

Review of successful Occupational Safety and Health benchmarking initiatives

Report

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1 Executive summary

Within the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) benchmarking has been defined as ‘a planned process by which an organisation compares its health and safety processes and performance with others to learn how to reduce accidents and ill health, improve compliance with health and safety law and/or cut compliance costs’. Using this definition, the overarching aim of this project was to review occupational safety and health (OSH) benchmarking schemes that have been set up at sector, Member State or European level. The research also set out to assess the benefits that such schemes can deliver, as well as their limitations, and to identify the key factors and main obstacles to their success.

A number of methodologies — including a desk review, email questionnaire and an online survey — were used to identify OSH benchmarking schemes in Europe and capture details of their scope, activities and effectiveness. To supplement this information, a case-study approach was adopted to gain further understanding of selected schemes including their success factors and any barriers to progress. This involved in-depth interviews with scheme co-ordinators and participants in order to benefit from the knowledge and practical wisdom of those involved. In addition, a limited number of case studies of benchmarking schemes focusing on non-OSH topics were conducted to explore transferable insights.

The review’s findings are illustrative of the diversity of available schemes and the range of sectors, topics and memberships covered. Across the 24 OSH schemes reviewed in depth, the nature of information-sharing requirements varies significantly, and includes both quantitative (i.e. OSH outcome) data and qualitative good practice (process) data. Many schemes contain elements of both.

The benefits of benchmarking schemes for member organisations are plentiful. Calibration of their own performance against the market is a strong motivating factor for organisations to join a benchmarking scheme. Another strong driver is that of achieving improvements in accident and incident rates. For example, the Finnish Zero Accident Forum, a voluntary network of Finnish workplaces, found that members’ accident rates fell by 46 % between 2008 and 2012 while the national accident rate did not significantly alter over the period. The benchmarking activities of the United Kingdom’s Health and Safety Executive’s Paper and Board Industry Advisory Committee (PABIAC) coincided with a drop in accident rates in the paper-making industry: the rate has improved from an accident rate higher than construction in the 1990s to just above the all-industry average. A ‘vision of success’ is an attractive notion: many participants join with the wish of creating a zero-accident environment.

Survey responses indicated that a wide variety of factors influence success, but that there is no one factor that all respondents agree on as critical to the success of their scheme. Data requirements emerged as a key factor, particularly with regard to participation and membership: benchmarking schemes with requirements to collect performance data are less attractive to members than those involving the sharing of good OSH practice. Focusing on features likely to be of most value to members is likely to lead to greater participation and success, although this should not preclude collection of data that scheme organisers believe will be of benefit, especially if it is key to tracking progress. Reporting accidents can be a sensitive issue and some members may be advised against sharing information about these: anonymous reporting could provide a means of addressing this. Virtual Risk Manager’s Fleet Safety Benchmarking scheme, for example, found that anonymity leads to more reliable data submissions and more productive discussions.

The vast majority of schemes create opportunities for networking and discussion. For example, the Zero Accidents Network in the Netherlands found that face-to-face workgroups and forums were preferable to more passive panel discussions and lectures. These worked best in persuading attendees of the importance and applicability of other companies’ policies and processes to their own organisations.

Several research interviewees discussed the importance of networking as instrumental in creating the relationships of trust and mutual collaboration that enable benchmarking schemes to be successful. The networking opportunities produced by the Universities Safety and Health Association, a forum for sharing best practice in the higher education sector, are among the most highly appreciated aspects of its activities. It found that most United Kingdom-based universities have good internal data-collection

processes, so they consider the most important function of the quantitative data they produce is in comparing these data with those of other institutions.

Schemes with 'hands-on' elements, such as on-site demonstration and those with opportunities for face-to-face discussion, are perceived as highly beneficial from the perspective of members. EU-OSHA's Benchmarking Steering Group, found that hosting events in non-competitive 'safe' environments allows individuals to discuss contentious and sensitive issues and helps secure the collaborative mindset needed to promote benchmarking.

Other considerations emerge as important, such as unit of membership (site rather than company membership, for example, can work better for some large firms) and criteria for membership. Schemes with broad (e.g. Finnish Zero Accident Forum) and narrow (e.g. HSE's PABIAC scheme) sectoral bases can both work well. By opening membership to not only market leaders in OSH performance, but also aspirational underperformers, the Finnish Zero Accident Forum maximises opportunities for peer learning and support.

The way goals are framed is also important; targets should be ambitious yet realistic. For Virtual Risk Manager's Fleet Safety Benchmarking scheme it was considered counterproductive to have too fixed a strategy prior to development. Virtual Risk Manager believes that the discussions produced on and around the benchmarking forum are as important as the data themselves.

Information gained from participation should be genuinely useful to the participants; if the scheme lacks perceived value, then participation is likely to decline owing to a lack of return on investment from the resources put in. On the whole, benchmarking participants prefer a focus on processes rather than outcomes, and practical examples of best practice are highly valued by members. The majority of respondents agreed that the ability to use information outputs to facilitate change was central to the success of a scheme. Schemes yielding documents containing OSH policies and processes are seen as useful, because this can save time developing documentation 'from scratch'. Sharing electronic documentation is particularly useful. The use of multiple dissemination strategies, such as those used by BGM in Germany in its statutory accident insurance comprehensive incentive system, is also seen as an important success factor.

Ease of participation is mentioned by many respondents. In the above-mentioned BGM scheme, questionnaires are as simple as possible to minimise bureaucratic barriers. A short, simple structure for the most recent survey in the United Kingdom HSE's PABIAC scheme also resulted in a high response rate.

Use of the phrases 'good practice' or 'best practice' should be considered carefully. Through its benchmarking activities, the ArcelorMittal Group, based in Luxembourg, found that a message of 'good practice' rather than 'best practice' was often more beneficial, as it was seen as offering guidance rather than imposing prescriptive procedures. Managers then feel they have greater ownership of the resultant OSH processes.

There was less agreement between respondents on what characteristics of environments or schemes were disadvantageous. Those mentioned most often were onerous time or resource demands of membership and low levels of industry support. Where schemes involve collection of large amounts of empirical data they can come to resemble research projects and may be extremely resource intensive: methodologies such as face-to-face interviews or on-site audits of OSH processes should be approached with caution.

The annex to the report is intended to serve as a practical guide for individuals and organisations looking to initiate an OSH benchmarking scheme or further develop an existing scheme. It sets out practical steps with respect to attracting members, setting goals, maintaining momentum and securing sustainability in the long term.

2 Approach and method

This report documents the collective output of research activities undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies in response to a request from EU-OSHA to undertake a review of successful OSH benchmarking initiatives. The overarching aim was to review OSH benchmarking schemes that have been set up at sector, Member State or European level in order to assess the benefits that such schemes can deliver, as well as their limitations, and to identify the key factors of and main obstacles to their success.

2.1 Background and aims

In the framework of its Healthy Workplaces Campaigns, EU-OSHA has established a network of European campaign partners in order to facilitate the dissemination of campaign messages to intermediaries and organisations at workplace level. The partners comprise pan-European or international organisations and companies: a total of 102 organisations of this type signed up to EU-OSHA's 2014–15 campaign. The benchmarking initiative represents an innovative step in the development of the partnership scheme in which EU-OSHA will encourage the organisations to benchmark good practices between themselves and develop a continuous improvement process in health and safety.

For the purpose of the Agency's work, benchmarking has been defined as follows:

A planned process by which an organisation compares its health and safety processes and performance with others to learn how to reduce accidents and ill health, improve compliance with health and safety law and/or cut compliance costs ⁽¹⁾.

This innovative research project is the first to attempt to map OSH benchmarking schemes across Europe with the purpose of capturing and summarising the knowledge and practical wisdom of those involved in benchmarking schemes in order to promote and support the development of more schemes across Europe.

Furthermore, this project is a key opportunity for the Agency to demonstrate its added value for European workplaces. Campaign partners can benefit directly from an exchange of good practices and there is significant potential for direct positive impacts on worker safety.

To gather constructive information about the practice and value of benchmarking, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) used a mixture of complementary research methods to review OSH benchmarking schemes at sector, Member State or European level. IES engaged the experts involved in these schemes to explore the benefits that such schemes deliver, as well as their limitations, and revealed a set of key factors of, along with the main obstacles to, their success as experienced by scheme leaders. This allowed comprehensive documentation and assessment of the effectiveness of current benchmarking schemes, as well as exploration of 'what works' when designing and implementing them.

▪ **Data were collected from the following sources:**

1. Campaign partners
2. Other individuals/stakeholders playing a key role in OSH benchmarking schemes
3. Experts from non-OSH fields who have employed benchmarking to drive up industry standards
4. Relevant documentation: web based, or those supplied by the above individuals.

▪ **Specific research questions included:**

1. Which kinds of organisations are able and willing to set up an OSH benchmarking scheme?

⁽¹⁾ <https://osha.europa.eu/en/seminars/benchmarking-event-summary.pdf/view>

2. How do participants and scheme leaders evaluate their worth and success? For example, are there empirical data available that show how successful the schemes are, for example in the form of better health or accident rates in participating companies?
3. What are the success factors of a good OSH benchmarking scheme?
4. What is the perceived added value provided for participating organisations?

▪ **Outputs covered:**

1. A directory of schemes and what is known about their effectiveness
2. Descriptive data analysis of the features of benchmarking schemes identified
3. Description of the circumstances and actions that give rise to a successful scheme and any barriers that prevent successful operation
4. A 'how to' guide for OSH stakeholders who wish to set up a successful benchmarking scheme.

The guide, and an understanding of the wider findings from the research, will be beneficial for all public and private bodies that intend to set up an OSH benchmarking initiative. It will enable them to avoid some of the difficulties that other organisations have encountered in setting up and running benchmarking schemes and allow them to ask themselves the right questions about their aims and what kind of scheme would meet their sector, national or international needs and resources. The outputs can be used to both encourage and support the development of similar OSH initiatives in Europe.

2.2 Methods

The methodology comprised a number of phases reflecting the Agency's requirements.

▪ **Phase 1: Desk review of benchmarking schemes and their effects**

This research phase involved searching for OSH and non-OSH benchmarking schemes in order to document their basic characteristics and develop an initial directory of schemes for continued expansion throughout the research. This was carried out via a literature review and scoping web searches.

▪ **Phase 2: Consultation with campaign partners regarding benchmarking schemes and their effects**

The desk review was augmented with a short email survey of campaign partners, a list of whom was provided by EU-OSHA.

In order to capture the variety of schemes that are available across Member States, IES emailed each of the Agency's partners with a short questionnaire. This was sent out on 27 October 2014 with a covering email explaining the aims of the research and asking campaign partners to complete a set of questions for up to three different benchmarking schemes. The questions covered:

1. The name of the scheme
2. The name of the leader of the scheme
3. A short description of the scheme
4. Where more information could be found on the scheme
5. Names and email addresses of people who could provide more information about the scheme. Partners were asked to provide as many names as possible to ensure a good sample for the survey and interviews
6. Details of informal networks involved in benchmarking which IES could contact to supplement the research.

The content of the email and the questions were reviewed and agreed by EU-OSHA and the response date asked of campaign partners was put back to accommodate EU-OSHA's concerns about the short turnaround time suggested for completed questionnaires. The return date was set for 7 November, allowing 11 days for completion and return.

This research phase enabled IES to identify a sub-set of campaign partners who had practical experience of benchmarking schemes and who therefore had the relevant knowledge to contribute to later stages of the research.

Fourteen people responded to the short email survey and approximately 20 schemes were identified or significantly expanded upon for the database from this research method. All those responding to the short email questionnaire were later invited to participate in either the full web-based survey or the interviews or both.

▪ **Phase 3: Interviews and surveys with participants active in benchmarking**

Phase 3 was an intensive research phase of gathering detailed qualitative and quantitative information about existing schemes and their success factors. It included interviews with both OSH and non-OSH stakeholders and also an online survey for completion by all individuals identified as a campaign partner or through the research as someone with knowledge of benchmarking schemes.

This phase was originally envisaged as a sequential process, with the short email survey followed by the in-depth interviews and then the development of the online survey on the basis of the data gathered from the interviews. In the event, as a result of extended contract discussions, the intended start date was deferred and this, accompanied by a need to complete the research as near to the intended finish date as possible, necessitated some redesign of the phase 3 research timeframes.

▪ **Phase 3a: In-depth interviews about OSH benchmarking schemes with a sample of campaign partners and benchmarking stakeholders**

The interview phase followed a number of steps to ensure that the data gathered were rich and relevant to the aims of the project.

1. Identification of a sample of knowledgeable and motivated interviewees
 - a. Potential schemes and participants were identified from a variety of sources including campaign partners' recommendations, individuals who responded to the short email survey and people who were identified in responses to it. In addition, certain schemes were targeted by the research team on the basis of a number of factors such as how closely they matched the benchmarking definition, the likelihood of them providing high-quality data or contrasting experience of success or challenge with different benchmarking schemes. In this way, schemes were included for consideration in the expectation that they would be instrumental in answering specific research questions. The research team also aimed to cover at least five different schemes from the 10 interviews.
 - b. These were reviewed by the team to identify 23 potential participants to provide 10 interviewees plus reserves who could offer an in-depth knowledge of at least one OSH benchmarking scheme either at sector, Member State or European level, focusing particularly on scheme leaders and creators who would have first-hand knowledge of the achievements and problems associated with the scheme.
 - c. The shortlist of case-study schemes was reviewed and agreed by EU-OSHA and 23 individuals were contacted and asked if they would be willing to contribute to the research via an interview. Following confirmation of this, appointments were set up with the 12 preferred interviewees confirming agreement.
2. Development of an interview topic guide designed to capture all relevant aspects of the scheme and learning points for future scheme developers
 - a. Along with the key research questions specified by EU-OSHA, the research team reviewed the schemes identified via the literature review and scoping searches, and examined the responses to the short email survey to generate a comprehensive draft set of detailed question areas to explore with each participant.
 - b. This was then reviewed and amended by EU-OSHA before final sign-off. Changes at this stage included:

- i. an explanation of OSH early on in the interview
 - ii. the addition of a question allowing respondents to identify one or more individuals as the driving force behind the benchmarking scheme and/or its continued success if that was relevant, rather than exploring solely the organisation(s) concerned, and
 - iii. questions probing the type of data that the scheme collects, such as sick leave data, near-misses, minor accidents and reportable accidents.
 - c. The finalised topic guide was used by all interviewers to structure their interviews.
3. Completion of 12 in-depth interviews covering actors in six countries, describing 11 different schemes. Of the 10 interviews selected for case-study development, there were five sector-based schemes, six schemes operating at national level, three at worldwide level and one at European level (totalling more than 10, as the sector and operating levels overlap), and the interviews lasted 30–45 minutes. The researchers aimed to cover at least five schemes and in fact achieved coverage of 10 different schemes for the purposes of case-study generation. Details are as follows.

▪ **Phase 3b: In-depth electronic survey with remaining industry ‘actors’**

All campaign partners, people who had been identified via the short email survey and any other contacts on the database who had been identified through the academic review and the scoping search were emailed with a request to complete an online questionnaire about OSH benchmarking schemes. The development of the survey was completed as follows:

1. **Generating the question areas.** These were developed using all information collected to date from the literature review, web search, short email survey responses and the initial interviews which had been carried out by the time the survey was compiled.
2. **Developing multiple response formats for the final set of question areas.** The research team reviewed the question areas and developed multiple-choice response formats for as many of these as possible to enable the questionnaire to be completed both quickly and easily by participants.
3. **Internal trialling and checking.** The draft questionnaire was reviewed independently by a number of IES researchers to ensure that it was understandable and the questions were discrete.
4. **Review and agreement of the questionnaire by EU-OSHA.** EU-OSHA made a number of suggestions for additions to the questionnaire and these were amended before moving on, including adding in a response option for sickness absence data and accident rate data in order to ensure that respondents were prompted to consider these important success criteria and include them where relevant.
5. **Translating the questionnaire.** The decision on which languages would enable the largest number of participants to complete the questionnaire involved identifying where the majority of schemes on the database were based to decide a minimum number of language translations and asking for additional languages from the client with oversight of EU-OSHA reach. The final set of languages selected was English, Finnish, Spanish, Italian, French, Polish, German and Dutch.

An outsourced translation service was used to translate the finalised questionnaire into the eight languages, ready for development in web format. The additional service of proofreading the questionnaire was funded to ensure translation quality.

To further check quality, the translations of the Dutch and German questionnaires were reviewed by an IES researcher with a first language of Dutch and near-first of German. On the basis of these checks, some adjustments were made to the questionnaire and, where appropriate, the translators were asked to make similar checks to the other questionnaires.

1. **Creation of the online survey.** All eight questionnaires were then created as web-based Snap questionnaires and supporting emails were written to explain the process and provide the link to the questionnaire. The emails were reviewed and agreed by EU-OSHA.
2. **Developing the survey sample.** Survey respondents included the campaign partners, along with other stakeholders who had been identified from the web search, the academic review or as part of the short email questionnaire.
3. **The survey was distributed to the sample and remained open for several weeks.** A reminder was sent to those recipients who had not already responded in order to maximise response rate.

