

Occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector

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Based on an input from the Topic Centre – Occupational Safety and Health (TC-OSH)

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1 The EU hairdressing sector

The hairdressing sector in Europe employs more than one million people who work across about 400,000 hairdressing salons and receive some 350 million potential customers. Hairdressing (and barbering) services, together with beauty treatment, form the *personal services sector* ⁽¹⁾.

The hairdressing trade is dominated by small establishments. Hair salons have, on average, fewer than three workers, and are, for the vast majority, run by self-employed hairdressers who often work on their own (without dependent employees). The share of self-employment in the sector appears to be two to ten times higher than in the whole of the economy. Apart from the sharp rise of microbusinesses run by owner–operators, an expansion in chain and franchise businesses can be noticed. These two trends imply a general decrease in hairdressing salons that employ five to ten workers.

Self-employed hairdressers may work in their own salon set up in their home (home-based or domestic hairdressers) or at business premises, but may also work as mobile hairdressers (visiting clients in their homes or place of work, in retirement homes, at fashion shows, weddings, etc.) or rent chairs (or sometimes rooms) at salons owned by someone else. Chair-renters do not have a contract of employment with the salon but a contract based on services provided.

The last two practices, mobile hairdressing and chair-renting, are considered to be growing in the hairdressing sector. In some EU countries, mobile hairdressers represent up to 23 % of the sector's workforce. There is a lack of data on the prevalence of the practice of chair-renting. It is quite commonplace in some Member States, such as the United Kingdom, but not very widespread or even marginal in others.

Hairdressing is a predominantly female profession, with over 80 % women workers. Many of them work part-time and stay in the sector for only short periods of time. The sector is also characterised by a young workforce. About 80 % of recruits are aged under 26 and 56 % are under 19. In some EU countries there have been trends towards the sector becoming more dominated by migrant workers.

In general, there exist considerable differences in salaries, working conditions and training across the Member States. Owing to the rather small average size of hairdressing businesses, their average annual turnover is comparatively modest. Pay levels are generally lower than the national average in most countries. The high rate of hairdressing activities in the illegal economy in some EU countries causes substantial problems and downwards pressure on working conditions in the sector.

People working in the sector have commonly mid-range qualifications (International Standard Classification of Education levels 3 and 4, i.e. 'upper secondary education' and 'post-secondary non-tertiary education', respectively) ⁽²⁾. In some Member States, considerable efforts have been made to raise training standards and the quality of entrants into the profession.

The significant improvement in user-friendliness, quality and safety of mass-marketed products for home use, in particular colouring products, is leading the personal services sector to seek to compete on quality, diversify and develop new niche markets such as health and beauty treatments. The development of hairdressing requires respect for the highest quality standards, for both customers and workers, and requires social and environmental responsibility.

⁽¹⁾ NACE rev. 2 class 96.02 (mainly equivalent to NACE rev. 1.1 class 93.02) most closely covers the sector, including hairdressing and other beauty treatment.

⁽²⁾ For more information on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) see <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx>

2 Main occupational safety and health risks

A visit to a hairdressing salon is usually associated with anticipations of being cared for in a relaxed environment. However, few clients are conscious of the fact that the hairdressing salon can pose serious risks to those working long and uninterrupted hours. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) has recognised that hairdressers are exposed to serious occupational health risks and that improving working conditions must be a major priority ⁽³⁾. The cost of work-related skin diseases has been estimated to be about five billion euros a year in the EU alone ⁽⁴⁾. A United Kingdom study has reported that 70 % of hairdressers have suffered from work-related skin disorders at some point during their career ⁽⁵⁾. A Danish study compared skin diseases in the hairdressing industry with the average skin diseases in all branches of the economy. For every 10,000 workers, 57 cases were reported in the hairdressing sector against six as an average in all occupations ⁽⁶⁾. In a French study it was found that, while hairdressers represent about 1 % of the entire workforce, 20 % of the women affected by work-related asthma are hairdressers ⁽⁷⁾. The International Agency for Research on Cancer, in one of its recent monographs (2010), states that its overall evaluation for 'occupational exposures (to chemicals) as a hairdresser or barber are *probably carcinogenic to humans (Group 2A)*' ⁽⁸⁾. It is also estimated that musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are five times more prevalent among hairdressers. Health and safety problems in the sector result in absences, lower productivity and untimely exit from the sector. Untimely exit (especially among young hairdressers, i.e. those under 35 years old) has a cost to society (increased demand for social security and healthcare services) and a negative impact on the profitability of the investments in vocational training for young hairdressers.

These health problems can be challenged effectively by introducing measures which usually cost very little. For instance, the purchase and use of gloves costs only about 1 % of the average annual turnover. Installing height-adjustable rotating chairs and non-slip flooring are also low-cost interventions.

