1 Introduction and summary

Since 2014, EU-OSHA has been implementing a project funded by the European Union under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which enables partner countries in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) to participate in the work of the Agency. EU-OSHA is working with its partners in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia to share information and expertise and discuss our strategies and priorities in the field of occupational safety and health (OSH).

With this in mind, EU-OSHA organised a seminar in Bilbao on 21-22 April 2015 bringing together our partners in North Africa, the European Commission, social partners, the ILO and Member State representatives to discuss current issues in OSH and to foster closer cooperation in the region. There is a strong existing network with countries in the Maghreb as well as existing links with EU Member States. Building on these connections to develop a solid and efficient OSH network in the Mediterranean region can only be beneficial for all parties involved and we look forward to the opportunity for further collaboration.

The meeting was held in the Melia Hotel in Bilbao and we would like to thank all the participants and, in particular, our colleagues from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, for making the event productive and successful.

2 Presentations

2.1 Dr Christa Sedlatschek - State of OSH in the EU – ESENTER2 Data

EU-OSHA’s Director welcomed all participants to Bilbao and opened the seminar by discussing the current state of OSH in the EU and presenting new data from EU-OSHA’s second European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENTER), the first findings of which were published in February 2015. This Europe wide survey collected responses from almost 50,000 enterprises on OSH management and workplace risks, with a particular focus on psychosocial risks, worker participation, and drivers and barriers to action.


It is clear that the world of work in the EU is changing. Workers, on average, are getting older and more and more people are working from home, presenting different challenges for those of us working in the field of OSH. The growing importance of the service sector to the EU economy is also evident in the results of ESENTER 2. “Having to deal with difficult customers, pupils or patients” was the most prevalent risk factor in the enterprises surveyed, although this changes when we look at the situation in different sectors. In positive news, three quarters of enterprises reported that they regularly conduct risk assessments and 90% of these enterprises identified the risk assessment process as useful.

2.2 Ms Zinta Podniece - State of OSH in the EU - EU Strategic Framework

Zinta Podniece from Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission introduced the Strategic Framework for OSH 2014-2020 launched in June 2014. The Strategic Framework 2014-2020 builds on the previous Strategy, taking into account the evaluation of this strategy, opinions received from the European Parliament and a public consultation held in 2013, which indicated continued support for coordination of OSH at EU level. The key challenges identified in the Strategic Framework are the implementation of OSH legislation, the prevention of work-related diseases, and demographic changes. The framework will provide the basis to meet these challenges and will be implemented in collaboration with national authorities and social partners.

2.3 Ms Marianne de Troyer – OSH in the EU, worker’s perspective

Marianne de Troyer of the European Trade Union Institute provided a worker’s perspective on OSH in the EU. In particular, workers and their representatives are concerned about deteriorating working conditions in the EU and the rise of precarious work and zero hour’s contracts. In particular, the European Working Conditions Survey produced by Eurofound in 2010 demonstrates some worrying trends related to workers health and safety the focus on deregulation in current discussions of health and safety at European level is also of concern. Rather than deregulation, from the worker’s perspective it is necessary to act to review and reinforce European legislation, particularly as it relates to work-related diseases (carcinogens, mutagens, repro-toxins, musculo-skeletal disorders, psychosocial risks). Worker’s representatives are calling for the Commission to act on these key issues for occupational, health and safety in Europe.

2.4 Mr Mario van Mierlo – OSH in the EU, employer’s perspective

Mario van Mierlo of the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers, discussed the importance of building a culture of prevention in workplaces and the need for a systematic approach to eliminating risks at workplace level. Companies need to see themselves as a community where employers and employees work together. It is also important not to see the review of existing Directives (REFIT) as a threat, it doesn’t have to be. Legislation can be simplified, rendered both easier to communicate and easier to enforce without lowering standards. An example from the Netherlands is the legislation which removed the requirement for companies to be members of an OSH organisations, putting the onus for prevention on employers working together with employees. To support this an online risk assessment tool was developed to enable companies to implement preventative measures in their workplaces, a tool which has been shared with many countries across the EU as part of EU-OSHA’s OiRA project.

2.5 Mr Claude Loiselle – ILO Global Flagship Programme – North Africa Initiative

In 2014, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) announced a new flagship programme for OSH, the Global Action for Prevention (OSH GAP), following the conclusion of the CIS network. This new programme seeks to coordinate the diverse capacity building programmes that exist globally. OSH GAP will focus on priority risks, sectors and workers and the structure will build on existing network by creating an International Advisory Committee supported by Regional Advisory Committees (RAC) that will work with donors to coordinate capacity building activities. The RACs will cover the following regions South East Asia (ASEAN-OSHNET); South and East Africa (SADC); Latin America (ALASEHT); West and Central Africa (IAPRP); Arab States (AIO SH); East and Central Europe (NACOSH), but there is also the possibility to build on other regional networks such as in the Maghreb and this will be explored as part of the new initiative. The next stage in the process will be to launch and promote the initiative and to develop the infrastructure of the RACs to guide the development and implementation of regional components of the programme.