Thirty people responded to the online survey, many contributing more information about the schemes already discovered through the short email survey and the desk-based research. However, in addition, approximately 11 new schemes of which the research team were previously unaware were identified this way and their information was added to the database.

▪ **Phase 4: Focused case studies of OSH and non-OSH benchmarking schemes**

Given that non-OSH benchmarking schemes have a longer standing and more prominent public profile than OSH benchmarking schemes, the research included a review of non-OSH schemes in order to capture learning from outside OSH but which is generalisable to OSH benchmarking. This enabled the collection of a comparative sample of benchmarking schemes sourced from outside the OSH field to capture additional valuable insights on precisely the same factors explored within the OSH schemes. The increased reach of the research was used to build an understanding of the similarities and differences across benchmarking schemes with different focal information. The three final review areas selected to identify established and successful schemes and develop three benchmarking case studies were:

1. Food safety/authenticity
2. Environmental standards
3. Flexible working and equal opportunities in the workplace.

The non-OSH benchmarking review used a keyword web search within each of the areas listed, followed by one interview per case study. These case studies were used to support the development of the practical guide on how to set up a successful OSH benchmarking network.

2.3 Report structure

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 brings together detailed case studies of OSH and non-OSH schemes.
- Chapter 3 summarises findings from the online survey (supplemented with data gained from other methodological elements where relevant).
- Chapter 4 sets out important issues for EU-OSHA to consider in supporting future benchmarking schemes.

3 Examination of existing benchmarking schemes

This chapter first provides descriptions of the steps taken to compile the databases of benchmarking schemes for both OSH and non-OSH content, and to select the OSH and non-OSH schemes for the production of case studies. Following this, the case studies are described in detail.

3.1 Compilation of OSH/non-OSH benchmarking databases

The databases were developed in two stages:

1. A desk-based review of academic literature around benchmarking schemes in the OSH field. Not meant to be exhaustive, the literature review served two purposes:
 - a. to generate criteria to inform the database fields
 - b. to provide starting search terms and concepts that would assist the second stage of a web-based review.
2. Two separate web searches for OSH and non-OSH benchmarking schemes.

3.1.1 OSH benchmarking scheme database

A database structure was developed on the basis of the desk-based review and was populated with the schemes identified through the web search. Database fields include the name of the scheme, contacts for the scheme and their role in the scheme, lead organisation, age and origin of the scheme, geographical reach, information on role in the scheme (i.e. creator of the scheme, leader of the scheme, general participant, etc.), sector of economic activity and many other fields, which include, at the close of the project, a summary of all information collected throughout all stages of the research, such as the details of the success factors and barriers to success.

3.1.2 Desk-based review: web search for OSH schemes

The web search for OSH benchmarking schemes was a rigorous, non-linear and organic process of expanding search strategies based on real-time learning, following a web-led multi-branched pathway. The team discovered that intuitive keywords and phrases such as 'safety benchmarking' were not particularly useful in producing relevant scheme data; however, the academic literature review produced a number of themes, organisations and search terms which proved significantly more productive. In addition, national and European trade and employer associations were researched for information about any OSH benchmarking schemes in operation.

By using the academic literature as a starting point, IES was able to identify and record many schemes that it was able to follow up and include in later stages of the research and which would otherwise have been omitted from the database. The reason that this unusual web-search process was useful is that OSH benchmarking schemes often do not have a high public or digital profile, so information about them cannot be located easily. This perhaps is one reason that this database is the first of its kind.

As the public profile of OSH schemes tends to be lower, it proved challenging to acquire contact names and email addresses for people who might participate in the survey or interviews; however, those schemes where this information proved possible to obtain were included in the initial short email survey and full survey or interviews.

3.1.3 Non-OSH benchmarking scheme database

A working database structure for non-OSH benchmarking schemes was developed on the basis of the literature review and was extended, refined and populated with the schemes identified through the web search. There are fewer fields than in the OSH scheme database, as it was always intended as a working document used to identify case studies for further research, rather than document schemes for

informing EU-OSHA initiatives. The database fields include the name of the scheme, contact details, a brief description of the main purpose of the scheme, the lead organisation, the geographic reach of the scheme and so forth.

3.1.4 Desk-based review: web search of non-OSH schemes

The search for non-OSH benchmarking schemes focused on the three issues or industry contexts agreed with EU-OSHA. Using a more straightforward approach of a keyword search yielded more schemes and more data about their operation and outputs than the OSH search. Schemes that were included addressed:

1. Food safety/authenticity
2. Environmental standards
3. Flexible working and equal opportunities in the workplace.

Details of the schemes were summarised in the non-OSH database.

3.2 Selection of case studies

3.2.1 OSH case studies

The OSH case studies were chosen on the basis of information from previous research phases via a process of purposeful selection. The short email survey and the web search generated information about existing or past schemes, as well as names of actors who would be willing and able to talk about them in detail. The researchers reviewed the database to identify those schemes which were most likely to address the research questions raised.

The sample selected represented those schemes that the research team judged would provide a good understanding of the diversity of schemes in operation and also from which there would be a rich source of information useful for developing a 'how-to' guide for others. As such, this included ensuring that relatively unsuccessful schemes were included in the sample along with successful schemes and those which were similar but which had produced different results.

The interviewees held a variety of roles including senior managerial health and safety roles in private organisations, sector benchmarking scheme leaders, team leaders in national-level voluntary safety networks and academics involved in safety benchmarking research.

In total, 11 interviews were conducted and eleven different OSH benchmarking schemes, were covered.

3.2.2 Non-OSH case studies

The non-OSH case studies were chosen on the basis of the database criteria. The database was used to examine all 30 schemes in order to identify those with good potential for following up with an in-depth interview. This process identified 11 schemes which had been in successful operation for a length of time and about which there was extensive information in the public domain. This was further reviewed, and a total of eight schemes covering the three areas were suggested to EU-OSHA as possibilities for case-study development.

These were reviewed by EU-OSHA. The food safety area was excluded, as it had less relevance to the project than the others, and three schemes were selected as ideal for case-study production: two from the environmental standards field and one from the equal opportunities field.

3.3 Case studies of shortlisted OSH benchmarking schemes

OSH case study 1: ‘Calculating the international return on prevention for companies: costs and benefits for investments in occupational health and safety’

Introduction

This benchmarking project was led by academic researchers in Germany and sought to identify the microeconomic benefits of investment in preventive OSH strategies. The research team investigated cost–benefit ratios in order to quantify ‘organisational returns on prevention’, i.e. direct and indirect effects of OSH investment such as accident prevention or reputational gains. Measurable variables (such as operating costs of OSH management systems) as well as sustained cultural changes were of interest.

The project ran from 2010 until 2012 ⁽²⁾, with data collected from 19 countries in the EU, Asia and North America. The team aimed to qualitatively collect data from one company per million citizens, resulting in data collected from 337 companies, typically with a staff count of 250–1,000 individuals. Research partners were contracted to conduct standardised face-to-face group interviews in order to audit OSH processes and outcomes.

The project did not set out to undertake a benchmarking exercise and participating companies contributed data on this understanding. However, the success factors and barriers for this initiative, particularly those concerning data collection analysis and dissemination, are applicable to this review. IES interviewed one of two scientific supervisors who designed and conducted the research project.

Set-up

The project was supported by three social security institutions ⁽³⁾, with the aim that the project outputs would provide an evidence base which could be used to influence organisational practice and change attitudes towards OSH management.

The research team’s expectation that participant organisations would be able to provide accurate cost and benefit data proved overly optimistic. In particular, participants struggled to assess and quantify OSH benefits. As a result, the research team revised its data collection methodology and, instead, conducted qualitative interviewing.

The interview methodology was based on an approach used during a methodologically similar project conducted by the same research team in Germany between 2007 and 2009. In order to develop this, the research team held a series of meetings with companies with the aim of adopting a ‘holistic’ approach to potential factors of interest. This meant that the topic guide and analysis design process were not wholly driven by the researchers’ own assumptions/biases.

An econometrician was employed to develop and test the model over the course of a year: a process the research team believes could not have been conducted any faster without sacrificing methodological robustness.

Audience

The core research team relied on a pre-existing ‘black book’ of specialists who in turn approached national partners contracted to recruit and interview companies.

When recruiting participants, national partners were instructed to perform a ‘positive selection’ of companies: only those with established positive attitudes to OSH prevention were invited to participate. There were many reasons for this selection bias:

⁽²⁾ Data were collected in Germany during an earlier project, as described below.

⁽³⁾ The International Social Security Association; the German Social Accident Insurance institute (DGUV); and the German Social Accident Insurance for the Energy, Textile, Electrical and Media Products Sector (BG ETEM).

- As the project was looking to ascertain the economic benefits of OSH prevention, there was little cause to approach organisations unaware of the economic potential of investment in OSH
- Only those with a thorough understanding of OSH-related matters could be trusted to provide reliable qualitative data regarding the impact of OSH investment
- Organisations with no positive inclination towards OSH were thought unlikely to share data with researchers.

National partners were instructed to focus on mining, construction, sales and manufacturing, as they were fairly universal by state. Service and high-tech sectors were excluded. Data were collected at the business unit/plant level. With many of the large employers having a large number of subsidiaries and capital links, it was viewed as too difficult to isolate workplace prevention at company level.

It was also necessary to select an object of analysis found consistently across multiple business cultures.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Face-to-face group interviews were conducted using semi-structured topic guides translated into the national partners' native languages. These topic guides contained a battery of six questions, which asked interviewees to assess their plant's costs of OSH investment per employee and speculate on the financial and non-financial benefits OSH prevention has produced.

It was viewed that face-to-face interviews would produce trustworthy data and allow researchers to better explain complex concepts and questions, ensuring the reliability of data. Where possible, national partners conducted group interviews with:

- the controller of the business unit
- an in-house safety expert
- a worker representative.

Multiple questions and statements were posed. For each group, only one consensual answer could be recorded. By having three separate viewpoints, researchers believed reliable data were collected, as potential biases of individuals would cancel each other out. This form of interviewing was viewed as ideal for the project's 'prevention accounting'. Where group interviews were not practical, the research partners conducted 'one-to-one' interviews before calculating mean scores.

Implementation, outputs and impact

When presenting data, researchers used truncated means: excluding outliers in the five upper and lower percentiles to improve statistical reliability. Consistent with the intention not to conduct benchmarking, individual companies received no tailored feedback. Individual national research partners received tailored country reports, but the 'performance' of individual countries was not compared. The project did assess whether certain geographic areas had higher or lower cost-benefit ratios, but individual rates were not compared.

The lead research team identified a global 'return on prevention' ratio, and significant correlations and differences between regions and company sizes. Data allowed researchers to identify the most significant types of benefit⁽⁴⁾ and cost⁽⁵⁾ that organisations experience when dealing with OSH prevention. These findings have since been utilised by sponsoring institutions as part of their employer engagement strategies.

⁽⁴⁾ For example, the prevention of disruption, the limitation of wastage, increased motivation, encouraging a focus on quality, stimulating innovation, improving public image.

⁽⁵⁾ For example, financial outlays for personal protective equipment and training interventions.

Success factors

The social security organisations involved in set-up and the national partners contracted to perform data collection had a heritage of working together on similar projects. Project developments could therefore be agreed upon informally and through consensus.

The project reached a conclusion regarding a worldwide 'cost–benefits' ratio to OSH investment. This finding has been triangulated by two further research projects, which used highly differentiated research methods⁽⁶⁾, supporting the validity of the economic model and the robustness and reliability of the project's qualitative data extraction technique. The project demonstrates that face-to-face group interviews could effectively produce high-quality data to benchmark performance.

Barriers

While providing rich and reliable data, the interview methodology demands significant resources from both researchers and those being researched. The batteries of questions presented during interviews could last as much as half a working day. In offering three or four interviewees (plus an individual offering administrative support assisting from each participating business unit) companies could effectively lose more than the equivalent of two working days. In addition, the interviews were resource intensive and difficult to set up, required persistent recruitment attempts and could be arranged only with companies strongly committed to OSH prevention.

Transferability

The project's principal scientific supervisor believes that companies and individuals would have been less willing to participate in the work if data were to be used for benchmarking purposes. There was a view that outputs typical of such activities do not properly accommodate regional and national socio-economic circumstances, leading to potential misinterpretation and unfair comparisons.

OSH case study 2: Zero Accident Forum, Finland

Introduction

The Zero Accident Forum (ZAF) is a voluntary network of Finnish workplaces, open to any plant/business regardless of size, sector or current level of occupational safety performance. Members have all adopted a 'zero-accident vision' by which all workplace accidents are viewed as preventable and eliminable.

The Forum is administered by the semi-privatised, tripartite Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) and is used to transmit and disseminate workplace examples of good practice and success, as well as other materials and toolkits designed to facilitate organisations' 'routes to zero [accidents]'. IES interviewed the team leader responsible for the ZAF.

Set-up

Formed in 2003, the ZAF was established by FIOH, in close partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Ministry provided funding, which allowed the project to operate as a free-to-end-user initiative. At the outset, the ZAF functioned as one aspect of the Ministry's national occupational safety programme, promoting good-practice-sharing schemes. The ZAF has proved the most successful and enduring aspect of this programme.

(6) Including the European Commission's BenOSH report (2011), details available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=716&langId=en&intPageId=1716>, accessed 15/12/14.

Initial participants were sourced from a pool of approximately 20 companies. These companies had already made their intent of strengthening OSH processes known to FIOH, and they formed a core steering group charged with developing and promoting the project in the wider economy. This activity produced added value by allowing the organisation to further strengthen its pre-existing contacts with key industrial partners.

Audience

As of December 2014, 320 organisations (employing approximately 14 % of the Finnish working population) were members of the scheme. Key members are based in the metal, chemical, paper, pharmaceutical, service, construction, power, hospital and municipal sectors. The ZAF accepts membership from not only whole companies, but also individual plants/sites. With some employers encompassing a large number of administrative divisions, membership is found to improve communication flows between the ZAF and the member unit and, within the business unit, maximise the impact of the sharing of good practice.

Everyday interactions occur between the OSH specialists employed in-house by member organisations. However, company managers are also proactively engaged by the ZAF, as described below. New members are largely recruited through informal marketing with existing members. The Institute believes the transmission of good feedback is the best method to communicate the benefits of the network.

State funding declined year on year, and the ZAF is now self-financing. Members contribute a small fee: a decision taken to ensure a sustainable forum resilient to political change. Fees are graded by company size, with five separate charges according to employee population. Discounted fees are applied to unit-level members. The Institute occasionally supports the project from general funds, raised from both governmental block funding and the open market.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Companies wishing to join the ZAF are required to fill in an application form and statement of future OSH intent signed by a company's CEO or another top-level manager. This pledge requires the organisation to commit to a statement which:

- outlines what a 'zero vision' entails
- describes how such visions can benefit companies
- broadly prescribes what actions must be taken by companies to move towards such visions.

This pledge of commitment was authored by FIOH in close partnership with its core members, and its basic requirements have been seen to work well among new members; it has not been altered since its introduction. Once committed to becoming a member, FIOH asks companies about their number of employees to determine the annual membership fee. Subsequently, members routinely submit annual accident rates and report whether they utilise any OSH management systems.

These data are used to assess the impact of the ZAF on members. However, FIOH believes that the sharing of best practice is of greater benefit to members. With key members operating out of multiple sectors, ZAF members benefit from potentially applicable guidance documents not encountered through day-to-day business dealings. It is this dissemination of best practice that forms the current core activities of the ZAF.

The forum arranges seminars consisting of presentations on OSH processes given by members of the ZAF; non-OSH senior managers are often invited as speakers. This allows them to give their views on the feasibility of particular initiatives and helps strengthen the support needed to implement change. The seminars routinely include site visits, which are viewed as very important as they allow OSH professionals to gain feedback from visiting scheme members.

Informal dinner sessions are held to encourage networking. FIOH uses opportunities to encourage members to form informal bi- and multilateral relationships, which in turn have led to the development of mutual site visits and auditing processing. Approximately 200 members attend these annual events. The ZAF produces a newsletter and hosts an extensive intranet presence to facilitate communication between members and associated OSH experts. Members receive topic-specific resource packages, covering issues such as 'safety in cold weather and darkness' and 'risk assessment', which can be used to independently audit and improve OSH processes.

As of 2005, the ZAF awards graded safety-level certificates. These certificates have three tiers:

- 'In the world's forefront of safety'
- 'Approaching the world's forefront of safety'
- 'Heading for the world's forefront in safety'.

Companies wishing to be considered for a certificate are required to submit data concerning the previous year's OSH processes and outcomes.

Implementation, outputs and impact

Between 2008 and 2012, accident rates amongst ZAF members were found to have fallen by approximately 46 %, while the national accident rate did not significantly change over the same period.

FIOH does not try to capture data concerning reputational gains and other added value benefits associated with membership. However, available presentations clearly demonstrate apparent benefits in these areas. In addition, 250 ZAF safety level certifications had been granted as of 2013. Local newspapers have been known to report on plants' successful attainment of safety certificates, indicating that companies are collecting reputational gains as a result of their involvement with the Forum. Here, FIOH sees the ZAF as providing a rare opportunity for 'good-news OSH stories'.