As occurs in all workplaces, in order to understand and appropriately confront occupational safety and health (OSH) risks, one must first identify the hazards in the workplace and relate them to the likelihood of occurrence. The appropriate prevention measures should then be proposed and applied. This procedure is called risk assessment and is iterative.

The main risks encountered in hairdressing salons could be divided among nine categories. At this point, it should be emphasised that the description of the risks and their required measures are not exhaustive.

⁽³⁾ EU-OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work), *Occupational skin diseases and dermal Exposure in the European Union (EU-25): policy and practice overview*. European Risk Observatory Report, 2008. Available at: http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/TE7007049ENC_skin_diseases

⁽⁴⁾ "European framework agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector". Common statement made by Coiffure EU and UNI Europa Hair & Beauty. Available at: http://www.dfkf.dk/xdoc/153/1_Common_statement.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ English, J., 'Disease at work: The perils of contact dermatitis for hairdressers'. *Dermatology in Practice*, 2004, 12(3), 12-13.

⁽⁶⁾ Weber, T., Nevala, A.- M. and Mantouvalou, K., *Study on social policy effects resulting from the scope of application of the European Framework Agreement on the prevention of health risks in the hairdressing sector*, Final report, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 2011. Available at: http://www.coiffure.eu/websites/anko_coiffure/files/2011%20June%20Final%20report%20Tina%20Weber%20H&S.pdf

⁽⁷⁾ Ameille, J., et al., 'Reported incidence of occupational asthma in France, the ONAP programme', *Occupational Environmental Medicine*, 2003, 60, 136-41.

⁽⁸⁾ World Health Organization and International Agency for Research on Cancer, *Some aromatic amines, organic dyes, and related exposures*, IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, Vol. 57, Lyon, 2010, p. 646. Summary of data available at: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Monographs/vol99/mono99.pdf>

2.1 Ergonomic factors

Ergonomics is the science that designs the work organisation, environment and equipment with the aim of adapting them to the worker. The term 'ergonomic factors' generally refers to situations where there is misfit (physical and cognitive) between the worker and the working environment. Lack of ergonomics in work design could result in physical discomfort, persistent pain in parts of the body or physical and mental exhaustion. The physical symptoms usually arise from constant and repetitive movements of various parts of the body or, alternatively, from holding awkward postures (sustained or constrained). These ergonomic problems may result in MSDs.

Lower back problems are usually caused when the hairdresser stands for prolonged periods of time. Such problems also occur from spinal twisting or bending. They are further aggravated when the employee is obliged to sit on stools without leg support or back rest. *Shoulder problems* occur when the worker constantly holds his or her arms above shoulder level or in abduction (upper arm positioned out to the side) for extended periods of time. This is observed during cutting or styling hair. *Neck problems* occur as a result of bending the head in the forward position or when turning it constantly from side to side to view the client's hair. Awkward gripping of utensils accompanied by repetitive and forceful movements normally causes elbow, wrist and hand problems. Standing for long periods of time can induce problems such as varicose veins, poor circulation and swelling in the feet and legs. In this category of risks manual handling of heavy goods or equipment can be implicated with lower back injuries. Bad organisational procedures such as unclear distribution of responsibilities, extended working hours, especially under intense conditions, and absence of rest periods aggravate the above symptoms.

With the aim of preventing injuries or symptoms, it is important to take a number of measures. These can be divided into, first, a proper design of the work environment and, second, appropriate work practices. In the first case the salon's layout and the location of equipment and materials are important in determining how the employer moves and positions him- or herself in the workplace. The hairdresser must have sufficient space around him- or herself to move freely and change body position so that he or she can reduce excessive reaching and bending. All workbenches must be constructed at appropriate heights and hairdressers' chairs must always be height adjustable. Not only must equipment and materials be within easy reach, but considerations should also be taken for their weight and bulkiness. This can be facilitated by the use of trolleys with wheels. With regard to work practices, it is important that the tasks vary as much as possible, so that the employee uses different muscles and allows muscles to recover (rotation of tasks). This can be accomplished by alternating between sitting and standing, for example when cutting hair, or alternating between different tasks such as sweeping and shampooing hair. The purchase of ergonomic tools with bended or adjustable grip keeps the wrists straight. Ergonomic issues should also be considered when new hair wash installations are purchased. The same applies for handheld hairdryers and scissors. Clearly defined responsibilities, equitable distribution of tasks, proper time allotments and rest breaks can help to diminish ergonomically induced symptoms. Health surveillance is a prerequisite for prevention. The doctor's opinion with regard to whether a pregnant employee should be exempt from some tasks should always be followed. Provisions in legislation and collective agreements for the protection of maternity should be adhered to. Risk assessment in a hairdressing salon should take into account working conditions suitable for pregnant employees.

