is being offered and encourage them to take up the offer of support;
- to stimulate interest amongst businesses not already participating in the scheme;
- to change attitudes to health and safety in small firms and promote behaviour which will lead to improved performance.

### Scope of the action

The focus is on involving representatives of small, medium-sized and large businesses. The scheme is ideally suited to larger businesses and those organisations that subcontract to them, which tend to be small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The ‘Good Neighbour’ network comprises organisations that promote the scheme and which are actively involved in other health and safety initiatives. Partners include the HSC/E, the British Safety Council, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the British Chamber of Commerce, the Institution of Occupational Safety and the Engineering Employers’ Federation and representatives of a range of other health and safety associations that have been involved in the forums.

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*‘Getting the small firms and large organisations together worked well and representatives of small firms particularly appreciated the offers of help from the larger organisations such as offers of places on training courses. Small firms appeared to value the face-to-face contact with other stakeholders and many showed enthusiasm for the opportunity to talk informally to others, including HSE inspectors and workplace contact officers.’*  
(Pauline Nash, HSE)

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Under the ‘Good Neighbour’ scheme, half-day discussion forums are held at a range of geographical locations. The forums are organised by the HSE with one of the larger participating organisations (the key partners) in each geographical location. The key partner makes the arrangements for the event; the HSE provides support with funding for the venue etc., and free health and safety information and advice.

Potential participants in the forum are identified at the outset, usually with the help of the key partner which will have the advantage of local knowledge in the relevant geographical region. A suitable number of large organisations, typically between four and six, agree to invite members of their safety committees and select a number of small firms with which they have an established business relationship. Representatives of the participating large organisations are encouraged to give brief presentations about what they are doing to manage health and safety in their organisations. The forums are also designed to encourage open discussions on topical health and safety issues, in particular those of concern to participating organisations. Health and safety experts, including representatives of the regulator (HSE), are also on hand at the forums to provide additional input, but the focus is on ‘neighbourliness’ between the partners.

Guidelines for the format for conducting a forum are provided by the HSE. The details include how to contact participants, guidelines for preparing the outline programme, good management of the event and examples of topics to be addressed.

The preference is for one of the large participating companies to host the meeting with the HSE/C adopting a facilitator role, designed to encourage interaction between the various stakeholders.

The following table provides some examples of ‘Good neighbour’ initiatives that have arisen from the forums:

| Industrial sector of lead company | Region     | Forum topics   | ‘Good Neighbour’ initiative  |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--|--|
| Healthcare                        | Mid-Wales  | Manual handling and personal safety.   | Provided manual handling and personal safety training, using recognised Susy Lamplough Trust Trainers. Organised a back care exhibition during European H&S Week 2000, |
| Engineering                       | South-West | Risk-assessment training for contractors. Help with safety policies.                                   | Arranged in-house health and safety training for contractors. Environmental training for contractors.  |
| Retail                            | Midlands   | Full review of policy. Risk assessments across the business. Encouraging greater employee involvement. | Assistance with risk assessment. Assistance with training. Sharing of expertise.   |
| Offshore drilling                 | Scotland   | Industry step change initiatives, safety leadership training, safety programmes.                       | Provision of instruction and training.   |

### Problems encountered during the action implementation

Some events have been more successful in attracting participants than others. The reason for this variability is multifaceted, making it difficult to define criteria for success. One contributing factor relates to the organisational arrangements

made by the larger participating companies, their commitment and access to interested parties being significant factors.

Despite the variability in levels of attendance between forums, all sessions were attended by representatives of the relevant organisations.

### Results and evaluation of the action

An evaluation of the scheme was conducted by the Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL, 2001). The evaluation consisted of a small-scale qualitative study, using three focused discussion groups, to elicit the opinions of representatives of participating businesses (small and medium-sized) on the usefulness of the 'Good neighbour' forums they had attended. The evaluation aimed to provide the HSE with information on any actions SMEs had taken to improve their health and safety management as a result of attending the forums. It also sought information on the sustainability of the initiatives implemented as a result of the forums, recommendations for their future format, and broader recommendations on the 'Good Neighbour' scheme per se.

The evaluation determined that the aims of the 'Good Neighbour' forums appear to have been partially met (see aims above).

- Participants considered the 'Good Neighbour' scheme to have potential in improving communication of health and safety information to small businesses. However, there was a widely held view that, for the optimal benefit to be derived, the regulator (HSE) would need to provide a more proactive lead, in order to maintain the momentum of the initiative. There was, however, a notable willingness amongst a number of participating large firms to commit themselves to helping smaller organisations in this way. The forums held appear to have been relatively successful, but the concept did not appear to be self-sustaining on the basis of a single meeting.
- Small businesses that attended the forums heard about potential help in improving their health and safety management, but felt that there would need to be more active external encouragement to engage a large number of small firms to take part. It was apparent that there was some confusion as to whether small businesses were expected to initiate further contact after the forum or whether the large organisations or HSE would take the lead.
- The evaluation did not address the third aim.
- The evaluation found little direct evidence that the forums have changed attitudes to health and safety in small firms.

There was a liking for the concept of partnerships and for cooperation between companies. The message from the focus group participants was that the forums were a good idea, but lacked direction and leadership.

Future 'Good Neighbour' forums should be improved in the following ways:

- more time for dialogue between small contractors and larger organisations should be built into the forums;
- smaller (fewer participants in each) sector-specific forums would engender freer and more engaging debate between participants, with the potential to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation;
- the roles of all participants, in particular the HSE and the large organisations, should be clearly stipulated from the beginning;
- follow-up meetings or forums are required to maintain momentum and to provide a further means through which cooperation can be developed.

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*'Following the evaluation and its recommendations, we made some changes to the forums. We now try to ensure that there is follow-up action after the event to keep the momentum of good neighbourly behaviour continuing. We have held separate topic/sector-specific events. We have allowed more time for delegates to network at the forums. And we have encouraged the larger organisations doing presentations to focus their talk towards small firms' delegates.'*  
(Pauline Nash, HSE)

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## Identified success criteria

The success of the forums depended on meaningful input from the various participants. The HSE played an important facilitating role in the development and funding of the 'Good neighbour' scheme. HSE representatives also provided useful background information for organisers of the forums, OSH expertise at the forums and free literature. OSH organisations also provided useful contacts and support.

A number of larger companies developed/enhanced their relationship with small business contacts, providing relevant OSH support and advice. As a result of the forums, a number of small businesses demonstrated a motivation to enhance their understanding and standards of occupational safety and health.

## Is the method/process/action transferable?

'Good Neighbour' forums could potentially be applied in most European contexts. A prerequisite for success seems to be that a third-party organisation should adopt a facilitator role. In the UK context, this has been the HSE; however, there would seem to be scope for other bodies adopting this role in other contexts.

The evaluation of the 'Good neighbour' forums identified certain weaknesses within the forum arrangements. These weaknesses stand as useful lessons to be taken account of before attempts are made to launch equivalent schemes elsewhere.

The forums held so far have each had identifiable differences that relate to participating companies. Organisers should be mindful of the particular interests and requirements of participants, and that they may vary from one context to the next.

Taking account of the valuable insights from the pilot programme discussed, in essence, it seems reasonable to conclude that the 'Good neighbour' concept offers potential as a source of lasting commitment and knowledge sharing on the issue of OSH (see section above).

There is a need for the forums to be facilitated by a third-party organisation, which can provide the technical lead as well as deal with practical issues such as scheduling and organising meetings of the forum. In this case, the health and safety regulator (HSE) took the lead, but other OSH organisations or large businesses could organise forums.

The forums should be promoted as a spur for further communication between participating companies and become associated with a lasting commitment to shared learning and OSH. The larger participating organisations should agree to organise follow-up OSH events and monitor the progress of the 'Good neighbour' scheme.

Forum meetings should be sector/industry-specific, so that issues discussed are of maximal relevance to participating organisations.

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*'Good Neighbour' forums could potentially be applied in most European contexts. A prerequisite for success seems to be that a third-party organisation should adopt a facilitator role*

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# 3.

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ACTIONS TAKEN AT THE  
REGIONAL LEVEL

# 3.1. WORKSHOP ON RISK ASSESSMENT FOR SMEs — BELGIUM

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## Key points

- The employer can use the tool himself.
- The tool is easy to use and not too time-consuming.
- It gives the business owner an overview of the risks in his company.
- The tool takes legal requirements as its starting point, so that the business owner can broadly check compliance with them.

The risk-evaluation tool designed in this scheme for SMEs, especially smaller ones, satisfies a number of success criteria.

Of a total of about 237 467 businesses in Belgium, roughly 230 177 have 50 employees or fewer (Social Security Department, 2000). These businesses provide jobs to half of Belgium's national workforce.

The frequency of accidents in the workplace is higher in small companies than in large ones. In businesses with fewer than 50 employees, the accident rate is one third higher than in those with more than 200 employees (Belgian Inspection Services figures, 2000).

PreBes, the professional association of prevention advisers in Flanders, has developed a tool that should enable small businesses to carry out their own risk survey and evaluation. The tool consists of a questionnaire that runs through the legal requirements, linked to good practice guidelines.

The current electronic version of the checklist dates from 1997 and is an update of the checklist first printed, which only evaluated occupational health risks. In 1999, improvements were made to the software and, in 2001, the content of the checklist was revised.

PreBes has been promoting the tool at information sessions in the various Flemish provinces, with cooperation from the Inspection Services. Its target group consists of all SMEs, regardless of the number of employees or the sector. In practice, businesses with fewer than 20 employees are being particularly targeted, as these do not employ an internal prevention officer. In these

businesses, the employer himself takes on the role of prevention adviser. This accounts for 216 808 businesses, employing 33 % of the workforce.

PreBes hopes in this way to support small companies in complying with legal requirements in having access to the tools that will enable them to take the necessary measures themselves as far as possible.

### Background of the action

The Well-being of the Workers Act of 4 August 1996, in implementing the framework directive, imposes on all employers, including small and medium-sized companies, the requirement to carry out a risk analysis. The analysis forms part of a dynamic approach to risks, in which the risks are responded to systematically and in a manner that takes account of changes and developments. Employers are given the freedom they need to devise a policy that is suited to the company's situation.

Belgian legislation and regulations stipulate that companies with less than 20 employees must call in an external prevention and protection service for advice regarding risk analysis. However, smaller businesses often regard the contracting-out of risk analysis as too expensive. Providing them with a tool that makes it relatively easy for them to map out their situation helps keep their costs under control.

The dynamic risk-management system is based on management principles, and should enable companies to adopt a systematic approach to prevention. The system is based on the well-known Plan-Do-Check-Act model used in the total quality system for continual improvement in all activities. The system places an emphasis on identifying core activities, determining target results, measuring results, comparing them with these targets and taking corrective actions. This produces a perpetual system, continuously improving results.



The dynamic risk-management system consists of the following principles:

- devising the policy: describing objectives and the means of achieving them;
- drawing up a policy programme including methods, assignments, requirements and resources for all parties concerned;
- implementing the policy and defining responsibilities of the parties concerned;
- evaluating the policy: establishing evaluation criteria.

The results of the risk analysis and the various measures are set out in a five-year general prevention plan and an annual action plan.

## Ambitions and goals of the action

Small and medium-sized companies experience difficulties with drawing up the risk analysis and maintaining a management system. They need ready-made tools for identifying and mapping out the various risks.

The intention behind the internal hygiene risk-evaluation system (IHRS) was to provide a user-friendly risk-survey and evaluation tool. On the basis of this development, a number of objectives were proposed:

- the target group is business owners and management; they must use the tool themselves;
- the tool must be easy to use and not too time-consuming;
- it must give the business owner an overview of the risks in his company;
- the tool must take legal requirements as its starting point, so that the business owner can broadly comply with them.

The tool may be used in all types of business, regardless of sector or size. The idea is that the IHRS should enable small companies to recognise and evaluate potential risks. No supporting activities are planned.

PreBes has recognised the need for support to be provided to smaller companies, and has organised information sessions throughout Flanders in order to explain the principles of the dynamic risk-management system and to present a detailed risk-evaluation tool.

## Scope of the action

The risk analysis working group at PreBes is planning five information sessions in each of the provinces of Flanders. The target group consists of SMEs in Flanders, regardless of sector or size of company. The first information session was organised for the east and west Flemish SMEs. The target attendance figure was around 50.

PreBes is financing the information sessions. The cost is EUR 91.96 for members and EUR 144.96 for non-members.

### *Programme*

The Ministry of Employment and Labour's Work Humanisation Department is cooperating in the programme. More specifically, a representative of the inspectorate explains the welfare regulations, including the risk-analysis requirement, the dynamic risk-management system and the general prevention plan.

An SME leader then gives an account of how his business is responding to the legislation and how it is setting about managing the risks in an economically responsible manner.

Because of cultural differences, both speakers are chosen from whichever province the information sessions are organised in.

In the third section of the information session, the internal hygiene risk-evaluation system (IHRS) is presented as a simple and effective tool for carrying out a risk evaluation.

### *Presentation of the internal hygiene risk-evaluation system (IHRS)*

At the end of the 1980s, PreBes developed a first instrument enabling companies to carry out an occupational health assessment. The tool served as

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*The results of the risk analysis and the various measures are set out in a five-year general prevention plan and an annual action plan*

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*The tool may be used in all types of business, regardless of sector or size*

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a very simple and affordable instrument that was primarily intended for SME managers of the association.

The application of the instrument was widened with the introduction of the law on well-being and the principles of risk analysis and the dynamic risk-management system. This system should ultimately allow all risks in a company to be systematically analysed and dealt with.

The IHRS is an analysis and evaluation tool for evaluating the areas of general and specific (occupational) hygiene and (occupational) safety and health in a business or organisation. The tool is available in printed format and on CD-ROM.

It is based on the legal requirements in the welfare at work code, supplemented by the 'good manufacture and maintenance practices' (GMMPs).

The evaluation is performed with reference to eight separate sections, each of which deals with one theme. For the sake of recognisability and ease of use, the same classification is used as in the welfare at work code as far as possible.

| Titles | IHRS and code for the well-being at work      |
|--------|---|
| T1     | General principles                            |
| T2     | Organisational structures                     |
| T3     | Workplaces                                    |
| T4     | Environmental factors and physical agents     |
| T5     | Chemical, carcinogenic and biological agents  |
| T6     | Work equipment                                |
| T7     | Personal equipment                            |
| T8     | Specific types of workers and work situations |

Examples of themes:

T1. General principles

- 1.2. General principles with regard to the prevention policy in the company
  - 1.2.2. The employer takes care of a structured and planned prevention approach by means of a dynamic risk-management system

T7. Personal equipment

- 7.2. Personal protective equipment
  - 7.2.1. A risk analysis has been performed as well as an evaluation of the risks which could not be avoided by other preventive measures

Each section is composed of a number of checklists, each of which describes a particular aspect of the theme. Each checklist consists of a series of points for checking. For each point, the employer checks whether or not he meets the set requirements. After conducting the check, he carries out the indicated evaluation.

The evaluation of the situations can be done in seven different ways, depending on the nature of the point. The points may relate to legal requirements or codes

*The user calculates the total positive and negative points separately for each checklist and for each section. The total numbers of positive and negative points per section correspond to an evaluation factor*

of good practice. These codes of good practice are called GMMPs or 'good manufacture and maintenance practices'.

If a legal requirement is not being met, the user is awarded negative points, while compliance with a code of good practice earns positive points. The user calculates the total positive and negative points separately for each checklist and for each section. The total numbers of positive and negative points per section correspond to an evaluation factor. The product of the evaluation factors and the totals per section are compared with value tables to provide an idea of the level of the department or work environment in question.

### Problems encountered during the action implementation

No particular problem was reported during the design phase. The usual publicity channels were used to advertise the information sessions: information leaflets, the web site and mailings to those on the PreBes membership list.

The number of participants at the session (around 20) was fewer than expected. The disappointing uptake is attributed to two factors:

- The relative inaccessibility of SMEs. PreBes is a professional association that mainly caters to medium-sized and large enterprises and authorities. Chambers of commerce will be used for the advertising campaign for the four remaining information sessions that are planned.
- The timing of the information session. It is often difficult for SME owners/managers to find time during the day. The subsequent sessions will be scheduled for the early evening.

In view of the limited uptake, it appears that these channels are insufficiently focused.

### Results and evaluation of the action

The IHRS is used to map out risks. The tool links in directly with current legislation. For each theme, the legal requirements are repeated, so that the employer is able both to identify risks and check whether or not he meets the requirements.

Use of the tool requires no specific training. The employer can directly survey the situation in his own organisation as regards risks, and use a simple method to decide on an approach to managing those risks. The tool has been specifically developed for smaller companies, but is widely applicable.

In all, 1 500 copies of the risk-evaluation system have already been sold. PreBes has not collected any data regarding the distribution of the tool. The total cost of the scheme is around EUR 1 500. The sale price is EUR 37.18, excluding VAT.

It is expected that the information sessions will promote the use of the IHRS as a risk-assessment tool. The information sessions were not originally devised as an element in a wider scheme of supporting activities for the IHRS tool, since the sessions were aimed at informing the SME employers on the risk-assessment requirement.

The performance of a risk evaluation is only one element in the systematic approach envisaged by legislators in this area. The devising of a dynamic risk-management system is inspired by the principles of total quality management, and encourages ongoing improvement of all aspects of the organisation. It is

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*'The law requiring every business to perform a risk survey and evaluation dates back to 1996. Six years later, we can see that the smaller companies are still looking for tools with which to meet this requirement.'* (D. Callewaert, Chairman of the PreBes risk analysis working group)

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*The added value of the instrument with regard to the safety and health of the employees lies in the fact that it offers a handy tool for setting up global prevention plans in companies. The results of the analyses provide an inventory of risks as well as a strategy for preventing them*

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left up to the employer to decide on a systematic approach to prevention management and improvement planning.

### Identified success criteria

The IHRS is a risk-evaluation tool for companies, especially smaller ones, which satisfies a number of success criteria:

- the employer can use the tool himself;
- the tool is easy to use and not too time-consuming;
- it gives the business owner an overview of the risks in his company;
- the tool takes legal requirements as its starting point, so that the business owner can broadly check compliance with them.

For the information sessions at which the tool is presented to be successful, a number of criteria should be borne in mind:

- With regard to the programme itself:
  - the speakers should preferably be from the local region;
  - information on legislation should be provided by a representative of the authority in question;
  - a simple evaluation tool should be presented;
  - a fellow business leader with wide experience should offer reference.
- With regard to the advertising campaign:
  - there should be liaison with organisations that represent the SMEs, i.e. chambers of commerce or others.

The added value of the instrument with regard to the safety and health of the employees lies in the fact that it offers a handy tool for setting up global prevention plans in companies. The results of the analyses provide an inventory of risks as well as a strategy for preventing them.

### Is the method/process/action transferable?

The tool and the supporting information session are transferable, provided the suggested improvements are taken on board.

The tool is not sector-specific, and can be applied by any SME. The tool can likewise form the basis for a sector-specific approach, provided it is adjusted to take sector-specific risks into account.

### Further information

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## 3.2. DEVELOPMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES TAILORED TO SMEs — DENMARK



### Key points

- Services to small enterprises must be based on personal contact with a positive approach.
- The concerned occupational health and safety professionals need development of their qualifications to work with small enterprises.
- The organisation of the service must be tailored to meet the needs of the small enterprises. Focus should be on more or less hidden economic, legislative or professional constraints.

The Danish occupational health services are a part of the working environment system, which is a system of institutions carrying out the activities necessary to provide a safe and sound work environment. The working environment system includes safety organisations of enterprises, trade safety councils, occupational health services and labour inspection. According to the Danish Working Environment Act of June 1998, all enterprises within certain, mainly industrial, sectors are required to affiliate with an occupational health service. In addition to this, all enterprises must undertake a workplace assessment. In many cases though, the occupational health services are regarded as the principal preventive services whose objective is to support affiliated enterprises and their safety organisations. The occupational health services are independent of the primary healthcare system, and therefore they have no formal relation to national health authorities.