In the opinion of FIOH, an added benefit is the establishment of a 'common safety culture' in Finland. For instance, the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries has recently stated it has a 'zero-accident vision', and is purposefully working to meet this by 2020.

Success factors and barriers

Success factors

Prior to forming the ZAF, FIOH had developed good relations with key industrial partners through extensive and collaborative project work, establishing itself as a trusted central point around which to build the ZAF. Being seen as a neutral broker, lacking a commercial self-interest, FIOH's leading involvement allowed companies to buy in to the scheme with confidence.

By opening membership to market leaders in OSH performance, but also aspirational underperformers, the ZAF maximises opportunities for peer learning and support. FIOH believes that the ZAF offers a radical message to management, that companies both *should* and *could* reduce accident rates to zero, and no lesser goal is acceptable for a company seeking sustainability. This improved the noteworthiness of the campaign and its partners' dissemination strategy. FIOH's view is that demand for good-practice sharing is likely to increase. This is primarily because many organisations are increasingly being asked to demonstrate commitment to corporate social responsibility strategies.

Barriers

In some circumstances the radical 'zero' message can hinder acceptance of the scheme's basic premise. The ZAF was therefore at first able to secure the interest of only the most forward-thinking companies, and contested discussions are still being held with less engaged employers about the feasibility of zero-accident policies.

A steady flow of members continue to leave the ZAF, and FIOH collects the reasons why and when this occurs. Currently, public sector employers facing budget cuts are the most likely to exit. When private sector organisations have allowed membership to elapse, this has largely been due to bankruptcy rather than a voluntary exit. FIOH is currently overhauling its membership database, viewing that not enough thought went into its initial development, and thereby ready identification of performance issues or areas of interest has been prevented.

Transferability

Since 2010, FIOH has been a leading member of the EU Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH) Safety Culture Group. In partnership with TNO ⁽⁷⁾ and OSH institutes across Europe, PEROSH promotes zero-accident visions at a European level. Through this ready-made, collaborative platform, FIOH has been involved in the development of two 'spin-off' initiatives: the Dutch Zero Accidents Network and the recently initiated Institut für Arbeitsschutz der Deutschen Gesetzlichen Unfallversicherung, based in Sankt Augustin, Germany.

Working with PEROSH, FIOH has developed strong and close (unofficial and contract-free) working relationships. This has allowed sharing of experiences of setting up and maintaining projects, limiting new initiatives' need to 'reinvent the wheel'. FIOH believes its projects are at too early a development stage to assess their impact, but that signs are promising. They note that academics involved in these activities have gone on to propose — and receive — funding for a number of related research projects.

A representative from FIOH has been invited to speak in Greece, Spain and Italy, and discuss the transferability of the ZAF. However, from FIOH's perspective the ZAF model could not be readily adopted across Europe without adaption, highlighting characteristics of Finland (e.g. having a small population and a strong history of tripartite 'consensus politics') that may be lacking elsewhere. There was a feeling that countries with less of a history of collaborative working might lack the cooperation and mutual trust between workers and managers needed to collate, adapt and implement processes shared through the ZAF.

OSH case study 3: Zero Accidents Network, the Netherlands

Introduction

The Zero Accidents Network (or *Netwerk* in Dutch) consists of a number of companies committed to sharing best practice, OSH documents and advice, closely based on the Finnish ZAF. The pledge requires company directors to commit themselves to a 'zero goal' approach to OSH prevention, with the aims of generating engaging leadership at the top, embedding intra-company safety cultures and improving inter-company communications and learning.

The Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) was contracted by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment to develop the project. TNO is a statutory company tasked with developing and delivering applied scientific insights to the public and private sectors. IES interviewed a project manager at TNO with responsibility for the Network.

Set-up

Looking to replicate the success of the Finnish ZAF and following a number of exploratory activities, the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment committed funds to support this scheme in 2012. The scheme is part-funded by the Ministry, and received EUR 50,000 of start-up money. Project-specific state funding has proportionally declined year on year, with TNO making up the difference from its general budget.

⁽⁷⁾ The Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research - responsible for the Zero Accident Network Netherlands, as described below.

At the outset, TNO held hypothetical discussions to gauge appetites for, and the perceived feasibility of, a project defined by a 'zero-accident' vision. Once private sector interest was found, a kick-off meeting was held at the end of 2012 to plan the development of the project. These organisations helped informally define the Network's goals, principles and main activities. After a year, memberships were formalised and an emphasis on marketing was encouraged for recruitment. The project's core members now regularly convene as a project 'think-tank' consisting of five or six OSH professionals from the scheme's most engaged participants. This group is tasked with discussing and planning the initiative's development. Looking to the future, it has been agreed that a core leadership structure composed of non-TNO representatives needs to take close-to-full ownership of the Network. However, the exact form of this structure has not been decided, and no companies as yet are prepared to make such a commitment.

Owing to the work-in-kind donated by Network members and interested parties, TNO is unable to estimate the financial costs borne by participating companies when setting up and sustaining the project.

Audience

TNO is research driven, and therefore has significant day-to-day interactions with the private sector because of its bespoke research projects. TNO drew on its extensive 'black book' of OSH professionals to approach companies to participate; chief executive officers (CEOs) and non-OSH senior managers are currently engaged through these.

There are currently nine full members within the Network, with approximately 50 'interested parties' yet to sign the commitment for full membership. The membership profile is varied, including large multinationals and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from a diverse range of sectors. Membership occurs at the plant/business unit level. Prospective members' CEOs or senior managers are expected to sign the Network's six-point commitment pledge, although TNO has found that time demands on their roles mean they quickly delegate day-to-day responsibilities to OSH specialists.

TNO has discussed the possibility of membership fees to sustain the project, but accepts that this would mean those making the biggest in-kind contributions would be expected to pay again with cash, potentially leading to drop-outs from the most engaged employers. Cash contributions are therefore currently viewed as a future option if significantly more members are recruited.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

TNO tries to diminish its own role in the Network, so as to encourage membership ownership of the initiative. Every year, two half-day membership meetings are held to encourage networking, during which members present on their own 'progress to zero'. The most recent sessions have looked to include as many interactive and small-group sessions as possible while limiting lecture-style sessions. TNO facilitates these by using research knowledge to approach companies with particular expertise, requesting that they give presentations.

Members are also invited to initiate, plan and hold detailed and small-scale 'thematic meetings' on specific issues — the most recent concerning the clearing out of factory machinery — at their own worksites, with members and interested parties attending. A website repository and forum has also been designed for companies to share good-practice guidance documents electronically. TNO is currently considering, with its members, how quantitative self-reporting of OSH outcomes and processes could be used to scrutinise members' journeys to zero.

Implementation, outputs and impact

TNO has not collected quantitative data related to the impact of the initiatives. However, it seems that companies are sharing a significant number of actionable points during each session. Members and interested parties appear to be looking to draw transferable lessons from any and all incidents and/or near-misses rather than reacting to prevent further incidents. TNO believes that more members and interested parties are now capturing and coding incident data and prioritising OSH needs through the traffic-light toolkits shared through the Network.

Success factors

Based on informal feedback from debriefings to group meeting attendees, face-to-face workgroups and forums are seen as preferable to more passive panel discussions and lectures. The former appear best at persuading attendees of the importance and applicability of other companies' policies and processes to their own organisations.

Barriers

In terms of membership numbers, TNO feels the project is underperforming: many interested parties appear reluctant to sign the full commitment document. TNO sees this as a cultural issue, with non-OSH managers unable to see why they should formally enter a partnership with others over an issue to which they may already commit significant internal resources.

TNO believes that the Network was not made attractive enough during its earliest activities, limiting membership take-up. Initially utilising one-directional 'lecture'-style sessions rather than interactive working groups, it was felt that early meetings failed to engage and motivate.

TNO would like to see improved communications between companies, with the website — designed to facilitate the sharing of good practice guidance — currently underutilised by members. TNO is itself still required to organise the majority of the Network's activities: no leading employer or employer association has volunteered to take on greater levels of responsibility, with potential threat to the long-term sustainability of the Network.

TNO emphasises that a productive best-practice and guidance network would need regular communications between leading organisations. If, as is currently the case, prolonged silences develop between face-to-face and/or electronic communications, it was noted that momentum and interest can be lost.

For TNO, the intrinsic motivations of the OSH prevention specialists make them the most accessible group with which to work. However, their influence within their employing organisations varies significantly; they may not have the authority to single-handedly implement processes shared through the Network.

Transferability

The Network's strategy of facilitating members to directly share their experiences in focus group or workgroup settings is drawn from bipartite and tripartite knowledge-sharing. Companies which routinely participate in this type of collaborative working appear to embrace this aspect of the project. There was a view that companies with a different working culture might not have the same willingness to share potentially sensitive information.

OSH case study 4: ArcelorMittal's benchmarking activities

Introduction

The ArcelorMittal Group, based in Luxembourg, is currently the world's largest global steel manufacturer. ArcelorMittal's corporate strategy advocates a 'journey to zero [accidents]' with alignment of this between business sites. Therefore, business units with top OSH performances are expected to share qualitative information with others in the group. Some benchmarking activities also occur with other organisations in the steel sector. To inform this case study, IES spoke to the Head of Health and Safety of ArcelorMittal Distribution Solutions.

Set-up

ArcelorMittal's benchmarking activities have been occurring for at least 10 years. IES was not able to determine how the schemes developed from the beginning, as both forms of benchmarking have been in operation for a longer period of time than the interviewee has been in position.

Audience

Business Units inside ArcelorMittal engage in two different types of benchmarking: one internal and one external to the organisation. Regarding the former, the company benchmarks OSH processes within different business units via a quarterly meeting of the Health and Safety Council, presided over by the group's global head of OSH. ArcelorMittal's Corporate and Distribution Services teams also benchmark processes and performance with those of selected large steel distribution and processing companies.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Internally, senior OSH managers from each of ArcelorMittal's business segments are obliged to attend quarterly meetings of the group's Health and Safety Council, which last two or three days (there are 815 multisite/multinational companies sitting within the global ArcelorMittal Group).

These provide an opportunity for a site visit to one of the Group's plants: the 15–20 OSH managers in attendance are encouraged to scrutinise the site and make recommendations, drawing on their own segment's experiences, during a subsequent debriefing session. Managers are subsequently encouraged to 'cascade down' these sessions by holding similar events with plant-level OSH managers within their business segment. Productive ideas regarding policies and processes generated from these meetings are in turn expected to be 'cascaded up' to the top-level Health and Safety Council meetings.

Sessions are designed purposefully to be 'hands-off' in approach. Formal scrutiny of key performance indicators (KPIs) is avoided, as they are seen to distract from 'big picture' OSH prevention strategies. However, if specific common issues are identified, a small task force gathers details on practices regarding the issue in question. Comparative qualitative analysis of these allows working groups to internally compile and publish good-practice guidance, which is disseminated to all business units within the Group.

ArcelorMittal's Council accepts that in practice its benchmarking processes are a 'top-level' activity, and the Council does not follow up to ascertain which plants have directly implemented its recommended good-practice strategies. Instead, ArcelorMittal leaves it to the discretion of individual segments' managers to decide what specific action is needed. These decisions are guided by managers' own agendas and action plans.

Externally, ArcelorMittal benchmarks with external organisations in a broadly similar manner to the above. During these exchanges, most large operators in the sector participate in site visits. Before the economic crisis, these meetings generally occurred three times a year, but now occur annually. During these meetings inter-company good practice guidance is not produced, as it is felt that it would be too difficult to produce documents tailored to multiple companies' needs. Participants instead enrol on the expectation that the information they are able to acquire during the physical sessions could go on to inform the production of intra-company guidance.

Implementation, outputs and impact

The interviewee was unable to provide any evidence regarding the impact of ArcelorMittal's benchmarking and information-sharing activities.

Success factors**Internal**

The attitudes of managers responsible for specific business units are seen as potential barriers to the implementation of centrally produced 'best-practice' guidance. According to our interviewee, this is due to managerial stubbornness in accepting flaws in previous methods, or that the new guidance is applicable to their individual circumstance. ArcelorMittal therefore labels its Health and Safety Council-produced guidance as 'good practice' to accommodate the notion that plant, cultural, linguistic and legislative differences demand practical variety. ArcelorMittal believes that if the Council disseminated *best* practice guidance, managers would be more motivated to break down, dispute and/or ignore the guidance.

By offering good practice guidance rather than imposing prescriptive procedures, plant-level OSH managers are required to input more time and effort when implementing guidance. It is believed that managers therefore perceive themselves as having greater levels of ownership of, and seeing greater levels of importance in, the resultant OSH processes.

ArcelorMittal's internal 'benchmarking by doing' is seen as the best way to ensure sustained and thorough benchmarking activity within the Group. A number of years ago ArcelorMittal decided to replace site-based meetings of the Health and Safety Council with conference calls. However, it 'very rapidly' became obvious that managers' commitment to freely exchanging data and processes declined, and the decision was reversed. Personal contact within real-world environments is therefore seen as a crucial success factor for the Group's current information-sharing activities. However, once an issue is identified and a working group is set up to collate data and author good practice guidance, ongoing communications are encouraged to drive forward the process between meetings.

The interviewee was clear that the lack of prescriptive requirements, combined with a facilitative approach and an observational approach to benchmarking, engendered the most productive and sustainable improvements in OSH practices, even though as a result there were few hard data to evidence this in the short term or at the local level.

External to ArcelorMittal

International competition laws reportedly lower the potential barriers one would face when looking to benchmark with one's commercial competitors. However, there is a view that after participants commit to an understanding that health and safety is the only issue discussed, issues regarding mistrust are negated.

Barriers

Internal to ArcelorMittal

ArcelorMittal believes it is imperative that benchmarking has a tangible output which justifies involvement in the scheme. If none is produced, ArcelorMittal believes managers would fail to engage. Previously, ArcelorMittal had experimented with formalised internal benchmarking, making use of quantitative data compared against annual performance targets. However, the Council found that this was not embraced throughout the organisation largely due to the bureaucratic or resource-intensive nature and unlikely utilisation of the results by individual managers.

Although current good-practice-sharing activities appear to work well, the Council accepts that some individuals will always perceive the activities to be irrelevant.

External to ArcelorMittal

ArcelorMittal finds that it is difficult and often misleading to use quantitative data when benchmarking externally, as different organisations often rely on different measurements.

The interviewee was asked to comment on the utility of large-scale inter-company benchmarking. The view was that time-consuming and expensive group discussions are often too general to be useful to individual organisations. ArcelorMittal therefore tries to exchange information through bilateral exchanges or small, regional-based groups, where discussions can be more focused on commonly shared difficulties. ArcelorMittal accepts that large group conferences might be useful in circumstances where organisations with no previous OSH culture are looking to proactively address OSH concerns for the first time.

Transferability

ArcelorMittal believes that practical difficulties are relatively easy to overcome. However, for an information-sharing scheme to be successful, participants need to share a common goal, accumulate common benefits and be willing to actively contribute to the development of competitors' business strategies.

Owing to these criteria, ArcelorMittal has lost some of its enthusiasm for external benchmarking. With the Group seeing itself as being ahead of others in the sector on the 'journey to zero', there are less obvious benefits in sustaining external contact with perceptively poorer performing companies, especially as the primary information being shared concerns good and best practice. Qualitative inter-company benchmarking initiatives seem to face the risk of drop-outs from industry leaders.

OSH case study 5: Universities Safety and Health Association

Introduction

The Universities Safety and Health Association (USHA) is a forum for sharing best practice in the higher education sector. This forum is largely populated by the central health and safety authorities of each member university. Universities as institutions — rather than individual OSH managers/departments — are the member unit, meaning multiple individuals within a member university are able to access the Association's services without having to take out multiple memberships.

In addition to the sharing of good practice and benchmarking, USHA proactively looks to lobby and influence government in conjunction with other trade associations. IES interviewed the Acting Chair of the Association.

Set-up

USHA formed in 1972, in recognition of an impending legislative shift away from prescriptive, compliance-based OSH laws towards legislation which demanded employers become more risk focused.

Over the previous decade, USHA has increasingly led production and facilitation of stakeholder guidance. USHA has recently co-operatively published good practice guidance and toolkits concerning research, fieldwork, student placements and emergent concerns such as nanotechnologies.

Audience

A total of 155 United Kingdom universities and research institutions are currently members of USHA. The United Kingdom membership comprises approximately 85 % of the higher education market. Six Irish universities and 12 global universities — mostly from the USA and Australia — form the international component of the membership. USHA is staffed by volunteers who undertake their duties in conjunction with their full-time paid jobs at individual member universities.

Universities pay a membership fee of GBP 450 per year (around EUR 600). This is seen as cost-effective in comparison with other trade bodies in the sector. USHA's greatest expenses are incurred by event management and back-office work. Benchmarking activities are viewed as relatively inexpensive to run.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Members are grouped regionally. Groups typically meet two or three times annually, sharing best practice through formal presentations and informal discussion/networking opportunities. In addition, an annual two- to three-day holistic spring conference and an annual topic-specific autumnal conference are held (the latter incorporating the Association's annual general meeting). These maximise opportunities for networking and dissemination of member-authored good practice presentations.