2.2 Hazardous substances

Irritant and allergic contact eczemas may be caused by prolonged or repeated contact with water and skin-damaging hazardous substances because of the specific wet work in hairdressing salons. Wet work involves activities in which employees carry out work in a wet environment for a substantial proportion of their working hours, wearing liquid-tight (occlusive) gloves or washing their hands

frequently or intensively. Typical wet work in the hairdressing profession involves, for instance, hair shampooing and working with (cutting, setting, etc.) wet hair.

Frequent contacts of the skin with water, aqueous products or wet hair can lead to irritant skin damage and sensitisation (development of allergies). An increased incidence of skin damage is to be expected, particularly if the hands are exposed to wet work for several hours daily. Liquid-tight protective gloves may also contribute to irritant skin damage if they are worn permanently or inadequately. Wet work is an important factor contributing to hazard increase, as it weakens the protective barrier function of the skin towards irritant or sensitising substances. Hence, particularly in the case of trainees and temporary workers, care should be taken to ensure that they do not have excessive wet exposure. Handling of hair cosmetics may be associated with irritant damage and sensitisation (allergies) on pre-damaged skin as a consequence of inappropriate protective measures. This applies to shampoos and care products, hair colourant products, permanent wave liquids and styling products. Furthermore, cleaning and disinfecting products may also cause irritant dermatitis and sensitisation (allergy) in conjunction with frequent skin contact or improper use. Certain substances used in hairdressers' salons may lead, via the airborne pathway, to skin irritation and sensitisation in conjunction with improper use.

Risk assessment is a process foreseen in an EU Framework Directive [Workplace Health and Safety Directive (89/391/EEC)]. The employer is obliged to ensure that any hazard for staff in the salon is appropriately identified and assessed by specifically educated experts. This process involves acquisition of data and compilation of an inventory of hazardous substances and products. Safety data sheets are a highly suitable information source, which may be supplemented by other, less formalised, manufacturer's information. In the case of cosmetic products, warnings and/or use instructions on labels or package inserts will also provide valuable information. Such an inventory can serve as the basis for activity-related hazard assessment, the drawing up of the operating procedure and the specification of protective measures at the workplace. Based on the information obtained on the substance risks arising from the products used and the type and nature of the envisaged activities, the related inhalative, dermal and physico-chemical hazards (fire and explosion hazards) are to be assessed independently of one another and compiled in the hazard assessment. An analysis of typical hairdressing activities revealed that the following activities in particular must be taken into account in the hazard assessment:

- hair shampooing and application of hair care products;
- hair colouring;
- permanent waves;
- styling; and
- wet cleaning and disinfection work.

Proper ventilation of the hairdressing salon is vital to minimise exposure. It is of major importance that the products used have been designed and manufactured in compliance with the EU Cosmetics Regulation (EC Regulation No 1223/2009) and the instructions of use must be followed. Some basic measures for the prevention of exposure to chemicals are checking that the containers are immediately capped after use, disposing of empty containers appropriately and storing products as directed by the manufacturer.

Drinking or eating should be strictly avoided, as should the wearing of jewellery or the use of nickel-coated utensils. Particular attention should be paid to avoid the use of chemicals if the employee observes skin abrasions on him- or herself or on a client's skin. In order to minimise occupational dermatitis, one must reduce prolonged contact with water by alternating between wet and dry activities. Protective gloves should be used and chemical residues on skin should not remain for a long time. Barrier creams may also be helpful in this regard. Provision should be made for a space dedicated to hand hygiene and care. Health surveillance schemes are necessary for the prevention of risks. Pregnant employees should be protected and exempt from tasks according to provisions stipulated in existing legislation and collective agreements. If doubt exists on the suitability of a certain task undertaken by a pregnant woman, then a doctor should be consulted and his or her decision

respected to protect maternity. Risk assessment should suggest tasks and working conditions that are suitable for pregnant employees.

2.3 Biological factors — hygiene

Biological factors, such as bacteria, viruses and fungal spores, can cause infections and diseases. For this reason, strict hygiene measures must be applied. The most effective way to contain these microorganisms is to use freshly prepared disinfectants.

For routine cleaning, brushes, combs, scissors, razors, clippers, towels, blow wavers, etc. must be washed in hot, soapy water followed by immersion in disinfectant solution for 15–20 minutes. Hands should be washed regularly with antibacterial soap. Cuts and abrasions should be covered with waterproof dressings. Over the course of a day many people can visit a hairdressing salon. This means that there can be a potentially high rate of exchange of microorganisms of communicable infectious diseases. To prevent this from occurring, equipment should not be reused on the next client until it has been thoroughly washed and disinfected. Here the use of gloves can also protect from diseases. As for all workplaces, washrooms and toilets must also be kept clean and disinfected. Air conditioners should be properly maintained and serviced to prevent the incubation and spread of microorganisms.