Developing a model for occupational health services for small enterprises was undertaken because of an ongoing discussion about possibilities and constraints for reaching small enterprises both among OHS professionals and on a more political level. Especially, the efficiency of the occupational health service in providing services for small enterprises has been impugned.

The project was conducted at the Occupational Health Service Centre (OHS) of Frederiksborg in Northern Zealand. The OHS established a project group of four persons, which was assisted by two researchers from CASA (Centre for Alternative Social Analysis) and a psychologist responsible for supervision.

*Developing a model for occupational health services for small enterprises was undertaken*

The Occupational Health Service Centre of Frederiksborg has 350 affiliated member enterprises with less than 10 employees. These enterprises cover about 10 % of the total number of affiliated employees.

## Background

The poor efficiency of service provided for small enterprises has been pointed out in a number of different contexts, for instance by the survey of OHS services carried out by the National Working Environment Board. The survey showed that only a minority of the small enterprises that had contracted to these services used their help efficiently to enhance their occupational safety and health.

The cooperation of occupational health service units and small workplaces could have the desired, favourable effect on the welfare of the workplaces, working communities and employees. The occupational health service has a central role to play in motivating small enterprises to introduce enhancement measures.

A starting point of the project was the observation that SMEs very seldom contact the OHS. Table 1 shows that over the last eight years the OHS has been in contact with a little more than half of the small enterprises with which it has contracts. The contact has been more frequent with industry than with the other sectors.

Table 1: Number of contacts during the period 1 January 1991 to 4 June 1999

| Branches               | Number of SMEs in OHS Frederiksborg | Enterprises with contacts regarding OSH | Contact in order to negotiate contracts | Enterprises contacted in total |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Industry               | 73                                  | 42                                      | 20                                      | 62                             |
| Construction           | 137                                 | 18                                      | 2                                       | 20                             |
| Hotels and restaurants | 61                                  | 11                                      | 20                                      | 31                             |
| Other branches         | 67                                  | 58                                      | 8                                       | 66                             |
| TOTAL                  | 338                                 | 129                                     | 50                                      | 179                            |

The target group was all the small enterprises that are members of the Occupational Health Service Centre of Frederiksborg. The main sectors represented are industry, construction and accommodation services (hotels and restaurants). The overall target was to make a visit to all member SMEs — 338 in total.

## Aims and goals

To develop an extensive service profile suitable for small enterprises, which could be included in daily operation, was the main aim of the project. The centre received funds for a pilot project from the National Working Environment Board and the project was carried out from 1999 to 2000. An additional goal was to establish a special membership pool for the small enterprises to ensure that they receive better service from the OHS for their OHS unit membership fee. Most of the OHS units work more with the larger enterprises and hence the less active SMEs have practically funded these larger enterprises' occupational health services.

### Scope of the action

A project group of four persons, which was assisted by two researchers from CASA and a psychologist responsible for supervision, was established by the OHS. The project was furthermore divided into a number of different phases:

- interviews with 10 owners of small enterprises about prior experience with the OHS and future expectations;
- development of methods and service offers;
- introductory visits;
- internal mid-term evaluation;
- introduction visits continued and provision of various other services, for example advice during visits to the enterprises;
- final internal evaluation;
- external evaluation.

Specifically tailored consultations, which better meet the needs of the small enterprises, were made possible by a special 'small enterprise membership pool'. It was at first feared that these specific consultations would entail more costs for the individual companies. However, the experience from the project indicates that small enterprises only rarely need more comprehensive advice and many consultation hours. The surplus funds remaining after the direct enterprise consultations are used for outreach activities.

Besides the membership pool, a number of other elements were included in the project:

- A personal contact person arrangement. Contact persons paid visits to specific companies.
- A telephone duty watch for 'here-and-now' responses.
- A special workplace assessment method developed for small enterprises.
- Tailored after-work seminars with presentation of, among other things, the workplace assessment method and other special topics designed for small enterprises.
- Seminars focused on practical exchange of experience between SMEs.
- Contacts between small enterprises and local employers' associations and organisation of joint activities.
- An information strategy tailored to the target group, including a newsletter for the companies and articles in a local weekly journal.

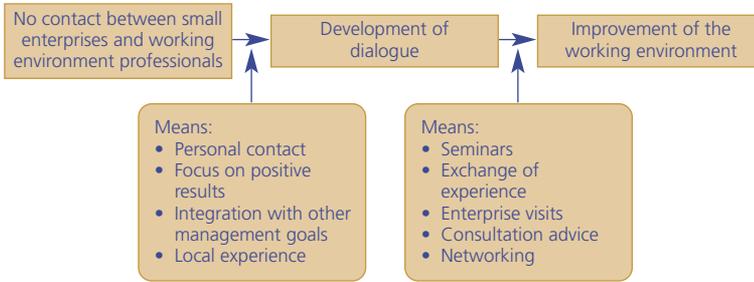
An important part of the project was the development of the consultant qualifications for working with small enterprises. The consultant needed to learn to achieve enhancements of existing initiatives, and to take a positive approach acknowledging existing efforts and achievements rather than strictly follow the traditional problem-oriented approach. It is crucial to establish a confidence-based dialogue with the small entrepreneur to achieve real success in initiating preventive health and safety measures. The figure below illustrates the method applied to establish an active client–principal relationship between the consultant and the entrepreneur.

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*'All the fancy methods for written/electronic service will only be used by a very small minority of the small enterprises.'* (Associate Professor Peter Hasle, Technical University of Denmark)

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The approach to working environment initiatives aimed at small enterprises



Results and evaluation

Two internal evaluations were carried out by the project group assisted by the researchers. The results were assessed and learning points and corrections of future activities were discussed. In addition to the internal evaluations, the whole OHS development programme was evaluated externally. The external evaluation collected written information from the project, interviewed the members of the project group and five owners of small enterprises.

In all, 180 (56 %) of 324 enterprises were visited by the OHS consultants during the project. This was considered a relatively successful rate. It was found during the mid-term evaluation that most of the small enterprises visited had given a positive feedback and also indicated satisfaction with the attempts from the occupational health service to offer them special assistance. Table 2 shows the number of visits and consultation areas during the project. Practically all the small enterprise owners contacted beforehand have accepted the offer of a contact person’s visit to their company — only a few have declined. Many of the company owners (more than expected) have also requested assistance to solve specific working environment problems.

Table 2: The time used in the small companies and the consulting area

| Type of consultation  | Metal industry          |             | Construction            |             | Hotels and restaurants  |             | Other branches          |             | All together            |             |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                       | Number of consultations | Hours spent |
| Introduction visit    | 48                      | 132         | 84                      | 234         | 29                      | 136         | 19                      | 95          | 180                     | 599         |
| Workplace assessment  | 8                       | 66          | 11                      | 38          | 26                      | 101         | 16                      | 31          | 61                      | 235         |
| Ergonomic             | 4                       | 21          | 3                       | 10          | 7                       | 20          | 2                       | 9           | 16                      | 59          |
| Technology            | 22                      | 92          | 10                      | 30          | 18                      | 39          | 13                      | 46          | 62                      | 206         |
| OD                    | 4                       | 7           | 2                       | 10          | 6                       | 13          | 2                       | 24          | 15                      | 53          |
| Health                | 5                       | 34          | 2                       | 4           |                         |             | 4                       | 10          | 11                      | 47          |
| Cooperation agreement | 1                       | 1           |                         |             | 2                       | 5           |                         |             | 3                       | 6           |
| All together          | 92                      | 353         | 112                     | 326         | 88                      | 314         | 56                      | 215         | 348                     | 1 205       |

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*Many consultants found it difficult to switch from the problem orientation to a more positive approach*

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A good number of participants have also taken part in the seminars organised. The seminars organised in other small enterprises were the most popular ones. Sometimes, however, the company owner who had signed up did not participate in the seminar, resulting in a waste of resources when the consultant travelled in vain to the companies. Very often, the reason was claimed to be 'more important' things in their company.

For the consultants, the project has also been a fruitful learning experience. Many consultants found it difficult to switch from the problem orientation to a more positive approach. The questions to be asked are:

- What kind of services can we offer these small enterprises with their special problems?
- How much shall we tolerate if the company owners have a negative attitude towards the OHS because they regard it to be extra tax?

The initial visits to many companies, visited rarely in earlier years, entailed a heavy workload for the consultants. Despite these additional activities, the consultants also kept up consultations for larger companies. The organisation of the first visit to the small companies took more time than expected due to lack of previous personal contact between the enterprise and the OHS consultant.

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*'Focus should be on more or less hidden economic, legislative or professional constraints when you are working with SMEs.'*  
(Associate Professor Peter Hasle, Technical University of Denmark)

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### Identified success criteria

Although it is too early to extract any analysed results from the consequences of the project, some tendencies can be seen. It seems that the small enterprises visited are now more likely to contact the occupational health services. These companies have also created a purchasing plan for equipment needed for an occupational expert. Additionally, some companies have created guidelines for handling chemical solvents together with occupational experts.

The development of better contacts between small enterprises and the OHS and more systematic working environment activities showed good results in short-term evaluation. Whether the effect will be long-lasting will depend very much on the continuity of the OHS services.

This project proved that the positive approach, development of qualification of OHS staff and the necessary organisation of a professional organisation to fit to small enterprises are the success criteria for these kinds of SME projects.

### Is the method/process/action transferable?

The project plan is transferable to other companies, but modifications are needed to comply with the national working environment system.

Further projects with a similar approach should consider especially the following issues:

- Qualification of the professionals. Many consultants are not used to working with small enterprises and the skill gap is much larger than they often expect.
- Making clear the more or less hidden economic, legislative or professional constraints is important.
- Face-to-face contacts are crucial.

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*Many consultants are not used to working with small enterprises and the skill gap is much larger than they often expect*

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**Further information**

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## 3.3. INTER-ENTERPRISE SAFETY COORDINATOR — FRANCE



### Key points

This action was based on the following observations:

- There is no safety structure in the SMEs of the meat-processing industry.
- It would be advisable for small and medium-sized businesses to develop a prevention approach.

This project consisted in hiring an inter-enterprise safety coordinator to provide assistance to businesses with less than 200 employees.

The main objective was to help businesses with the implementation of a specific prevention policy.

The meat-processing sector is characterised by a large number of occupational injuries. This is why the social partners, represented at the National Health Insurance Fund, selected this sector to become the scope of a particular prevention action (called the sectoral participative approach).

In this context, the regional health insurance fund of the Loire region (CRAM des Pays de la Loire) conducted a two-year experimental action that consisted in encouraging regional businesses to implement a global prevention policy with the assistance of an inter-enterprise safety coordinator.

The businesses concerned with this project were slaughterhouses, and meat-carving and meat wholesale businesses with less than 200 employees.

On 1 September 1997, a regional convention concerning the setting-up of a partnership for improving the safety and health of workers in the meat-processing sector was signed by trade federations, the employers' union of Sarthe and the CRAM des Pays de la Loire, in order to define the terms and conditions of this project and the role of each partner.

This approach was characterised by close cooperation between the various organisations listed above, in order to mobilise professionals and have them take charge of occupational risk prevention in their businesses.

The role of the multi-enterprise safety coordinator is to propose business-specific prevention actions and to make practical tools available to each company as well as to increase operator awareness and check that actions are correctly implemented.

## Background

The activities of slaughterhouses, meat-carving shops and wholesale butchers have always been a high-risk sector for occupational injuries. In 1993, it was observed that, in this sector, one employee in four had an accident every year, on average.

The major risks include:

- lifting and handling (46 % of accidents);
- cuts (31 %);
- slips and falls on a level (18 %).

A number of actions were conducted by several prevention organisations, but their impact proved rather low, first of all because business managers were not aware of the importance of a prevention approach.

A new prevention strategy was implemented by the French National Health Insurance Fund to answer the following questions: How can we make business managers aware of the importance of improving working conditions and employee safety? How should we convince them?

The 'sectoral participative approach' is based on the concept that the industrial sector and the businesses should progressively take responsibility for the resolution of their own prevention problems in order to achieve some autonomy in this field. The experimental action developed by CRAM des Pays de la Loire and initially planned for one year took place in this context. Its objective was to assist businesses in the meat-processing industry to implement a specific prevention policy.

The concrete implementation of this action consisted in a regional partnership agreement between national federations of butchers, the employers' union of Sarthe and CRAM des Pays de la Loire resulting then in the signature of a membership contract between each business and the employers' union of Sarthe.

In 1998, which was the first year of the project, 10 businesses became members. In 1999, two businesses renewed their contract and five additional businesses decided to become members. Within the two-year period, a total of 15 businesses (altogether 865 employees) took part in the project. The financial participation of CRAM des Pays de la Loire amounted to some EUR 46 000.

Due to its experimental nature, this action was discontinued after the two years. Another reason for ending the project was that the member companies had to face new problems such as the 'mad cow disease crisis' and difficulties in hiring new employees, especially because of the introduction of new regulations concerning the 35-hour week in France.

## Ambitions and goals

The main objective of this project was to assist small and medium-sized enterprises of the meat-processing sector in the Pays de la Loire region in putting into effect new safety principles, aimed at reducing the number of occupational injuries, through regular meetings with a safety coordinator (at least 10 days per year and per business) over a one-year period.

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*The activities of slaughterhouses, meat-carving shops and wholesale butchers have always been a high-risk sector for occupational injuries*

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This action was not meant for the long term but it made it possible for member companies to engage in an active prevention approach.

### Scope of the action

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*'In a sector where the scope of prevention is very large, the intervention of a third party is likely to be more neutral than that of an institutional agent. Any company that contributed to this project, even with a small financial contribution, expects something in return.'* (Albert Servant, CRAM des Pays de la Loire)

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The regional convention signed by the partners in September 1997 included a definition of the various roles and a description of the process to be followed.

By signing this convention, the employers' union of Sarthe agreed to the following commitments:

- Hire a safety coordinator, shared between several businesses, for a one-year period and keep an office available for him.
- Sign a membership contract with all businesses interested in this project, to define the practical modes of intervention.

The professional federations agreed to the following commitments:

- Promote the acknowledgement of a global prevention approach among their members.
- Provide guidance to the member companies and get their feedback as to the results of this approach.

The CRAM des Pays de la Loire made the following commitments:

- Promote the acknowledgement of a global prevention approach among regional businesses.
- Support the safety coordinator by providing him with additional training and by helping him in his mission to the enterprises.
- Make an assessment of this experimental action and make sure the results are spread among the representatives of the profession.

In order to promote this project, the partners sent a common letter to all regional businesses belonging to the meat-processing industry. Staff of the prevention department of CRAM visited the 35 businesses targeted for this action. These businesses had between 10 and 200 employees. Of the 35 businesses, 10 agreed to sign a membership contract the first year. One half of the costs of this action were supported by CRAM and the other half by the businesses (at a cost of EUR 46 per employee).

The motivations of the businesses that decided to join this project included:

- high frequency rate of occupational injuries;
- high cost of accidents;
- difficulty in hiring new employees in the event of absenteeism due to sick leave;
- need for an assessment of the situation;
- desire to induce a change in employees' behaviour and increase staff motivation;
- low financial cost per employee.

The safety coordinator's mission consisted in assisting the companies in this prevention approach, by defining objectives and giving directions. The various steps of the safety coordinator's action, defined in the membership contract of the participating businesses, were as follows:

- Assessment of the situation and identification of priorities.

- Participation in the implementation of a safety contact in each business. The safety contact is a person designated within each organisation to be the preferred contact of the safety coordinator. The role of the safety contact consists in acting as a link between the management and the safety coordinator; guiding the safety coordinator within the business internal organisation; collecting information when the safety coordinator is not there; and using the practical tools implemented by the safety coordinator.
- Awareness-increasing actions aimed at all categories of staff.
- Participation in the development of prevention tools. These tools may take the following form: introductory booklet for newcomers, 'call for help' form, evacuation map, first-aid book, safety folder containing regulatory documents (certificates of compliance as well as technical instructions for new equipment).
- Participation in training courses. In this field, actions include work-related first-aid training, fire fighting and safety training.

In concrete terms, the role of the safety coordinator consisted in the assessment of the situation in each business and in a customised answer to the specific requests of each member company. He participated in actions to bring businesses into compliance with standards in terms of safety regulations and to increase the awareness of staff. The time allocated to each business amounted to two to three weeks per year.

At the request of some member companies, which wanted to renew the experience after the first year, in the same conditions, in particular with the financial participation of CRAM des Pays de la Loire, this project was continued for another year. Two successive safety coordinators were hired, each on a one-year contract. The two safety coordinators who participated in this action had studied for two years after the baccalaureate and had attended the Safety and Environment School in Limoges. Neither of them had particular knowledge of the meat-processing sector but both attended in-house company training of several weeks duration in a large business of this sector at the beginning of their contract.

The major actions carried out during this two-year experiment include:

- training and staff awareness-increasing actions;
- implementation of a welcoming procedure for newly hired staff;
- practice of accident analysis with identification of several causes;
- call to the management for decision-making in terms of investments;
- integration of safety in a research project on an ox-stall.

### Problems encountered during the action implementation

The main difficulty during the implementation of this action was that the business manager seemed to be at a loss as to how to approach the prevention issue. In view of the extent of this task, the business management often eluded this question. It appeared to be the right time to develop a simple and easy-to-use assistance tool for the business manager.

Practical sheets were designed and grouped to form a quick reference guide for the business as to the prevention policy to be implemented.

### Results and evaluation of the action

The last evaluation, carried out by CRAM des Pays de la Loire at the end of 1999, that is to say after the second year of the project, consists of:

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*The role of the safety coordinator consisted in the assessment of the situation in each business and in a customised answer to the specific requests of each member company*

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- an evaluation by the coordinator of the actions carried out in the member companies;
- an evaluation of the answers given by member companies to a questionnaire.

As a whole, this action was seen as positive for both businesses and coordinators.

It enabled businesses not only to assess the situation in terms of compliance with safety regulations, but also to acquire a specific methodology for accident analysis. It also made it possible to make operators aware of prevention, to motivate them and to promote a change in mentalities. In two instances, according to the company, the number of accidents was reduced (although no statistics are available).

Among the 15 participating companies, one was dissatisfied with the experiment because it had high expectations of the safety coordinator, especially as regards a change in employee behaviour.

The businesses that did not wish to continue the experiment after the first year gave the following reasons:

- too time-consuming;
- too general an action for the safety coordinator;
- more time needed to take advantage of the orientations given in the first year;
- too much financial commitment.

The businesses that applied for another year wanted to continue the implemented actions. Another reason for continuing this project was that business managers had become aware of the importance of prevention steps in the longer term.

Upon their arrival, the safety coordinators were struck by the lack of eagerness of member companies. In fact, the action of the safety coordinator was first felt as an obligation for member companies because it implied devoting extra time to listening to messages and organising actions. Progressively, this responsibility was handed over to the safety contact in each company. This person managed safety until the level of awareness rose among management and employees.

Despite a positive assessment, this project came to an end and was not renewed. However, the trade federations encourage their members to implement punctual actions such as awareness-raising campaigns among managers and employees as to biological risks, and the methodology for preparing a common document for risk assessment. The businesses wish to work together with employers' federations, among others, for the organisation of inter-business workgroups in which business managers can exchange views about specific subjects.

### Identified success criteria

One of the success factors of this action was the partnership between the various organisations involved, that is trade federations of the sector concerned and the prevention department of CRAM des Pays de la Loire. In fact, these organisations are the regular contacts of regional businesses. They supported the distribution of information concerning this project and helped businesses to take the initiative for such actions.

The financial participation of CRAM was another success factor. The financial burden associated with the implementation of this project was not fully borne by the businesses that already make a major contribution in the field of prevention and staff training. Only 50 % had to be paid by the businesses.

