

A JOINT APPROACH TO OSH BY THE LABOUR INSPECTORATE AND PILOT COMPANIES FROM THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR IN GALATI DISTRICT

1. Organisations involved

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2. Description of the case

2.1. Introduction

This initiative to improve OSH through Good Practice promotion at construction sites within the Galati District belongs to the Labour Territorial Inspectorate of Galati. It is part of a 41- labour territorial inspectorate network corresponding to the 41 districts of Romania.

Galati District is situated in the Eastern part of Romania and is home to a very diverse range employment sectors and work activities e.g. metallurgy, machine building, alimentary industry, construction sector, etc. Consequently, the labour inspectorate has to cope with a large variety of OSH risks related to the workplaces in the afore mentioned sectors.

The construction sector occupies an important place in this context due to the hazardous nature of a number of construction activities.

In 2007 the Labour Inspectorate initiated an OSH Good Practice action in the construction sector

which became an ongoing approach, with a follow up in 2009 and, more recently, in July 2011. Very positive outcomes have been obtained thus encouraging further initiatives.

These actions initially involved one pilot company from the construction sector but were later rolled out to most of the construction sites in Galati District.

2.2. Aims

The Labour Inspectorate's actions aimed to:

- Improve risk management on the construction sites within Galati District i.e. at regional level
- Provide more practical risk assessment tools for the Labour Inspectorate and the OSH representatives from the construction companies involved in this action
- Improve the communication between staff at different levels of the organisation e.g. the management of the construction companies, the OSH representatives, and the workers from a large variety of workplaces
- Set up a series of OSH Good Practices and actions that might be transferred to other construction companies without major difficulties
- Provide safer workplaces in the construction sector at regional level
- Establish a more proactive role for the Labour Inspectorate, providing OSH consultancy for construction companies rather than only acting as an inspection authority.

2.3. What was done, and how?

An overview of the Labour Inspectorate's three-step action on Good Practices in the Construction Sector within Galati District

1. Good Practices in the Construction Sector Action - 2007

In 2007, upon the initiative of senior management at the Labour Inspectorate of Galati District, a study was carried out named Good Practices in the Construction Sector. This study examined the OSH hazards and associated risks that construction workers are exposed to.

Initially the study particularly focused on the MSDs that are relatively common among construction workers and the factors that generate such disorders.

The main objective of the study was to raise workers' awareness on the hazards that generate MSDs and the preventive measures to be taken to avoid or reduce the risks.

Risk assessments were carried out on the construction sites involved in the study and preventive solutions and safer working behaviours were identified.

A representative construction company from Galati District, SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL, was designated as the Pilot Company within the study. The company had 239 employees (SME) and coordinated a consistent number of construction sites in Galati and elsewhere in the region.

Other construction companies participated in this study e.g. SC VEGA 93 SRL, SC CLIMATEC SRL, SC UNICOM SA, SC LARISSA CO SRL, SC CF SA, SC PROIECT SA (managers, OSH coordinators, workers' representatives). An external OSH service provider, SC PREVENTICA SA was also involved.

The strategy adopted during the study consisted of:

- Customised OSH training sessions for the labour inspectors to make them aware of the specific hazards and risks, prior to inspecting the Pilot Company,
- Collecting on site data on the workplace related risks based on questionnaires, workplace

inspection, discussions with the company's management team and the workers, including the OSH coordinators and the workers' representatives,

- Identification of the major hazards responsible for MSDs within the working environment, by categories of workplace and workers' activities,
- Identification of other work related factors that might influence work accidents/incidents and occupational diseases, others than MSDs: the level of workers' professional competences and skills, OSH training, work organization, etc.
- An analysis of the way the overall risk management is accomplished at all levels within the construction site, from the company management to the workers at their workplaces, including leadership involvement, organizational measures, workers' participation in the OSH decision making process,
- Special attention was paid to MSDs and a series of preventive solutions were developed with the help of the construction workers,
- At the end of the study, the Labour Territorial Inspectorate of Galati organized a series of OSH training sessions. These training sessions were attended by personnel with a particular interest in OSH on construction sites in Galati District e.g. employers, managers of important construction sites, OSH representatives, construction site co-ordinators, workers from the most exposed workplaces, labour inspectors, and local authorities' representatives,
- Further actions to promote Good Practice in the Construction Sector have been discussed to consolidate the outcomes obtained through the 2007 study,
- The Territorial Labour Inspectorate of Galati was awarded the First Prize for Good Practices in the Construction Sector at the Closing Conference of the European Week 2007 Campaign on the 23rd of November 2007 in Bucharest.