2.4 Physical factors (microclimate, noise, lighting)

The microclimate parameters (room temperature and humidity, rate of indoor air exchange, etc.) should be adjusted to provide the maximum comfort for both employees and clients. A stressful microclimate may induce work accidents and discomfort.

Proper maintenance of the air-conditioning system is therefore important. The work areas must be adequately illuminated by natural or artificial light. If this is not the case, sore eyes as a result of excessive straining can be the cause of an accident. Poor lighting can also induce headaches. Blow wavers, hairdryers and steamers can generate a relatively high noise level, especially when used concurrently. In this case, apart from communication being hindered, hearing impairment may also occur.

2.5 Electrical risks

A hairdressing salon is equipped with a variety of electrical devices. These devices are usually used in the proximity of wet conditions and, if they are not cared for, there will always be the danger of electric shocks. For this reason, maintenance of electrical equipment is vital. A qualified electrician must inspect the electrical infrastructure and equipment regularly. Electrical cords, plugs and sockets should be properly insulated and safety relays installed. Intake filters in blow wavers and hairdryers should be regularly cleaned or replaced to prevent insufficient flow and overheating. Hairdressers should always follow the manufacturer's instructions for the installation and use of the equipment. Important safety points to remember are to always store electrical equipment away from moist or wet areas, never to touch electrical devices with wet hands and to switch off and unplug devices before cleaning. The use of extension cords and multiple plugs should be avoided. All electrical equipment must be certified and all safety requirements for their use should be fulfilled.

2.6 Slips, trips and falls

A hairdressing salon must be spacious and organised in such a way to provide free movement of both staff and clients.

Proper organisation in this respect entails that footstools, equipment, coat hangers, product displays, magazine racks, etc. do not obstruct free passage. In addition, in order to prevent trips care must be taken so that electrical cables or cords do not cross the salon's floor. To prevent slips, all floor surfaces must be dried and immediately cleaned from spills and hair constantly swept away. The floor surface must be horizontal, void of cracks or tile breakages and slip proof. Ladders and steps must also be slip proof. Employees should wear non-slip footwear. Proper storage and easy access of utensils, liquid or semi-liquid package products are essential to avoid accidents from falls. Equipment with moving parts and trolleys should employ breaking mechanisms to avoid accidents from unintentional movements.

2.7 Burns and cuts

Contact with hairdryers and steamers that may have hot surfaces can cause burns. Care must also be taken to avoid continuous contact with excessive hot water. It is important that all utensils such as scissors, razors or clippers are handled carefully, kept in good condition and stored with protective coverings. This is necessary to avoid severe cuts from their sharp edges and end points when retrieving them from storage. Bad lighting, increased work intensity and prolonged hours of work can also contribute to cuts.

2.8 Fire risks

All three parameters necessary to initiate and propagate a fire coexist in the work environment of a hairdressing salon: hot electrical surfaces, flammable products and air.

In order to minimise the risk of fire, one must isolate one parameter from the other. This can be achieved by proper storage of hair products, aerosols and solvents away from hot surfaces or heated utensils, preferably in fire-proof cabinets. Further to this, good work practices and work schedule can isolate incompatible tasks such as drying and hair spraying. Solvent spills must be cleaned immediately and empty containers disposed of properly. In order to avoid a high concentration of solvent vapours in the indoor air, adequate ventilation should be installed. Smoking should be strictly prohibited. Portable gas heaters with naked flames should not be used. All escape routes and fire exits must be kept clear. The salon should be equipped with fire extinguishers, fire blankets, sprinklers and a fire alarm. An emergency plan should be designed and all employees should become familiar with it and participate in any emergency drills.

2.9 Psychosocial factors

Psychosocial factors that can impede work practices and promote stress include bullying, sexual or racial harassment, intimidation, threats, verbal abuse and, in extreme situations, physical assaults. Under European OSH regulations employers have a duty to provide information on these issues, a safe work environment and training. It is particularly important to establish, from the outset, a workplace policy on sexual harassment and bullying. The employer must continuously consult and cooperate with his or her employees and not burden them with excess work that can lead to stress. In order to avoid the above conflicts and misunderstandings, the employer should prepare a clear plan on work times, tasks, responsibilities and decision-making powers, as stipulated in Article 6 of the European social partners' Framework Agreement on Work-related Stress (October 2004). In the agreement in the hairdressing sector, both sectoral social partners confirm their commitment to this European agreement on work-related stress.

3 The EU Framework Agreement

The considerable work-related health and safety problems in the hairdressing trade, described and supported by a vast body of (medical) research, have prompted the European social partners, UNI Europa Hair & Beauty and Coiffure EU (see box), to action. Convinced that preserving the good health of all persons working in hair salons will contribute to protecting jobs and securing the economic future of hairdressing and businesses, over recent years the social partners have negotiated a Framework Agreement ⁽⁹⁾, with the aim of fostering an integrated approach for the prevention of risks and protection and promotion of OSH in the hairdressing sector. This European Framework Agreement was signed by the sectoral social partners in Brussels on 26 April 2012, and applies to all employers and workers in the sector. Based on Article 155(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the signatory parties have asked the European Commission to present the agreement to the Council of the European Union for implementation by EU legislation, so that it would become binding in the Member States. At the time of writing, the Commission was still assessing this request.