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*'In their final assessment, some businesses realised that they were able to take action in terms of prevention. The business manager became aware that he could conduct his own actions and implement a prevention policy.'* (Albert Servant, CRAM des Pays de la Loire)

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*The competency and dynamism of hired coordinators were key factors in the success of this action*

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Lastly, the competency and dynamism of hired coordinators were key factors in the success of this action. The regular presence of the safety coordinator in the organisation made it possible to remind business managers of their liabilities in terms of safety and of their duties towards the employees.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

This project would be easily transferable to another region or country, and also to another sector of activities.

The main recommendation for the implementation of such an action would be to limit the duration of the approach and the number of beneficiaries within a restricted geographical area. In fact, a large geographical scope could generate additional costs and travel times, thus reducing the impact of the action.

The experience has shown that the coordinator does not have to be an expert of the industrial sector of application. A short training period, at the beginning of the project, may be enough.

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*'Today, all safety-related concepts do have an impact on decision-making.' (Banchereau Viandes (46 employees))*

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### **Further information**

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# 3.4. PROGRÜNDER — A CONSULTANCY NETWORK FOR SMEs IN THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA LAND — GERMANY



## Key points

- Feasibility study (1 January 2000 to 30 June 2001)
- General analysis (1 August 2002 to 31 January 2004)
- Final launching (February 2004)

The objectives of the feasibility study have been met:

- Evaluation of the need for introducing the safety/health concept into consultancy for future entrepreneurs.
- Development of a process for the implementation of result-oriented occupational accident prevention in consultancy.
- Development of a checklist/advice model (the 'instrument') for entrepreneurs.

The German programmer project is a regional programme for providing future small and medium-sized business entrepreneurs with consultancy services on occupational safety. It is the fruit of cooperation between the Düsseldorf

Chamber of Commerce Environment and Energy Centre and the ASER Research Institute, which is a part of the University of Wuppertal. The project was carried out on request of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for North Rhine-Westphalia. The feasibility study was entrusted to Prospektiv GmbH, a Dortmund company that specialises in business consultancy.

This project is financed by the European Union and the North Rhine-Westphalia *Land* (NRW). It is a part of the Quatro initiative specific to this area of Germany, whose objective is to encourage small and medium-sized companies to obtain qualification standards and apply continuous evolution policies.

## Background of the action

Many small company managers see regulations as obstacles and they are not aware of the economic advantages that increased safety and better occupational disease prevention are liable to give their companies.

Many of the safety problems observed by control authorities (labour inspection) during their missions can be put down to decisions on investments that have been made without taking safety requirements into consideration.

The basic idea behind this project is to ensure that investments are made in compliance with occupational safety requirements, using specific forms of assistance and advice to entrepreneurs. In this way, notions of prevention can be given long-term support.

New companies' capacities for innovation and their competitiveness can be reinforced by the potential provided by occupational safety actions. However, for this to be the case, labour protection must be integrated into company philosophy from the very beginning and be firmly anchored in managerial and organisational concepts.

The main health and safety aspects covered by this project concern prevention of occupational risks by making future company executives aware of them, and improving acceptance of new regulations on occupational safety.

The project's main interest is in the 623 000 companies created in Germany every year and secondarily in the 125 000 companies that are taken over and the 33 000 companies that move house (1999 figures).

According to data received from the Düsseldorf Chamber of Commerce, in North Rhine-Westphalia alone, approximately 2 300 persons set up their own companies every year. The network envisaged for providing advice on prevention must provide these future company managers with relevant information and make them aware of the importance of health and safety.

## Ambitions and goals of the action

The objectives of the study were to prove the feasibility of a project for setting up a consultancy network for future entrepreneurs (1) to make them aware of occupational safety problems from the moment they begin planning their investments and (2) to give small companies advice and information on safety.

These objectives are more qualitative than quantitative. The aim is not a precise reduction in the number of occupational accidents or diseases (no figures are given on this point) but more to find the most suitable ways of making future company managers aware of the importance of prevention and encouraging

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*The objectives of the study were to prove the feasibility of a project for setting up a consultancy network for future entrepreneurs to make them aware of occupational safety problems from the moment they begin planning their investments and to give small companies advice and information on safety*

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*'We wonder to what extent making entrepreneurs aware of the importance of prevention in health and safety will influence the success of a company, give it long life and contribute to its main results. We are considering providing future entrepreneurs with examples to illustrate the economic consequences of taking these aspects into account.'* (Tanja Schulze, Prospektiv GmbH)

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them to invest in occupational health and safety. There is also the question of giving company managers a new image of public services that should be recognised as being structures that give assistance and advice and not as control organs responsible for punishing any infringements.

### Scope of the action

The target group for this project are future small and medium-sized enterprise managers, who have considerable possibilities of creating employment.

The objective is to design and develop a service offer for entrepreneurs that is based on existing advisory structures (international chambers of commerce, chambers of trade, banks, etc.) and which will enable them to take occupational safety requirements into account.

The project is divided into three phases. The feasibility study was carried out on request of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for North Rhine-Westphalia. It will be followed by a general analysis (August 2002 to January 2004) before final launching (February 2004).

The immediate objectives are to create an advice offer for small and medium-sized company entrepreneurs. This means developing a concept on advice and a network capable of meeting the following requirements:

- be close to companies that benefit from the service;
- possess a single concept for advisory services;
- coordinate consultants.

In fact, the project calls on the services of five different partners: an industrial consultancy company (Prospektiv GmbH), an academic research institute (ASER at the University of Wuppertal) and official organs: the Düsseldorf Chamber of Commerce Environment and Energy Centre, the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Regional Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (Landesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz NRW).

Prospektiv GmbH was selected for its experience in professional consultancy. The results of all the actions carried out will be analysed by the ASER Research Institute, which will also provide theoretical support. The Düsseldorf Chamber of Commerce is an essential element as it is the entrepreneurs' first discussion partner. Lastly, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is the project sponsor, while the Landesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz provides expertise for questions of health and safety.

The feasibility study has been separated into three tasks:

- Analysing the existing situation on setting up new companies.
- Developing and validating a suitable tool (a consultancy concept that enables entrepreneurs to take 'safety' aspects into account when planning their investments and carrying out experimental field tests).
- Designing a possible network for providing advisory services on safety.

The analysis has endeavoured to reply to the following main questions:

- Who are the entrepreneurs?
- What type of advice do entrepreneurs require?
- Who are the existing advisory service providers (general/private/occupational safety)?

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*'This project has no precise quantitative objectives as far as reducing the number of occupational accidents or illnesses is concerned. In fact, the feasibility study did not contain any concrete intervention, but solely research work on the importance of the "occupational safety" concept when setting up a new company. This being a pilot project where no prior experience is available, the feasibility study has enabled entrepreneurs' requirements for basic information in terms of occupational safety to be defined and suitable procedures to be developed.'* (Tanja Schulze, Prospektiv GmbH)

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- What supports exist today (documents supplied by chambers of commerce, ministries, banks and Internet sites) and what do they contain?

The second task consisted of defining the content of the advice to be given on health and safety by:

- studying the research situation on indirect effects of health and safety practices on companies;
- identifying the different methods used for calculating the economic profitability of these practices;
- making a comparison between general methods of calculation used for planning investments (GRIP) and the cost-efficiency analysis (KWA);
- identifying safety factors;
- drawing up a checklist for entrepreneurs to enable them to evaluate risks related to safety;
- evaluating this checklist in terms of quantity and quality (by means of questionnaires).

The third task was split up as follows:

- Developing and setting up a consultancy network centred on occupational safety.
- Defining two levels of advice: (1) Making people aware of health and safety problems and presenting their economic consequences. (2) Providing entrepreneurs with specialist advice.
- Identifying partners capable of providing advisory services on both levels.
- Defining advisory service content.
- Defining and editing supports (documents).
- Defining a progressive qualification concept for groups of consultants. Training consultants.

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*The method used throughout the study consisted of analysing the existing situation, proposing improvements, designing tools, validating and finally field-testing them, mainly by means of questionnaires*

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## Results and evaluation of the action

The results of the feasibility study are presented in a report of about 100 pages.

The method used throughout the study consisted of analysing the existing situation, proposing improvements, designing tools, validating and finally field-testing them, mainly by means of questionnaires.

Specific objectives were attained, as a consultancy network concept for drawing entrepreneurs' attention to occupational safety was proposed as a result of the study.

The checklist, which was one of the feasibility study's objectives, was subjected to dual quantitative and qualitative evaluation. On 14 March 2001, it was submitted for quantitative evaluation to a team of testers made up of eight potential entrepreneurs. The team was made up of seven men and one woman, aged from 26 to 58, all working in different fields of activity (orthodontics, paint-work, wood and cabinet work, orthopaedics, automobile) and possessing different levels of education (three at baccalaureate level, two at technical high-school level and three at college of further education level). All had received training in supervision, had just set up their companies (in the last two to four months) or were about to do so.

They were asked to evaluate the checklist on the basis of different criteria, and give each aspect a rating between 1 and 5:

1. The simplicity/complexity of the checklist; its coherence
2. Its intelligibility
3. Its graphic presentation and clarity
4. Use and relevance
5. Effectiveness in risk prevention/The list's 'profitability'.

Two entrepreneurs and two consultants were questioned for the qualitative evaluation at different dates to check whether the list was understandable and whether it served a useful purpose. Their suggestions for improvements were taken into account.

Globally, the checklist was considered useful and well designed.

On this basis, the general analysis (which was the second phase of the project) was launched on 1 August 2002 and it will continue until the beginning of 2004. Launching, i.e. running the consultancy network without any administrative assistance or project supervision, is planned to begin in February 2004, provided that project participants consider pursuing the project worthwhile.

### Identified success criteria

Due to the project's progress status, it is only possible to analyse the success of the feasibility study for the moment.

The study's success depended on good cooperation between the different partners, and, above all, on the method used to define entrepreneurs' real requirements and their limits to be able to suggest appropriate solutions. Moreover, field tests enabled different project ideas to be validated and improvements to be made to them.

The project is 80 % financed by the European Union and the North Rhine-Westphalia *Land*. The remaining 20 % has been provided by the other participants.

### Is the method/process/action transferable?

The effectiveness of this type of advice must be evaluated to test the possibility of transferring it to other regions and countries (on a European level).

It is already clear that the idea of providing advisory services to entrepreneurs is a good way of making them aware of 'health' and 'safety' questions. Nevertheless, this method will only have a real impact in regions where there are large numbers of small companies being set up.

Moreover, the model would need to be adapted for use by local actors promoting new company start-ups (chambers of commerce, banks, etc.).

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*'The real objective of the general analysis was to determine to what extent the checklist that had been drawn up was of use to entrepreneurs for integrating environmental protection, occupational health and safety and quality aspects into their investment plans. On the other hand, it is not possible for us to determine what effects this action may have on the health of any personnel employed by these entrepreneurs in the future.'*  
(Tanja Schulze, Prospektiv GmbH)

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### Further information

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Other web sites:  
[www.hwk-duesseldorf.de/uzh/index.htm](http://www.hwk-duesseldorf.de/uzh/index.htm)  
[www.aser.uni-wuppertal.de/projekte](http://www.aser.uni-wuppertal.de/projekte)  
[www.arbeitsschutz.nrw.de](http://www.arbeitsschutz.nrw.de) (documentation order form)

## 3.5. INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR SPREADING SAFETY CULTURE: THE COMPANY TRAINING/INFORMATION OFFICER FOR SAFETY — ITALY

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### Key points

Different phases of the project:

1. Analysis of training needs of local businesses.
2. Creation of training courses.
3. Conception and production of training media.
4. Distribution of educational material to businesses in the Province of Lucca.

The regional initiative programme (PIR) 'Integrated approach for spreading safety culture: the company training/information officer for safety' is the fruit of an initiative of the Associazione degli Industriali della Provincia di Lucca, in Tuscany (employers' organisation of the Province of Lucca).

It set up a training programme, which started in March 2000 with the presentation of the project to regional businesses during public seminars and involved representatives of around 80 companies. It finished in May 2001 with the distribution of educational material to these same businesses.

The project is run by a training organisation named CISITA-Formazione Superiore, under the patronage of the Province of Lucca and the Organismo

Paritetico Provinciale (the designated training body which groups together employer and worker representatives).

## Background

The Province of Lucca features about 1 600 businesses in the manufacturing industry, of which 99 % are small to medium-sized businesses (94 % of these employ less than 50 people). The sectors of production are quite varied: paper production and recycling, cardboard, textiles, rock quarries, shipbuilding, construction, footwear, plastic materials and rubber.

From 1996 to 1998, with a working population remaining practically constant, the number of work accidents fell notably, from 9 278 to 7 957; however, the number of fatal accidents doubled during the same period. An increase in this latter phenomenon, and, in particular, three fatal accidents occurring within the first weeks of 1999, sparked off a strong social movement involving a general strike and convocation of the Extraordinary Assembly of the Province of Lucca.

It was within this context that the Associazione degli Industriali decided to address the work safety issue by making employee training and information an absolute priority.

In a general manner, the launching of this regional initiative programme is part of the application process of the 1994 Legislative Decree No 626, which, following the European directives on improvement of health and safety in the workplace, introduced an innovative requirement relating to the vital role of worker training and information in the area of work safety. The objective was to modernise and complement the numerous workplace health and safety actions regularly undertaken in the Province of Lucca, where the social partners are particularly attentive to this issue. These included setting up committees drawing together the local partners concerned, signing agreements between social partners, and organising training sessions for workers' safety representatives (RLS), for department heads of prevention and protection (RSP), and for fire-fighting and first-aid teams.

## Ambitions and goals

The objective of the project was to encourage and enhance the development of a work safety culture inside small and medium-sized businesses, thanks to the creation of a new position within each company: the **safety training/information officer**. This person is meant to become the reference person on safety issues for employees, without thereby casting doubt on the role of the head of the Prevention and Protection Department or that of the workers' safety representative, both of which are mandatory positions under Italian labour regulations.

The job of the training/information officer is to assess the realities of the production process inside the company and to identify the major risks. Once designated and trained, this officer will in turn train the workers inside the same company focusing on the specific risks in their activity and the optimum work behaviour to adopt, collaborate with the different partners in the company on the resolution of safety issues, and encourage dialogue with the institutions. This person must also list and analyse on a company scale any reasons for lack of interest in safety-related issues, and measure the direct results of his preventive/information actions.

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*The safety training/information officer: a key role within the company: to assess the realities of the production process inside the company and to identify the major risks*

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### Scope of the action

A three-phase training programme

The first phase of the project was an analysis of needs as expressed through a local sample of industrial sector companies and based on questionnaires and interviews. The survey led to two conclusions: an absence of any real work safety culture in the workplace and an inability on the part of the company to communicate efficiently on this subject.

The company CISITA-Formazione Superiore was given the task of implementing training sessions intended for future training/information officers. These courses, covering cultural, psychological, and communication aspects of safety, and including theoretical and practical modules as well as exercises, were addressed to directors, workers' safety representatives (RLS), department coordinators, team leaders, and heads of prevention and safety, who were designated to become the key reference people in the company. The teachers in charge of these courses were work psychologists, experts in occupational hygiene and safety, as well as experts in corporate communication.

Organised by sector of activity, the courses' objective was to teach participants the following points:

- How to communicate and collaborate with partners involved in company safety issues by using a common language.
- How to elaborate training programmes and adequate operations.
- How to communicate within the company and develop a work safety culture.
- How to master the necessary methodology to develop a work safety culture in a specific professional context, in order to overcome bad habits and resistance to the application of current work safety rules and guidelines.

The themes assessed to reach the objectives laid out above were as follows:

- Modalities of organisation and safety in the company.
- Worker information and training.
- Principles and modalities relating to communication, organisation of meetings, and definition of training/information programmes.
- Use of active communication methods and techniques.
- Use of educational material adapted to situations.
- Procedures and assessment modalities of worker training/information in the company.
- Methods for the evaluation of training/information results.

A set of educational material was conceived using the needs as expressed through the preparatory survey and from discussions with training session participants.



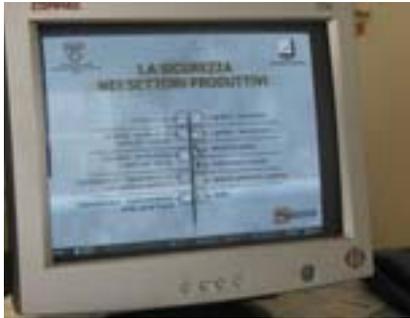
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*'Our objective was not to give traditional training courses, nor to simply make workers more aware of legislation on accident prevention in the workplace, but rather to make them truly aware of how work safety applies from beginning to end.'*  
(Associazione degli Industriali of the Province of Lucca)

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This media comprised, on the one hand, a multi-sector CD-ROM, accompanied by a manual, and, on the other hand, nine monothematic CD-ROMs (one for each sector, with the exception of building and shoemaking), accompanied by videocassettes and booklets.

- In addition to the project presentation, the multi-sector CD-ROM included a section on the theme of safety in general (progress of legislation on work accidents, practices, statistics, risk evaluation, principles of prevention), a section on safety in the relevant sectors of activity for local businesses, and a section on the resources at the disposal of the training/information officer to complete his/her mission. To this was added a glossary and numerous exercise forms.
- The purpose of the sector-based videocassettes was to focus on particularly dangerous production processes with the help of films shot in plants.



For both the first and second phases of the programme, regular meetings were held with local businesses, with the aim of measuring the extent to which the programme actually responded to the real company needs in the different sectors of activity. On top of this, a Technical Scientific Committee, composed of safety and communication experts, was assigned the task of project steering and follow-up. It was made up of academics, consultants, members of the Organismo Paritetico Provinciale, associations committed in the area work safety, and technical experts designated by the Associazione degli Industriali.

### Problems encountered

The difficulties encountered varied according to each project phase considered:

- During the analysis of needs, project initiators had difficulties in securing local business interest, support and participation for the project.
- There were also some difficulties in collecting information on safety needs in the different production sectors.
- Finally, and above all, the first project phase revealed that within the SMEs there was a lack of a person globally responsible for safety problems, and of a work safety culture.

Many briefing sessions were thus organised by the persons in charge of the Training and Safety Departments of the Associazione degli Industriali and by the experts of the training institution CISITA, in order to explain to the employers the

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*'We ardently wish for a change in the attitude of local businesses towards the whole question of safety in the workplace, and the development of a way of thinking incorporating real commitments and responsibilities rather than a simple respect of the letter of the law in force.'* (Associazione degli Industriali of the Province of Lucca)

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*'Despite the diversity of expectations and initial motivations of participants, the level of satisfaction in the end was judged to be satisfactory, and even very satisfactory.'* (Elisabetta Nardi, CISITA)

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aim of the project and the characteristics that the future training/information officers had to have to attain the objectives of the project.

- Determining the content of the training sessions was difficult, because of the lack of homogeneity of the trainee training/information officers' original production sectors and of the diversity of organisation forms within the various companies.
- Nevertheless, it was possible to provide uniform knowledge to the trainees in a basic unit, and to exploit this diversity in the sense of a more detailed analysis of the problems and the possible solutions.
- Finally, producing educational material required particular attention when aligning the traditional working methods of safety experts with those based on technology and multimedia.

A continuous coordination between the experts in communication, the safety technicians and the SMEs made it possible to overcome progressively difficulties.

### Results and evaluation of the action

During a period of four months, eight training sessions were given to a total of 115 trainees. These sessions, which were structured according to the participants' sector of activity, lasted 32 hours, and were spread out over five weeks.

Albeit free (the project was financed by the European Union and the region of Tuscany), course attendance was compulsory for those enrolled.

The Technical Scientific Committee carried out evaluations during and after the courses, in order to compare trainee satisfaction with their expectations. The evaluations measured satisfaction with the course content, as well as with the quality of the methods and teachers. Apart from the questionnaire, the participants took tests to assess their level of knowledge on conclusion of the course.

Results of training sessions (extract):

- For 89 % of participants, the wide variety of positions and companies among the attendants was an enriching factor.
- 76 % considered that meeting and exchanging points of view with other participants enhanced general work safety awareness in their specific work sectors.
- 50 % of trainees considered the courses very short (32 hours).
- A few future safety/information officers expressed doubts about the possibility of applying the methods and teachings to their companies without encountering some form of 'resistance'.