2.6 Mr Yves Calvez – International Association of Labour Inspectors

The International Association of Labour Inspectors (IALI) was established in 1972 and brings together 100 member organisations active in labour inspection around the world. Its aim is to promote professional, ethical and efficient labour inspection and seeks to achieve this by raising awareness amongst labour inspectorates and providing support and resources to build the capacity of its members. Through the development of common principles, guides and practical tools IALI aims to create the basis for a common approach to labour inspection among its members. Labour inspection is not only about the number of inspectors and inspections undertaken, it is also about the quality and the efficiency of those actions.


2.7 Ms Mercedes Tejedor – Development of a National Strategy – Spain

Spain has developed its second strategy for OSH, which will run from 2015-2020 and builds on the previous Spanish OSH strategy, which ran from 2007-2012 a period which saw a decrease of 61% in workplace accidents. The new strategy was the result of an evaluation of the previous strategy and a diagnosis of the current state of OSH in Spain to identify the priorities for further action.

http://osha.europa.eu
The process brought together all stakeholders, governmental authorities, regional authorities and social partners to design the strategy and agree to its content. The new strategy is also influenced by the EU Strategic Framework as outlined by Ms Zinta Podniece. The main objectives of the Spanish OSH strategy are increasing the efficiency of OSH institutions, enhancing the activities of public authorities in the field of OSH, strengthening social dialogue and improving the OSH conditions in priority sectors. The strategy will be available on line soon at the website of the National OSH Institute.

www.insht.es

2.8  Professor Habib Nouaigui – Organisation of the Prevention of Occupational Risks in Tunisia and the Strategy for the Construction Sector

EU-OSHA’s focal point for Tunisia and Director of the Tunisian Institute of OSH (ISST), Professor Habib Nouaigui, has been collaborating with the Agency in the implementation of its ENP activities in Tunisia. The Ministry of Social Affairs is the responsible authority for OSH in Tunisia and includes the Labour Inspectorate. The Ministry is supported by a National OSH Committee, the ISST and the National Health Insurance Fund (CNAM). The ISST was established in 1990 and its principle missions are to provide medical and technical assistance concerning OSH and to deliver training and awareness raising activities in Tunisia, such as publishing periodicals, creating promotional material and making use of other media like television and radio. Furthermore, the ISST has a research unit responsible for undertaking specific studies related to the priority areas for OSH in Tunisia. From 2012 to 2014, Tunisia developed a strategy aimed at the construction sector, which remains a sector that is high risk with a high number of accidents and fatalities. The strategy was developed with the support of an EU Twinning Project, in consultation with social partners, and aims to tackle the priority risks in the sector such as falls from height, electrocution and dermatosis as a result of using cement and bitumen.

http://www.isst.nat.tn/

2.9  Professor Abdeljalil El Kholti – State of OSH: Morocco

The occurrence of tragic accidents in Morocco, such as in Lisafa in 2008, resulted in an increased awareness of the need for better OSH, but there is a need for more progress. The level of accidents and work-related deaths in Morocco is very high, both when compared to countries in the EU and also its neighbours in the region. The Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs is the responsible authority for OSH in Morocco and includes the Labour Inspectorate. A National Institute of Working Life was established in 2010 and is led by Professor Abdeljalil El Kholti, EU-OSHA’s focal point in Morocco, which is dedicated to creating a prevention culture and to identifying and raising awareness about key issues in OSH in Morocco. The Moroccan constitution prescribes the need for protecting workers health and Morocco has ratified ILO Conventions related to OSH (C155 and C161), however, there is a need to revisit some of the legislative base. Although there are challenges for OSH in Morocco, there is a willingness to meet these challenges and in the coming years the need to consolidate the legislative base, develop a national strategy for dealing with OSH and raising awareness and fostering a prevention culture will be key, along with other priorities aimed at delivering significant improvements in OSH by 2021.

http://www.incvt.ma/index.html

2.10 Dr Iles Farida – State of OSH: Algeria

Doctor Iles Farida, Director of the National Institute of the Prevention of Workplace Risks (INPRP) in Algeria presented the current state of OSH in Algeria and the institutions and actions in the field. Since independence, there has been progressive evolution of the OSH system in Algeria. The Ministry of Labour, as the responsible authority, has developed the legislative base along with raising awareness and providing support. A national OSH policy has been developed in consultation with social partners and other stakeholders, including INPRP established in 2000, to provide assistance, information and training in the field of OSH in Algeria. INPRP’s also conducts research making use of its laboratories to identify and analyse issues in order to provide up to date information to policy makers, companies and other stakeholders in Algeria.