EU social partners

UNI Europa is part of UNI Global Union, which represents around 1,000 trade unions in 140 countries and seven million workers in 330 European trade unions. As the European trade union federation for services and communication, it is responsible for social dialogue with the corresponding employers' organisations in various areas of activity in the service sector, including personal services, for which it has a specific section called '**Hair & Beauty**'.



More information can be found at: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/sectors/hair-beauty/about-us>

Coiffure EU is member of UEAPME (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises). It is the association of employers' organisations active in the field of hairdressing in the following EU and European Free Trade Association countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway.



More information can be found at: <http://www.coiffure.eu/>

An overview of the current (April 2013) membership is given below. There is no formal representation, on either side, in Estonia, Latvia, Romania or Slovakia.

	BE	BG	CZ	DK	DE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LT	LU	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	SI	FI	SE	UK
Coiffure EU	√	√	√	√	√	√			√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√
UNI Europa Hair & Beauty	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√			√	√		√		√	√	√

The representativeness of the above organisations for the European personal services sector was investigated and confirmed by two European studies. The first was conducted in 2001 by the European Commission in collaboration with the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) and the second was in 2008 by Eurofound in cooperation with the University of Vienna ⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽⁹⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7697&langId=en>

⁽¹⁰⁾ See also http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tn0811017s/tn0811017s_4.htm

3.1 Background ⁽¹¹⁾

The social partners UNI Europa Hair & Beauty and Coiffure EU have been engaged in European sectoral social dialogue for many years, with the aim of realising an upwards harmonisation of the quality of service and employment conditions across the EU.

The Sectoral Dialogue Committee for the Personal Services was created in 1999. The Committee meets up to four times a year, in annual plenary meetings and working groups, and has been holding additional negotiation meetings on training and OSH issues ⁽¹²⁾.

As part of this dialogue, a number of joint texts have been negotiated and adopted over the years. The following declarations and recommendations deal, partly or completely, with OSH in the EU hairdressing industry.

In 2001, a 'How to get along code' — guidelines for European hairdressers ⁽¹³⁾ was negotiated and signed. The code sets out general principles concerning business, fair wages, OSH problems, undeclared work and lifelong learning, forming the basis for the recommended guidelines aimed at fostering good working relations. They also include general principles covering child labour, work–life balance, rights to join or form unions and collective bargaining. Translations of the code were validated at national level by the social partners of several countries.

A covenant on health and safety in hairdressing ⁽¹⁴⁾ was concluded in 2005, focusing in particular on the use and handling of cosmetic products and their chemical agents. The covenant was a first attempt by the social partners to combat the relatively high number of occupational diseases — in particular occupational skin diseases (OSDs) — in the hairdressing trade.

Since 2005, the scientific horizon in terms of occupational health risks and (skin) diseases in hairdressing has expanded notably. Emerging scientific evidence on these risks and on preventative measures, and the existence of proven and cost-effective best prevention practices in some Member States, urged the social partners to again sit down at the table in order to give the covenant on health and safety a more concrete implementation. Both parties wanted, in particular, to develop practical tools and instructions on health for both employer and employee.

Against this background, in the framework of the Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue budget heading, the EU co-financed two joint projects, named SafeHair 1.0 and 2.0 ⁽¹⁵⁾ in 2010 and 2011. Both SafeHair projects were directed by the University of Osnabrück in cooperation with the following EU and national social partners from the hairdressing sector: Belgium (CSC Energie Chimie), Denmark (Dansk Frisor and Kosmetiker Vorbund), Germany (Zentralverband des Deutschen Friseurhandwerks) and France (Federation Nationale de la Coiffure). The Hair and Beauty Federation Malta and Obrtna Podjetniška Zbornica Slovenije (Slovenia) were involved in SafeHair 2.0. The project focused on the prevention of OSDs in hairdressing.