To date, around 3 000 educational sets have been distributed to businesses in the Province of Lucca, which represents a body of some 15 000 workers, and the number of copies varies according to the size of the company. The Associazione degli Industriali sends out this material on request.

Given the nature of this project, and its recent execution, it is not yet possible to measure its consequences directly on the number of work accidents or work-related illnesses incurred in the province.

Nevertheless, the PIR carried out a survey in September 2002 to measure the project's efficiency within companies that participated in the training sessions, as well as within all companies having received teaching aids. Once these results are gathered, statistics on work accidents in the Province of Lucca since the end of the project will be studied.

Moreover, the regional initiative programme is going to be pursued and completed by a project financed by the Province of Lucca, which aims to support and accompany the action of training/information officers, in particular in their mission to analyse health and safety needs within their companies and in the development of courses and educational material intended for workers.

### **Identified success criteria**

One of the reasons for the success of the scheme is the effort on communication made by those responsible for the action. An analysis of needs was made first, and then the materials and training were really adapted to the needs of the companies involved in the action, with very practical examples.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The project transferability depends essentially on the chosen method, which is applicable to contexts other than those singled out in the Province of Lucca.

To succeed, it is essential that partners in the project have an in-depth knowledge of the industrial framework in their region, as well as the real accident prevention needs of local businesses. Furthermore, for a veritable work safety culture to thrive, the issue needs to be brought to the attention of as many companies as possible (in particular through a wide distribution of educational material).

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## 3.6. SAFETY AND SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS — UNITED KINGDOM



### Key points

- The project aimed to provide an infrastructure of basic health support and advice for small (< 50 employees) and micro-businesses (< 10 employees).
- The ethos of the scheme was to encourage small businesses to adopt a proactive approach to health and safety management.

Between 1996 and 1998, a health and safety management support project 'Safety and support for business' (SAS) was developed in an economically deprived area, within a large industrial city in the north-west of England. The project aimed to provide an infrastructure of basic health support and advice for small (< 50 employees) and micro-businesses (< 10 employees), as part of a programme of urban regeneration for the area, a central objective of which was to address issues of social inequality in health and well-being.

The approach adopted has been described as one of facilitative action, designed to assist and empower small businesses to address workplace health and safety issues. By working closely with small business communities over an 18-month period, the initiative sought to establish trusting partnerships between project staff and local businesses. Initial interactions centred on identifying the health and safety needs for small businesses; this resulted in the identification of four health and safety interventions

### Background

It is widely accepted that small businesses often lack the time, technical knowledge and resources to implement basic health and safety systems and training for their employees. Levels of compliance with health and safety regulations also tend to be lower, and the incidence of accidents higher for small businesses, compared with larger organisations.

An established approach to increasing levels of compliance, and improving safety standards, amongst small businesses is to target information and advice at members of this group.

Barriers are also reported with regard to small businesses seeking information and advice through direct contact with workplace health and safety inspectors (government officials).

The target region for the initiative, areas of South Liverpool, has a history of economic decline, low per capita income, and above-average standards of ill health. Male unemployment in the area was approximately 30 % in 1997. The 'Safety and support for business' scheme was part of a broader initiative, designed to address problems of urban regeneration in the area and broader issues of social inequality in health. The importance of healthy workplaces in maintaining and improving public health is a priority of the UK Government.

The project's catchment area included approximately 600 businesses of which 70 % had fewer than 10 employees. Throughout the scheme's two-year duration, a total of 123 local companies had some access to the project's health and safety interventions (construction n = 10, manufacture n = 23, retail n = 10, service n = 50, other n = 30).

### Ambitions and goals

The 'Safety and support for business' initiative is based on the philosophy that levels of compliance with regulations and good practice in health and safety amongst small and micro-businesses can be enhanced where information and advice are tailored to the needs of the target audience, and where it can be demonstrated that compliance can enhance the future prosperity of small businesses. Increasing levels of compliance with health and safety law and good practice should, logically, reduce the incidence of accidents and ill health and contribute to the well-being of employees and the community as a whole.

The ethos of the scheme constituted a 'facilitative action' approach, designed to encourage small businesses to adopt a proactive approach to health and safety management.

The principal objectives of the project were as follows:

- To gain a detailed insight into the health and safety information, advice and service needs of small businesses.
- To identify a range of initiatives tailored to meet the identified needs of small businesses.
- To develop and implement the identified initiatives.
- To evaluate the impact of the identified initiatives in meeting the health and safety information needs of small businesses.

### Scope of the action

The target groups for this intervention were 600 small and micro-businesses in the South Liverpool area. Over two thirds (approximately 70 %) of these companies could be described as micro-businesses, i.e. fewer than 10 employees.

In an attempt to ensure that the initiative was well targeted to meet the needs of small and micro-businesses, the project team spent the first six months of the project gathering background information through a consultation process with members of relevant local stakeholder groups: local charities, business groups, the local authority, and the State health and safety regulator.

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*Despite health and safety assistance being available, small businesses often appear resistant, considering traditional approaches to be overtly paternalistic and, moreover, associating compliance with high investment costs (Dugdill et al., 2000)*

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*Barriers are also reported with regard to small businesses seeking information and advice through direct contact with workplace health and safety inspectors (government officials)*

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Stakeholder consultations are said to have provided a detailed and valuable insight into the nature and extent of health and safety management support required by small and micro-businesses in the region.

The consultation process resulted in the identification of the following initiatives.

### *The free health and safety starter pack*

The health and safety starter pack was designed to provide employers with basic health and safety support and guidance. The pack provided clearly illustrated and worded assistance on the following issues:

- writing a company health and safety policy;
- details of regulatory health and safety requirements;
- guidance on conducting risk assessments;
- guidance on conducting environmental assessments.

### *Free health and safety inspection (not exceeding one hour)*

More specific and tailored knowledge came through direct contact with the project's health and safety officer. Here, participating businesses could have access to one hour of free advice on assessing and controlling risks to their employees and technical aspects of hazards relating to their activity. Participating businesses were also provided with practicable advice on how to set up a safety management system in their organisation, as outlined in the starter pack.

### *Policy advice and training*

In contrast to the inspection, advice and support on these issues were priced. During these paid sessions, the health and safety officer was able to provide detailed guidance on the preparation of company health and safety policy. Practical assistance could also be provided in the form of risk assessments, method statements and in-house training. Training was often tailor-made and enabled companies to comply with regulatory requirements, or to meet the requirements of contracting companies. Specialist and general training packages were registered with training boards where appropriate.

The justification given for charging for these services was that the costs associated with this input would help to ensure that participating businesses 'valued the intervention'.

Each business was charged at a rate of EUR 60 per hour for access to these services. This cost was also subsidised by the scheme at a rate of 40 % for the first year. The lever subsidy was designed to decrease in subsequent years.

The health and safety support on offer within the scheme was designed to be flexible. For example, a company could take advantage of the free starter pack and inspection, but refrain from the priced policy advice and health and safety training. If selecting the priced components, assistance would be adapted to their requirements and budget limits.

A facilitative rather than expert-led approach to intervention was promoted in the project.

### *Promotion and implementation of initiatives*

With the interventions developed, project marketing and implementation was the next phase. The approach to marketing and raising awareness of the scheme included the following:

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*'The free services were very successful. They also provided a mechanism through which further contact could be established and some degree of trust developed. The ongoing nature of the support was appreciated. This allowed businesses to reflect on their needs and call on the project for support as and when they required it. It gave some companies confidence that they could tackle health and safety issues with the option of support from the project's health and safety officer for informed non-partisan advice.'* (Charlie Kavanagh, LOHP)

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- Presentations to local small business organisations, such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the Merseyside Occupational Health and Safety Group. This approach allowed the scheme and its constituent initiatives to be publicised, by reaching small businesses through existing communication networks.
- Publicising the scheme through local mass media.
- Direct contact with local businesses. For example, a promotional leaflet was sent to all businesses in the catchment area (approximately 600 businesses).
- Large and medium-sized businesses were targeted to disseminate information on the scheme to small and micro-businesses with which they traded/relied upon in the supply chain.
- The project's health and safety officer also 'cold-called' on some local businesses to offer and promote the scheme.

This two-year project was funded by EUR 117 000 from the single regeneration budget. This level of funding provided a full-time health and safety officer, an administrative assistant and part-time hours for a management team. This project ran from 1996 to 1998 (six months' development and 18 months' implementation). There are reported to have been a number of subsequent schemes that have built on the knowledge and insights from this funded project.

### Problems encountered during the action implementation

Many participating businesses were reported to be concerned about the cost implications of health and safety management and the associated interruptions to work time and productivity.

A reluctance amongst participating businesses to implement health and safety strategies was said to be the main obstacle to the project.

However, although participation in the early stages of the implementation phase is said to have been very low, the scheme organisers report that levels of interest and confidence gradually developed during the course of the project.

### Results and evaluation of the action

An independent evaluation of the scheme was conducted by the Liverpool John Moores University.

Information was gathered via a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews with representatives from a sample (n = 36) of participating businesses.

A weakness of the evaluation was that no attempt was made to elicit responses from non-participating businesses which had received marketing information but elected to abstain from participation.

#### Results of the evaluation

##### Awareness/penetration

- Of a target population of approximately 600 local businesses, 140 had some contact with the SAS project team. This can be taken to represent a penetration rate of approximately 20–25 %.

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*The main features of this approach were as follows: keeping all information confidential, taking time to listen to the issues and concerns of participating businesses, providing information and feedback where appropriate, being readily available on the end of a telephone line to provide ongoing support, and fully involving each business during the decision-making process (Dugdill et al., 2000)*

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*'The health and safety officer gave us information that we didn't know we needed. We had an old health and safety policy. [They] brought it up to date. We have a lot of compliments on the policy from the main contractors to whom we submitted the policy.'*  
(Construction sector — Scaffolding business)

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*Motivation to participate*

- 63 % (n = 140) were motivated to participate by the offer of a free inspection of their premises.
- 22 % (n = 140) thought that some other benefit might accrue from participation, for example a lowering of health and safety insurance premiums.
- 7 % (n = 140) were motivated by some other trigger (e.g. an imminent inspection from a regulatory authority).
- 4 % (n = 140) were recommended to the project by word of mouth.

The table below provides a breakdown of uptake of each of the intervention options.

| Number of companies by business sector | Starter pack (free) | Inspection (free) | Policy (EUR 60/hour) | Training (EUR 60/hour) |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Construction n = 10                    | 90                  | 60                | 60                   | 50                     |
| Manufacture n = 23                     | 96                  | 35                | 26                   | 30                     |
| Retail n = 10                          | 100                 | 30                | 10                   | 0                      |
| Service n = 50                         | 94                  | 28                | 6                    | 16                     |
| Other n = 30                           | 90                  | 33                | 13                   | 16                     |
| Total n = 123                          |                     |                   |                      |                        |

Source: Dugdill et al, 2000.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the level of uptake was greatest for those initiatives which were at zero cost to participating businesses. The uptake of ‘costed initiatives’ was below 30 %, with the exception of the construction sector.

**Impact**

- A number (unstated) of companies are said to have updated their health and safety practices and policy following participation in the scheme.
- A number (unstated) of companies reported that participation in the scheme had increased their awareness of relevant legislation.
- A number (unstated) of participating businesses cited potential economic benefits arising from participating in the scheme. Examples cited included:
  - ‘improved company image — as a safety-conscious business’;
  - ‘improved chances of winning tenders for new work due to being able to produce health and safety management documentation’, for example a formal health and safety policy statement; risk assessment and safety management documentation.

The aims of the SAS project appear to have been realised:

- The four interventions were successfully developed and applied.
- The project demonstrated that short-term (two-year) health and safety projects can have an impact on small businesses’ priorities. Gaining support from SMEs for health and safety interventions is notoriously difficult; against this background, the project seems to have been quite successful.

- The 'facilitative approach' applied throughout the project appears to have been successful in developing links with a significant number of small and micro-businesses in the target region.

### Identified success criteria

The involvement of the intermediaries (partnership organisations, see first section) served to increase levels of trust in the aims of the scheme by participating businesses.

Due to the participation of the target population during the development stages, potential problems could be understood and actions taken to lessen any potential misgivings. This approach has ensured that the interventions were relevant and that uptake would operate more efficiently.

Allowing SMEs to adopt a flexible approach to participation is claimed to have helped to remove some of their negative preconceptions with regard to health and safety interventions.

If the reduced take-up can be attributed to financial considerations, then this raises questions regarding the schemes stated objective of aiming to encourage small and micro-businesses to pay for health and safety services (see fourth section).

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*'Various factors were important for the success of the project such as engaging business in the right way, involving intermediaries, not charging too much and not being associated with health and safety enforcement.'* (Charlie Kavanagh, LOHP)

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### Is the method/process/action transferable?

Given similar resources, the SAS project method could potentially be applied to other regional settings across Europe.

Based upon the insights derived from the 'Safety and support for business' scheme, the following recommendations are provided for any parties intending to develop a similar, regionally based, infrastructure of health and safety support for small and micro-businesses:

- Interventions of this type will benefit from good access to formal and informal communication networks within the local business community. Such networks can provide useful means for distributing information and also provide some degree of legitimacy for the project.
- This project's 'facilitative approach' is recommended as it appears to have been well received by participating SMEs.
- Assessing the health and safety information and advice needs of small businesses, in the first instance, helped to ensure that the developed interventions were tailored to meet the needs of local business and logically should have had a positive impact on take-up.

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## ACTIONS TAKEN AT THE SECTOR LEVEL

# 4.1. ALLIANCE FOR WORK SAFETY IN THE DRY-CLEANING INDUSTRY — GERMANY



## Key points

The Professional Association for Environmental Protection in the Dry-Cleaning Industry, the VUT (Verein für Umweltschutz im Textilreiniger-Handwerk Hamburg), was created in 1988 using 'Umwelt und Reinigung' ('Environment and cleanliness') as a slogan.

VUT member enterprises have the following obligations:

- Attendance at a basic training course for company managers and one representative.
- Yearly participation in an advanced training course.
- Yearly business evaluation on occupational safety and environmental aspects such as water protection, pollution control, waste disposal and prevention.

The VUT slogan, 'Umwelt und Reinigung' ('Environment and cleanliness'), is now recognised in Hamburg and the region to the point where it is now requested specifically by certain important public authorities and industrial contractors on all orders placed with suppliers.

Since 1999, the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office (Amt für Arbeitsschutz Hamburg) and the Hamburg Association for Environmental Protection in the Dry-Cleaning Sector (Verein für Umweltschutz im Textilreiniger-Handwerk Hamburg, VUT) have put a new form of cooperation into practice in Germany.

Of the 120 dry-cleaning companies in the region, 80 are members of the VUT. They are small enterprises with 1 to 15 employees (mostly part-time female staff). As members, they are required to be exemplary in terms of both environmental protection and occupational safety. They have to attend regular training programmes and undergo thorough annual inspections on technical and organisational aspects of environmental protection and occupational safety. A quality label is awarded only to members which reply to the annual questionnaire correctly. Additionally, controls are organised and evaluated by the Technical Centre for Energy, Water Treatment and Environment (ZEWU), which is under the authority of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce.

There are regular exchanges of information between the VUT, the ZEWU and the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office. Every year, the list of companies to be awarded quality labels is sent to the Occupational Health and Safety Office. Control reports are available for consultation. In return, the Occupational Health and Safety Office has stopped carrying out regular controls on companies possessing the label. Random inspections and controls are rarer; however, they may occur under specific circumstances, notably in the event of complaints, accidents or occupational diseases.

This form of collaboration between the public and private sectors is positive: the three parties concerned (VUT, the Occupational Health and Safety Office and ZEWU) have a good relationship with one another and their representatives meet regularly. The programme is financed by subscriptions from member companies (i.e. dry-cleaning companies). To begin with, the alliance was purely local, as it only covered the city and area of Hamburg, but, little by little, links have been created with similar associations in other regions.



## Background

The alliance's history is closely related to the history of the VUT itself. In the middle of the 1980s, dry-cleaning companies were under criticism for their use of solvents, especially perchloroethylene. At the time, they felt the need to create an organisation capable of representing their interests towards residents' associations, food-processing companies and traders, which considered them to be dangerous neighbours. Criticism of the dry-cleaning industry was voiced by the press and on television, and this gave rise to a number of court actions brought against dry-cleaning companies.

The VUT (Verein für Umweltschutz im Textilreiniger-Handwerk Hamburg<sup>(12)</sup>), was created in 1988 using 'Umwelt und Reinigung' ('Environment and cleanliness') as a slogan. It had been 'put on the rails' by the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and its first task was to represent the interests of companies in the industry in their problems concerning the use of perchloroethylene.

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*'Since 1987, further to the perchlorethylene issue, good cooperation has been established between the VUT and the Occupational Health and Safety Office.'* (Miriam NGuyen, Amt für Arbeitsschutz Hamburg)

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<sup>(12)</sup> Association for Environmental Protection in the Dry-Cleaning Sector, Hamburg.

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*'In industrial sectors with a lot of small enterprises, we think it is a good solution when quality control is monitored on a voluntary basis, in terms of environmental and occupational protection, through a trade association such as the VUT.'*  
(Miriam NGuyen, Amt für Arbeitsschutz Hamburg)

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In 1997, the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office adopted a new policy (Aufsicht, Beratung, Systemkontrolle) for occupational risk prevention: monitoring, counselling and system control. This concept is based on a key principle of the new legislation concerning occupational safety, considering that the role of administrative bodies should no longer consist of monitoring but rather of delivering advice and fostering business initiatives in this field.

Through this new concept, the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office is looking for new ways of promoting occupational health and safety in small and medium-sized enterprises. In industrial sectors where enterprises are small, it is important that these businesses follow a voluntary approach of quality control in terms of the environment and occupational safety. The Occupational Health and Safety Office could then stop acting as a supreme inspection body and let the businesses take charge of self-control. The efficiency of monitoring actions performed by the VUT and the quality of work of the ZEWU are checked via sampling and random visits.

In 1999, the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office proposed creating a partnership with the VUT for promoting preventive action in dry-cleaning companies. In fact, it was perfectly logical to cooperate with an association that was particularly representative of the industry (two thirds of the companies in the dry-cleaning industry are members) and which had been dealing with questions of environment and safety since the day it was created.

The VUT and the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office made a certain number of reciprocal agreements under the terms of their alliance.

VUT obligations to the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office consist of:

- sending it an annual list of companies that have been awarded the quality label;
- sending it all the individual control reports made on work sites during the annual inspection carried out by the ZEWU;
- VUT administrative executives participating in preparing control and training programmes.

For its part, the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office abandoned its regular visits to companies carrying out sampling tests and it now only inspects VUT member companies under specific circumstances (complaints, accidents, occupational diseases, etc.).

Annual meetings are also programmed for exchanging ideas and information and are essential for maintaining the high level of cooperation that has existed until now.

### **Ambitions and objectives of the action**

The alliance is risk-prevention oriented. This is achieved by making companies increasingly aware of risk prevention and their own responsibilities. The alliance's objective is to get companies to set up their own self-monitoring systems for accident and occupational disease prevention. Its main means of action are exchanges of ideas and experiences, providing technical support, and helping companies draw up their health and safety reviews.

## Scope of the action

By means of its control activities, the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office is endeavouring to get uniform and appropriate occupational safety standards accepted by small and medium-sized dry-cleaning companies. To attain this objective, companies must be offered help and support in setting up occupational safety and medical protection measures on their own initiative and under their own responsibility. This would reduce control activities carried out by the State accordingly.

By adhering to the VUT, companies accept the following three conditions:

- They agree to VUT executives carrying out inspections in their companies, which may concern both technical and organisational aspects.
- They agree to give VUT executives all necessary assistance in carrying out their control and advisory tasks and to give them access to any installations that may require inspection in this context.
- Companies and staff agree to attend the advanced training courses offered by the VUT, inasmuch as these courses are essential for providing companies with trained specialist personnel (extract from Article 7 of the VUT articles of association).