Attendees are usually health and safety professionals of member organisations, and OSH-focused researchers attend the topic-specific conferences.

USHA operates specialist project groups, charged with focusing on a specific issue. The aim of these is to draw upon members' expertise to establish a consensus on good practice. The groups are tasked with designing guidance and toolkits and delivering tailored conferences and training for other members of the Association. The groups are also encouraged to use their 'black books' to secure collaborative connections with relevant trade and professional associations.

Members interact and share best practice through 'Hasnet', a sector-specific members-only forum which operates through 20 topic-specific lists. The forum allows members to search for, discuss and compile information about specific issues. A newsletter is regularly sent out containing information about the activities of USHA and its members. The members also have access to 'Barbour's Online Safety information Service', which collates and disseminates outcome data and policy and process guidance from approximately 800 international sources.

In terms of quantitative data, USHA annually collates incident- and near-incident rates, using Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) definitions to categorise data. (USHA does not collate ill-health data; historically this has been collected by employee associations active in the sector.) The incident data are anonymised and circulated in league tables to enable members to use the data for their own benchmarking processes. Individual regional groups can also request that league tables are discretely published within the group for all members to get a clearer picture of OSH performance in their local area. Some quantitative data are sent to the United Kingdom's public-sector Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA), for use in national-level reports. Data submissions to HESA are not anonymous.

USHA also conducts *ad hoc* quantitative benchmarking activities regarding specific issues. Recent activities have concentrated on:

- quantifying OSH staffing levels within member universities
- identifying who OSH professionals report to within member universities
- assessing the availability of training opportunities — such as web-based resources — within member universities.

Implementation, outputs and impact

USHA tends to use its quantitative data *ad hoc* to identify areas for working groups to focus upon. Subsequently, the groups produce training initiatives and guidance documents to address these issues. This means benchmarking activities usually have an obvious, tangible end product. These guidance documents and training initiatives are subject to a 12-month review, in the form of a web-based survey which goes out to all members, validating utility and usability, and assessing the impact of the resources that have been produced.

The Hasnet forum appears to be useful for OSH professionals within universities to 'micro-benchmark' their own processes against others and to lever influence within their employing organisation as a result. OSH professionals can readily demonstrate that an identified issue is seen as relevant to comparator organisations, as they are able to signpost their superior to a relevant forum discussion.

Success factors

According to member feedback, the physical and electronic networking opportunities produced by USHA are among the most highly appreciated aspects of its activities.

USHA finds that, because of their statutory obligations, most United Kingdom-based universities have good internal data-collection processes. Therefore, they view that the most important function of the quantitative data they produce is to facilitate universities in comparing their own pre-generated data with others across the sector; few members need assistance with data-collection procedures.

Barriers

The current Chair feels that many members do not fully appreciate that the Association is volunteer led. This results in members holding unreasonable expectations which cannot always be met, potentially resulting in disappointment.

In 2014 USHA identified the following areas as priorities for the next five years:

1. Improving the 'quality, timeliness, targeting and accessibility' of communications
2. Developing collaborative partnerships with key influencers internal and external to the higher education sector
3. Conducting a review of USHA's Executive Committee, to better define officer's roles and improve members' access to, and the representativeness of, the Committee
4. Improving two-way communication between the Association's central and regional groups
5. Improving USHA's website, particularly its security, accessibility and usability.

Transferability

Around five years ago, USHA attempted to strengthen its international contacts and activities by reaching agreements with overseas representatives to invite one another to their respective conferences. However, current members have not viewed this international dimension as a particular priority. As international members are based on what was referred to as 'the other side of the world', the relevance of their experiences is not always clear to United Kingdom-based members. Therefore, USHA is now planning to strengthen its contacts with European OSH organisations such as EU-OSHA; there is a strong feeling that geographically closer collaborative networks (especially those focusing on OSH issues in the higher education sector) could appear more relevant and useful to participating members.

USHA works extensively with cross-sector organisations with a more general remit, such as the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), when producing its procedural guidance. However, USHA is not in favour of extending its benchmarking activities beyond its own sector. In addition, they are resistant to producing guidance documents that are relevant to a multi-sector audience as they do not want to lose focus on the specific needs of their members, and in doing so risk the financial sustainability of the initiative. However, there was a feeling that cross-sector sharing of guidance documents could be useful, as this could provide an opportunity for learning from transferable insights.

OSH case study 6: BGM's statutory accident insurance comprehensive incentive system

Introduction

BGM is the statutory accident insurance organisation for the German food and Horeca (hotel, restaurant and catering) sectors, financed by compulsory insurance payments. Statutory insurance agencies in Germany are bipartite, and have boards of directors formed of 50 % employer and 50 % employee representatives.

Maintained by BGM, the Comprehensive Incentive System (CIS) asks companies to self-audit OSH processes. To incentivise membership, BGM provides insurance discounts to companies which implement an appropriate number of OSH prevention measures. IES interviewed BGM's Head of Prevention Management.

Set-up

A similar scheme has been operating in the meat sector since 2002. In 2011 the meat industry's small statutory insurance organisation merged with the BGM (the larger company of the two) and BGM's food and Horeca board of directors assumed overall responsibility. After analysing the costs and benefits of the forerunning scheme the Board concluded that the financial effect of offering incentives for OSH benchmarking processes was a positive one. Therefore, it was decided that the food sector's incentive system should be adapted for the food and Horeca sectors.

The indicators contained within the initiative's self-auditing questionnaire were developed by BGM's professional research staff in consultation with businesses represented by BGM's Board of Directors. These consultations assessed whether these industry-leading companies would pass the test. This ensured that the scheme's test criteria were realistic, with potential to encourage organisational change. Prior to the scheme's full scale roll-out, the questionnaire was also trialled with a range of companies operating in the sector. At this stage it was viewed important to ascertain whether its questions were relevant and understandable, and whether its indicators were applicable in the context of varied company profiles. This process (i.e. from Board of Director-level discussions to the full-scale roll-out of the questionnaire) took two-and-a-half years, going live in January 2014.

Audience

Approximately 400,000 companies, collectively employing 3.5 million individuals, are currently insured by BGM. Discounts are awarded on a company-wide basis. The first annual cycle of the food and Horeca-wide system was completed in April 2015. As questionnaires will be assessed and rebates calculated at the end of the financial year, BGM is not yet aware how many companies are yet eligible for a rebate in this first year of operation. However, as of October 2014, over 2,000 employers have requested and downloaded a questionnaire form.

BGM promotes the scheme through trade magazines, which are automatically mailed out to all registered employers in the sector. Its website displays information about the scheme, and inspectors are instructed to notify employers about the scheme during consultative visits. BGM makes use of contacts with employer associations to disseminate information about the survey by writing to the organisations and attending their annual general meetings. Furthermore, information is shared in the annual, sub-sector-specific trade shows organised by BGM.

The membership comprises a mix of consistently top OSH performers in the sector and aspirational improvers. Evidence suggests that long-time members tend to improve year on year, or maintain a high quality standard in OSH management. It is difficult to engage non-motivated companies with financial incentives, as they may never achieve the necessary standard.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

BGM sends out a series of questionnaires by mail, email or telephone for six sub-sectors, asking whether companies have enacted a series of BGM-approved measures regarding safety. When an application is made, respondents select their sub-sector and download a tailored questionnaire and information pack, containing explanatory briefing notes, good-practice case studies and details on the history of the incentive scheme.

The questionnaires contain a series of 'yes/no' questions, regarding approximately 30 specific areas. Outcome data are collected on accidents per branch/region, and the number of occupational health cases per company.

A questionnaire 'score' of 80 % or above makes a company eligible for an insurance saving. Different questions are weighted so that small businesses are not prevented from meeting the 80 % target figure. Companies must prepare documents for possible inspection to validate the claims made in their questionnaire returns. BGM is also able to validate many claims through cross-analysis of its extensive sector databases. For example, as a result of being responsible for paying the sector's first aid and traffic safety training, BGM is able to rapidly double-check claims about the number of first aiders a company employs.

Questions regarding a number of 'normal' prevention measures form the focus of BGM's questionnaire. However, respondents are also asked about a 'bonus block' of supplementary measures to ensure that smaller companies, which might be unable to afford comprehensive OSH management systems, are still eligible for the incentive payment. Companies are eligible for bonus block points if they participate in BGM research, which helps to improve BGM's research recruitment in a cost-effective manner in the process.

Bonus block points are rewarded if companies proactively suggest possible projects to help improve OSH prevention processes in the sector. However, with the weighted importance of the purchasing of OSH management systems and other potentially expensive activities, in practice it is still significantly more difficult for a small- or micro-employer to clear the 80 % hurdle.

Changes to assessment criteria are possible each year, allowing contemporary developments in OSH prevention discourse to continually feed in to the questionnaires' design, affecting organisational change among participants looking to clear the 80 % hurdle.

Implementation, outputs and impact

If the 80 % hurdle is cleared, companies receive a discount on their previous year's accident insurance premiums of EUR 25 per full-time equivalent (FTE) permanently contracted worker. There is a minimum rebate value of EUR 100 and a maximum threshold of EUR 100,000. If the target of 80 % is not met, written feedback to guide future performance is available. The forerunning scheme in the meat sector offered, in addition to financial savings, biennial OSH awards and *ad hoc* medals of honour for top performers, so that industry leaders could benefit from reputational gains.

Over the 12 years of the forerunning meat-industry scheme, participation rates climbed to approximately 45 % of all sub-sector companies, with 30 % of SMEs openly volunteering information about their OSH processes. This gives an indication of popularity among participants: if properly financed, incentives appear to be a useful method with which to encourage the collection of data beyond that required by law. Longitudinally, there is clear evidence that an increasing proportion of participants were meeting the targets.

Regarding the longer-running meat sector incentive scheme, BGM has collected data that demonstrate participants and non-participants had roughly equal accident rates at the scheme's outset, although the downwards trajectory of participants' accident rates has been significantly greater than non-participants' over the past decade. Anecdotal evidence suggests that companies are utilising the questionnaires as an internal checklist tool, even if they are not submitting rebate requests to the insurer. This suggests that the quality and practical value of the measures contained within the questionnaire are valued by organisations across the sector.

Success factors

Feedback has shown that users regard the scheme very favourably. Large and small companies have indicated that the measures are 'down to earth' and sufficiently specific to lever practical change among participants. BGM designed its questionnaires to be as simple as possible to minimise bureaucratic barriers to completion.

BGM views that rewarding organisations (and maintaining this even when negative OSH events occur) helps promote the scheme and facilitates change. If rebates were automatically wiped out by rare accidents, it is felt that only the very best and most confident performers would participate. By focusing incentives on processes, it is thought that companies more willingly share data and seek to improve OSH performance.

BGM believes that the prescriptive nature of prevention measures maximises the initiative's ability to lever positive change in the industry. With scoring criteria guided by expert research, companies considering new processes in order to score higher are being led by cutting-edge OSH knowledge. In addition, by changing the prevention measures necessary for qualification every year, BGM is able to focus the scheme on emergent issues. These can be identified through quantitative analysis of BGM's insurance claims and pay-outs database, an advantage of the scheme being insurer led.

There was a view that data collection and processing would be problematic if respondents were free to print the survey form using any printer configuration, so this has been systematised. To allow for an automated data-entry process, the initiative's questionnaire forms must be requested and are electronically locked so that they can only be printed in a manner immediately readable to BGM's scanning software.

BGM's use of multiple dissemination strategies was seen as a vital activity owing to the wide range of company profiles found in the sector.

Barriers

BGM views that having a known, trusted and perceptively neutral lead organisation is a prerequisite for similar schemes. Likewise, having a lead organiser with a physical presence within companies is seen as necessary to promote a scheme's value to potential participants. BGM therefore views the recent up-scaling of its meat industry scheme to be inherently problematic: BGM does not expect uptake to be as high as it was in the smaller meat-processing sector as a result.

BGM has had to address weighting carefully to ensure that performance scores are relevant for both small and large companies: BGM has ongoing difficulty in determining what functions as good practice among small employers, and how scores can be weighted to accommodate this. A new 'bonus block' has been used to address this issue.

On a similar theme, BGM previously graded insurance savings according to score (e.g. a score of 95 received greater discounts than a score of 80). In order to attract SMEs, it was decided that flat payments would be implemented, meaning that SMEs unable to afford OSH management systems needed to attain full marks but could nevertheless benefit from the scheme. Likewise, the scheme stipulated that insurance savings would be capped at 5 % of the total insurance fee; this made the incentive savings available to small companies virtually non-existent owing to their low-cost insurance payments, which could amount to as little as EUR 200 per year. Again, wanting to encourage participation of SMEs, it has been decided that percentile caps linked to insurance contributions will be removed.

Transferability

No other German statutory insurance company runs a similar scheme at present. However, 'nearly all' of the insurance organisations have expressed an interest in BGM's system. BGM therefore believes it will be able to use the data it currently collects to conduct inter-sector benchmarking of OSH policies in the next two years.

OSH case study 7: United Kingdom health and safety authority's paper and Board Industry Advisory Committee's benchmarking activities

Introduction

The United Kingdom's Health and Safety Executive (HSE)'s Paper and Board Industry Advisory Committee (PABIAC) was set up in the late 1970s/early 1980s as a tripartite body, charged with informing the HSE about the key issues found in the sector. Over the years PABIAC's scope has changed: since 2005, PABIAC has had an objective-generating focus, responsible for deciding three-year objectives for OSH prevention in the sector, and developing cooperative strategies to meet these objectives. One such strategy is benchmarking, which is used in the sector to establish how organisations' outcomes and processes compare with PABIAC's objectives. The HSE is unable to isolate the specific costs of its benchmarking activities alone.

An IES researcher spoke to a HSE officer involved with the scheme, and a senior member of the participating trade association, the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI).

Set-up

In the 1990s, several PABIAC-commissioned studies identified mills with OSH management systems in place performing significantly better than those without in terms of their OSH performance. In partnership with industry and worker representatives, PABIAC looked to develop initiatives that would proactively encourage good-practice sharing in an industry then typified by 'us and them' attitudes. PABIAC now operates on the stipulation that member companies willingly share with others all the safety information and data they collect.

Audience

PABIAC has two levels of committee: a steering committee, containing an HSE chair and officers, and industry and union representatives.

Two trade association representatives sit on the steering committee, along with market leaders from key sub-sectors. This committee sets the sector's three-year OSH objectives, and a series of 'Industry Delivery Committees' determine strategies to achieve these objectives.

Quantitative and qualitative benchmarking occurs at the site level; individual sites are expected to develop site-specific work plans to meet the Steering Committee's objectives.

PABIAC's membership coverage is high in the paper, tissue and corrugated card sub-sectors, with lower coverage in the micro- and SME-dominated recycled sector. Exact numbers of members vary with each submission round, but among 'PABAIC Pledge' signees, 70 organisations in the corrugated sub-sector, 50 organisations in the paper sector, and 'a lot less' in the recycled sector are active in benchmarking. Generally, health and safety professionals employed within member organisations are responsible for submitting data.

PABIAC largely relies on the CPI, the industry's trade association, to approach organisations and invite them to join the scheme. This is viewed as an important line of approach for organisations which have disengaged from HSE.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Members of PABIAC are regularly sent targeted questionnaires. The questions are determined by the steering committees' three-year objectives, and tend to change each time they are published. This allows assessment of outcome and process performance against changing objectives, the most recent of which have been:

1. Reduce 'high frequency, low severity' and 'low frequency, high severity' incidents
2. Implement near-miss reporting and occupational health management systems
3. Nominate named senior managers to take on direct responsibility for OSH management
4. Collaboratively measure OSH competencies of their workforce.

In addition, members submit monthly quantitative reports to the CPI, containing information concerning:

- accident data (categorised by: 'fatalities', 'major', 'minor'; non-RIDDOR 4- to 7-day absence ⁽⁸⁾, non-RIDDOR 1- to 3-day absence, total and continuing hours lost, first aid injuries, property damage injuries)
- near-miss data (categorised by 'slip, trip or fall', 'contact with machinery', 'contact with sharp object', 'exposure to fire', manual handling', 'workplace transport' and 'struck by object')
- unsafe conditions and acts data ⁽⁹⁾.

These reports require organisations to provide further qualitative details concerning each reported significant incident, allowing CPI and HSE analysts to further categorise the incidents. The CPI uses these data to produce league tables of accident and near-miss rates, with named companies ranked from top to bottom. This is presented to all members on a 'name and shame' basis. The CPI approaches the top performers in these league tables to share how their good performances have been achieved and to open their sites to others.

⁽⁸⁾ RIDDOR — Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/>

⁽⁹⁾ http://www.paper.org.uk/services/health_safety/pabiatic.html

The sector's employers are encouraged to sign 'the PABIAC pledge', which codifies each of the committee's three-year plans. The CPI's league tables give a clear indication of where members who have signed the PABIAC pledge sit in comparison with others, intended to highlight the fact that adherence with PABIAC's targets are an effective method with which to achieve quality OSH prevention.

Implementation, outputs and impact

After collating the practices of top performers, the CPI publishes role- and issue-specific guidance with the intent that this can be used by members to perform internal gap analysis of their own processes. It also uses the data to set the themes and contents of a series of industry-specific workshops it supports. By dividing attendees into four regional groups, the resource demands involved in attending are reduced.

