



OSH in the school curriculum — Member State activities

Summary of a report ⁽¹⁾



To underpin occupational safety and health (OSH) education in schools and colleges it is necessary to formalise it in curriculum requirements. The report reviews how the Member States have been including OSH and risk education in their national curricula.

There is **considerable progress and activity** at both primary and secondary education levels in terms of both implemented and planned actions in the Member States. Actions to include OSH in education at the curriculum level include:

- statutory requirements;
- voluntary curricula;
- guidelines and resources to support the statutory requirements and voluntary curricula;
- formal recommendations;
- national guidance and resources in cases where no curricula have been set;
- promotional campaigns to support the above;
- approaches linked to safe and healthy schools.

Cooperation on education at the European level is resulting in a convergence in the core subjects and learning objectives in schools across the Member States. Risk education and OSH are generally not treated as a stand-alone subject; instead opportunities are being taken to incorporate them into the learning objectives of other relevant subjects in school curricula, such as science, physical education, health education and citizenship. It is therefore important to develop risk education and OSH learning objectives for the core curriculum subjects for different age levels.

In introducing OSH and risk education into the curriculum, a strong **partnership** approach is often taken involving bodies such as OSH authorities, education ministries and curriculum authorities. As national curricula change and develop, OSH authorities also need to be able to influence this process at the proposal stage.

Many **innovative resources** have been produced at national and regional levels in the Member States to support teaching. Resources and classroom teaching plans that are linked to the curriculum will be most useful.

In some Member States, such as Sweden, **integrated approaches** are taken whereby risk education is linked to a safe learning environment for teachers and pupils and also the health of the pupil at school. Some initiatives are supporting risk education in schools while at the same time providing support to schools to improve safety in school buildings. Pupils may be actively involved in school safety issues, for example through the designation of pupil safety representatives — which is a legal requirement in some Member States — and pupil participation in hazard spotting in schools.

While there are some excellent resources available for teachers, much less attention has been paid to the **preparation of teachers** themselves. It is recognised that teachers need training in how to deliver risk education; if they do not have such training, and risk education is just one option on the curriculum to choose from, they may be reluctant to attempt to teach it and opt for a topic that they feel more comfortable with, even if they have been provided with good resources. Therefore, training programmes are needed for existing teachers and OSH and risk education teaching needs to be included in the curriculum of teacher training courses for future teachers. Teachers at all levels of education need this preparation.

The greatest challenge is to mainstream OSH into **university education** in order to reach future engineers, architects, medical professionals, business professionals, managers, etc. The mainstreaming of OSH into university-level courses is the least well-developed area for various reasons, which include their greater autonomy. Actions to include OSH in relevant courses such as engineering or business studies are therefore ad hoc, and often dependent on the interest of individual professors or particular advocates within professional bodies. Professors need convincing of the need to include OSH in courses. They also need relevant materials. Nevertheless examples of good practices do exist, for example in the area of engineering.

(1) OSH in the school curriculum: requirements and activities of the Member States <http://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/TE3008521ENC/view>

Examples of pupil competences for curriculum subjects that relate to risk education

Examples of personal and social competences

- to acquire and demonstrate safety skills;
- to take responsibility;
- to be able to ask for help;
- to develop the confidence to give advice;
- to deal with unhelpful stereotypes and pressures;
- to recognise risk and make safer choices.

Examples of health competences

- to be able to apply first aid;
- to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Examples of citizenship skills

- to understand the need for rules;
- to take part in making and changing rules;
- to research and discuss local and topical issues;
- to consider social and moral dilemmas;
- to participate in decision-making.

Examples of career-related learning

- to meet and talk with people with a range of work roles and skills;
- to identify their own skills and achievements;
- to think about ways to develop these skills further.

Examples of risk education-specific competences, e.g. as part of practical curriculum subjects

- to know about hazards, risks and risk control;
- to recognise hazards, assess consequent risks and take steps to control the risks to themselves and others;
- to use information to assess the immediate and cumulative risks;
- to manage their environment to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others;
- to explain the steps they take to control risks.

Success factors for mainstreaming OSH into education curricula include to:

- make a clear commitment and provide adequate resources;
- set objectives for mainstreaming OSH into education in the national OSH strategy;
- base activities on research into what is taking place in reality, what can be realistically achieved, what works best, etc.;
- develop close cooperation with education authorities and especially with curriculum-setting bodies;
- identify opportunities in the education curriculum and seek to influence the curriculum as it changes and develops;
- tailor proposals and initiatives to the core curriculum and current teaching policy and methods, including the integration of risk education across the compulsory and non-compulsory curriculum; key areas for integration include the frameworks for personal, health and social education and citizenship; risk education should also be incorporated into health-promoting schools ('healthy schools' programmes);
- develop learning objectives for OSH and risk education for the relevant subjects in the curriculum framework matched to the age and ability of children and young people; focus learning objectives on developing an understanding of risk, including hazard recognition, risk assessment and developing informed safer behaviour;
- provide OSH/risk education resources appropriate to the various curriculum subjects and age levels;
- provide professional development in risk education for teachers and trainers; training is needed for teachers at all levels, both as part of the professional development of (existing) in-service teachers and in trainee teacher programmes; consider the needs of others involved in education such as those involved in the management of schools and parents too;
- develop a school-level OSH qualification that fits in with the school qualification system;
- develop partnerships with key promoters of risk education to achieve a consistent approach and avoid duplication;
- pilot initiatives and monitor and review progress;
- exchange experiences and network;
- place learning about risk within a whole-school approach to safety and risk; the approach should cover both a safe learning environment for pupils and staff health and safety; link this in turn to 'healthy school' initiatives.

Further information

Further information on mainstreaming OSH into education is available at: http://osha.europa.eu/priority_groups/young_people

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