Initially, the partnership between the Occupational Health and Safety Office and the VUT was motivated by an ambition to help small and medium-sized dry-cleaning companies become independent in terms of prevention. The alliance's main means of action are sharing knowledge (companies that have tested certain occupational safety methods can pass on the results of their experiments to others), providing technical support and making evaluations of companies.

## Results and evaluation

Despite the fact that the number of dry-cleaning companies in the Hamburg area has dropped by 30 % (from 170 to 122), the number of VUT member companies has practically remained the same since 1990 (about 80 members), which means that the association's influence has increased.

Its slogan, 'Umwelt und Reinigung' ('Environment and cleanliness'), is now recognised in Hamburg and the region to the point where it is now requested specifically by certain important public authorities and industrial contractors on all orders placed with suppliers.

In February 2001, an absolute majority of VUT members voted to increase the association's public relations activities and the first group actions have been launched in the form of advertising campaigns and contests intended for customers.

The awareness of safety and health problems has risen in the profession. This is demonstrated by a reduction in the use of solvents, an adaptation of technical equipment and the introduction of new work procedures.

An OSH policy has been introduced in SMEs (prevention plans, training of employees and managers) and the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office fosters yearly projects implemented by trade associations such as the development of an internal monitoring system for dry-cleaning companies (*Aufbau einer internen Systemüberwachung der Chemischreiniger*) in 1999.

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*The awareness of safety and health problems has risen in the profession. This is demonstrated by a reduction in the use of solvents, an adaptation of technical equipment and the introduction of new work procedures.*

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The number of occasional inspections of authorities has decreased, which means that the businesses are becoming more and more active in the field of occupational accident and disease prevention.

### Identified success criteria

The VUT's influence over its members has given positive results. The association's quality label is now recognised and its executive committee did not hesitate in excluding 13 companies that infringed the association's regulations repeatedly. For their part, companies appear satisfied with the services they receive from the alliance, as proportionally the number of VUT adherents has increased. Companies which have not renewed their subscription to the VUT have mainly done so for financial reasons. The VUT's success can be explained by its historic role as the defender of dry-cleaning companies.

Procedures defined for cooperation between the Occupational Health and Safety Office and the VUT have also proved their efficiency, as they have been used as a model for similar associations in other German *Länder*, or provinces, and even by the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry of the Environment, National Planning and Agriculture in April 2000 for creating an eco-label in this area of activity.

Training courses and inspections have also proved to be useful, as awareness of occupational risks has increased significantly in the profession.

Last, but by no means least, the alliance's success resides in the excellent dialogue that exists between the Occupational Health and Safety Office and the VUT, between the member companies and with the ZEWU, which contributes by training and controlling companies.

### Is the method/process/action transferable?

The VUT itself describes its action as being 'transferable' to other regions and gives two examples.

In February 1992, nine companies in the Bremen area founded an association similar to the VUT. It had 18 member companies by 1996 and, at the end of 1994, it merged with the Hamburg association, to make use of the latter's slogan and public relations media.

In April 2000, in cooperation with the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry of the Environment, National Planning and Agriculture (Ministerium für Umwelt, Raumordnung und Landwirtschaft), a proposal was made for dry-cleaning companies to adopt an ecology or eco-label: 'environmental voluntary self-monitoring' (*Für die Umwelt — freiwillig überwacht*). Procedures set up for awarding this label corresponded to those instigated by the Hamburg VUT, notably where evaluating companies' efforts in environmental protection are concerned.

It remains to be seen whether a similar form of collaboration could be envisaged in other countries. Essentially, its success would depend on existing professional syndicates' prior actions.

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## 4.2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE PRINTING SECTOR — GREECE

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### Key points

- Assessment of occupational safety and health in the printing industry.
- Physical and chemical parameters were examined in the work environment of the printing industry.
- Dissemination of information for better working practices to promote a safer and healthier work environment.

The aim of the project was the assessment of occupational risks and the dissemination of information for better working practices and the promotion of a safer and healthier work environment in the printing industry, above all in the small and medium-sized enterprises that widely form this sector of activity. In the last 10 to 15 years, the printing industry in Greece has upgraded its technological capabilities by introducing new machinery and computerised systems with the result of increasing productivity and quality. Nevertheless, new technological developments do not necessarily go hand in hand with improvements in working conditions. Often, increased productivity, extended working hours, the misuse of chemical solvents and the accumulation of a large amount of machinery, especially in inappropriate places, can culminate in a working environment that could be hazardous to the health and safety of the employees.

In order to assess the risks to safety and health in the printing industry and consequently to use this information for the improvement of the work environment, a project was initiated by the Hellenic Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Elinyae) in conjunction with the Athens Labour Centre (EKA). The project, entitled 'Evaluation of occupational risks in the printing industry' began in September 2001 and was supervised by the occupational physician Spyros Drivas.

Elinyae is a bipartite non-profit organisation and its purpose is to provide technical and scientific support to those involved in occupational health and safety and to contribute to the improvement of occupational health and safety by advising legislators, employers and employees.

## Background

The basic incentive for the initiation of the project came from discussions between employers and employees on matters of health and safety in the Greek printing industry.

Statistical data for occupational accidents and occupational diseases are incomplete or non-existent. The major injuries arising from lack of safety procedures are burns from fires or explosions, cuts from unguarded machinery, and electric shocks. The major health symptoms are headaches and nausea, eye and skin irritation, dermatitis, dizziness, drowsiness and other effects on the central nervous system, cardiac arrhythmia, liver and kidney malfunction, respiratory irritation, occupational asthma, cancers, musculoskeletal disorders and deafness.

Active participation of the employees in the project was therefore deemed necessary since they are both the exposed group and those most familiar with the working environment and work procedures. Worker participation involved discussion groups, answering questionnaires and carrying portable measuring instruments during the work periods. The employers of the companies involved facilitated the action by allowing access to the plant and by giving detailed descriptions of the production plan and its organisation. The Federation of Employees of the Press and Paper Industry also played an active role in bringing together Elinyae with a number of employer groups within the printing industry.

In Greece, there is a very large and diverse group of printing companies. According to the National Statistical Office, it is estimated that there are more than 4 000 companies with approximately 19 000 employees. Most of these companies are small enterprises, with less than five employees. Four companies located in Attica volunteered to participate in this project, with the number of employees involved amounting to 4.5 % of the total workforce.

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*'The Hellenic Institute of Occupational Safety and Health develops and conducts research programmes for a number of sectors. Concurrently, it has endeavoured to increase the sensitivity of the social partners on matters concerning safety and health in printing. The findings of these programmes will be presented in the form of simple guidelines thus contributing to the dissemination of information on good working practices.'* (Minas Analytis, General Director of Elinyae)

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## Ambitions and goals

The action is developed following different stages:

- The first stage of the action involves the assessment of the risks through measurement of physical and chemical parameters in the workplace (solvents, metals, dust, noise, lighting, heat stress, ergonomic and safety hazards).

Once risk assessment is completed, different actions can be carried out. These are as follows:

- Promoting awareness of the employers and employees of risks in the workplace and adopting better working practices such as substitution of solvents with less dangerous ones, improvement in ergonomic conditions, decreasing noise levels, etc.
- Providing information to the companies to help them comply with existing legislation.
- Providing methodological tools to occupational physicians and safety engineers.
- Raising interest in other enterprises that did not participate in the project.
- Disseminating information through the distribution of leaflets and pamphlets.
- Organising seminars for the conduct of good working practices within the sector.

### Scope of the action

In order to implement the first stage of the action, a scheme was set up to sample and determine in the workplace volatile organic solvents, metals, inhalable and respirable fractions of dust, noise, lighting, microclimatic conditions (heat stress), ergonomic hazards and work-related musculoskeletal disorders.

The group studied was the four SMEs in the Attica region already mentioned above. The sites within the plants became the basis for the design of the study. The physical and chemical parameters were determined in five different areas/processes for the four plants examined. These were:

- at the printing press site during printing;
- at the printing press site during cleaning;
- at the binding site;
- at the packaging site;
- in storage areas.

For the determination of heavy metals (lead, cadmium, cobalt and chromium), a review of the literature was conducted to obtain information on the type of inks and their use in the printing industry. The facts obtained were then cross-referenced with information given by those responsible for the operation of the plants. The inhalable and the respirable fractions of airborne particulate matter were measured gravimetrically. The results were compared with the limit values adopted by Greek legislation. Heavy metal determinations exhibited concentrations below the limit values.



The inhalable and respirable fractions of airborne particulate matter measured were within the limit values. However, during specialised printing techniques, which required the use of bronze dust, dust levels higher than the limit value were observed.

With respect to noise, a significant percentage of the measurements recorded noise levels between 85 and 90 dB(A)Leq while a similar number of measurements were above 90 dB(A)Leq. Noise frequencies dangerous to hearing (between 500 and 2 000 Hz) were detected.

The working surfaces were adequately illuminated. However, on illuminated tables where montage of the films is carried out, the high intensity of the light could cause eye irritation following extended exposure.

Measurements for thermal stress indicated that, even during the winter period, worksites are characterised by relatively warm environments.

With respect to safety issues, such as accidents from fires, explosions, electrical equipment, or poorly maintained or unguarded machinery, the risks were also identified.

It has been shown that ergonomic hazards such as manual handling or work with video display terminals are important sources of health problems. Musculoskeletal disorders such as work-related upper limb disorders should be further investigated by appropriate questionnaires and clinical examination.

The evaluation of the results was conducted by the working group within the Centre of Applied Research of Elinyae.

Due to the small number of representative companies, it is not possible to draw absolute conclusions about the sector. However, the results did provide evidence of problems to health and safety during different activities of the plants examined.

It was noticed that, at those sites where the printing machines were situated, there was a high concentration of solvents in the air which, at times, exceeded the additive exposure limit value.

### Problems encountered

Although a large number of companies were approached, only a few volunteered to participate in the project. This, probably, has to do with the companies' criteria for the appraisal of the costs versus the benefits of any investigative process on their premises.

The difficulty to guarantee access to a larger number of printing industries was the main problem in our attempt to gather a larger sample of data so that the results of the study could be more representative of the risks and health hazards of the sector. Nevertheless, the four SMEs examined in this study represented about 4.5 % of the total employees in the sector.

The overwhelming majority of the 4 000 or so printing companies consist of less than five employees. Since most of these enterprises are not active members of any employers' organisations and many employees are not members of trade unions, it was difficult to come into contact with them through these organisations.

### Results and evaluation of the action

The first phase of the project was undertaken during the period September 2001 to June 2002. The initial findings will be presented to employers and employees.

The results indicated a number of problems with respect to safety and health in some sections of the plants. It became apparent that it is necessary to obtain results more representative of the risks. With this in mind, the study will be extended to a larger number of plants by inviting as many companies as possible, trade unions, safety engineers, occupational physicians, etc., to a two-day seminar.

By these means, it is planned to increase awareness of the risks for all those involved in the sector so as to encourage their active participation in the next round of the study. Furthermore, training courses will be established and will be directed to the workers' committees for health and safety. The programme will include aspects of legislation, descriptions of physical hazards (such as noise, dust, high temperature, etc.), as well as chemical hazards (such as solvents, acids, metals) and safety matters in general. The course will be completed by actual demonstrations of good practices.

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*'The need to design and realise this study expresses the anguish of the employees in this sector about their work environment and their health. Therefore, there is a need to continue and complete this study in order to better promote safety and health in the printing sector.'*  
(Spyros Drivas, Occupational Physician, Head of the Centre of Applied Research, Elinyae)

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*'Further research is needed in this area which should even be extended to large Greek enterprises. This will help to conclude how the size of the company, its profit and the implemented technology influence the management of occupational safety and health risks.'* (Gerasimos Papadopoulos, Safety Engineer at Typoekdotiki S.A., Vice-President of the Hellenic Association of Mechanical and Electrical Engineers)

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By the end of this year, pamphlets and leaflets will be published by Elinyae, which will contain information on the hazards investigated and the good practices required to be adopted in order to improve the standards of safety and health of the workers. Some of these good practices include substitution of solvents for less dangerous ones (e.g. vegetable oils and fatty acid esters), installation of sound absorbent materials, improved ventilation to reduce dust and solvent levels, safety mechanisms to reduce spills and cuts and introduction of mechanical systems for the transport of heavy loads. Publishing a guide for safety engineers and occupational physicians will complete the whole task.

### **Identified success criteria**

The action was successful in that the study allowed for the first time the examination of a wide range of physical and chemical parameters in the sector, in order to pinpoint those areas that are most troublesome.

The study will be brought to a conclusion with the organisation of the seminar and training sessions, and will be considered successful if the number of participants is high.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The action can be considered transferable in so far as the design of the study could serve as a model for its extension, and as a basis for similar studies in other sectors.

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# 4.3. RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREVENTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR — LUXEMBOURG



## Key points

The scheme consists in giving SMEs of the construction sector access to information on CD-ROM that they can easily and directly make use of:

- For finding out about the legislation.
- For training staff and increasing their awareness.
- For drawing up the safety plan required by the legislation on temporary or mobile construction sites.

This Luxembourg project has been conducted at national level. It is aimed at the construction sector, which in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is almost exclusively made up of small and medium-sized companies.

The fundamental objective of the project was to supply SMEs in the construction sector with information on legislation and the safety rules they are supposed to apply, and simultaneously to offer them a tool for analysing and preventing potential hazards on construction sites and in workshops. The tool is available in two forms: a CD-ROM or online on the Internet.

Three organisations have gathered together for this project: the Inspectorate of Labour and Mines, the public authority responsible for checking on companies to ensure that they comply with employment regulations, the Fédération des Artisans, a body which represents and defends the interests of SMEs and the self-employed, and the Work Accident Insurance Association (AAA), an autonomous public social security organisation whose mission is to prevent work accidents and to provide compensation in connection with work accidents and occupational diseases.

## Background

Two items of Luxembourg legislation are behind the initiative. The first relates to the obtaining of an operating licence by SMEs (classified establishments and activities). In 1999, a legal reform imposed new constraints on SMEs, requiring

them to obtain operating licences. Constraints relating to safety rules and standards are among the obligations that have to be satisfied. The complexity of these new regulations has created a need within all SMEs for guidance and for a simplified presentation of the legal texts.

The second item of legislation is the implementation of the European directive on temporary or mobile construction sites in Luxembourg law, resulting in a new set of regulations concerning the construction sector alone. The introduction of this legislation, and the obligation to appoint a safety coordinator and draw up a safety plan, alarmed companies in the sector, most of which found themselves in unknown territory.

Thus, the SMEs themselves have felt the need for information and support in the face of these changes in operating practice. The Ministry of Labour and Mines, which was responsible for the legislation, was approached by the Fédération des Artisans in order to consider possible courses of action. At the same time, the third partner, the AAA, was translating into French the safety requirements set out by the *Berufsgenossenschaften* (professional associations) in Germany, seen as very helpful for prevention in Luxembourg companies. This organisation therefore also joined the project.

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*The audience for which this tool is intended is safety coordinators, worksite foremen, architects, and those responsible for safety within companies*

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The partners have given priority attention to the construction sector for other reasons too. This sector has experienced a great rise in the use of subcontractors, a system which ultimately makes it difficult to determine who is responsible for safety issues, and which makes the work of prevention especially difficult in the field. Moreover, SMEs in the construction sector are making more and more use of temporary workers, and this constitutes a further risk factor. Overall, this sector has a high accident rate of 35 %.

The decision to prioritise this sector is therefore a logical one. However, the plan is to produce CD-ROMs for other sectors at a later stage.

### Project objectives

Analysis of the legal texts shows that 90 % of the requirements are fairly simple instructions. On the other hand, the language used is insufficiently clear. The texts have been rewritten in a more practical and concrete manner, giving SMEs access to information on CD-ROM which they can easily and directly make use of:

- for finding out about the legislation;
- for training staff and increasing their awareness;
- for drawing up the safety plan required by the legislation on temporary or mobile construction sites.

The audience for which this tool is intended is safety coordinators, worksite foremen, architects, and those responsible for safety within companies.

### Scope of the action

A working group bringing together representatives of the various partners met to examine and decide upon the type and level of information required.

By consulting its members, the Fédération des Artisans established what SMEs in the construction sector needed in the way of information. It was therefore representatives of the future users themselves who determined the level of complexity which was acceptable for SMEs.

The SMEs requested information which was illustrated with concrete examples and practical advice. Short, simple, illustrated texts about the basic safety rules (most of which relate to technology and work techniques) formed the core information included in the database, rather than information presented on the basis of a more global, systematic and integrated view of prevention.

The first CD-ROM version is divided into four parts:

- A model risk evaluation form which can be used to determine the relevant risk categories and the actual risks requiring assessment for a given worksite, depending on the construction specialisations involved.
- A self-assessment form, providing guidance in worksite safety monitoring. This has been devised on the basis of the risk assessment for the worksite.
- A database on safety risks and accident prevention. Simple illustrated screens summarise common worksite risks.
- A questionnaire on good practice models.



On the first version of the CD-ROM, the information given took into account 90 % of construction specialisations. A second CD-ROM has now been produced, which covers all construction specialisations and provides information intended for SMEs in the wood and metal sectors.

This second, more complete version of the CD-ROM contains:

- all the elements contained in the first CD-ROM, to which has been added information on muscle and skeletal problems;
- a database of safety requirements applicable to workshops and construction sites (organised thematically);
- all legislative texts.

The contents are also accessible on the Internet.

The federation was responsible for disseminating the tool by means of an advertising campaign and organised briefings, during which the CD-ROM was distributed free of charge.

So far, 140 worksite coordinators have received the CD-ROM free of charge during the demonstration sessions. Since 1998, this product's information and approach has gradually been distributed to all worksite coordinators.

The CD-ROMs are sold for around EUR 20 in order to set up a new fund to finance the production of further items in the CD-ROM series.

### Problems encountered during implementation of the action

There was a difference of opinion regarding the content between the Labour Inspectorate, which wanted it to be as comprehensive as possible with respect to information on legislation, and the SMEs, which wanted an approach that was as simple and pragmatic as possible. The inspectorate felt that such a simplification of texts relating to prevention measures involved a risk of inaccuracy.

Financing also posed problems due to the fact that all funds for the development of the project were supposed to be advanced by the Inspectorate of Labour and Mines.

### Results and evaluation of the action

Between 600 and 800 SMEs have acquired the CD-ROM so far, from a theoretical potential group of 23 000 companies.

There has been no systematic evaluation of this project in the form of a questionnaire or evaluation meeting. Feedback from users about the tool has been given in a disparate manner.

The Fédération des Artisans feels that the first version of the CD-ROM was both necessary and sufficient. It regards the second, more comprehensive version as too complicated.

SMEs (worksite foremen, safety supervisors, etc.) especially appreciate the short illustrated texts relating to safety requirements.

For safety coordinators, the tool seems to be too basic. SMEs have indicated that they never use some of the elements in the second version of the CD-ROM.

The introduction and dissemination of information have not had any direct influence on work accident statistics. The accident rate remains stable. In absolute terms, the number of accidents continues to increase because activity within the sector has risen over the last few years. This is explained by the fact that the objective of the CD-ROM was to achieve prevention in selective areas (working with safe tools, using safe working methods). On average, the maximum reduction in the accident rate that can be expected following an improvement in technology or working methods is 2 or 3 %. The factor that has the greatest influence on improved safety is safety management. For SMEs, organising a coherent system for managing safety presents great difficulties. Moreover, establishing a safety culture among personnel is made difficult by the fact that SMEs in the construction sector make extensive use of temporary workers.

In both large and small companies, prevention needs to be approached in an integrated manner. Spectacular results cannot be expected while preventive action only targets a single element out of the whole group of factors.

The approach chosen is one of simplifying safety. Yet, prevention can only be effective if it is integrated into the overall management of a company.

### Identification of success factors

The positive aspects of this project approach are as follows:

- Demand for the project came from the SMEs themselves.
- There was a real and concrete need that was easy to define.