When reporting minor and major RIDDOR incidents, the CPI publishes qualitative descriptions of all incidents in regular monthly reports, but also in immediately circulated 'safety alerts'. These allow other organisations to perform rapid risk assessments and devise appropriate measures to prevent similar incidents occurring within their own company. Safety alert information is distributed through the CPI to all PABIAC and CPI members. This information is also circulated in continental Europe and Australasia. These information flows are reciprocated before being circulated among PABIAC's members.

Accident rates have reduced significantly over PABIAC's current and former three-year strategies. Currently, paper manufacturing accident rates are just above the United Kingdom's all-industry average, compared with the 1990s when it had a worse severe incident and fatality record than construction. The HSE hopes that this is attributable to the effectiveness of the PABIAC strategy, but is unable to say whether or not benchmarking activities have played an instrumental role.

Success factors

The 'name and shame' aspect is seen by the CPI as vital in the competitive industry, as the prestige of finding oneself on 'page one' of the produced league tables is felt to motivate CEOs to improve their company's performance, and encourage top-level OSH leadership in the process.

Owing to the poor safety performance of the sector in the 1990s, the HSE enforced the industry aggressively through increased inspections, enforcements, prosecutions and threats of mill/machinery closures unless issues were immediately rectified. The CPI accepts that this legislative threat originally compelled members of PABIAC to act in a more collaborative manner, encouraging benchmarking in the process.

Since the sectors' OSH record has improved, papermaking is no longer a 'targeted industry'; inspections have become more reactive and the sector is largely self-regulated/managed. However, with only a handful of industry advisory committees left in the United Kingdom, the CPI feels it is vital to retain PABIAC as a tripartite organisation, and warns that if any of the parties were to fall out of the equation, decreases in the perceived legitimacy of the scheme could negatively affect the ongoing programme. Reciprocally, the HSE believes that its partnership arrangement with the CPI improves the perceived legitimacy of its activities.

A high response rate to their most recent survey was attributed to its careful design. HSE consulted with a professional designer to produce a short, simple structure with as many closed responses as possible.

Barriers

The paper sector is in decline, and remaining companies are less able to afford staff to attend training/networking events as they once were, reducing enthusiasm for physical information-sharing sessions.

With the paper industry's OSH performance improving a great deal over a short space of time, the CPI accepts that it is difficult to maintain momentum and persuade companies of the ongoing need to pay attention to OSH issues. The regular changing of targets is intended to keep benchmarking activities fresh in participants' minds. The CPI plans to benchmark companies' leading indicators and focus on new issues such as occupational health for the same reason.

HSE feels that some members are less willing to provide data as they are unaware of how the data might be used. It is also felt that smaller organisations lack the time needed to regularly submit verifiable data. Staff turnover is viewed as another practical barrier, with the HSE often not knowing who would be best placed to submit data or how they could be contacted. It was suggested that the sector's employers had become more insular following the recession, resulting in some difficulty reaching the right individuals within organisations.

An emerging challenge is obtaining the text of each incident approved by companies' solicitors. The CPI reports that lawyers are increasingly insistent upon placing embargoes on details of incidents that could implicate companies in civil or criminal cases.

PABIAC and the CPI believe that they consistently receive good-quality data on basic accident and near-miss rates. However, it can be harder to produce, capture and analyse data pertaining to their newer objectives. These are arguably more abstract than before and less orientated towards easily measurable variables such as basic injury rate reduction. For example, current requirements stipulate that companies target both 'high frequency, low severity' and 'low frequency, high severity' injuries, and ill-health data. These data requirements arguably require a greater level of expertise on the part of data submitters, and/or greater levels of interpretation, potentially constraining the reliability of the data obtained. As a new strategy is shortly to be designed, some considerable thought has been given to addressing this: from now on, PABIAC will announce which specific issues it intends to benchmark prior to the survey's dissemination, in the hope that this will give members sufficient time to ensure that they have the resources needed to participate.

Regarding communication, HSE views there may be better methods than they currently use to penetrate the hard-to-reach firms in this market. At present, PABIAC is limited to communicating with those companies in contact with the trade association.

Discussions have been held by the Committee regarding the perceived effectiveness of the PABAIC pledge as a stand-alone lever to influence change, with some industry and union representatives believing that it does not guarantee action. However, it is felt that the pledge works well as an awareness-raising device.

A practical barrier for CPI itself is that it has to juggle its health and safety concerns with its other priorities. This leaves the organisation sometimes unable to lead the development of benchmarking activities as much as it would like. The CPI therefore feels that an OSH-specific organisation may be better suited to the role of driving a benchmarking scheme.

Transferability

Australian paper associations have worked with the CPI in order to adapt their benchmarking and safety alert mechanisms for the Australian market. However, this is a developing activity and it is too early to comment on the success of the transfer.

OSH case study 8: Virtual Risk Manager and Fleet Safety Benchmarking

Introduction

Virtual Risk Manager (VRM), a private sector company, provides web-based training and assessment products related to at-work road safety and driving standards. It operates a free-to-use English-language online gap analysis tool, with which vehicular fleet owners worldwide can benchmark OSH processes. VRM's paying customers participate in bespoke benchmarking activities, which collect and present data concerning both processes and outcomes. IES interviewed the scheme's Research Director.

Set-up

The Fleet Safety Benchmarking (FSB) scheme has its origins in a 1995 research study of fleet collision incident rates. This was conducted by a Transport and Logistics academic centre based in the University of Huddersfield, in conjunction with a road safety charity and an insurance broker. This project produced a report and number other outputs including an ongoing industry benchmarking programme which continues to compare quantitative collision rates in the sector. This addresses questions such as:

1. 'How do you define a collision?'
2. 'How do you define a vehicle?'
3. 'Is a high benchmark "score" good or bad (i.e. does a high 'score' indicate poor driving practices or good reporting mechanisms)?'

The original scheme led to the creation of a second scheme, which continues to record outcome figures but with the added value of benchmarking. This involves analysing both outcomes and processes, and allows analysts to ensure the validity of comparisons.

The lead researcher involved in the original scheme (IES interviewee) now works for VRM. In 2004, a principle private sector client requested that VRM conduct some inter-company benchmarking exercises on their behalf. After re-establishing contact with the road safety charity attached to the original project, VRM submitted a proposal for additional funding from the Department for Transport (DfT). Funding of approximately GBP 18,000 was secured, which led to the creation of the FSB initiative.

Participants recruited to the new scheme were asked to submit quantitative data concerning road safety outcomes (e.g. collision numbers) and also completed a five-minute survey consisting of 10 closed questions regarding road safety processes. Subsequently, participants were invited to fill out two further questionnaires with 30 and 300 items, respectively. When the state-funded grant came to an end, VRM decided to sustain the initiative as two separate products — one free, the other paid for via subscription.

Audience

Owing the costly nature of running road fleets, most participants in the scheme are large employers. Most fee-paying participants are private sector fleet owners, though there are also a few public sector participants. With public sector agencies running some of the United Kingdom's and Europe's biggest fleets, VRM attributes this balance to the proactive attitudes, and corporate social responsibility policies of their private sector clients.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

When the DfT investment in the project came to a close at the end of the 2000s it led to a reduction in the scope of the free-to-access online scheme. The level of detail of the surveys and the focus on outcomes subsequently dropped, and participants were asked only to submit data on the 10 original process questions. On completion of these questions participants receive immediate feedback on how their processes compare against other anonymous participants. This is a free, globally accessible resource provided by VRM.

VRM can afford to provide this free service as it rarely has to perform development work on the initiative's website, resulting in low-cost maintenance. The free-to-use nature of the tool also brings benefits for VRM in that it serves as a hook to attract further potential clients for VRM's more extensive benchmarking services.

Paying members are invited to participate in biannual day-long 'benchmarking forum' meetings, where VRM benchmarks a wide range of processes and outcomes, including:

1. incidences of speeding
2. drink/drugs checks/disqualifications
3. careless and reckless driving rates
4. mobile phone usage
5. expired licence incidences
6. Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) checks
7. the population of 'at-risk' drivers within fleets
8. crash/incident rates
9. fleet employees' performances on VRM's online assessments.

The data are collected through VRM's membership database. Companies are also invited to volunteer further quantitative information or allow data collected from separate VRM products to be shared. The forum meetings usually have 25–30 organisations in attendance. Meetings are conducted under Chatham House Rules ⁽¹⁰⁾, and all data are presented anonymously by default. During benchmarking presentations, some companies declare which data point their company represents, but others do not. Following each, attendees are invited to set the agenda for the next group meeting, to ensure that conversations and associated benchmarking activities are relevant to fee-paying customers. Participants are invited to suggest topics for discussion and potential guest speakers and to comment on the current meeting's proceedings and content.

Clients of VRM forge contacts during these sessions, and participate in secondary discussions outside the core group. In addition to the meetings, fee-paying 'partner organisations' can request bespoke benchmarking activities; for example, the benchmarking of data from all organisations within their road safety partnership or supply chain. Here, respondents submit the same types of data as above, which are analysed and presented discretely for all group participants with the position of external organisations excluded. Using the same methodology, VRM also provides intra-company benchmarking for fee-paying organisations.

Implementation, outputs and impact

To date, 1,281 individuals have completed the free five-minute benchmarking tool. From anecdotal feedback, VRM is aware that a number of organisations have utilised the free five-minute survey as a gap analysis tool, and implemented procedural changes as a result.

Among VRM's paying clients in 2012 were 17 fleets employing 170,000 drivers (using approximately 80,000 vehicles) involved in the scheme. VRM calculates that, collectively, over the course of the scheme, the three-year insurance claim rate of these organisations reduced from 45 % to 42 %, with insurance costs, on average, decreasing from GBP 588 per vehicle per year to GBP 475 per vehicle per year.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://www.chathamhouse.org/about/chatham-house-rule>

VRM believes that through its services in-company OSH managers gain leverage and buy-in with their superiors by demonstrating how their (anonymised) competitors are behaving. VRM benchmarks the number of DVLA checks to which a company is being subjected and reports that the worst performer at the last benchmarking forum meeting used this information to lever resources to affect change.

A further key benefit of benchmarking, as reported to VRM by its clients, is that the services provide a place to bring together multiple data streams. Although companies are likely to have fully developed human resources databases, collision databases, statutory fines databases, vehicle database and training databases, benchmarking activities allow organisations to integrate this and identify hidden trends.

Success factors

The biggest barrier to benchmarking, according to VRM, is finding like-for-like data. Therefore, having organisations benchmarking both outcomes but also processes is valuable as it negates issues caused by the use of differing definitions.

They also view that benchmarking schemes need a strong facilitating structure, particularly when benchmarking is occurring in a face-to-face, intimate setting. VRM benefits from providing this leadership role, bringing its clients together and directly assessing their needs. FSB's previous involvement with a road safety charity was additionally seen as advantageous, as it allowed organisers to present themselves as neutral brokers, lacking conflicting interests. The charity and insurance broker were also able to utilise contacts and partnership agreements to widely disseminate information about the scheme.

While detailed, comparative quantitative data are useful to participants, they need to be balanced with an easy-to-use input methodology: if there are too many bureaucratic hurdles, this can be off-putting. When designing its short questionnaire, VRM designed items in a way that non-specialists within employing organisations would understand and comment on them, allowing organisations to participate in the gap analysis activities even if interested parties lacked buy-in with their own management.

VRM believes that all benchmarking schemes should encourage in-project learning, and as long as there is a fixed idea of intent it would be counterproductive to have too fixed a strategy prior to development.

Interestingly, the company argues that the discussions that benchmarking results produced on and around the benchmarking forum are as important as the data themselves. Anonymity means that organisations are able to present their organisations 'warts and all', arguably leading to more reliable data submissions and more productive discussions.

Barriers

While privacy and Chatham House Rules restrictions often produce rich and illustrative internally accessible outputs, publicly accessible outputs appear generic and 'somewhat bland'. VRM believes this may limit the attractiveness of their activities to non-participants, i.e. they are not able to reflect the richness of debate and disclosure that occurs in practice.

When originally applying for DfT funding, VRM identified a number of common barriers to benchmarking, including:

- Multiple parties interpreting data entry items' working/phrasings differently or using different measurements (e.g. miles versus kilometres)
- The quantity, quality and validity of available data
- Some organisations have better reporting mechanisms than others
- Participants are sometimes unable to follow instructions on benchmarking forms, partly because of a lack of clarity in definitions
- Data sets are rarely, if ever, complete, making assumption-free analysis impossible.

Transferability

An organisation has recently approached VRM about adapting and rebranding the short online tool for use in Spain and South and Central America; although operators in these countries are currently able to submit data, the tool is currently available only in English. The approaching organisation has agreed to bear the associated costs of this rebranding, and VRM sees no reason why the plan should not succeed.

OSH case study 9: EU-OSHA's Benchmarking Steering Group's activities

Introduction

As part of its Healthy Workplaces Campaign, EU-OSHA has convened a Benchmarking Steering Group, tasked with exploring benchmarking as part of the partners' current campaign objectives. Several larger employers have indicated that with their organisations increasingly taking on responsibilities for OSH management from SMEs in their supply chain, an increased focus on benchmarking could improve the effectiveness of their wider activities.

To date, three companies have held in-company conferences looking to explore issues surrounding and affecting the sharing of data and good practice guidance. Heineken has held a session primarily on OSH leadership models; Lego on how organisations can learn from incidents and accidents; and Toyota on OSH performance indicators. This case study focuses on Toyota's recent 'Safety Days' event, occurring over two days in November 2014. IES spoke to the Sustainability Development Director of Toyota Material Handling Europe.

Set-up

Toyota Material Handling Europe (forklifts) has been a campaign partner of EU-OSHA for five years. Owing to the priorities and enthusiasm of its marketing and communications departments, Toyota has always been able to act as an active campaign partner, sending out information about EU-OSHA's campaigns to its suppliers, customers, contractors and sub-contractors, and employees.

Toyota feels it is important to play a leading role in EU-OSHA's campaigns because of a combination of corporate social responsibility concerns (e.g. forklift accidents serious injury) and its commercial agenda, which compels Toyota to act as a market leader.

Industry partners were invited to join EU-OSHA's Healthy Workplaces Campaign steering committee to help determine its future activities. One issue to emerge on the steering committee was that most EU-OSHA-sponsored events tended to occur in Bilbao or Brussels. Companies based elsewhere in Europe may lack access to these events. The steering group therefore suggested that in-company partner-hosted events would create accessible spaces which would allow sharing of good-practice guidance, and that these would also emphasise the practical relevance of the issues to be discussed.

The Toyota Material Handling Safety Days were held at the company's head office in Mjølby, Sweden. The first day was dedicated to discussing the management of stress and the second focused on indicators of OSH performance, where the issue of benchmarking was frequently discussed.

Audience

- Seventy-nine attendees — including 25 Toyota staff – attended the 80-person capacity event. Individuals from Sweden and Denmark were best represented, but attendees from across northern, eastern and Mediterranean Europe made the journey. As with the previous events in the series, the organising company invited attendees through a variety of channels. Toyota's recruitment strategy included:
 - automatically inviting all EU-OSHA campaign partners through the programme's communication channels

- asking Toyota's key account managers and purchasing department to identify customers and suppliers who could be persuaded to attend
- requesting that local factories approach local stakeholders – such as geographically proximate factories – with invitations.
- Toyota approached EU-OSHA's Swedish focal point, which was asked to utilise its 'black book' to contact interested companies within Sweden.
- Trade associations were approached to secure international attendees.

These multiple approaches resulted in the event selling out in three weeks, and ensured that a diverse range of attendees could benefit from the event's networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities. Safety managers, purchasers, suppliers and worker representatives were in attendance, as were invited non-corporate safety experts.

Toyota estimates that it spent EUR 10,000 on hosting the event, with attendees covering travel, accommodation and opportunity costs themselves.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Toyota's programme included plenary sessions, breakaway working groups and factory visits, along with an equipment fair and networking. Partners were invited to give speeches/presentations, so as to provide realistic portrayals of health and safety management and performance in their organisations. Some participants chose to share quantitative data during these sessions.

During breakout sessions, groups of seven were tasked with discussing which indicators could benchmark performances and processes related to specific issues. These looked at how benchmarking could feed into the wider Healthy Workplaces Campaign.

Attendees were sent a survey, assessing reasons for attendance, satisfaction and interest in the information provided, with the aim of informing the design of future benchmarking activities.

The final section of this survey included battery questions looking at the importance of various hazards to the attending organisation, types of quantitative lagging and leading indicators collected, whether data are reported publicly and root causes of commonly occurring incidents, as well as attitudes towards OSH management.

Implementation, outputs and impact

Quantitative data indicate that active campaign partners' OSH performance has improved significantly during the course of their involvement with EU-OSHA. Toyota feels its Safety Days sessions were particularly beneficial for in-company OSH professionals. While these individuals are frequently consulted by non-specialists within their own organisation, they lack opportunities to access topic knowledge and experience from their peers overseas. In addition, although trade and OSH-focused organisations might allow for networking at a national level, campaign partner sessions are filling an identified gap in the international market for such activities. International networking and information-sharing of this type are important for multinational employers, who face a number of common issues such as international variations in OSH legislation and definitions.