http://www.inprp-dz.com/
2.11 Mr Yves Calves – Development of a National Strategy – France

The French OSH Strategy 2010-2014, contained four main elements, to increase the OSH knowledge base, to pursue an active OSH policy, to encourage enterprises to take preventative measures and to create a plan for communication including the development of practical tools for OSH management. At the conclusion of this strategy, work commenced on the development of the 3rd French OSH Strategy, including discussions with social partners and the identification of the key elements of the strategy, taking into account the EU Strategic Framework. The aim is for the 3rd French Osh Strategy to be published in July 2015, with the development of regional strategies to follow. At the same time, a reform of the labour inspectorate, its organisation and its powers, in order to more effectively and efficiently identify and target the priorities and improve its capacity to undertake collective activities with a particular focus of small and micro enterprises.

2.12 Mr Károly György, Hungarian Trade Union Federation – Engaging Social Partners

Social dialogue is a central pillar of the European Social Model and, furthermore, there is a general correlation between how far the tripartite OSH system is established and the accident rate. In the EU, social dialogue is reinforced through the tripartite advisory committee of DG EMPL, EU-OSHA’s tripartite governing board and social dialogue committees at both EU and national level. Engaging in social dialogue should not be a source of fear, as conflict, compromise and consensus are central to achieving the best results in OSH for all stakeholders. Legal systems that establish formal social dialogue are necessary, but there is also a need for active engagement of all partners to ensure effective bipartite and tripartite collaboration. Bipartite cooperation is becoming increasingly important, demonstrated by the sectoral agreements on OSH that can be sent to the European Council so as to become law. At national level workers representatives are governed largely by national laws, but the role of health and safety representatives and health and safety committees is a key element to effective OSH management in the workplace. It is clear that effective collaboration between social partners, workers and employers is central to lifting OSH standards, but there remain key challenges in achieving better engagement, such as undeclared work, the challenge of micro and small enterprises and domestic workers.

2.13 Ms Violaine Roggeri, EU-OSHA – Campaigning on OSH

EU-OSHA undertakes a biannual Healthy Workplaces Campaign, the biggest of its kind in the world, and through this campaign and over the years the Agency has developed strategies for managing a successful OSH campaign. Some of the key elements of EU-OSHA’s campaign is the establishment of a solid and effective network, including social partners, media organisations and enterprises in order to multiply the campaign message. It is also important to ensure that awareness raising activities are timed to ensure a consistent rhythm over the course of the campaign, targeting the message to the appropriate language, both nationally and also at sectoral level. Developing connections with media partners is essential to ensure the message is promoted and good use of social networks has proved to be valuable for EU-OSHA in its campaigning activities.

http://toolkit.osha.europa.eu/

2.14 Dr Dietmar Elsler, EU-OSHA – Benefits of OSH for Small Businesses

A major focus of EU-OSHA is on small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Why? Because SMEs are a driver for the European economy employing 67% of workers, yet are disproportionately likely to have workplace accidents (82% of injuries and 90% of fatalities occur in SMEs). In recent years, EU-OSHA has been researching the benefits of OSH for small businesses to demonstrate the added value in undertaking preventative measures. A number of other organisations have demonstrated the value of good OSH for businesses, and EU-OSHA has built on this with 13 case studies of successful and cost effective OSH interventions by small businesses. These interventions ranged from purchasing new protective equipment to designing new work processes and demonstrate the positive results, both in terms of OSH and economically, that can be achieved for companies that take preventative measures, particularly those measures that involve training and organisational change.


Another important aspect of OSH Management is the use of economic incentives to encourage businesses to take preventative measures.
These measures can be an effective mechanism to ensure that businesses take preventative measures, reducing accidents and also the burden on the State caused by these accidents, not to mention the cost for businesses and, of course, workers themselves. When targeted properly, these incentives have a significant economic pay off and combining the business case for small businesses and incentives for action can make a positive contribution to improving OSH, particularly in SMEs.


2.15 Mr Tim Tregenza, EU-OSHA – OiRA and E-Tools

Online interactive tools are the result of new technology and the evolution of computers and web use and can help workers and businesses to improve OSH in the workplace. The increasing importance of e-tools is demonstrated by their inclusion in the EU Strategic Framework. Following the success of the Online Interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tool, which was developed in the Netherlands and has, through EU-OSHA’s OiRA project, been translated into 18 languages in 15 countries for use by small businesses, EU-OSHA has been looking to see what other e-tools have already been developed. The aim of this activity is to help developers share information and tools where possible so that governments, businesses and workers can benefit from e-tools developed across Europe and the world.

http://www.oiraproject.eu/