Within the framework of SafeHair 1.0 (2010), a questionnaire survey was developed and conducted for the evaluation of the state of art of implementation of skin protective measures in hairdressing all over Europe (EvaHair). Furthermore, the basis for a scientifically guided consensus on the prevention of OSDs in hairdressing was established among all stakeholders. This led, in 2010, in Dresden, to the adoption of a voluntary agreement, the 'Declaration of Dresden — Common recommendation on skin protection for the hairdressing sector in Europe' ⁽¹⁶⁾. The Declaration of Dresden was adopted by 34 representatives (employer and employee organisations, social agencies and research centres) from

⁽¹¹⁾ Based on (i) Coiffure EU and UNI Europa Hair & Beauty, *Summary of the origins, background and objectives of the European Framework Agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety in the hairdressing industry*, Unpublished; and (ii) European Commission, *European sectoral social dialogue — recent developments*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6008&langId=en>

⁽¹²⁾ For more information see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=480&langId=en&intPageId=51>

⁽¹³⁾ http://www.coiffure.eu/websites/anko_coiffure/files/EN%20-20How%20to%20get%20along%20code%2026%20June%202001.PDF

⁽¹⁴⁾ http://www.coiffure.eu/websites/anko_coiffure/files/EN%20-%20Covenant%20on%20Health%20and%20Safety%2021%20Sept.%202005.pdf

⁽¹⁵⁾ For more information see <http://www.safehair.eu>

⁽¹⁶⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7698&langId=en>

12 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Kosovo, Malta, Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom). It provides a basis for further attempts concerning OSH and the prevention of occupational dermatitis in particular. It contains a 'Declaration of intent' with recommendations concerning the prevention of OSDs in hairdressing, as well as an 'attachment' with detailed support measures for the implementation of the Dresden Declaration at national level.

In the next step, the EU follow-up project SafeHair 2.0 (2011/2012) was launched with the aim of guiding the implementation of the accepted standards in a scientific manner. Together with three workshops (in Ljubljana, Berlin and Malta), a modular 'SafeHair Skin&Beauty Toolbox' (www.safehair.eu) was developed. This toolbox contains didactical materials and information for skin protective measures for ready access in the salons and for different target groups involved in education and administration in the field of professional hairdressing (i.e. apprentices, employees, masters, salon owners, teachers, managers, administrators, professional associations, suppliers, experts and further stakeholders).

3.2 Towards a new agreement

It is against the backdrop of the abovementioned social dialogue activities that the European social partners decided to move towards an EU-level agreement for the hairdressing sector. The European Framework Agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety in the hairdressing sector ⁽¹⁷⁾ is the result of an autonomous initiative by the social partners, on the basis of Article 155 of the TFEU ⁽¹⁸⁾ (see box).

Sectoral social dialogue and EU-level agreements ⁽¹⁹⁾

Social dialogue is the central feature of collective industrial relations in Europe. The term 'European social dialogue' refers to the institutionalised consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving the European social partners. European sectoral social dialogue is an instrument of EU social policy and industrial relations at sectoral level, and consists of dialogue between the European trade union and employer organisations of a specific sector of the economy.

Social dialogue is mentioned in primary EU law in the TFEU. Articles 154 and 155 of the TFEU provide a procedure that combines the consultation of the social partners by the European Commission with the option to leave social regulation to bipartite agreement between management and labour organised at EU level.

Where the issue under consideration is specific to one sector, or has particular implications in a sector, the sectoral social partners may decide to negotiate an EU-level agreement on the matter. EU-level agreements establish minimum standards to apply across the EU and lay down certain commitments to be implemented by a deadline. Article 155 of the TFEU provides two options for the implementation of agreements concluded by the EU-level social partners under Article 154.

1. The first option is implementation as 'autonomous agreements', i.e. in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to management and labour and the Member States (the so-called 'voluntary route'). These autonomous agreements are generally implemented by the national member organisations of the signatories.
2. Under the second option, agreements can be implemented in the form of a Council decision, which is, in practice, a Council Directive. This option is open only 'in matters covered by Article 153', that is in social matters for which the EU has shared regulatory competence for setting minimum standards.

⁽¹⁷⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7697&langId=en>

⁽¹⁸⁾ Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 9 May 2008 (see <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:115:0047:0199:EN:PDF>).

⁽¹⁹⁾ Based on <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/europeansocialdialogue.htm>

3. The Council decision declares the agreement generally applicable in the EU, and it rests on Member States to ensure its implementation. Article 153(3) of the TFEU permits Member States to implement EU directives in the social policy field, including OSH directives and those directives implementing an EU social partner agreement, by national social partner agreement. This implementation route implies that no transposing legislation is required as long as the results required by the EU legislation are obtained.

More information can be found in the following publications:

- European Commission, *Social Europe guide — Volume 2: social dialogue*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2012. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7384&langId=en>
- European Commission, *European sectoral social dialogue — recent developments*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2010. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6008&langId=en>

The Agreement was signed in Brussels on 26 April 2012, in the presence of László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, who is responsible for social dialogue at EU level. The signature of the agreement was preceded by a seminar with scientific experts and representatives from EU-OSHA, the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization — all of which support the process ⁽²⁰⁾.

Figure 1: The signing of the agreement on 26 April 2012.