Toyota has received 'plenty of very positive' feedback about the event and its agenda, with at least five attendees expressing an interest in becoming an EU-OSHA campaign partner as a result of their positive experiences. They also report that, as a result of their attendance, in-house specialists have been able to lever greater influence over the general managers who attended the event.

Success factors

Toyota views that these sessions ensure information exchanges are contextual and relevant to attendees.

Hosting events in non-competitive 'safe' environments allows individuals to discuss contentious and sensitive issues; alternatives (such as lobbyist-centred meetings in Brussels) reportedly fail to secure the collaborative mindsets needed to promote benchmarking. Toyota also feels that the privileging of discretion — with no journalists in attendance — was advantageous for the same reasons.

The strength of EU-OSHA's campaign partner network meant that Toyota did 'not have to beg' for speakers, and could trust that planned attendees would not cancel. Looking at practical success factors, Toyota planned its conference well in advance, and circulated invitations early through multiple channels, ensuring good attendance among individuals who had to arrange travel. Similarly, EU-OSHA events have been scheduled every three months, in a purposeful 'rhythm' intended to maintain momentum.

The three organisations which first hosted events reached a decision that each would attend and present each other's sites. This allowed agendas to be partially set prior to promotion. With different attendees attending each event, the presenters did not have to spend excessive amounts of time preparing presentations from scratch. However a changing programme of breakout sessions allows repeat attendees to remain engaged and benefit from the practice-sharing events.

Transferability

In 2015 Siemens and SEAT have also scheduled future events in the series. However, Toyota views the logistical challenges of putting on such events to be a potential barrier to further similar activities.

OSH case study 10: The United Kingdom's Health and Safety Executive's CHaSPI benchmarking tool

Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Corporate Health and Safety Performance Index (CHaSPI) was an initiative operating from 2006 to 2011/2012 which allowed large businesses in the United Kingdom to measure their health and safety performance against others internal and external to their sector. CHaSPI collected both qualitative and quantitative data to capture OSH performance in terms of outcomes and processes, and collated detailed descriptions of companies' strategic approaches to OSH management. Data were collected and analysed by an external consultant, Greenstreet Berman. IES spoke to a project manager within the HSE attached to the project (now closed) when it was live.

Set-up

In the early 2000s, HSE identified demand for a method by which companies could signpost their OSH performance to employees, other companies and interested stakeholders such as investors. Greenstreet Berman was subsequently commissioned to develop and pilot CHaSPI in consultation with HSE-affiliated social partners. This first manifested as a paper-based product in 2003, with a web-based service following in 2004. After a piloting and validation stage, CHaSPI was fully launched in the summer of 2005.

Loughborough University was commissioned to validate the auditing system. This validation saw academics conduct over 80 interviews with organisations that had begun data submission processes, as well as external stakeholder organisations (such as investors) seeking to utilise companies' benchmarking data to inform their operations.

When considerations were being made to discontinue the service in 2012/2013, a survey was sent out to all participants who had submitted data to assess the usability of the scheme: responses to this survey were very mixed. Lacking a clear understanding of the project's impacts, the HSE decided it could no longer justify sustaining the project.

Audience

CHaSPI's self-auditing tool, through which quantitative and qualitative data were submitted, was very expansive and in depth. As a result, the HSE aimed the initiative at large companies, accepting that input requirements would have been 'too onerous' for small companies. It was hoped that enterprises from all sectors would be able to participate.

As of 2008, 601 organisations had registered with the initiative, though only 114 had completed and uploaded at least one full data submission. Fifty-seven per cent of registered participants were private sector, with 30 % from the public sector and 6 % voluntary sector. Regarding the main business activities, 14 % of registered organisations were executive, local or regional government offices and bodies; 12 % were in the construction and materials sector; 8 % in health; 8 % in support services; 7 % in other public services; and 6 % in education. Eighty-eight per cent of registered organisations operated in the United Kingdom, and 12 % in the United Kingdom and overseas. Seventy-seven per cent of registered participants employed between 250 and 4,999 staff, while 17 % employed over 5,000.

On registration, companies were required to name a primary and secondary point of contact. As of 2008, over 80 % of primary contacts performed a dedicated health and safety role in the company, with over 50 % of secondary contacts having similar roles. A slight majority of primary contacts were employed at the management level.

CHaSPI was promoted via the HSE website upon its launch, but little proactive follow-up took place compared with the relatively high number of promotional activities that accompanied its launch.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

The audit tool asked a number of battery questions, which when analysed and assessed together produced scores for five primary indicators of OSH performance, those being:

- Health and safety management
- Injury rate – employees/contractors
- Employee sickness absence rate
- Occupational health
- Major incident rating.

These scores (each with a maximum value of 10) were subsequently averaged to produce a company's CHaSPI score. Companies had to submit data for at least three of the primary indicators in order to receive a CHaSPI score.

Additional information was collected regarding:

- Company activities in highly regulated sectors
- Whether directors had declared their support and leadership in OSH management or whether data submitted had been verified by external agencies
- Companies could then choose to use their CHaSPI score internally, or upload it into a central database to benchmark their company against others in their sector and across the economy. Until 2008, uploaded data were attributable to the named organisation. A decision was made in 2008 to allow companies to present this anonymously. The CHaSPI website also contained a document library, containing HSE- and industry-produced good practice guidance and OSH news.

Implementation, outputs and impact

When looking to assess the success of the scheme, the HSE heard that many companies found great utility in the scheme, and were using the audit tool to perform in-depth intra-company gap analyses and performance assessments. However, few were uploading data into the central data-sharing system, preventing the sharing of data between interested parties.

This was confirmed by telephone interviews with registered users, which found that many companies were using CHaSPI:

- as an internal tool to identify strengths and weaknesses
- as an internal tool to report back on organisational health and safety performance
- to keep up with the latest OSH developments.

Other reported benefits focused on CHaSPI's in-company role in:

- formalising the measurement and monitoring of health and safety
- highlighting the positive aspects of health and safety management systems
- enabling greater appreciation of health and safety responsibility from the directorate
- providing a structured set of questions for auditing performance to a recognised standard.

The telephone survey found that only a slight majority of registered users had used CHaSPI for external purposes, and not necessarily by submitting data to the central database. For example, some companies reported using their CHaSPI score as a selling point in bidding and tendering processes.

Owing to a lack of submitted data, the HSE was unable to collect enough information to make informed decisions regarding the impact of the scheme on company performance. Few companies submitted multiple reports; none submitted more than four. Of those that submitted multiple reports as of 2008, CHaSPI score demonstrates improvements in OSH performance over time, although analysis could not attribute this to the companies' involvement with CHaSPI or other factors. Despite this lack of data, the HSE believes that the multipartite development of CHaSPI helped bring notions of managerial leadership in health and safety, and worker involvement, to the forefront of the United Kingdom's OSH discourse.

Success factors

At the outset of the initiative, the HSE thought it was feasible to hand CHaSPI over to another lead organisation following the scheme's launch. However, feedback from validation interviews reported that companies would perceive the initiative as more legitimate if it were branded as a HSE product, with the organisation seen as a neutral broker.

Following the pilot-stage validation of the audit tool, Greenstreet Berman changed a number of questions to make them more applicable to large companies, regardless of their sector. They also shortened a number of response scales, to simplify data entry processes.

As described above, from 2008 onwards companies could submit attributed or anonymous data. Research conducted in 2008 heard concerns regarding both these data submission methods, with approximately 50 % of registered and potential users supporting each method.

Those against mandatory named reporting voiced concerns that aspirational improvers might be discouraged from submitting data if they worried about attributable poor scores. Likewise, concerns about how the data might be used (for example, to inform HSE inspection strategies) were reported.

Others, however, thought that the economy's largest organisations should not be allowed to anonymise their performance, and argued that it was unfair that companies which reported their data anonymously were able to subsequently access the attributed data of others.

Barriers

HSE found that a wide number of balanced score cards, OSH management systems and other safety performance indicators were available on the market and the some were viewed by companies as having equal or greater levels of utility, usability and accessibility compared with CHaSPI. The complexity of CHaSPI's audit form meant that CHaSPI could not compete in this increasingly crowded market, even as a free tool.

This became a self-reinforcing barrier, as a resultant lack of public domain data meant companies could not draw comparisons 'with any effectiveness or credibility'. Resultantly, as one registered user stated in 2008, participants were 'putting information in but not getting anything out of it'. This indicates that a critical mass of participants needs to be achieved before benchmarking activities are seen as valuable by potential participants.

Respondents also indicated that CHaSPI could be improved if the Index expanded to look at occupational health issues, such as mental health. Other respondents highlighted issues regarding the perceived fairness of the scheme; companies were allowed to pick and choose what they filled in — allowing them to present false impressions of their performance by not submitting data for indicators they would score low on. The audit tool's categorisations were also seen as problematic, with some respondents indicating that when companies were asked to define themselves, they did not have enough options to choose from: limiting assurances that subsequent benchmarking would assess 'like for like'.

Approximately half of registered users indicated that they had first heard of CHaSPI from a source external to the HSE, indicating that its dissemination strategies affected the general public's awareness. However, when asked about issues discouraging their use of the tool, several respondents cited issues that were not objectively valid: such as the 'purchasing cost' of the free service, indicating that communications were ineffective. Telephone surveying found that registered users and potential users would have been more likely to use the service if its benefits were better explained, promoted and proactively pushed in specific sectors.

Those that identified further areas of improvement, in 2008, cited:

- General poor usability with the website and slow download speeds.
- Cumbersome data entry procedures: for example, if looking to submit a second or third data submission, respondents were required to manually enter all information from scratch, rather than update previously entered information.
- A lack of explanatory notes accompanying the audit tool – which could have helped to define issues and explain how relevant data could be captured.
- Lack of assurances that other companies' submissions were verified (Ibid).

Transferability

Owing to a change in strategy, which has seen the organisation become more industry led, the HSE would not currently consider taking the lead in a new benchmarking initiative. However, it would be very keen to assist an industry-led development.

The HSE now feels that employers tend to feel more comfortable comparing data within their sector rather than externally, as companies are more assured that like-for-like issues are being compared, and as a result they are able to gain a clearer picture of how OSH might affect profitability and company-level performance. The HSE therefore believes that many companies, while still having an appetite for benchmarking, now do so informally or discreetly, through trade associations or OSH-focused organisations.

The HSE accepts that its data submission requirements were too onerous. If CHaSPI were to be resuscitated, the IES's interviewee suggested that industry and employee representatives should inspect a CHaSPI form, and collaboratively select which measurements are most pertinent for their sector-specific circumstances. Similarly, considerations should be made as to which measurements could produce tangible benefits for participants. Following such discussions, industry leaders could then produce bespoke, simplified benchmarking cards, of readily explainable value to potential participants.

OSH Case Study 11: Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (Initiative New Quality of Work)

Introduction

The Initiative New Quality of Work (*Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit*, INQA) is a German national-level initiative that seeks to promote the transfer of knowledge and experience on how to develop healthy, safe and engaging working conditions for employees. It is a joint project involving the government at the federal and Lander level, the social partners, statutory accident insurance funds, the Federal Labour Agency, foundations and individual companies.

INQA is concerned with the 'quality of labour' in the broadest sense. Its activities are focused on four fields of action: Human resource management and leadership, equal opportunities and diversity, health, and knowledge and skills. INQA seeks to develop behaviour management practices focused on prevention and the active promotion of employees' health, capabilities, and overall employability. It promotes a corporate culture centred on the skills and capabilities of individual employees, and is increasingly taking a life course perspective on the quality of work. In doing so, it seeks to align employees' interests with the need for German businesses to be competitive in a globalised economy. The Initiative views the development of the capabilities and competencies of employees as key to business success. This reflects growing concerns about demographic change and shortages of skilled labour in Germany. More broadly, increases in the 'quality of work' are expected to contribute to making Germany a competitive and innovative business location and to improving the overall social climate in society. INQA's approach reflects a move away from a system of occupational health and safety centred on regulation and enforcement towards one based increasingly on consultation, support and exchange of best practice (Bieneck and Sedlatschek, 2006:53).

INQA both develops and provides practical tools and guidance for employers on how to improve the quality of work, and fosters exchange between employers, experts and other stakeholders. The Initiative is conceived as an 'independent platform' (BMAS, 2013) and facilitator of practice-oriented exchange between employers who want to improve working conditions and company culture and other stakeholders. INQA is centred on the platform INQA.de, via which it supplies dedicated self-assessment tools that allow companies to identify strengths and weaknesses of their HR and OSH practices. Based on the results of these self-assessments, companies then receive concrete advice on how to address the issues identified. They also have access to a database comprising 100 examples of innovative HR and OSH practices developed by employers as part of the Initiative. Innovative pilot projects in the area of quality of work can moreover receive funding under the Initiative. INQA also offers subsidised consultancy and auditing activities to enterprises that wish to develop long-term strategies in its areas of activity.

Networking activities are key to the functioning of the Initiative. INQA has developed networks at the national and local level and collaborates with further network partners and associations in disseminating its insights, tools and activities. Its networks are focused on specific themes, regions, or sectors. A number are explicitly designed to provide companies with opportunities for mutual learning and exchanging best practice. It is however difficult to establish in every case to what extent the exchange of good practice and dialogue within such initiatives and INQA partner networks is concerned with benchmarking in the sense of member companies explicitly comparing their OSH processes and performance, and to what extent it is concerned more with the dissemination of guidance, tools, and best practice examples identified or developed by the Initiative. Hence this case study selectively covers some elements of benchmarking that could be identified.

This case study presents a number of examples of benchmarking activities in the area of OSH carried out in INQA partner networks.

Set-up

The Initiative was launched by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour and the social partners in 2002. It is led by the federal government, the federal states, statutory accident insurance funds, the Federal Labour Agency, the social partners and a number of foundations, and is financially supported by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz- und Arbeitsmedizin*) serves as a hub for the Initiative. It coordinates and monitors projects and the thematic network groups, and is responsible for updating the online platform, PR and publications, and conferences. Furthermore, it offers expert advice on projects in the area of occupational safety and health.

The Initiative works with a broad range of network partners, which represent more than 3,500 actors.

Audience

The Initiative targets German employers, notably the staff responsible for management, HR and innovation. INQA targets private, third, and public sector organisations of all sizes.

By 2013, the Initiative had reached approximately 3,000 businesses employing more than 3 million employees (BMAS, 2013).

Information sharing (the benchmarking process)

As outlined above, activities to communicate good practice among German employers to other organisations are key to INQA's activities. Benchmarking in the stricter sense of companies explicitly comparing their OSH processes and performance takes place within a number of INQA partner networks.

The INQA Offensive Good SMEs (*Guter Mittelstand*), which is centred on a self-assessment tool for organisations, provides regional platforms for dialogue between participating companies.

INQA Office (*INQA Büro*) has developed an innovative form of benchmarking in the area of office work. It offers a 'Best Practice Site Visit Programme', as part of which organisations can visit others with exemplary office designs. These can be linked to formalised benchmarking activities, as part of which firms exchange data on sickness absences, accidents, productivity etc. (Gerz, no date).

The Demography Network *ddn*, an INQA partner network founded as part of the Initiative, promotes benchmarking concerning the management of demographic change within organisations, including issues related to the OSH needs of older workers. The Network has conducted a survey of member organisations, the results of which were fed back to participants alongside an evaluation of their performance relative to others.

The results were then discussed in the Network's working groups (Siegesmund, 2006). *ddn* continues to support 'collegial benchmarking', whereby members are invited to present their strategies to a small circle of other member organisations and discuss them according to predefined criteria. *ddn*'s regional networks match members to potential benchmarking partners and provides benchmarking activities within its working groups (*ddn*, 2011).

The Network SME Competency (*Netzwerk KMU Kompetenz*) is a network project in the area of occupational health management run by the health insurance AOK. It is an INQA partner network, and received funding from the Initiative for three funding periods. Since support ended, the scheme has been funded via member contributions and by AOK. The Network is targeted at customers of AOK across the federal states of Lower Saxony and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. It currently has 147 members.

Member organisations of the Network SME Competency invest in occupational health management and prevention activities, which are executed in collaboration with the AOK. The activities are introduced based on the needs of the business, as identified via a questionnaire.

AOK collects information on and evaluates the outcomes of the health management projects it runs within its client organisations as standard practice; this is required by the guidelines of the GKV, the association of German statutory health insurance providers.

The Network then organises the exchange of knowledge and experiences between members via working groups, site visits, and network conferences. It currently has working groups for the sectors of health, administration, and food-producing businesses, thematic working groups on issues like demographic change, health management, and health during restructuring, as well as target-group oriented working groups for management and employee representatives. The working groups meet twice a year, and themes are based on input from members.