1. Risk Management to Everyone's Benefit Action n° 2009

In 2009, the Labour Inspectorate of Galati District initiated a follow up of the previous action, encouraged by the positive outcomes obtained with the 2007 study and the way it was welcomed within the construction sector, at all levels.

The 2009 initiative was run under the slogan **Risk Management to Everyone's Benefit** with the full support of the Labour Inspectorate's senior management. This action's objective was to improve risk management within the construction sector and to provide practical instruments for risk assessment on the construction sites in the district.

The Labour Inspectorate's action started with two Pilot Companies - SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL and SC CLIMATEC SRL.

This action resulted in the creation of software for risk assessment designed to simplify risk assessment on construction sites, while also providing a practical instrument better adapted to the SMEs sizes and to the particularities of the workplaces.

The active involvement of many categories of personnel from the Labour Inspectorate, the construction sites, IT companies and local authorities was encouraged and a multidisciplinary team was recruited, including labour inspectors of Galati Labour Inspectorate, OSH coordinators of the two Pilot Companies, an IT expert from S.C. RESSOFT SRL.

This action was achieved through the following main steps:

- Data collection on the particularities of the workplaces from the construction sites concerned, based on customised forms to be filled in by almost all categories of personnel,
- Software was created to improve risk assessment of the construction site workplaces,
- A website was also created to provide practical instructions for the use of the software and the

terms under which it can be utilized (website address: www.evaluairiscuri.ro),

- A short film about this action was also made by the multidisciplinary team in charge of this initiative to illustrate the impact the action had on the construction site personnel interviewed (managers, OSH coordinators, workers, etc.), the obstacles encountered, and the diversity of the participants involved.

2. A survey of the outcomes obtained as a result of the Labour Inspectorate's initiatives of 2007 and 2009 ñ July 2011

In July 2011, the Labour Inspectorate of Galati carried out a series of on the spot visits to a series of construction sites that had participated in the 2007 and 2009 actions.

They were meant to provide an overview of the outcomes reached through the 2007 and 2009 initiatives based on a less conventional approach than statistics and legal records of work accidents/ill health.

Six construction sites of SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL were included in this inspection tour, which was carried out by the inspectors of the Labour Territorial Inspectorate of Galati.

The improvements in working conditions on the construction sites were particularly impressive as well as the implementation of a judicious workplace risk assessment and of adequate preventive measures.

A workshop involving all those who had participated (e.g. labour inspectors, construction site managers, OSH coordinators, workers, IT experts) in the 2007 and 2009 actions was held upon completion of the inspections. The local authorities' representatives were also invited, given their interest in the environmental impact (noise and dust pollution, disruption and damage to access roads due to heavy vehicles/traffic, etc.) of the construction activities for the communities situated in the vicinity of the construction sites.

At the end of the workshop, it could be concluded that the ongoing nature of the 2007, 2009 and 2011 initiatives was crucial for the success of this approach along with the effective partnership between the labour inspectorate and construction site employees, IT experts and local authorities.

Photographs of the various improvements were taken at the inspected construction sites of SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL e.g. construction site closing fence, workers' accommodation facilities, the OSH coordinator's office, the use of adequate PPE on the construction sites, improved working conditions, etc.