⁽²⁰⁾ All presentations are available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=1286&furtherNews=yes>

3.3 Scope and content of the agreement

The agreement applies to workers, including trainees and apprentices, and their employers. When self-employed persons (chair-renters) and employers personally work in a salon that is also the workplace of a worker, they must comply with certain provisions of the agreement. Apart from chair-renters and working employers, the self-employed (single-person enterprises) are not covered by the agreement.

In the three years of negotiations of the agreement, it quickly became apparent that it was useful to go beyond mere skin protection measures to include the entire working environment of the hairdresser. The agreement is composed of two parts.

Part I regulates general provisions and is divided into several sections, as follows:

- skin protection (e.g. reduction and elimination of wet work and dangerous chemicals, use of gloves);
- prevention of allergies (e.g. restricting dust formation, sensitising substances, hand tools containing soluble nickel);
- prevention of MSDs (e.g. ergonomic design of workstations and trolleys, adjustable chairs and stools, comfortable hand tools, diminishing of repetitive tasks);
- working environment and work organisation (e.g. working hours, work spaces, lighting, facilities, non-slip floor covering, general and exhaust ventilation, personal hygiene);
- maternity protection (e.g. adapting tasks, consultation with physician); and
- mental health and well-being (e.g. management, roles and responsibilities).

Part II of the agreement gives a detailed description of individual and collective protective measures applicable to the sector. Individual measures include wearing shoes with non-slip soles, not leaving aqueous solutions containing irritating substances or preparations to dry on the skin, and not drying hands with customers' towels to prevent involuntary contact with hairdressing chemicals. Collective measures include workers not eating or smoking in the workplace and obliging employers to provide protective gloves, as well as ensuring that tools are cleaned and disinfected systematically.

The agreement endorses the principles of prevention under Framework Directive 89/391/EEC (Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989). It states, for instance, that employers must take measures to help employees avoid repeated contact for long periods with water and skin-irritating substances that may cause irritations and allergic reactions and organise a balance between wet and dry work activities.

If the use of less dangerous alternatives is not possible, it states that the employer should use materials, products and tools in a form that involves low exposure. The substitution principle should apply to a range of materials, including products used for permanent wave treatments and blonding agents.

A specific clause is devoted to MSDs, calling on employers to organise the rotation of tasks in order to avoid repetitive movements or strenuous work over an extended period of time.

Apart from complying with legislation on working time, employers should take account of the most recent ergonomic best practices when acquiring new equipment and tools. As an example, the parties make it clear that handheld hairdryers must be as light, quiet and low in vibration as possible without this affecting their technical efficiency.

The signatory parties also recommend that employees consult a doctor of their choice or an occupational physician as soon as they experience symptoms such as recurrent pain, numbness or tingling.

3.4 Declaration

In addition to the Framework Agreement, on 26 April 2012 the involved parties also adopted a complementary **'Declaration on health and safety in the hairdressing sector'** ⁽²¹⁾. This declaration is addressed to stakeholders such as the cosmetic industry and manufacturers of other substances used in the sector.

The declaration calls both on stakeholders to intensify research into substances that are less harmful to the skin and respiratory tract than those normally used in the sector and on manufacturers to provide required information on the use and risks of salon products. It also calls on the supplier industry to take greater account of ergonomic principles in product development and to step up its ergonomic research. The declaration also includes a commitment by the parties to integrate the principles of the agreement into training, thus linking the Framework Agreement to their 2009 autonomous agreement on the implementation of the European Hairdressing Certificates.

3.5 Next steps

The agreement was negotiated on the assumption that it would be binding throughout the EU and apply to all hairdressers. Therefore, in the preamble of the agreement, the social partners, in accordance with Article 155 of the TFEU, ask the European Commission for legislative implementation of the agreement through a decision of the Council, that is making the agreement legally binding in all EU Member States by issuing an EU Directive. Furthermore, the parties call upon Member States to ensure that, at national level, all self-employed hairdressers active in the sector would benefit from the same level of protection as that foreseen in the agreement. At the time of writing, the Commission was still assessing this request. In the Commission Communication on Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT) of 2 October 2013 ⁽²²⁾, it announced that during the present Commission's term of office, it will not bring forward a proposal for legislative implementation of the agreement. At the same time, the Commission will continue with its assessment.

The parties will establish a joint working group at European level, which will report annually on progress made on implementing the agreement. This working group will also be open to new scientific findings.

Before presenting a proposal for a Council decision to implement the agreement through EU legislation, the Commission assesses a number of issues, including the appropriateness of EU action in the field, the representativeness and the mandate of the contracting parties, the legality of each clause in relation to EU law and the possible administrative, financial and legal constraints on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) resulting from an implementation by EU legislation. To support the analysis of the added value of the agreement, the Commission has contracted an external study to collect background information and provide an overview of the hairdressing sector, to collect medical–scientific data on work-related accidents and health problems and to estimate the costs and benefits of the provisions laid down in the agreement. This will contribute to the Commission's assessment of the concerned agreement.