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*'In both large and small companies, prevention needs to be approached in an integrated manner. Spectacular results cannot be expected while preventive action only targets a single element out of the whole group of factors.'* (Paul Weber, Inspection du travail et des mines)

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- An organisation representing SMEs participated in the project and influenced its outcome.
- This same organisation was involved in its dissemination.
- The tool being offered is simple, modular and easy to use.
- The medium chosen enables adaptations and updates to be made easily.
- The CD-ROM is cheap.
- The concept can be transposed to other sectors.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The CD-ROM concept is completely transferable to other countries of the European Union. The legislation section would, of course, need to be adapted. On the other hand, the safety measures and requirements are already the outcome of a knowledge transfer, since they are a French translation of the rules used by the *Berufsgenossenschaften* in Germany. An English version of these requirements might also be worth considering.

The risk evaluation form is also transferable since it can be used as a basis for drawing up the safety plan required by the European directive on temporary or mobile construction sites, as implemented in different countries.

### **Further information**

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## 4.4. BRANCH CODES FOR SKILLED TRADES — NETHERLANDS

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### Key points

The development of sector codes consists of three phases:

- Determining standards in order to create a checklist in the areas of quality, hygiene, energy, occupational safety and health and the environment relevant to the sector targeted, financially and technically accurate.
- Integrating the sector code into sector training and introducing it to businesses.
- Company certification.

The Central Industry Board for Skilled Trades (HBA) is an organisation representing entrepreneurs and employees in the skilled trades. It covers over 30 affiliated trades and a total of around 52 000 businesses providing employment for over a quarter of a million people.

The smallest industry consists of just several dozen businesses, and the largest of over 10 000. Skilled trades may be engaged in services (e.g. hairdressers and chiropodists), production and repairs (e.g. confectioners and shoemakers) and artistic fields (e.g. gold- and silversmiths and whiteware businesses) with a high proportion of self-employment.

The HBA stands for the development of many small and medium-sized businesses. For the more than 30 different individual industries, the HBA works together with their representative organisations and trade unions.

The HBA develops sector codes for and in collaboration with affiliated industries. A sector code is a brief reference work in the form of a booklet in which a series of points for attention are listed in the areas of quality, hygiene, energy, occupational safety and health and the environment for a particular industry.

The points are arranged by industrial process. A symbol indicates whether each point relates to a legal requirement, an industry standard, a recommendation or a situation it is advisable to avoid.

The entrepreneur can use his sector code to check how far his business complies with legal requirements and how it scores with regard to industry standards and other recommendations. Rather than being intended as a means of surveying and evaluating the risks in a business, the booklet offers a checklist of processes which can be improved. The entrepreneur then decides for himself whether and how to tackle these points.

The use of the checklist is supported by training sessions. The HBA is currently looking into the possibility of certifying businesses that work successfully with the codes.

### Background and surroundings of the action

The initiative for the development of the sector code came in the late 1980s, in response to pressure from public health authorities. The alarming reports concerning contamination as a result of contact with contaminated blood led the sector to take measures to remove such risks. The National AIDS Committee called in the HBA to improve the level of hygiene in external care (beauty care, chiropody and hair care). During external treatment, the carer-specialist comes directly into contact with the skin of the customer-patient. Small wound infections can be a source of contamination and carry a risk of passing on the AIDS or hepatitis viruses.

A decision was made in favour of an integrated approach to the sector, inspired by the Lakmet concept as a comprehensive concept in the areas of logistics, health and safety, quality, environment, energy and technology. Lakmet is the Dutch acronym for logistics (*Logistiek*), health and safety (*Arbeidsomstandigheden*), quality (*Kwaliteit*), environment (*Milieu*), energy (*Energie*) and technology (*Technologie*). The concept resulted in the sector code path, a combined quality assurance system that focuses on process, system, supply chain and total quality.

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*A decision was made in favour of an integrated approach to the sector, inspired by a comprehensive concept in the areas of logistics, health and safety, quality, environment, energy and technology*

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### Ambitions and goals of the action

In view of developments in society and especially in the small trades, and the deregulatory role of the government, there is a need among small traders for clear guidelines regarding operational management and professional practice.

Socioeconomic, technological and other social developments place large demands on the entrepreneur's energy. In order to continue operating in a competitive environment, he needs to focus on his own core activities. These do not include occupational safety and health, the environment and other such areas, and the knowledge and expertise to follow up on the guidelines are lacking.

The government has set targets and made the entrepreneur responsible for achieving them on his own initiative. But, the entrepreneur in a skilled trade usually lacks the know-how to do this.

The HBA wanted to meet the need for all guidelines, standards and recommendations in each industry to be collected together in a clearly organised, convenient tool: the sector code.



All guidelines, industry standards and recommendations regarding occupational safety and health, hygiene, the environment and quality in a particular industry are presented in the form of a checklist. Using this, the entrepreneur can check

how far he already satisfies all requirements and recommendations. His score can be used as the basis for devising concrete points for action. For the actual carrying out of the improvements, he can get help from the sector organisation or from a number of other external organisations.

The HBA recommends that the checklist should be worked through every year, and points for action determined. In this way, the company can work on continual improvement.

### Scope of the action

The codes are developed, distributed by and updated with the sector organisations, with support from the HBA. External experts such as the inspection services have a say in the development process. The first codes were developed in 1997.

In a process of consultation within the trade, the various risks are mapped out on a centralised basis in each sector, and guidelines for managing each risk defined. This set of guidelines is called the sector code. The sector code is converted into a checklist for risk surveying and evaluation.

The sector code follows the business process. As far as possible, the guidelines are formulated in the form of operating instructions. They are divided into four levels, each with its own icon:

-  Legal practice: legal requirements
-  Good practice: sector standards
-  Best practice: the ideal situation, strongly recommended
-  Preferably do not apply

From the checklist, users can find out how they score with respect to legal requirements, sector standards and other recommendations.

The development of the sector code or sector code path consists of three phases.

#### 1. Determining standards

This starts at the request of a sector. An initial set of guidelines is drawn up via the analysis of documents and business visits. A working group of relevant stakeholders checks the guidelines for accuracy, relevance to the sector, technical applicability and financial feasibility. The social partners decide on the sector code, after which a checklist is drawn up using the guidelines.

#### 2. Integrating the sector code into sector training and introducing it to businesses

The sector code is introduced and tied in with training. In training, traders learn how to use the code. They learn how to map out the situation in their business using a checklist, and how to arrive at a score. They then learn how to set up and implement an approach plan, with annual evaluations. At the end of the training, a certificate is issued.

#### 3. Company certification

The codes form the basis for company certification. At present, the relevant structures are being established and the certification scheme determined. A central college for experts will act as the implementing body and monitor the certification system across the sector.

The HBA is working on an Internet version of the codes, also with the intention of storing the results of the evaluations in a database, which will make benchmarking or the comparison of results between different companies possible.

The codes are completely financed by the HBA. The total development costs come to around EUR 15 000 per code. The cost to the trader is around EUR 450 excluding working hours.

### **Problems encountered during the action implementation**

The only serious problem reported by the HBA is the difficulty of standardising technical elements in a number of sectors. For example, among dental technicians, the standardisation process that the codes bring about is regarded with suspicion.

Moreover, the code appears not to be applied to the same extent in all sectors. The hairdressers are the weakest sector here, with a 10 % rate of application, compared with, for example, 75 % implementation in the chiropody sector.

### **Results and evaluation of the action**

According to the Trades Council, the success of the codes has been unparalleled compared with other projects. This is explained by the fact that the codes reflect current needs on the part of traders, and tie in with characteristic aspects that typify traders in a small business set-up (see table below). For the code for chiropodists, there is also the factor that the special training certificate is now required by healthcare insurers.

The strength of this approach lies primarily in bringing together and gaining agreement on the requirements that can be laid down for a particular sector in the area of quality, health and safety and the environment. By combining the code's prescriptions in accordance with legislation and regulations and the guidelines with the latest technical position, a standard is created as the basis for continuous business improvement.

Moreover, it can also be argued that the tools and supporting actions that have been developed provide a relatively easy way for the sector to meet the requirements that have been laid down.

The code system offers benefits to both traders and stakeholders in the sector. Also, it provides small businesses with a concrete means of fulfilling their social responsibilities and engaging in sustainable business practices. A sector code has now been drawn up for 10 sectors: chiropodists, beauticians, hairdressers, ceramic artists, stained-glass artists, gold- and silversmiths, dry cleaners, watch repairers, dental technicians and butchers.

By January 2002, the codes were in use in around 11 000 businesses. The level of penetration ranges from 10 % for hairdressers to 75 % for chiropodists. The degree of application of the codes is growing continually because they are also implemented in vocational training programmes.

In 2002–03, codes will be developed or started for shoe repairers, chimney cleaners, optometrists, road workers, ice-cream makers, traders in roll-down shutters, awning and sunblind sector, the parquet flooring sector, the bicycle sector, the sheet glass sector and the roofing sector.

The directly measurable effects in terms of health and safety can be illustrated by the example of disinfectant use. The testing service in Waren carried out research on the development in use of disinfectants by hairdressers, beauty salons, and chiropodists and found a noticeable improvement in the last of those sectors in terms of meeting legal requirements and correct use of disinfectants. In the hairdressing sector, no direct impact could be measured because monitoring was carried out in parallel with the dissemination of the code in that sector.

**Identified success criteria**

The HBA itself identifies a number of stimulatory and inhibiting factors. Among the former is that the sector code should fit in with the characteristics of the small business (see table below).

The code offers a combined quality assurance system to small businesses that complies with all the criteria for success:

- an integrated approach;
- easy, rapid implementation;
- light administrative load;
- close fit with culture in the sector;
- relatively low costs.

Among possible drawbacks, the HBA singles out the point that the trader can no longer present himself as unwittingly incompetent ('I didn't know') in liability cases.

Furthermore, the code is sector-specific but not business-specific. The trader is advised to seek additional support for the specific characteristics of his business. Support is also not provided for checking and monitoring the application of the code.

A certified health and safety service does, however, monitor the presence of a written risk evaluation.

*'I have not come across any other approach that is applicable to sole traders. The lack of any significant threshold for those taking on the sector code path is also something that has not been paralleled before.'*  
(Gerard Roorda, HBA)

The proposed code fits in directly with the characteristics of a small business

| Small business characteristics  | Corresponding feature of sector code  |
|---|---|
| Can only take on one or two new subjects at a time  | Just one subject — i.e. the sector code as a standard                                   |
| Short planning horizon  | The sector code does not demand longer-term goals                                       |
| 'Do' culture  | The sector code calls for little or no extra administration                             |
| 'Comply with' culture   | The sector code is designed to take account of small business culture                   |
| Boss of your own company  | Do-it-yourself approach rather than outside consultants                                 |
| Little aptitude for selection of information  | Sector code offers tailored information   |
| Little time for finding out about new developments outside the immediate area of specialisation | Sector code is not time-consuming, and deals with this centrally                        |
| Hesitant attitude towards externally developed tools  | The sector code arises out of the initiative and consultation with others in the sector |
| Identifies closely with trade identity  | Affirmation through name and content of the sector code                                 |

Source: Roorda and Hooi, 2000.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The sector code path is a general concept that can be applied in a wide variety of sectors. The approach is not confined to small businesses, but can in principle be used by any sector with its own association. The HBA identifies the most important conditions as follows:

- business processes are sufficiently standardised;
- there is a central body that is prepared to take on a coordinatory role;
- this central body has the competence to flag developments in legislation and regulations in good time;
- sufficient numbers of businesses must be prepared to determine and maintain the standardisation and implementation process in mutual consultation;
- preferably, sector-specific training should exist, in which the ascertained best practices can be given a sector-wide grounding.

### **Further information**

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## 4.5. WORKLOAD ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT IN THE RETAIL SECTOR — NETHERLANDS



### Key points

- One increasingly widespread hazard in the retail trade is work pressure, and the stress that results from it.
- The 'Work pressure tool for the retail trade' takes the form of a 12-page booklet and is aimed at both employers and employees.
- It identifies problem areas in the business, and formulates easy-to-implement solutions.

The Central Industry Board for Retail Trade (HBD) is a collaborative association, regulated by public law, of employers' and employees' organisations in the retail sector, whose main task is to promote the interests of the entire retail trade. The Council's tasks involve providing support to the sector by means of research, projects and information.

Concern for occupational health and safety falls within the scope of the social affairs policy area at the HBD. Among other things, the HBD offers support to companies in the retail sector with the application of health and safety legislation.

One increasingly widespread hazard in the retail trade is work pressure, and the stress that results from it. Work pressure is a significant factor in time off work, but is also responsible for disappointing results and unsatisfactory quality levels in businesses.

To define the extent of the work pressure phenomenon, the Retail Trades Council (HBD) commissioned TNO Arbeid to develop a measurement tool. The 'Work pressure tool for the retail trade' (February 2000) takes the form of a 12-page booklet and is aimed at both employers and employees. The tool identifies problem areas in the business, and formulates easy-to-implement solutions.

### Background of the action

In 2000, nearly 725 000 people were employed in the retail sector. Of these, 84 % were in paid employment, while 16 % were independent entrepreneurs or working members of the business owner's family.

The retail sector experiences a high personnel turnover, as a result of which relatively little emphasis is placed on occupational safety and health policy.

Sickness leave is relatively infrequent in the sector. Complaints relate to the locomotive system (bones, joints and muscles) and to psychological problems, including stress.

Work pressure is a significant problem in the sector. It is a problem not just for the employees themselves, but also for their organisations, leading as it can to time off work, poor levels of motivation and inadequate quality of service.

Employers and employees agreed in collective labour agreement (CLA) negotiations in 1999 to tackle work pressure in the sector, and if necessary to reduce it. The HBD has responded to the agreement with a practical, easy-to-use tool that helps employees in the retail trade draw attention to and tackle work pressure. TNO Arbeid was commissioned to develop the 'work pressure tool'.

### **Ambitions of the action and goals to be reached**

The work pressure tool had to meet a number of requirements:

- It needed to be able to draw attention to problems in the organisation that are related to work pressure.
- It needed to offer standard solutions to the problems that were identified.
- It needed to be suitable for use by different types of organisation irrespective of size and in-company structures.
- It needed to be user-friendly and easy to deploy.

The thinking behind the assignment was that there was a need within the retail trade for a simple method that could be applied to answer the following question: Is work pressure a significant phenomenon in our business or not? If so, what solutions are suitable for tackling it?

The method had to offer a number of standard solutions for the work pressure problems that had been identified, enabling employees and managers to tackle the problems jointly.

The work pressure gauge for the retail trade was introduced in early 2000, in the form of a brochure. Since then, various collective labour agreements have included agreements to use the tool to gain insight into and reduce work pressure at the organisational level. The agreements make provision for an evaluation exercise, in which the results produced by the tool are presented.

### **Scope of the action**

TNO Arbeid has determined six factors that influence work pressure:

- work demands;
- articles/goods;
- information/communication;
- processing/handling;
- work organisation;
- staffing levels.

These factors are translated into practical problems which typify conditions in the retail trade. For each problem, causes and associated solutions are indicated.

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*Consultation plays a central role in many of the solutions. Without proper consultation among employees and between them and the management, a solution will never bring about a reduction of work pressure. The tool's target group consists of both employees and managers.*

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The work pressure gauge has been designed like a traffic light. Problems and causes are indicated in red, solutions in green and criteria in orange.

The tool is intended for use by employees who identify the relevant problem areas. If problems cannot be solved (by the employee himself, or with the support of colleagues and/or management), this is regarded as a work pressure factor. The employee then defines the causes that lie behind the problem and this should lead to solutions and associated criteria.

Consultation plays a central role in many of the solutions. Without proper consultation among employees and between them and the management, a solution will never bring about a reduction of work pressure. The tool's target group consists of both employees and managers.

### Problems encountered during the action implementation

The set-up and development of the work pressure gauge were not particularly problematic. The collective labour agreements made provision for the distribution of the brochures, ensuring extensive coverage.

However, the actual use of the tool can be made difficult by the characteristics of the sector: a high level of employee turnover, a high proportion of young employees and temporary workers and periodic workers who tend to be employed in busy periods or during holidays only, and diverse part-time contracts.

The use of the tool is not compulsory. In many cases, this may be the reason why the tool is not used.

### Results and evaluation of the action

One of the most significant conclusions seems to be that the work pressure gauge is a suitable means of opening up work pressure for discussion and producing greater understanding of its causes.



The work pressure gauge is a brochure that offers a standard method and hence has its limitations. This is because it relies on a standardised formula, which has to be suitable for use in all kinds of businesses. It is the typical, commonly occurring situations that can be measured, rather than unique, specific ones.

From this point of view, the work pressure gauge does not aspire to comprehensiveness, and does not claim to be unconditionally applicable in every specific working situation. However, it can promote understanding of the ways in which a solution can be developed, and clear the way for other possible solutions to be discussed.

The use of the work pressure gauge is foreseen in a number of collective labour agreements. Some 40 000 copies of the tool have been requested at the various distribution points, by retailers and shopworkers, but also by training centres, professional associations, schools and consultancy firms.

The HBD commissioned TNO Arbeid to evaluate the distribution and use of the work pressure gauge in August 2002. Two questions were central to this evaluation:

- How user-friendly do users find the tool? What do they perceive as its strengths and weaknesses?
- Has use of the tool led to practical measures being taken?

The evaluation shows that the actual use of the tool to measure work pressure has been rather low. A questionnaire which was sent to 638 respondents produced a 12 % response. This response level, and the high proportion of respondents who admitted that they had not used the tool (81 %), point to the fact that the issue of work pressure is not perceived as a priority in the retail trade. It seems that employers and employees are too busy to do anything about work pressure. There appears to be a lack of consensus about how to tackle the problem, and perhaps even a lack of understanding that it is possible to do anything about it.

Persons having used the tool appear satisfied. As reasons for this, they cited the fact that work pressure has become a topic for discussion, and that understanding of the causes of work pressure has increased.

### Identified success criteria

The information brochure offers business owners a selective, concise overview of the possible risks in their businesses. Rather than laying exclusive emphasis on the legal aspects and the requirements imposed by legislation, the brochure adopts a positive approach.

The business owner can use the tool to evaluate his company's risks and draw up a prevention plan himself. There is no need to use the services of an external consultant for the evaluation.

Employers and employees seem to be particularly satisfied with the approach to consult with one another and evaluate and tackle the risks and the problem of work pressure together.

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*'Employers and employees appear to be especially pleased with the approach, in which the two parties consult with each other and jointly evaluate and tackle work pressure and its associated risks. It is the resultant improvement in communication that is particularly appreciated by those concerned.'* (Joyce Rosenthal, HBD)

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### Is the method/process/action transferable?

The tool can be transferred to other countries. In its evaluation, TNO Arbeid formulates a series of recommendations:

- In addition to the general section, specific sections should be added which are tailored to various sectors within the retail trade.
- There should be better preparation for introducing the tool, such as information on its use, purpose and potential results. The cost-benefit aspect should be emphasised here.
- In the first instance, it is recommended that the tool should be used by larger organisations. If this proves successful, it will create a positive image, which will then encourage other organisations to also use the tool.

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# 4.6. STRATEGIC PLAN IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN NAVARRE — SPAIN



## Key points

- This scheme consists of a set of initiatives developed in the Comunidad Foral de Navarra, one of Spain's regional governments, and is targeted at small farmers in the region so that they can begin to apply the principles of prevention as provided for by Spanish law.
- The scheme's goal is to foster the inclusion of preventive management on small farms.
- Specifically, the aim is for these farmers to become aware of risks and begin to take preventive measures on their farms based on risk assessment that they perform themselves.

The Comisión del Sector Agrario, a body in which officials from government organisations work together with social partners as provided by law, initiated this scheme. The commission was established in 1996 as part of the Navarre Board of Occupational Health and Safety (Consejo Navarro de Seguridad y Salud en el Trabajo) and is presided by the Navarre Institute of Occupational Health and Hygiene (Instituto Navarro de Salud Laboral) <sup>(14)</sup>, the scheme's founder. Navarre farmers' organisations (UAGN, ENHE) participate in the commission as well as the Government of Navarre's Department of Agriculture, trade unions (CCOO UGT-UPA, ELA) and management (CEN).

