

## Supporting micro and small companies with interactive risk assessment tools – Conference - 17 May 2017

### Opening speech by Dr Christa Sedlatschek

Good morning, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to you all and it's good to see such a big attendance.

Yesterday, we had a working meeting with those people who have been with us from the start, and those who have joined us along the way, our so-called OiRA Community and IRAT Network.

Today, we have broadened the audience considerably for this conference to include a lot of new people. This is because we are now **entering a new phase**.

Before we tell you about that phase, let's get one thing clear: **OiRA** refers to the Online interactive Risk Assessment tool that we have been developing for several years now in Bilbao. And **IRAT** refers to all of us active in the wider network engaged in the development of Interactive Risk Assessment Tools across Europe.

We in EU-OSHA **do not have a monopoly** on this work, **nor do we wish to**. It is very important for us to share, exchange, cooperate and learn. We all have **similar objectives** – to exploit the wonders of the internet for the benefit of enterprises, and specifically to make life easier for micro and small enterprises.

We are convinced that risk assessment continues to be the **cornerstone of proper health and safety management**. And it does not have to be burdensome! We are making technology **work for us** and **for companies** to ease the administrative load.

From the outset, the OiRA project has been positioned to support one of the main goals of successive EU OSH strategies: **to develop simple tools to facilitate companies, and particularly micro and small companies**, to carry out **effective risk assessments**.

For EU-OSHA, we have **never** conceived of this as just an Agency project because we are some 65 people working in Bilbao and there are some **25 million** micro and small companies that the EU OSH strategy is seeking to help. For us, **OiRA is and always has been a**

**European project.** We always knew that it would only ever succeed if we could manage to bring together a critical mass of stakeholders behind the ambitious project. These include social partners at EU and national level, governments, public institutions and inspectorates who are dedicated to developing and disseminating risk assessment tools that are **tailored to the specific needs** of European MSEs.

So, briefly a little history: we started our work by running the Healthy Workplaces Campaign on Risk Assessment in 2008/2009. By then, our campaigns were recognised as the world's largest, dedicated to health and safety. And the Risk Assessment campaign right from the start appealed to **the many and not just the few**.

During that time, discussions began with the Dutch authorities, because they had successfully implemented an online system with dozens of sectoral tools already up and running. We then made the decision that the development of OiRA would be the **campaign's legacy** and we immediately felt a groundswell of support for the work we were starting.

Thanks to the Dutch Ministry, the Dutch Social Partners, the ETUC, Business Europe and UEAPME, we were accompanied in our early development work by a very enthusiastic advisory group who helped and guided us along our way.

After the technical development of the tools generator in 2009 and the pilot phase in 2010-2011, EU-OSHA officially launched the OiRA project at the OSH World Congress held in Istanbul in September 2011.

**Our OiRA baby was born and we haven't look back since!**

**So, where to next?**

Well, it's time to enter the next phase and that is why we are gathered here today. We are embarking on the next steps, with our OiRA Community and our partners everywhere.

I'm hoping that when you hear our presentations this morning, you will be persuaded – as we are – of **two key messages**:

We need to **vigorously promote** the work that is already done and underway; and we need to **expand our own role as facilitator**.

So, this morning my colleague **William Cockburn** will first share with you the main findings of the so-called SESAME project – Safe Small and Micro Enterprises. **These are really thought-provoking**.

He will be followed by **Andrew Smith** who will bring you up-to-date on the current state-of-play of OiRA from an Agency perspective, **and its future challenges**, which I hinted at earlier.

Then, our partners in the field, those who really use and connect to interactive tools all the time will have the floor. We will hear from **Séverine Brunet** from the INRS in France about their experiences.

And after the coffee break, we will get some different viewpoints. We will learn how the Tanning and Leather sector used the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee to develop their tool. Then, we will hear about other interactive tools designed over the years in Ireland and Norway, outside of the OiRA framework. We have valuable lessons to learn from them.

So, as you may have gathered, we are now **reaching out!**

**We are reaching out** to national labour inspectorates and ministries, to social partners everywhere, to national OSH institutes and researchers and to the world of experts. **We are reaching out** and we intend to move on, also with the support of the European Commission. **We are reaching out** to you!

Our OiRA baby has grown up quickly: **it's time for the adults to take over!**

We hope that what you learn today will inspire you to bring home some ideas and knowledge that you can use in your own lives, working to assist micro and small enterprises, and actively moving forward in the online world.

One last message for now: our **long-term commitment** to serving the needs of micro and small enterprises and the people they employ **is guaranteed**. It is **enshrined** in our work programme, **reiterated** in our Governing Board meetings and **reflected** in our projects. **We are in this for the long haul**.

The discussion today is not confined to minimum compliance. It's about **simplifying** our lives, **lightening** the load and **placing** occupational safety and health **centre stage** in Europe's workplaces.

**Please join us on our journey!**

So, now I hand you back to Brenda and wish you all an excellent day. Thank you.

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