3.6 Success factors, lessons learnt and transferability

The Framework Agreement is without doubt an important sectoral agreement and an example of a successfully integrated policy of social dialogue.

In his halftime summary, Commissioner Andor stated: 'In 2012, the European sectoral social partners concluded another important agreement which aims at protecting the health and safety of workers in the hairdressing sector. There is clear scientific evidence that hairdressers are exposed to high risk of

⁽²¹⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=7698&langId=en>

⁽²²⁾ [COM\(2013\)685 final](#)

occupational disease, in particular skin diseases and musculo-skeletal disorders, and therefore measures to better protect them are justified' ⁽²³⁾.

The agreement is a regulation by social partners for social partners and is tailor-made for small businesses. The social partners are convinced that the implementation of the agreement will help to preserve the good health of all persons working in the hairdressing trade and increase the professionalism and profitability of the industry.

'Hairdressers, whether as entrepreneurs or co-workers, offer their services to millions of customers every day. A healthy working environment contributes significantly to the success of businesses and is important both for the persons working in the hairdressing trade as well as for the customers. Coiffure EU welcomes the intent of EU-OSHA to support the practical implementation of the European Framework Agreement on the protection of occupational health and safety by providing useful aids and tools. This will contribute to increasing the acceptance of the proposed measures by all those working in hairdressing.'

Rainer Röhr, Secretariat Health & Safety and Environment, Coiffure EU

'For UNI Hair & Beauty, prevention based on general rules or on a voluntary basis is not enough to improve working conditions of hairdressers in their salons. Therefore, UNI has proposed the negotiation of a framework agreement specific to the sector dealing with the particular occupational risks all hairdressers in Europe (either employers or workers) are exposed to. If the sector wants to attract and retain the most talented, it has to be able to offer "well-being" to its staff.'

François LAURENT, Vice President UNI Hair and Beauty

Experiences of countries that have implemented measures similar to those contained in the agreement point to clear benefits for employers and workers alike in lowering sick leave and absence, reducing staff turnover and reducing treatment and follow-up costs for health systems in treating occupational disease. Evidence suggests that the costs of implementing the agreed prevention measures are low — less than EUR 0.5 per customer, or just over 1 % of the annual turnover of an average salon.

The employer and employee representatives believe that the agreement is active SME policy as it relates to an industry that is not the focus of political interests (such as the automobile industry). They have welcomed that the EU, by co-funding the EU SafeHair projects, has contributed to ensuring that the procedure described in the agreement has a scientific background.

⁽²³⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/andor/documents/halftime-summary-barrosoii_en.pdf (p. 31).

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5 Further information

European Union

- Coiffure EU: <http://www.coiffure.eu/>
- EPOS (European Initiative for the Prevention of Occupational Skin Diseases) — ‘healthy skin@work’: <http://www.epos2010.eu/>
- EU-OSHA (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work) — Online interactive risk assessment tools: <http://www.oiraproject.eu/available-tools/#mainContent#title>
- European Hairdressing Certificate: <http://www.euhaircert.eu/>
- SafeHair project: <http://www.safehair.eu>

United Kingdom

- Hair Heads: <http://www.hair-heads.co.uk/>
- Health and Safety Executive — Hairdressing: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/hairdressing/index.htm>
- Mimas and University of Manchester — Hairdressing training: <http://htmobi.mobi/>
- Walsall Council — Hairdressing health and safety: http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/hairdressing_health_and_safety.htm

The Netherlands

- The source of information on the safe use of products : <http://www.isditproductveilig.nl>

Australia

- Department of Commerce, Government of Western Australia — Hair, nails and beauty industry: http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/content/industries/Personal_and_other_services/Further_information/Hair_nails_and_beauty_industry.html
- Queensland Government — Key health and safety tips for hairdressers: <http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/documents/showDoc.html?WHS%20Fast%20Facts/retailwholesale%20-%20hairdresser>

France

- Fédération Nationale de la Coiffure Française (FNC) — Coiffure et santé: <http://www.fnc.fr/index.php/actualite-dossiers/Coiffure-et-sante-Precisions.html>
- Salon de coiffure — Fiche d'entreprise No 17 de bossons fute: http://www.bossons-fute.fr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=659-entreprise0017&catid=15-fichesentreprises

Belgium

- Coiffeur futé: <http://www.coiffeurfute.be>
- Knappe kapper: <http://www.knappekapper.be>
- Risktrainer pour les coiffeurs: <http://www.emploi.belgique.be/publicationDefault.aspx?id=17984>
- Risktrainer voor kappers: <http://www.werk.belgie.be/publicationDefault.aspx?id=17984>

New Zealand

- Department of Labour, New Zealand — Health and safety in hairdressing: <http://www.dol.govt.nz/PDFs/hairdressing.pdf>



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