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*The farmers participated in the scheme on a voluntary basis. Training and dissemination were free of charge <sup>(13)</sup>*

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## Background

Only recently has the high rate of accidents on farms both in developed countries and in poorer ones come into the public spotlight, thanks to the preparatory work and resolutions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2001 <sup>(15)</sup>. Part of

<sup>(13)</sup> Only those who brought their rural vehicles to technical inspections (see below) had to pay the inspection fees.

<sup>(14)</sup> The **Instituto Navarro de Salud Laboral** is a regional government organisation falling under the Department of Health. It is in charge of providing the Navarre Regional Government's technical counselling in the field of occupational health and safety.

<sup>(15)</sup> In 2001, the ILO adopted the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention.

the problem revealed is that national statistics do not reflect the true situation, and also that for various reasons the data in this industry are not comparable with those of others.

In Spain as in other countries, one of the major causes of the underreporting of accidents in farming is the cover for contingencies system as provided by the social security special scheme for farmers (*Régimen Especial Agrario*). In this scheme, self-employed farmers (66 % of those affiliated) are not encouraged to report their work-related injuries, as they get no compensation for the first period of sick leave. Another reason for underreporting is that many accidents occur to people without social security coverage (people who only work occasionally as farmers, such as farmers' family members, retired persons, or people working without a contract for other reasons).

Small farms stand out for their high accident rates. The use of machinery, agrochemicals, and the enormous variety of tasks that farmers perform (many of which without having received proper training and information) make for a wide array of occupational hazards. All in all, the most frequent and serious hazards include those related to machinery (particularly tractors, two-wheeled tractors and motor saws) and these accidents are often fatal.



Navarre is a small region (with only 530 000 inhabitants). When including the agro-industry, the agriculture sector in Navarre overall has 5 500 registered companies, 4 900 of which are livestock and cattle raising companies, where 8 000 persons have 'self-employed' status. Many of these workers do not devote their entire day to farming work. When the number of family members working on specific occasions during the crop year is included, it is estimated that 25 000 persons are affected by the occupational hazards on this type of farm.

During the peak of the crop year, some 3 500 temporary labourers also work in the industry. Then, the self-employed farmers become 'entrepreneurs' and, as such, are subject to all the obligations and responsibilities provided for in legislation for risk prevention and the protection of the health and safety of workers employed.

Because this sector is highly fragmented and because of the seasonal nature of the work involved (and therefore the great 'variability' of the risks entailed), together with the precariousness of the working conditions (very short-term contracts, and at times no contract at all when immigrants without work permits are employed), the implementation of conventional prevention plans is difficult. These same circumstances make traditional external inspections difficult both from the standpoint of the quantitative scope, that is the number of farms that should be covered, and the diversity of situations that should be observed and corrected on each farm.

All those characteristics of the sector (varying labour regimes, underreporting of accidents and weak worker representation) have affected the social visibility of the problems of rural workers and self-employed small farmers who

occasionally become employers. This is so much the case that the ILO recommendations on safety and health in agriculture (R192) from 2001 devote an entire chapter to the need to improve the social protection of this group of workers (points 12 to 15).

Lastly, the low visibility of this problem in the farming industry both in Spain and internationally has led to a relative lack not only of specialised experts in prevention in this field, but also of suitable information and training materials.

### Ambitions and goal

The objective from the outset was for small farmers, both those who hired workers and those who did not, to become aware of their responsibility and take it on through concrete preventive measures.

The Navarre Regional Government's Sectoral Commission analysed priorities for action and developed a series of instruments which, over time, came to be known as the 'Strategic plan'. As work on the subject progressed, the commission's main objective became to 'stimulate the sector', which, in this case, means developing a set of measures aimed at creating the conditions so that risk prevention becomes the norm rather than the exception on small farms.

### Scope of the action

Considering both the severity of the situation and the total lack of impact on the sector that the Labour Risk Prevention Act had achieved until that time, the following three different types of measures were conceived:

- Firstly, actions were designed to achieve the adoption of specific corrective measures in risk situations on small farms. The identification of the problem of machinery in general, and particularly tractors, made it necessary to directly tackle the problem of the conditions of tractors and other farming machinery. A programme was drawn up to facilitate compliance with the obligation for technical inspections (this programme was called the mobile unit plan for farming machinery vehicle technical inspection) <sup>(16)</sup>. This part of the plan consisted in practice in setting up mobile inspection units and taking them to various locations in Navarre, according to a calendar, coupled with a promotional campaign focusing very specifically on the locations chosen. The farmers were then to go to the closest inspection unit with their vehicles and pay for the inspection fees (the campaign only made it easier for the farmers to bring their vehicles but the inspection was not free).
- Secondly, various measures focused on introducing preventive management on small farms. Based on the notion that poor conditions on these farms were due to a total lack of preventive action, the objectives set were to convey the need for day-to-day prevention along with both principles for action and guidance in day-to-day work. A training/counselling strategy was designed:
  - A 'trainer training' course for experts in prevention on small farms was given and suitable training materials were published since those available were not only scarce but also incomplete.
  - Specific training for farmers was planned and specific materials were developed for that purpose.

<sup>(16)</sup> In 1997, this programme spawned a specific working group within the commission. Although technical inspections have been required by law since 1994, it was estimated that only 5 % of all vehicles had been inspected. Implementation of the plan began in 1998 once the necessary legislative changes had been made.

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*The mobile unit plan consisted in practice in setting up mobile inspection units and taking them to various locations in Navarre, coupled with a promotional campaign focusing very specifically on the locations chosen*

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*A 'trainer training' course for experts in prevention on small farms was given, specific training for farmers was developed and a guide for adaptation and risk assessment on farms (Guía para la adecuación y evaluación de riesgos en las explotaciones agropecuarias) was published as a practical complement*

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- A guide for adaptation and risk assessment on farms (*Guía para la adecuación y evaluación de riesgos en las explotaciones agropecuarias*) was developed and published as a practical complement to the occupational hazards in the farming manual (*Manual de prevención de riesgos laborales en el sector agrario*).
- A textbook was published, entitled ‘Course on prevention of occupational hazards in farming’ (*Curso de prevención de riesgos laborales en el sector agrario*).

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*‘The aim of the guide is to have the farmers taking on prevention tasks on their farms, providing enough confidence and practice to perform by themselves the initial hazard evaluation on their farms, to determine the measures for harm prevention, and then to plan the development and practice of those preventive measures and the periodic inspections.’ (Javier Eransus Izquierdo, INSL)*

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The guide is used as a tool in the basic course whose main objective is for the farm owner to take on preventive management. It assists farm owners and self-employed workers to do the risk evaluation by themselves and to determine the most suitable prevention measures and then to plan and implement them. The guide is aimed at farm owners ‘[...] taking on prevention tasks on their farms, providing enough confidence and practice to perform initial hazard evaluation on their farms, plan preventive actions and periodic inspections’.

- Thirdly, a set of actions was designed to have a long-term ripple effect. This category includes dissemination, farmer training and specialised training for experts.
  - Among the dissemination activities were the publication of articles in magazines, the publication and circulation of information on specific themes, the publication and dissemination of stickers, posters and other training materials for technical experts and of the Prevention of Occupational Hazards Act, direct mail drops of material broken down by specific hazards (i.e. fire and explosion hazards in silos and flour factories), participation in seminars, etc.
  - Since the year 2000, the Regional Government of Navarre has allocated grants and subsidies in order to stimulate prevention on farms, and has provided grants for research. In 2002, for instance, it subsidised training of school-aged youth through an awareness-raising campaign and dissemination in schools and rural areas and through transversal activities.
  - Technical training was promoted through several different measures.
    - The specialised materials published took on the form of technical prevention cards, consisting of a series of 16 different titles, all devoted to the prevention of accidents with hazardous farm machinery. Several new editions have already been disseminated.
    - On that same subject, research was also carried out in conjunction with the Universidad Pública de Navarra, whereby a turnover protection structure was developed for tractors registered before 1 January 1978 (‘Diseño de una estructura de protección al vuelco para tractores inscritos con anterioridad al 1.1.1978’). These structures are to be applied to all tractors that are not new enough to have built-in devices for protection in case of turnover. The same university also developed course material for students in agronomy.
    - In addition, teaching materials were developed for a programme for advanced students at the university, including a series of different units on the structural safety of farming machinery, safety in the use of this machinery, and prevention in the use of plant health products, etc. In all, 67 students attended the course.

## Problems encountered during implementation

The fact that a significant portion of the target population do not devote their entire working day to farming makes it difficult to achieve participation in direct training actions. It is to be expected that the remaining actions will influence the improvement of prevention on this type of farm.

## Results and evaluation of the action

The indicators used to evaluate the success of this initiative for farm vehicles are the degree of participation and the number of vehicles inspected via the initiative. Both of these were high (**16 000 vehicles** inspected, 80 % of all vehicles affected by the regulation). This was achieved thanks to the high degree of participation of the professional organisations on the sectoral commission representing farm owners who, in other sectors, would be considered ‘micro-enterprises’. These organisations mobilised and lent logistical support to the plan. But perhaps their main contribution was to explain the initiative to their associates and then convene them, thereby quelling the fears that inspections usually instil.

In terms of the extent to which the farmers actually took on prevention, a good indicator could be the number of hazard evaluations done by the participants in the courses. So far, within the courses offered by the UAGN, 130 evaluations have been performed by the farmers, while 320 requests for advice were later received by the trainer/counsellor about technical doubts. The success in participation in this initiative was due to the fact that the involvement in training means for farmers not only complying with the legislation enacted which calls for employers to have training in order to carry out prevention activities by themselves, but also that the design of this course implies the actual performing of a risk-assessment and prevention plan <sup>(17)</sup>.

As regards the objective of ‘stimulating the sector’, it can be said to have been achieved if one considers that, as the work progressed, needs were increasingly well pinpointed so as to be able to continue to improve the situation. For instance, one of the professional associations that participated in the commission, the Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Navarra (UAGN), decided to hire a prevention expert in order to promote its own programmes. The same organisation is now considering implementing a joint prevention service for its members. Moreover, the organisation is examining the possibility of obtaining grants for a plan to adapt all farming equipment in Navarre.

## Identified success criteria

The working group responsible for decision-making represented all agents in the sector, had true work capacity, and was able to endow itself with a suitable decision-making procedure. The fact that a host of actors including professional associations representing self-employed farmers, technical experts, government authorities, business associations and unions all come together under the sectoral commission was very important. This enables a participative process of analysing needs.

The professional organisations provided a direct link to their members and this, coupled with the relatively low population of Navarre, generated the ideal environment for achieving broad-based and effective action.

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*One of the professional associations that participated in the commission, the Unión de Agricultores y Ganaderos de Navarra (UAGN), decided to hire a prevention expert in order to promote its own programmes. The same organisation is now considering implementing a joint prevention service for its members*

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<sup>(17)</sup> The organisers of the plan had such a positive appraisal of the usefulness of the guide for adapting and assessing risks that they published a similar guide for use in forestry, *Guía para la adecuación y evaluación de riesgos en las explotaciones forestales*.

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*By planning on a local level, one can ensure that those directly working in the sector, that is the people with direct knowledge on shortcomings are involved in designing the measures to be implemented*

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The publicity given to the array of different activities ensured the appearance of occupational hazard prevention issues in the local press on a day-to-day basis.

Because the plan also develops human resources and generates favourable public opinion towards prevention, positive effects can be expected over the long term.

On the whole, by planning on a local level, one can ensure that those directly working in the sector, that is the people with direct knowledge on shortcomings, are involved in designing the measures to be implemented. Thanks to a combination of a limited geographical scope and the representation of the sectoral commission which took care of the organisation, actions suited to the needs of the target population could be designed, public attention was drawn, and direct preventive results were achieved.

### **Is the method/process/action transferable?**

The adaptation of this type of programme to other sectors seems possible as long as it gets the support and active participation of recognised sectoral organisations. One of the organisations should adopt a facilitator role, but it is also very important to pay attention to the decision-making process, in order to achieve good collaboration. The identification of preventive needs that can be regarded as their own by the target population is central.

### **Further information**

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## CONCLUSIONS

SMEs are important contributors to European competitiveness, the majority of the jobs in Europe being created by micro-enterprises. A recently published report by the European Commission's Observatory of European SMEs of 2002 <sup>(18)</sup> notes that all Member States have set up measures to stimulate entrepreneurship. These measures are varied and consist on the one hand of loans and grants and on the other of support services such as technical, legal and managerial advice, information centres for start-ups and the provision of training to potential and new entrepreneurs. Support services are generally considered to have a positive effect on enterprise creation.

The variety of schemes that provide assistance to SMEs in improving occupational safety and health is in line with the policy described in the Commission's report. In order to be able to propose improvements and direct policies towards the most successful approaches, it is important to monitor the effect of these initiatives and the progress achieved. Those responsible for the schemes were therefore asked whether they carried out an assessment of the effect of their initiative, such as a questionnaire to the target group.

### EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ACTIONS DESCRIBED

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*In order to be able to propose improvements and direct policies towards the most successful approaches, it is important to monitor the effect of these initiatives and the progress achieved*

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Only a minority of the actions covered in this report have been evaluated systematically. Some of them were undertaken only very recently, and some are still in the development stage; it is therefore not possible to draw rigorous conclusions about the success of schemes.

Where they have taken place, the evaluations mostly concern the view of the target enterprises regarding the benefits or relevance of the proposed approach or materials, or the level of satisfaction of the beneficiaries rather than the actual impact of the action on the state of health and safety in SMEs.

Nevertheless, the assistance programmes described in the report provide a sufficient amount of precise information, especially concerning the conditions for implementing actions, to be able to derive from it some useful information on what appears to work better for those who would like to adopt similar approaches.

### *Reaching the greatest number of SMEs*

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*In general, those projects that have reached the greatest number of enterprises are those carried out at the level of a very specific sector, or related to a specific risk*

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There are little data available concerning the rate of participation by SMEs in the various actions taken in the 15 countries.

The national programme of assistance for SMEs proposed by AUVA in Austria is undoubtedly the one that has reached the largest number of enterprises: 24 000 since it was launched in January 1999. The fact that it enables employers/SME owners to meet a legal obligation and the fact that, for the beneficiary enterprises, the services received are free of charge are undoubtedly two decisive factors for the success of the operation.

In general, for those projects for which we have the data, those that have reached the greatest number of enterprises are those carried out at the level of a very specific sector, or related to a specific risk.

For example, the programme alliance for work safety in the dry-cleaning industry carried out in Hamburg involves 80 % of the enterprises concerned.

<sup>(18)</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/analysis/doc/execsum\\_2002\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/analysis/doc/execsum_2002_en.pdf).

Within the framework of the strategic prevention plan for the agriculture sector in Navarre, 16 000 vehicles (or 80 % of the vehicles concerned by the legislation) have been inspected and 130 risk evaluations have been performed by the farmers and a further 320 demands for consultancy were received by the trainers.

These two actions show that it is possible to effectively reach SMEs. However, this should not conceal the general reality: actions intended for SMEs generally reach only a rather small percentage of the enterprises for which they are intended. For example, the OSH contracts developed in France in the concrete product manufacturing sector reached about 7.8 % of enterprises, or between 11 and 14 % of the employees, despite operating over several years.

This result reflects the difficulties encountered by most initiators of assistance programmes in coming into contact with SMEs, especially with the smallest ones, and even more so in convincing them to take part in this type of action. This is because, too often, occupational risk prevention does not seem to be a priority for action for these small underresourced organisations, as they do not see OSH as relevant to their businesses' competitiveness and productivity. Thus, the initiative proposed to Greek firms in the printing sector consisting of an evaluation of risks in their studios by physical and chemical experiments found very few volunteers (only four enterprises), notably due to the cost-benefit criterion applied.

It should be stressed that these kinds of programmes do need a systematic evaluation to measure the effect on the SMEs targeted. A good approach seems to be the one adopted by the German scheme to establish a consultancy network for SMEs. This scheme, before being launched, was assessed with a potential target group, in order to be sure that the service offered would correspond to the needs expressed by the SMEs. This seems to be a good method for a systematic evaluation of the schemes:

- before launching the scheme, assess the compliance of an action with the needs of the targeted group;
- at the end of the project, measure the effects of the schemes and analyse the problems encountered during the implementation of the action.

### **Making the measures appropriate: neither too complex nor too expensive**

The enterprises targeted by the actions must be capable of using the tools or information proposed. The measures should therefore take into account the needs and resources of the enterprise. They should be neither too complex nor too costly.

#### *1. Making it practical and relevant*

In order to interest enterprises in the proposed action, the tool should be suitable and meet their expectations. For example, the workload evaluation tool developed by the trade federation for the retail sales sector in the Netherlands did not obtain the expected success, even though around 40 000 copies were distributed: around 86 % of the 638 persons interviewed/asked admitted that they had not used the tool because they did not consider the subject a priority and they were too busy with other things.

It is important to first ensure that the action effectively meets the expectations of the enterprises targeted. Performing a feasibility study or preliminary enquiry therefore appears an essential stage for the future success of the action.

For example, a feasibility study was performed in North Rhine-Westphalia to find the most suitable means of promoting awareness among future

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*Too often, occupational risk prevention does not seem to be a priority for action for these small underresourced organisations, as they do not see OSH as relevant to their businesses' competitiveness and productivity*

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*The measures should take into account the needs and resources of the enterprise. They should be neither too complex nor too costly*

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entrepreneurs of the importance of OSH and to encourage them to invest in occupational health and safety, especially by setting up a consultancy network specialising in health and safety for the founders of SMEs in Germany. This study made it possible to analyse the existing situation and propose tools adapted to the needs of the enterprises targeted. It seems, at this early stage, that the design of consultancy services intended for company founders is a good way of promoting OSH awareness among entrepreneurs by creating an OSH culture in these small enterprises.

The proposed tool must also be practical and easy to use. This was the case of the CD-ROM designed for the SMEs of the construction sector in Luxembourg. The legal texts have been rewritten in a more practical and concrete manner, giving SMEs easy and direct access to information on CD-ROM on:

- relevant legislation;
- training staff and increasing their awareness;
- drawing up the safety plan required by legislation on temporary or mobile construction sites.

## 2. Keeping the cost down

The cost of the action undoubtedly has a major influence on the degree of corporate participation in the project.

Initiatives proposing a consultancy service for SMEs, either free of charge or for a moderate sum, have been very successful. Such is the case with the Austrian programme already mentioned above, and the action implemented by the regional health insurance fund (CRAM) of the Loire region in France. Renewed for two years with the unanimous support of the beneficiary enterprises, it has had the merit of creating awareness about a need for OSH action by the enterprises themselves. It also enables them to take the first step by establishing an overview and training a person within the firm to be the safety contact.

It is also not surprising to observe that the free services (free health and safety starter pack, free health and safety inspection, not exceeding one hour) offered within the framework of the 'Safety and support for business' initiative had the greatest success (94 % participation). Additional priced services, such as management planning instruments, interested only 30 % of the enterprises taking part in this action.

It is therefore by proposing actions that are inexpensive in time and resources, easily accessible and with very tangible content that OSH procedures can be initiated in SMEs.

## ***Effectiveness of schemes in preventing risks in participating SMEs***

Very few data are available concerning the repercussions of the initiatives described on occupational health and safety conditions in the beneficiary enterprises. Some nevertheless had an obvious positive impact.

The Austrian insurance organisation noted a considerable reduction in the number of work accidents (declining by half) in firms with between 11 and 20 employees. However good the results may seem, it is important to note that they may not be exclusively linked to the scheme as other factors may have contributed to the reduction in the number of work accidents. Because of that, the programme should be evaluated in the long term.