Fig. 1 SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL construction site ñ view with the closing fence being erected (left) and facilities for workers' accommodation during the construction works (right)



Fig. 2 SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL construction site ñ OSH coordinator's office within the

construction site (left) and view of the lay out plan of the site (right)

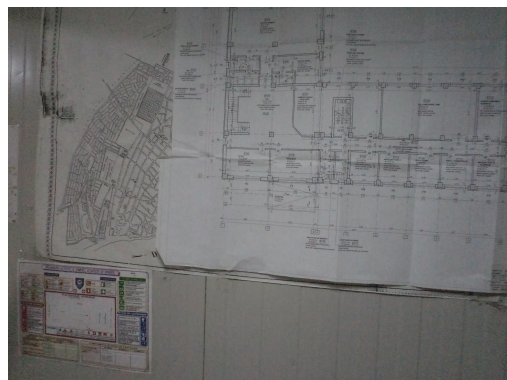
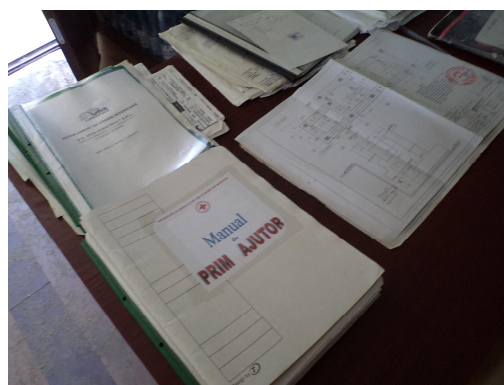


Fig. 3 SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL construction site ñ OSH coordinator's office with the first aid kit on the wall (left) and the first-aid manual (right)



2.4. What was achieved?

- Improved overall risk management within the construction sites at a regional level
- The software created in 2009 to simplify risk assessment especially for the SMEs, had been accessed 4907 times and had registered 1715 visits by 2011, thus becoming a practical instrument in terms of risk management for a significant number of construction sites.
- Reduced risk of MSDs for the workers from the construction sites participating in the study (SC VIVA CONSTRUCT SRL).
- A higher level of training for the labour inspectors, the construction sites' employers/managers, OSH coordinators and workers related to the specific risk assessments of the workplaces in the construction sector.
- Improved working conditions on the construction sites participating in the Labour Inspectorate's initiatives as illustrated through the above photos as well.
- Safer workplaces and a healthier workforce in the construction sector at regional level (Galati District).

- A safer work behaviour of the construction sites employers/managers and workers, which is likely to reduce the prevalence of work accidents and ill health through improved risk management and practical solutions that are easy to carry out with low implementation costs.
- Better communication with the local authorities and the communities situated in the vicinity of the construction sites resulted in the completion of construction works with less irritation for the communities (eg. dust and noise pollution, deterioration of the access roads due to the intense circulation of heavy vehicles for the duration of the construction works, etc.).

2.5. Success factors

The commitment of senior management at the Galati Labour Inspectorate constituted the key factor of success when it came to implementing the initiatives to improve the OSH related aspects in the construction sector within Galati District. Concomitantly, the ongoing communication with Labour Inspectorate personnel and the employers of a series of important construction sites in the region was a crucial aspect in achieving the expected outcomes.

The extensive participation of the construction sites OSH coordinators and of the workers' representatives in this process was invaluable.

The local authorities' involvement in a series of communication sessions on the initiatives promoted by the Labour Inspectorate represented a significant contribution towards the success at a local level in Galati District and the neighbouring region. This made the Labour Inspectorate's initiatives more visible at local level and enhanced the communication with local communities that are generally resistant to the opening of construction sites in the immediate vicinity of their properties.

The ongoing development of all these actions was a critical factor as well. It allowed continuity and a chance to learn from the outcomes obtained from each stage of the study and each of the actions that were carried out.

2.6. Further information

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2.7. Transferability

There is good potential to transfer the actions described in this case study to other construction sites and/or construction companies.

The initiatives of the Labour Inspectorate of Galati may be adopted by other labour inspection structures in Romania without major difficulties, for use in the construction sector, especially for small and medium construction companies.

The Labour Inspectorate of Galati has already promoted its software for risk assessment in the construction sector through common training sessions held with similar territorial labour inspection structures, and employers and OSH coordinators of the construction sites at regional and national

level.

3. References, resources:

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