The Network SME Competency has repeatedly run a Benchmarking Working Group since the inception of the project, in line with demand from Network members. Benchmarking activities are targeted at member companies that have had successes in workplace health management. Meetings have in the past taken place at the sites of member companies, and comprised an introduction to the company and its workplace health management activities followed by a tour of the site. The company's activities were then assessed by its peers according to qualitative criteria, resulting in a final report to the host company. This was followed by discussions of issues in workplace health management, for instance data collection and controlling (Drupp and Druvenhorst, 2012). The Benchmarking Working Group also used anonymised qualitative and quantitative data from member organisations, based on standard data collection procedures via the health insurance activities, internal data collection, and qualitative interviews with employees, as the basis for benchmarking activities. Organisations can request more data on other businesses that they consider to be relevant to their activities or comparable, and – given consent from all involved – detailed comparative analyses and exchange can take place. The main benefit of the benchmarking process for participants tended to be that it gave participants a sense that their situation and outcomes are not as radically different to other companies' as expected. The respondent did not believe that companies derived new activities and approaches from the process.

Success factors

Participants in benchmarking activities within the framework of INQA pointed to a number of success factors for benchmarking. Das Demographie-Netzwerk, (ddn) (2011) highlighted the importance of trust between participants; this is most easily achieved where companies are not direct competitors, and where participating representatives have similar backgrounds and are at a similar level in organisational hierarchies. ddn also highlighted the value of good moderation for discussions in working groups. The Network SME Competency stressed that benchmarking is most useful where it provides information on processes and implementation, which can give insights into how interventions work and where they encounter barriers, rather than merely quantitative outcome data.

Barriers

According to the Network SME Competency, the main problem encountered in by its Benchmarking Working Group has been the availability and collection of comparable data from participants. While measures of sickness absences and percentage return to work etc. are available for all companies, more interesting metrics related to causes of companies' varying performance, for instance of management styles in relation to health management, are difficult to obtain. This reflects the fact that larger organisations in particular have their own internal management systems, which tend to be focused on economic indicators, and that there is often reluctance with regard both to collecting health data and to adapting internal data collection.

Transferability

INQA is an example of an 'umbrella' initiative for programmes designed to foster the exchange of knowledge and best practice regarding OSH activities, as well as providing a platform that provides related information. Its proven applicability to multiple sectors and diverse areas of activity indicates there may be potential to implement similar, wide-ranging schemes more widely within the EU. A possible learning point is the added value 'a recognisable 'umbrella term' can offer; this can arguably add 'weight' when attached to small initiatives.

Also, the principle of 'collegial benchmarking' and its demonstrable success in Germany may be useful to stress to industry partners when marketing or promoting new benchmarking schemes.

3.4 Case studies of shortlisted non-OSH benchmarking schemes

Case studies were developed from three non-OSH interviews drawn from the environmental standards field (two case studies) and the equal opportunities field (one case study). These fields are home to a variety of benchmarking schemes about which data are readily available on the Internet. The benchmarking schemes selected as case studies are all successful, highly populated and relatively long-standing schemes operating at European or global level.

Non-OSH case study 1: Global Reporting Initiative

Introduction

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) focuses on sustainable growth for businesses, encouraging the sharing of sustainability initiatives and economic, environmental, social and political responsibility. It has developed a Sustainability Reporting Framework — a reporting system that allows subscribing organisations to measure, understand and communicate their own best practice between each other — and the mission is to make this reporting standard practice ⁽¹¹⁾.

Set-up

The scheme was set up in the 1990s, when multi-stakeholder meetings determined that there was a need for a transferable sustainability framework, a position led by the US-based Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) and sustainability-centred research organisation the Tellus Institute ⁽¹²⁾.

A non-profit organisation, most of the GRI's funding comes from the organisational stakeholders (those that use the reporting initiative themselves), with additional income coming from government and other grants; the organisation lists the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency, the Norwegian foreign ministry, and the Australian Government amongst benefactors, as well as revenue generated from publications and training programmes ⁽¹³⁾. Organisations pay a membership fee to become organisational stakeholders, which gives them access to the GRI and its services.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/about-gri/Pages/default.aspx>

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/about-gri/what-is-GRI/Pages/default.aspx>

⁽¹³⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/about-gri/Pages/Funding.aspx>

Audience

The GRI is a non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 600 stakeholders in more than 60 countries⁽¹⁴⁾. Currently, the scheme is focused on large, developing economies, with the reporting framework being pushed in Brazil, China, Colombia, India and South Africa. The nature of the scheme means it will predominantly be focused on managers, those who have the remit to enact changes to business practices towards a more sustainable ethos, but this will have a trickle-down effect to employees at ground level as corporate culture changes to this sustainability drive. It is also a boon for governments, because if changes suggested in the framework were adopted on a large scale there would be less need for strict environmental legislation.

The framework is multi-sector, with participants drawn from 'civil society, business, mediating institutions, academia, labour, public agencies and intergovernmental agencies'⁽¹⁵⁾.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

The information and data collected are standardised in a reporting framework⁽¹⁶⁾. These fall into three broad categories: strategy and profile, management approach and performance indicators. The most innovative and nuanced, and relevant to EU-OSHA, are the performance indicators.

These indicators are disaggregated further into economic, environmental and social factors, giving differentiation and allowing stakeholders to focus specifically on areas they wish to improve. The performance indicators can be found in the reporting framework, some of which fall directly under the banner of occupational safety and health. Numerous experts were consulted in developing these indicators, from a variety of sectors including business, social justice, environmental studies, finance and trade unions⁽¹⁷⁾.

Best practice is shared through measuring these aforementioned indicators, and collating the findings on a web tool, MyGRI, which provides a network for information around geographical focal points⁽¹⁸⁾. Owing to the international spread of these networks, communication and constantly being up to date are key, and information is disseminated through regular publications and a website part funded and maintained by sponsors from the worlds of business and technology, including Microsoft⁽¹⁹⁾. These are the major costs for the GRI (database and website management, as well as publication costs) along with staffing. For stakeholders, the GRI tool can be downloaded and used free of charge⁽²⁰⁾, but to become an official organisation stakeholder there is an annual fee, scaled by the size of the organisation: USD 10,000 for organisations with revenue/operating budget above USD 1 billion; USD 5,000 for organisations with revenue/operating budget between USD 100 million and 1 billion; USD 1,000 for organisations with revenue/operating budget between USD 1 million and 100 million; and USD 500 for organisations with revenue/operating budget less than USD 1 million.

Implementation, outputs and impact

Participation in the scheme is spread through the network and publications, as well as promotion from partner organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). GRI representatives regularly speak about publications at conferences, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development⁽²¹⁾, and the informal networking that occurs at such events raises awareness of the scheme and participation.

⁽¹⁴⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/network/organizational-stakeholders/Pages/default.aspx>

⁽¹⁵⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/network/organizational-stakeholders/Pages/default.aspx>

⁽¹⁶⁾ GRI G3.1 Sustainability Reporting Framework

⁽¹⁷⁾ GRI G3.1 Sustainability Reporting Framework, p. 50.

⁽¹⁸⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/network/Pages/default.aspx>

⁽¹⁹⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/about-the-website/Pages/default.aspx>

⁽²⁰⁾ http://search.standardsmap.org/assets/media/GlobalReportingInitiativeGRI/English/AtAGlance_EN.pdf

⁽²¹⁾ <https://www.globalreporting.org/information/about-gri/what-is-GRI/Pages/default.aspx>

The most notable outputs are the sustainability guidelines (G1, G2 and G3, where the aforementioned indicators are published), which point stakeholders in the right direction and set initial benchmarks. Other publications include 'learning documents', intended to teach stakeholders how to successfully implement the framework, as well as output from the GRI's research and development arm.

As mentioned above, the impact of the scheme is wide ranging, with over 600 stakeholders in 60 countries. Companies use the GRI as a broad-brushed benchmarking scheme, which is increasing in popularity as sustainability practices rise in prevalence, with the index itself aiding governance structures and future directions of the clients. Outputs are not a formalised benchmarking process as of yet, but rather more implicit outputs such as principles to follow, standards and advice on how to engage with these principles and standards.

Success factors, barriers and outlook

One of this scheme's great strengths is its transferability. Because it is very general and applicable to 'business' as a whole, the model can be modified across sectors, or indeed elements added to be made more specific to subsectors.

A barrier is some 'teething problems' with the index measures themselves, although GRI 4, the latest version of the reporting guidelines, alleviates this somewhat.

The GRI has been criticised for not using the information reported to it to actively benchmark between sectors, meaning there is a large amount of relevant information that is not being used to full effect; other indexes such as the Dow Jones sustainability index or the carbon disclosure project do this to improve reporting and information about underlying performance. In addition, there was no obligation for stakeholders to complete all the indicators, meaning unfavourable outcomes could be glossed over by stakeholders when filling out their outcomes for reporting.

Away from the index itself, a strength is the GRI's principles themselves; their structure and guidance on how to write an effective sustainability report has been adopted by numerous stakeholders and goes some way to standardising corporate sustainability reports, aiding the benchmarking process. These principles are clear and not overspecified, meaning they are universally applicable in sustainability reporting. These principles could be merged with the indicators for a more formal benchmarking initiative, leading to relevant publications being released. It is also pioneering; part of its longevity can be attributed to it being the first in its field as a reporting initiative and evolving as it continues to be used.

Non-OSH case study 2: European Green Capital Award

Introduction

The European Green Capital Award (EGCA) is part of the EU's sprawling Environment Action Programme, established in 2008 and first awarded in 2010 ⁽²²⁾. The purpose of the award is to promote sustainable urban growth across the European Union, with the award itself going to one city a year that 'is leading the way in environmentally friendly urban living and which can thus act as a role-model to inspire other cities' ⁽²³⁾.

Whilst there is no remuneration for the award itself, its prestige brings indirect benefits such as exposure, investment and an increase in tourism ⁽²⁴⁾. Applications are made public, sharing best practice and providing direction for other cities; this is where the benchmarking aspect comes in.

Set-up

⁽²²⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/about-the-award/policy-guidance/index.html>

⁽²³⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/about-the-award/policy-guidance/index.html>

⁽²⁴⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/about-the-award/faqs/index.html#g7>

The ECGA is a part of broader European environment policies. Environment is a key component of the Europe 2020 growth strategy, and an incentivised, innovative scheme such as this can promote that substantially. The scheme was set up by the European Commission itself, under the environment directorate-general, and it is therefore funded by the commission budget.

Costs can be vast due to cities adopting a sustainable urban development plan, but urban development is naturally an expensive endeavour, and the argument from the ECGA is that the publicity, job creation and investment that the award brings will offset this somewhat ⁽²⁵⁾.

The award was first initiated by an association of 15 European cities (Tallinn, Helsinki, Riga, Vilnius, Berlin, Warsaw, Madrid, Ljubljana, Prague, Vienna, Kiel, Kotka, Dartford, Tartu and Glasgow) with support from the European Commission. For funding the bidding process, cities are expected to raise the capital themselves; for example, current green capital award holder Bristol was given an exceptional award by the Arts Council to do so ⁽²⁶⁾.

Audience

The award is targeted at municipal governments and councils, specifically mayors and council leaders, of cities with a population of 100,000 or more (for states without a city of 100,000, the largest city is eligible). The award is open to any city in the EU-28, the candidate countries and the European Economic Area. It is predominantly focused on the environment, but has knock-on effects on urban development and planning, transport, climate change and local economies.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

Awarding is data intensive; the application process is rigorous, requiring forecasts, current projects, and a demonstrable commitment to sustainable growth. Environmental indicators are used and measured, which determines best practice and shows leading and lagging cities in environmental affairs. Currently the 12 indicators used are as follows ⁽²⁷⁾:

1. Climate change: mitigation and adaptation
2. Local transport
3. Green urban areas incorporating sustainable land use
4. Nature and biodiversity
5. Ambient air quality
6. Quality of the acoustic environment
7. Waste production and management
8. Water management
9. Waste water treatment
10. Eco innovation and sustainable employment
11. Energy performance
12. Integrated environmental management

This can be textual, graphical and numerical, and for transport maps and proposed transport links blueprints are often submitted as well. With regard to these indicators, five pieces of information are requested for each ⁽²⁸⁾:

⁽²⁵⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/about-the-award/faqs/index.html#g7>

⁽²⁶⁾ <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/arts-council-news/bristol-awarded-exceptional-award-grant-european-g/>

⁽²⁷⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/evaluation-process/index.html>

⁽²⁸⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/evaluation-process/index.html>

1. Describe the present situation.
2. Describe the measures implemented over the last 5–10 years.
3. Describe the short- and long-term objectives for the future and proposed approach to achieve these.
4. List how the above information can be documented and add links where possible.
5. Good practice section.

Following this, the applications are assessed by a jury to determine a winner before being published by the European Commission. The jury consists of various European Agencies and directorates general ⁽²⁹⁾, and the award is judged on the following categories ⁽³⁰⁾:

1. The city's overall commitment, vision and enthusiasm as conveyed through the presentation.
2. The city's capacity to act as a role model to inspire other cities, promote best practices and spread the EGC model further while bearing in mind city size and location.
3. The city's communication actions including:
 - a. Citizen communication to date in relation to the 12 environmental criteria, effectiveness via changes in citizen behaviour, lessons learned and proposed modifications for the future.
 - b. The extent to which the city's local partnering has gained social and economic advantages.
 - c. Outline of the city's European Green Capital communication strategy should it win.

The information for best practice is disseminated through these reports, with different cities showcasing their ideas for sustainable urban development. The sharing of information is paramount to the scheme, as the heavy weight placed on communication in the judging shows.

Implementation, outputs and impact

The scheme is publicised by the European Commission, encouraged to join by the aforementioned indirect benefits it brings with it. The scheme is relatively new (the award first given in 2010), but has gained traction, with applications for the 2017 EGCA currently being accepted. When awarded biannually there were around 35 applicants, and now there are about 17 as it is awarded annually, although this number is expected to increase as criteria for application are loosened (smaller population of city, etc.). Published output and statistics come from the applications from the cities themselves, which are all available on the website of the Directorate-General for the Environment. Cities follow up after six months, meeting with the EGCA committee to demonstrate how their policies and green agenda have been put in place.

Success factors, barriers and outlook

According to one of the stakeholders, there are number of reasons for the scheme's success. The award has been prestigious, promoting cities' green credentials, incorporating cities into an influential network, and the Commission reports a sense of pride instilled in the cities and their citizens. This has worked well for the Commission, cutting its costs as it does not offer sponsorship or grants, but rather this incentive comes from businesses that are attracted to the green cities.

As mentioned previously, the criteria for applicants are widening, with smaller cities and those from applicant countries being allowed to apply, meaning we can expect the scheme to expand in the future. It is also potentially transferable to OSH: there is a health aspect in air and water quality, so some of their measures are transferable and applicable to other benchmarking schemes.

⁽²⁹⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/the_jury/index.html

⁽³⁰⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/applying-for-the-award/the_jury/index.html

Non-OSH case study 3: MIPEX**Introduction**

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is an online tool developed by the migration policy group, which ranks countries by their success at integrating migrants across numerous factors. Intended to be a comparative tool, it shows successful policies at a national level across numerous countries, and areas of strength and weakness for those countries. It has its roots in the 2004 European Civic Citizen and Inclusion Index, developing as it expanded its scope and sophistication across several national databases. It analyses policies as and when they are implemented, scoring them as to how they affect migrants, generating an overall score for a country. Factors considered are long-term residence, family reunion, labour market mobility, access to nationality, political participation, education and anti-discrimination law ⁽³¹⁾.

Set-up

In 2004, the EU-15 endeavoured to collate national integration policies, making them concise, transparent and comparable ⁽³²⁾. Targeted at non-governmental organisations (NGOs), governments, academics, press and European institutions, and launched in Brussels, Madrid and London, further editions of the index were commissioned in 2007 and 2011, the latter of which considers 148 policy indicators in 37 countries to develop a scale of analysis in migrant integration. Co-financed by the European Fund for Integration of Third-Country Nationals ⁽³³⁾, there is also a network of national partners, generally one from every participating state. It was set up to provide a benchmark for rating of national policies by stakeholders and national governments, which can then be compared with a European norm. The funding structure has changed; the European Commission has been the largest funding organisation, but national partners (often third sector) also contribute, normally under a matched-funding structure.

Audience

Participants are national governments and the EU, with migrant-related policy being analysed for how accommodating or inhibiting it is to the integration of migrants into a country. Data are contributed and outputs used by think tanks and government agencies that focus on migration and migrants, such as the United Kingdom's Runnymede Trust or The Heinrich Böll Foundation in Germany (both of which are national partners). The focus is very much on those institutions which are predominantly interested in migrants and migration policy; although single-issue in this respect, there is no reason the methodology and instruments used could not be transferable. Given that it is a comparative tool looking at national-level policies, the geographical reach is broad, focusing on the EU-27 (Croatia is currently being worked on along with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and 10 other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) members across three continents.

Information-sharing (the benchmarking process)

The methodology behind MIPEX is policy analysis with regard to migrants. Across the aforementioned categories, numerous policies are considered, grouped together into sub-categories, and then scored 100, 50 or 0, giving an average out of 100 which can be compared across countries.

The information is then shared through this index, which is freely accessible and manipulable by anybody who wishes to access the data (these are currently available via a web search). As it is a 'rolling' scheme, new policies can be assessed upon implementation, and the country score updated

⁽³¹⁾ <http://www.mipex.eu/key-findings>

⁽³²⁾ <http://www.mipex.eu/about>

⁽³³⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/financing/fundings/pdf/awp_2013_eif.pdf

accordingly. Changes of this nature are logged on the website's country profiles; for example, the United Kingdom's 2010 Equality Act improved the overall country score by five points ⁽³⁴⁾.