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*Initiatives proposing a consultancy service for SMEs, either free of charge or for a moderate sum, have been very successful*

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Unfortunately, the results are only directly visible in very few of the cases. However, since the main objective of the actions is to introduce a prevention approach into enterprises that are relatively insensitive to this concept, positive effects can be expected, if not in the short term, at least in the medium term. Growing awareness by the employers of the importance of risk prevention and their decision to include it in the management of the enterprise are a key to success. This is because, once the 'need' has been made obvious, the enterprise will voluntarily develop prevention either by itself or by using external support (training, OSH consultant, etc.).

### **Supporting risk-assessment activities**

Nearly all the cases described in this report included a support to help SMEs make an initial evaluation of risks. This is because the managers of these firms are not necessarily acquainted with the legislation and the obligations it entails, and often have neither the time nor the means, especially human resources, to perform this evaluation.

The most effective actions in this area are those which have been supported by training and/or consulting in the workplace, and which did not merely consist of general information provided for example in brochures or other publications.

For example, in the Danish case where an offer of an inspection of the workplaces by a consultant was made to small enterprises, this was accepted by 56 % of employers, with some also requesting specific assistance with some problems they encountered.

It should be stressed that the consultant does not necessarily have to be a specialist of the sector of activity of the company he is supporting. This was the case of the inter-enterprise safety coordinator in France, who had a general knowledge of health and safety at work but no specific training on the meat-processing industry. In-house company training in a large business of this sector proved to be sufficient.

To effectively promote prevention in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Lucca Province in Italy, an employers' organisation proposed helping volunteer firms train a safety training/information consultant from within their personnel. A total of 115 consultants were therefore trained and 3 000 information sets were distributed, with the support of European and regional financing for this action. The initiative combines operations in the workplaces with a cross-enterprise safety consultant, and information for employers via the distribution of information sets. It is by combining the two approaches that the most convincing results are obtained.

A very interesting initiative has been taken in the United Kingdom to develop knowledge links and transfer between large and small enterprises. Too often, the manager of a small enterprise may be aware of the risks inherent in the business, but does not know what to do for effective prevention. It is therefore by the exchange of know-how such as the system put in place as part of this action that OSH procedures can be initiated in a small enterprise.

Several actions described in the report mention developing tools for self-evaluation of risks; the most effective ones are those which go beyond mere provision of the tool and are supported by a programme of training in its use for either the owner or for the safety manager in the firm. For example, the self-evaluation tool proposed in Finland by the Technical Research Centre of Finland was a great success, going well beyond the expectations of its designers: 82 %

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*Nearly all the cases described in this report included a support to help SMEs make an initial evaluation of risks*

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*The most effective actions are those which have been supported by training and/or consulting in the workplace*

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of the SME employees originally targeted were trained in its use, and 622 instructors, or six times more than expected, were also trained.

### ***Involving trade unions and trade associations***

All those organisations that have at any time tried to help SMEs improve their situation in the area of occupational health and safety are well aware that the first difficulty encountered is to reach these enterprises. Involving trade unions and trade associations in the project therefore appears to be one of the keys to the success of this approach. It is often in this way that information reaches the SMEs, even though in some cases a large proportion of these firms are not members of this type of organisation. These organisations have distributed networks as well as practical knowledge of the sector. Unions can represent workers in the sector, and provide assistance with getting employers to consult their workforce — this is sometimes needed more in small firms than in large ones. Their visible involvement can add credibility to the project in the eyes of the end user.

For example, the CD-ROM on self-evaluation of risks for the building sector in Luxembourg was disseminated extensively to its members by the Tradesmen's Federation. The Chamber of Commerce was also called on to inform enterprises about training sessions with this tool.

Likewise, the Irish designers of the corporate stress-management evaluation pack mention, as a condition of transferability of the action, the existence of a distribution network, notably through trade federations, employees' trade unions and employers' organisations.

The benefits of involving trade associations in the design and implementation of the action are also demonstrated in the scheme developed in Navarre. It consisted of a set of initiatives developed in the Comunidad Foral de Navarra, one of Spain's regional governments, and is targeted at small farmers in the region to enable them to apply the principles of prevention as provided for by Spanish law. The fact that a host of actors including professional associations representing self-employed farmers, technical experts, government authorities, business associations and unions all come together under the sectoral commission (in charge of implementing the action) was very important. This enables a participative process for analysing needs. The professional organisations provided a direct link to their members and this, coupled with the relatively low population of Navarre, generated the ideal environment for achieving broad-based and effective action.

### ***Targeting employment sectors***

From looking at all the cases, it seems clear that the actions implemented at the level of a specific sector of activity are those that are particularly successful. This can be explained fairly easily: the risks inherent to a sector can be clearly identified, the enterprises targeted are easier to reach via the trade federations in particular, and people in the same sector 'speak the same language'. So, action can be better targeted, more precise and more sector relevant.

The action taken in Hamburg by the Hamburg Occupational Health and Safety Office and the Hamburg Association for Environmental Protection in the Dry-Cleaning Sector is a good example. Originally created to address criticism of the use of solvents, the association has succeeded in raising its members' awareness of the benefits of taking action on environmental problems. This has been reflected by a considerable reduction in the use of solvents. Subsequently,

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*The professional organisations provided a direct link to their members and this generated the ideal environment for achieving broad-based and effective action*

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*The actions implemented at the level of a specific sector of activity are those that are particularly successful*

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the partnership entered into with the Occupational Health and Safety Office has made it possible to extend this growing awareness to questions of occupational risk prevention.

Another trade federation was the instigator for the use of occupational prevention codes (Netherlands branch codes) by occupation (hairdressers, shoe manufacturers, etc.), drawing up a checklist of the main aspects to be monitored in terms of quality, hygiene, the environment and occupational health and safety. These codes have been a huge success with the occupations targeted, enabling SMEs to have a complete, practical tool, with its content relating to their occupational situation and well adapted to their needs. Immediate results were observed in some occupations, such as the significant much improved increase in the safe use of disinfectants in the hairdressing, beauty salon and pedicure occupations.

The promoters of several general regional and national level programmes recommend, moreover, to obtain better results, that the same actions be implemented, but at the level of specific sectors of activity. This is the case with the forum for discussion between small and large enterprises set up in the UK ('Good neighbour' scheme). Another example is the workshops on risk evaluation in Belgium. The initial workshops to promote the awareness of risk evaluation did not have the expected success, because they appeared too remote from the concerns of the enterprises targeted. For the instigators of the action, it would be more interesting to organise workshops by sector of activity that would take into account the risks specific to the sector and would undoubtedly be of more interest to SME managers.

Sometimes, a national action can be targeted at a specific sector, in order to gain in efficiency. This is the case of the campaign for the improvement of working conditions in the ceramic industry in Portugal. This national campaign is a good example of combining national and sectoral forces and stimulates the participation of partners. It allowed the development of a whole range of actions such as training, spreading of information via the media, editing manuals for the diverse ceramic sub-sectors and making the school community aware of the need for prevention at work.

### General conclusions

It is difficult to reach SMEs and even more difficult to get them to act. However, it is not impossible.

For a scheme to be successful, it should:

- Focus on a particular sector or risk.
- Be appropriate: neither too complicated nor too expensive.
- Have the involvement of different partners (employers, employer associations, workers, trade unions) in its planning and implementation.
- Measure its adequacy by:
  - assessing the needs before the action;
  - carrying out a systematic evaluation of its effects afterwards.
- Offer support free of charge or at a minimal cost.
- Help to create an OSH prevention culture in SMEs.
- Combine active interventions with practical documentation and tools.

ASSESSING THE ACTIONS

| Case   | Assessment of the impact  | Relevance for others  |
|--|---|---|
| AUVASicher — A programme to provide OSH assistance to SMEs, Austria                                    | This preventive service, based on legal requirement, which has been offered free of charge to SMEs, was launched in 1999 to improve the situation in these companies in the area of occupational risks. By 2001, out of the 288 851 SMEs, 24 000 production units had adopted the proposed approach and 146 000 hours of counselling were provided. In all, 70 % of the SMEs indicated that their expectations regarding assistance had been fulfilled.   | The adaptation of the AUVASicher programme to other countries seems difficult. To obtain comparable success, the programme would require the support of a national organisation that has a solid base and is recognised throughout the country. It is also based on a legislative act that lays down the requirement for social insurance organisations to draw up this free preventive service, which would maybe also have to be implemented. |
| Risk management for SMEs, Finland  | The aim of the project was to improve the overall knowledge in the different areas of risk management among the staff of the Finnish SMEs. To achieve this, a holistic toolkit was developed. The project reached 82 % of the original aim of training SME employees. The number of trainers trained was six times higher than originally planned. The sustainability of the project has been ensured by establishing a risk-management forum that has promoted the toolkit and monitored its maintenance and further development since 2001.   | The risk-management toolkit could easily be transferred to other countries provided some modifications are made in order to take account of the local conditions (i.e. legislation, authorities).   |
| Agreements on objectives and prevention contracts in the concrete product manufacturing sector, France | This scheme, started in 1988, was designed to help SMEs undertake a true investment programme (equipment and training) by means of agreements with authorities, in order to prevent occupational injuries and improve working conditions. Its implementation has resulted in a net reduction in the severity of occupational injuries among the signatory enterprises. A growing awareness by the trade of the importance of OSH issues has also been noted. Besides, in 2001, representatives of employers and employees decided to engage in a more global preventive approach, called the sectoral participative approach, consisting in having enterprises take charge of their own OSH problems. | This assistance programme could undoubtedly be transferred. National agreements on objectives have existed in a large number of other sectors of the economy. However, to provide a real incentive to prevention, the system should be granted a sufficient allocation of funds.  |
| 'Work positive' — A stress management information pack for SMEs, Ireland and Scotland                  | This scheme centred on the development and distribution of an information pack providing SMEs, in all sectors, with guidance on best practice in stress risk management, survey tools for assessing risks associated with work-related stress and practicable advice on how to control them. No impact evaluation has been conducted as yet but some participating organisations have stated that the use of the package has allowed them to identify sources of employee work-related stress and, consequently, to develop an action plan.   | The 'Work positive' package could be applied in a wide range of organisational/national settings although care would be necessary where there is a need to translate the questionnaires used in the risk-assessment survey into other languages. For such schemes to be successful, it is desirable to have an established distribution network to disseminate the package.   |
| Campaign for the improvement of working conditions in the ceramic industry, Portugal                   | This campaign, which is part of the national plan of action for prevention, was launched with a view to contributing to the modernisation of companies and to integrating occupational risk prevention into daily management. As part of the action, 29 projects were initiated in the areas of research, information and training. There are no results at present. The campaign will be assessed through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the projects.   | IDICT has already promoted framework programmes drawn up by strategic objectives and areas of intervention (i.e. civil engineering, agriculture, textile industry). The campaign can be transferred to any other sector as long as the social partners and the institutions concerned are involved in its definition, implementation and assessment.  |
| 'Good Neighbour' scheme, UK  | This national programme was designed to encourage supportive relationships between large and small firms in managing health and safety. The forums organised were successful (a number of small businesses demonstrated a motivation to enhance their understanding and standards of occupational health and safety) but the evaluation did not make it possible to obtain quantitative results as regards repercussions. Several improvements are considered such as follow-up meetings in order to maintain momentum and provide further means through which cooperation can be developed.  | This programme could potentially be applied in most European countries. A prerequisite for success seems to be that a third-party organisation should adopt a facilitator role. Forum meetings should be sector-specific, in order that issues discussed are of maximal relevance to participants.  |
| Workshop on risk assessment for SMEs, Belgium  | PreBes, the trade association of prevention advisers in Flanders, has developed a tool that should enable small businesses to carry out their own risk survey and evaluation. PreBes has promoted the tool at information sessions with the cooperation of the inspection services. In all, 1 500 tools have been sold. There are no data regarding the distribution of the tool (neither by sector nor by size of enterprises). The number of participants at the seminars was fewer than expected which can be explained by the relative inaccessibility of the SMEs and the lack of availability of the SME leaders.   | This tool is easily transferable. It is not designed for a particular branch of activity and can be used by any SME. It could be interesting to develop this type of tool per sector taking into account the sector-specific risks.   |

## ASSESSING THE ACTIONS

| Case   | Assessment of the impact  | Relevance for others  |
|--|---|---|
| Development of occupational safety and health services tailored to SMEs, Denmark   | Given the difficulty to reach SMEs and the lack of efficiency of the OSH services provided to them, this project was conducted to develop a model of occupational health services for such enterprises based on personal contact and a positive approach. In all, 56 % of the SMEs were visited by OSH consultants; most of them gave a positive feedback. It has been noted that the SMEs visited are more likely to contact the OSH services. With the help of occupational experts, some companies set up a plan to buy required equipment; others elaborated guidelines for handling chemical solvents.   | If this project were to be carried out in other countries, some modifications would be necessary in order to take account of the national specificities, such as legislation. Particular attention should be paid to the qualifications of the experts who should be prepared to work with SMEs.  |
| Inter-enterprise safety coordinator, Pays de la Loire region, France   | The main objective of this project was to assist SMEs of the meat-processing sector in putting into effect new safety principles, aimed at reducing the number of occupational injuries, through regular meetings with a safety coordinator over a one-year period. This action enabled businesses to assess the situation in terms of compliance with safety regulations and to acquire a specific methodology for accident analysis. It also made it possible to make operators aware of prevention, to motivate them and to promote a change in mentalities. In two instances, the number of accidents was reduced.  | This project would be easily transferable to another region/country or to another branch of activity. The main recommendation for the implementation of such an action would be to limit the duration of the approach and the number of beneficiaries within a restricted geographical area. The safety coordinator does not have to be an expert of the industrial sector of application. A short training period may be sufficient. |
| A consultancy network for SME company founders in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany  | This project aims at providing future SME managers with consultancy services on occupational safety. It comprises three phases: feasibility study (2000-01), general analysis (2002-04), launching (2004). The objectives of the study were to: evaluate the need for introducing the safety/health concept in consultancy for entrepreneurs; develop a process for the implementation of result-oriented occupational accident prevention in consultancy; develop a checklist for entrepreneurs. The study has enabled entrepreneurs' requirements for basic information on OSH to be defined and suitable procedures to be developed.                               | The effectiveness of this regional programme must be evaluated to test the possibility of transferring it to other regions or countries. This method will only have a real impact in areas where large numbers of small companies are being set up.   |
| Integrated approach for the development of a work safety culture: the company safety training/information officer, Italy | The objective of this regional initiative programme (Province of Lucca) was to fight against fatal accidents, making employee training and information an absolute priority. The programme encouraged the development of a work safety culture in SMEs thanks to the creation of a new position within each company: the safety training/information officer. During four months, eight training sessions were given to 115 trainees and 3 000 educational sets were distributed to businesses. It is not yet possible to measure the consequences of the programme directly on the number of occupational injuries incurred in the province.                         | The project transferability depends essentially on the chosen method, which is applicable to contexts other than those singled out in the Province of Lucca. To succeed, it is essential that partners in the project have in-depth knowledge of the industrial framework in their region, as well as of the real accident prevention needs of local businesses.  |
| Safety and support for business (SAS), UK  | The objective of this project was to encourage small and micro-businesses to adopt a proactive approach to health and safety management. Of a target population of 600 companies, 140 had some contact with the project. The free services (free health and safety starter pack, free health and safety inspection, not exceeding one hour) were very successful. The ongoing nature of the support was appreciated. The initiative demonstrated that short-term (two-year) OSH projects can have an impact on small businesses' priorities. The 'facilitative approach' appears to have been successful in developing links with a significant number of SMEs.       | Given similar resources, the SAS project method could potentially be applied to other regional settings across Europe. For the project to be successful, good access to formal and informal communication networks within the local business community would be necessary.  |
| Alliance for work safety in the dry-cleaning industry, Hamburg, Germany  | A cooperation was established between two bodies (a trade federation in the sector of environmental protection in dry cleaning and an OSH organisation). The alliance's objective is to get companies to set up their own self-monitoring systems for accident and occupational disease prevention, by providing technical support, exchanges of ideas and experiences and helping companies draw up their health and safety reviews. Despite the fact that the number of dry-cleaning companies has dropped, the number of companies that are members of the federation has remained the same. Companies are increasingly aware of the risks existing in the sector. | This action could be transferred to other regions and sectors. Its success would mainly depend on existing trade organisations' prior actions.  |

## ASSESSING THE ACTIONS

| Case   | Assessment of the impact   | Relevance for others   |
|--|--|--|
| Assistance programme for the printing sector, Greece                                   | The aim of this programme was the assessment of occupational risks, the dissemination of information for better working practices and the promotion of a safer and healthier work environment in the printing industry, particularly in SMEs, which are numerous in the sector. The action was successful considering that the study conducted allowed for the first time the examination of a diverse group of physical and chemical parameters in the sector, making it possible to pinpoint the most dangerous areas.   | This programme is transferable in so far as the design of the study can serve as a model and a basis for similar studies in other sectors.   |
| Risk assessment and prevention in the companies of the construction sector, Luxembourg | The aim of the project was to supply SMEs in the construction sector with information on legislation and the safety rules to be applied, and simultaneously to offer them a tool for analysing and preventing potential hazards on construction sites and in workshops. The tool is available online on the Internet, or on a CD-ROM. In all, 600 to 800 SMEs from of a potential group of 23 000 companies purchased the CD-ROM. There has been no systematic evaluation of this action. SMEs especially appreciated the short illustrated texts related to safety requirements.  | The CD-ROM concept is entirely transferable to other European countries, as well as the risk evaluation form since it can be used as a basis for drawing up a safety plan for construction sites as required by the corresponding European directive on temporary or mobile construction sites, as implemented in different countries. The concept could also be adapted to any other sector of activity.  |
| Branch codes for skilled trades, the Netherlands                                       | The development of branch codes was initiated in response to pressure from public health authorities. These codes are a quality assurance system drawing up a checklist of the main aspects to be monitored in terms of quality, hygiene, the environment and occupational health and safety that provide SMEs with concrete means of fulfilling their social responsibilities and engaging in sustainable business practices. Branch codes have now been drawn up for 10 sectors. By January 2002, the codes were in use in 11 000 companies. The level of penetration varies from 10 to 75 % according to the sector. The degree of application of the codes is growing continually because they are also implemented in vocational training programmes. | The concept of the branch code can be applied to a variety of sectors and is not restricted to SMEs. However, the approach requires that certain conditions be met: business processes must be sufficiently standardised; a central body must take on a coordinator role; a sufficient number of businesses must be prepared to maintain the standardisation and implementation process in mutual consultation; and sector-specific training should exist. |
| Workload assessment instrument, the Netherlands  | Work pressure being a significant problem in the retail trade, TNO Arbeid was asked to develop a measurement tool. This tool is a booklet aimed at helping employers and employees identify problems and design easy-to-implement solutions. The evaluation showed that the use of the tool has been insignificant which points to the fact that work pressure is not perceived as a priority in the sector. Those who used the tool appear satisfied particularly because it improved communication between all the partners concerned.   | This type of tool could be transferred to other countries. It should first be used by large organisations. If it proves successful, it could be used in other structures.  |
| Strategic plan in the agriculture sector in Navarre, Spain                             | The goal of this plan, initiated by the Sectoral Commission of the Navarre Regional Government, was to foster the inclusion of preventive management in small farms. Thanks to the plan, farmers participated in training programmes that enabled them to perform by themselves the risk assessment on their premises, and also to bring their vehicles to be inspected (80 %). UAGN, a trade association that took part in the commission, decided to hire a prevention expert to promote its own programmes and is considering obtaining grants to adapt all farming equipment in Navarre. Since the plan has generated human resources and a favourable opinion towards prevention, positive effects can be expected over the long term.                | This action could be transferred provided it is planned on a local level. It should be geographically limited and involve those directly working in the sector in designing the measures to be implemented.  |

# 6.

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In order to encourage improvements, especially in the working environment, as regards the protection of the safety and health of workers as provided for in the Treaty and successive action programmes concerning health and safety at the workplace, the aim of the Agency shall be to provide the Community bodies, the Member States and those involved in the field with the technical, scientific and economic information of use in the field of safety and health at work.

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

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