After every round of indexing, results are published in book form and a debate is held as to migration policy based on the findings. Members provide information roughly every three years for an index, and the new release, MIPEX 4, will be slightly different in that it will be an update of MIPEX 3 rather than a full overhaul from scratch, as has been the case in the past. Information is also communicated through a book, which summarises the findings, and all the raw data are kept on the MIPEX website for access. The website is maintained and updated by the Migration Policy Group (which also publishes the book), and publication is a collaborative effort with national partners, led by the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), a think tank. Dissemination is overseen by policy experts in each country, who peer review the report and data.

Implementation, outputs and impact

To date, the index has been updated to incorporate increasing numbers of relevant policy areas, as well as more countries to improve the comparative aspect of the index.

It has been adopted by an increasing number of stakeholders, at both the national and supranational level, with major outputs being the three editions of the index itself, although as previously mentioned it is being constantly updated as new policies are implemented. Currently, 37 countries are studied (increasing to 40) and these tend to have a national stakeholder who also supports the project. Policy wise, MIPEX has not been explicitly used in United Kingdom policy-making, although findings from it have been considered when looking at best practice from across Europe, and in other countries there have been cases of MIPEX being used explicitly, although our United Kingdom expert could not give us empirical examples.

Success factors, barriers and outlook

The index is highly transferable; the methodology could remain very similar, with alterations made to the policies being studied and categories upon which they were being assessed. Other procedures are transferable as well, such as the ability for anyone to make a chart and the 'double-blind' peer review procedure, with scores given before the country is known as well as after. This would not necessarily have to remain in the public sector, and organisational policy and structure could be analysed as well.

With regard to outlook, the instruments are in place now to continue updating the index every three to four years and to expand the index in terms of the number of participating countries; it has expanded from the EU to include North America, Japan and the European Neighbourhood, with potential to continue expanding. There is also an aim to increase the number of indicators that could analyse policy even further, by looking at policy outcomes to see if what is on paper measures up to what is happening at ground level. Quantification of all this is another success factor, producing clear measurement and comparative variables for policy-makers in the policy analysis process.

3.5 General observations

It is evident from the above case studies that extant OSH schemes are very diverse and involve a number of approaches to goal-setting, information-sharing and stimulating membership. Some challenges encountered for scheme organisers can be specific to the markets in which they operate (with respect to sector, country and type of member organisations) and success factors may not necessarily be transferable for similar reasons. Nevertheless, the detailed accounts provided offer significant food for thought for those considering setting up a new scheme or wishing to improve the effectiveness or widen the scope of an existing scheme.

Our investigations into non-OSH schemes suggest that OSH schemes present specific challenges that may not be common to benchmarking schemes in other topic areas. When companies share health and

⁽³⁴⁾ <http://www.mipex.eu/uk>

safety data or descriptions of OSH systems, this can involve disclosure of information that is potentially sensitive for legal and/or commercial reasons. Poor OSH performers may feel exposed to the scrutiny of, for example, insurers or enforcement bodies, while better performers may not wish to share information about processes that may give them a competitive edge. The non-OSH schemes tend not to have those implications for those involved, although there are some overlapping issues concerned with scheme management such as encouraging participation and problems inherent in requesting information in a particular format.

In summarising results from the surveys and questionnaires used in this review, the next chapter reflects an even greater diversity of OSH schemes. In doing so it enables a better understanding of common themes and characteristics of the large number of benchmarking schemes identified through the multiple methods applied in this review.

4 Overview of identified schemes

The case studies described in the previous chapter provide rich data about a diverse collection of schemes which focus on a range of topic areas and audiences.

However, the research team also collected information on schemes through the scoping searches, the brief email survey and the full online survey. As would be expected in original research using multiple research methods in a field with limited publicly available access points, some of the data collected lacked sufficient detail or scope to draw firm conclusions or comparisons with other schemes. This chapter begins by describing some measures that were implemented to address data quality issues.

4.1 Treatment of data

To ensure that the quality of the quantitative analysis on various features of benchmarking schemes was sound, data from the scoping searches and email survey were excluded where they were not substantiated by information from the full online survey or the case-study interviews.

A further consideration was that respondents had multiple different subject positions to the schemes described, with some being lead organisers, others who were general participants and others who were individuals with a degree of topic knowledge regarding the initiative in question. It cannot be presumed that these individuals have access to the same quality of information regarding their respective schemes so the internal quality of these datasets may vary to some degree.

4.2 Summary of findings

The main features of the identified benchmarking schemes are presented below by theme, with tables presented alongside key points.

The data summarise information from 16 survey responses on unique schemes, seven case studies on unique schemes and two schemes covered by both a survey response and a case study, meaning that data from 25 unique benchmarking schemes are captured in the tables below. The two case studies not included in the quantitative analysis are Toyota Safety Days, initiated by EU-OSHA's Benchmarking Steering Group (as this is not new scheme information for EU-OSHA), and the academic study into return on prevention practices (as this is not a comparative benchmarking scheme so did not fit with the dataset).

For almost all questions there was a dataset of 23 or 24 observations. As it was not possible to be certain that absence of a response was an omission (as opposed to a positive response indicating something substantive outside the available multiple choice responses), where there were missing data, percentages were all calculated using 25 as 100 %, unless otherwise indicated. This explains the small number of tables where the '*N*' at the top of the table is not equal to the total '*N*' at the end: the '*N*' in the heading represents the actual responses obtained whilst the '*N*' in the totals row is the number used for calculations of percentages.

4.3 Age of initiative

While a number of schemes have been set up very recently, around half had been in operation for at least six years. Their longevity indicates that they are valuable to those participating in the scheme and also perhaps that these schemes are flexible enough to adapt to changing environments and participant feedback.

Table 4.1: Breakdown of identified schemes, by age

Age	N (22*)	%	Age	N (22*)	%
11+ years ago	9	43	0-2 years ago	5	23
6-10 years ago	4	19	11+ years ago	10	45
0-2 years ago	5	24	3-5 years ago	3	14
3-5 years ago	3	14	6-10 years ago	4	18
Total*	21	100	Total*	22	100

*No data were obtained for three of the schemes. In this instance, as all schemes will have an age/length of operation, the percentage calculations are based on the total schemes for which responses were provided (N = 21).

For example, ArcelorMittal's international benchmarking scheme is over 10 years old and has changed from being site based to conference-call based and back again over that time. The first change took place to accommodate financial and time pressures on participants, then a subsequent reversal of this decision was implemented to address the negative effect that lack of personal contact was having on the successful operation of the scheme.

It should be noted that some schemes set up more recently are offshoots or established and long-running schemes. For example, the Zero Accidents Network in the Netherlands, set up in 2012, is a scheme mirroring the Finnish ZAF set up in 2003 and aiming for similar success. BGM's statutory accident comprehensive incentive system for the German food and Horeca sector, set up in 2011, has been developed on the back of the German meat sector statutory insurance system, which has had considerable success in improving safety and has been operating since 2002.

Regarding the schemes' operational status, of the 25 schemes, 88 % (N = 22) are currently active, 8 % (N = 2) are no longer active and data are not available for one scheme (4 %).

4.3.1 National coverage of schemes

Table 4.2: Breakdown of identified schemes, by country of operation

Country of operation	N (25)	%
Australasia (exclusively)	1	4
Europe wide	8	32
Finland	1	4
Germany	2	8
Multiple Anglophone nations	1	4
Netherlands (exclusive)	1	4
Netherlands and France	1	4
Spain	1	4
United Kingdom	3	12
Worldwide	6	24
Total	25	100

When broken down by country of operation, there is a predominance of schemes identified through the research operating at European level, with the next greatest number of schemes operating worldwide. The two combined account for more than half of the sample and indicate a clear appetite for systems that allow cross-national collaboration and comparisons.

These types of schemes include sector-level benchmarking, such as VRM's FSB online gap analysis tool, which is listed above in the 'multiple Anglophone nations' category, and intra-organisation international benchmarking schemes, such as ArcelorMittal's Health and Safety Council site visit benchmarking. The United Kingdom sample is relatively high, as might be expected from a study using warm contacts and snowball sampling amongst its participant-gathering methods (as well as a necessity to conduct web searches in English).

4.3.2 Sector coverage of initiative

- **Multiple versus single sector**

Table 4.3: Breakdown of identified schemes, by sector coverage

	N (24)	%
Multiple sectors (top-level SIC code)	12	50
Single sector (top-level SIC code)	12	50
Total	24	100

SAC, Standard Industrial Classification.

The sample of benchmarking schemes is close to evenly split according to whether specific or multiple sectors are covered. Whilst the scope of this study does not allow the assumption to be made that this split represents all schemes in existence, it does imply that schemes can operate effectively in either capacity.

- **Sector of operation**

Table 4.4: Breakdown of identified schemes, by sector

Sector (top-level SIC code)	N (25)	%
Real estate activities	4	16
Administrative and support service activities	4	16
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4	16
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use	4	16
Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	4	16
Economy-wide	5	20
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	5	20
Financial and insurance activities	5	20
Human health and social work activities	5	20
Accommodation and food service activities	6	20
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	5	21
Mining and quarrying	5	21
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	5	21
Information and communication	6	24
Other service activities	6	24
Professional, scientific and technical activities	6	25

Sector (top-level SIC code)	N (25)	%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	7	29
Education	7	28
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	8	32
Construction	8	33
Transportation and storage	9	36
Manufacturing	17	71
Total*	25	540*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete and so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % since many schemes include organisations from more than one sector. SIC, Standard Industrial Classification.

When broken down by sector, the largest group of schemes were listed as operating in the manufacturing sector (68 %) (not necessarily exclusively) ⁽³⁵⁾, followed by transportation (36 %), construction (32 %) and electricity and gas (32 %). This may be at least partly explained by higher demand: these are higher risk sectors with higher frequency and severity of industrial accidents than some of the less frequently covered sectors such as the arts (16 %), administration (16 %) and finance (20 %). One possibility is that benchmarking schemes in these sectors may focus largely on the higher profile risks in the sector rather than less acute ones such as stress at work.

4.3.3 Current focus of schemes

For this part of the data analysis known schemes were coded according to the main aspects of their remit, including populations, topic and type of information shared.

The two features appearing most frequently in benchmarking schemes are 'outcome measures' and a process measure; thus, both hard outcome data, such as accident rates and sick leave, and softer prevention processes are included in 75 % of schemes. Likewise, a similar number of schemes included lagging indicators (outcome measure) as OSH-reporting processes (process measure). The mixture of process and outcome measures often appears in the same scheme, such as in VRM's FSB, which includes asking participants to share their road safety processes but also to submit quantitative data about collision numbers, etc.

Best practice information features frequently in schemes, for example HSE's CHaSPI website offers collections of best practice guidance for members alongside its self-auditing tool, and the ZAF in Finland and Zero Accidents Network in the Netherlands both prioritise the sharing of best practice in the process of achieving the 'zero vision'.

Table 4.5: Breakdown of identified schemes, by area of focus

Issues and groups in scheme	N (24)	%
Supervisors	2	8
Managers	2	8
Other/it varies	2	8
Employees	5	21
Other processes	5	21
Work sites	6	25
Work equipment	7	29

⁽³⁵⁾ Note that percentages presented here sum to more than 100 as some schemes operate in more than one sector.

Issues and groups in scheme	N (24)	%
Other OSH processes	10	42
Leading indicators	11	46
Lagging indicators	14	58
OSH reporting processes	14	58
Best practice guidance	15	63
OSH performance indicators (sick leave, accident data)	18	75
OSH prevention processes	18	75
Total*	24	537*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

4.3.4 Changes in scope of schemes

A considerable number of schemes had changed in terms of their remit and/or membership base over the course of their existence; therefore, this area is worthy of separate analysis.

Regarding review methodology, this area of research is defined by how much the contributor (interviewee or survey respondent) knew of changes to the scheme over time, so data here may be truncated and may not represent the full history of each scheme. However, most schemes appear to have increased their scope over time with only 8 % remaining static and none of the investigated schemes reducing in scope. Most common was an expansion of data collection, which could comprise either volume or type of data and smaller numbers of schemes extended across national borders or increased in sector coverage.

Expansion was generally organic in nature, for example as the German meat sector insurance scheme merged with the wider food and Horeca sector scheme, the latter was able to extend its benchmarking activities to a wider audience using the original meat sector model.

Table 4.6: Breakdown of schemes according to changes actioned

	N (17)	%
No change	2	8
Expanded in sector coverage	6	25
Expanded in nation coverage	7	29
Expanded in scope of data collection	10	42
Total*	25	104*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

4.3.5 Types of organisations involved in setting up and participating in schemes

Table 4.7: Breakdown of schemes according to origin/participants

	N (24)	%
No data	1	4
Universities	1	4
Various	1	4
Employees' association	2	8
Consortium of private sector organisations	3	12
OSH specialist	3	12
Tripartite organisation	3	12
Consultancies	3	13
Trade/employers' association	4	16
Social enterprise or other not-for-profit organisation	7	28
Governmental/non-departmental body	8	32
SME for-profit (< 250 employees)	10	40
Large for-profit enterprise (> 250 employees)	15	60
Total*	25	244*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

Most of the schemes identified through the research were set up by or have participants from organisations in the private sector. Schemes such as ArcelorMittal's Health and Safety Council site visit benchmarking and VRM's FSB scheme are examples of schemes operating largely or exclusively in the private sector. Almost one-third of schemes have governmental and non-departmental members and the same number involve social enterprise or not-for-profit schemes. However, the boundaries between the private and public are not distinct, as several schemes identified are open to both public and private sector organisations, such as VRM's FSB scheme, which is mostly composed of large private companies but includes a small number of public sector organisations. The interviewee reflected that there was no apparent reason that this should be so imbalanced in terms of participant type but that there may be a stronger cost-reduction motivation for private organisations.

4.3.6 Reported motivations to join scheme

Table 4.8: Breakdown of responses according to motivation for joining

	N (24)	%
Protect financial capital	2	8
Respond to political pressure	3	12
Other	4	16
Relational gains (i.e. improved relationships)	9	32
Reputational gains	8	33
Compliance with legislation	9	36
Protect human capital	9	36

	N (24)	%
Calibrate the organisation's performances against market	12	48
Create zero-accident/incident environments	16	64
Total*	25	388*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

The reasons people become involved in benchmarking schemes are varied but the most common reason cited in the research was to create zero-accident environments (67 % of participants cited this as a reason). The ZAF in Finland and Zero Accidents Network in the Netherlands are clearly named after this aspiration and for other schemes it is a core intention, for example, ArcelorMittal Group, which views its benchmarking scheme as instrumental in its 'journey to zero'.

Half of respondents cited a desire to calibrate the organisation's performance against the market; this would clearly be a core motivation for users of VRM's FSB scheme, which allows contributors to compare their processes and outcome measures with those of other organisations. Over one-third of participants mentioned compliance with legislation, including organisations such as ANFAC and Quality Safety Audit, and one-third also mentioned protection of human capital and relational gains.

4.3.7 Reported benefits for participants

Table 4.9: Breakdown of responses according to reported benefits

	N (23)	%
Sick leave rates	0	0
Employee behaviour	6	24
Staff competencies regarding OSH	6	24
Stakeholder perceptions of OSH	6	24
Risk management and planning tools	7	29
Accident/incident costs	8	32
Organisational structures	8	32
The implementation of risk management and planning tools	9	36
Auditing processes	10	40
Communications regarding OSH	10	40
OSH management policies	11	44
The implementation of OSH management policies	11	44
Process/policy documents	13	52
Accident/incident rates (e.g. DAFWCF/RIDDOR)	16	64
Good practice case studies	17	68
Total*	24	552*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

DAFWCF, Days Away From Work Case Frequency; RIDDOR, Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

Whilst 64 % of respondents selected reductions in accident and incident rates as one of the benefits of participating in their benchmarking scheme, an even greater proportion listed having access to good

practice case studies as a benefit. It should be noted that for survey respondents it is not clear whether people were reporting potential or realised benefits, especially for those schemes which are newly created; however, in the case studies, several respondents indicated specific improvements in safety processes and outcomes that they attributed to participation in the scheme.

For example, the ZAF in Finland found that members' accident rates fell by 46 % between 2008 and 2012 while the national accident rate did not significantly alter over the period. The interviewee providing information about the HSE's PABIAC scheme noted that accident rates in the papermaking industry have fallen over recent years in conjunction with PABIAC's activities. The rate has improved from an accident-rate higher than construction in the 1990s to just above the all-industry average, and whilst this cannot be directly attributed to PABIAC's activities, the interviewee expected there to have been some impact.

4.3.8 What participants contribute to the scheme

Table 4.10: Breakdown of responses according to contribution of participants

	N (23)	%
Other	3	12
Auditing of other participants	7	28
Membership/user fees	7	28
Other work 'in kind'	7	28
Participation in designing benchmarking processes	7	28
Participation in steering groups	10	40
Completion of surveys	13	52
Participation in data analysis	13	52
Self-auditing	14	56
Total*	24	324*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

The ways in which scheme members participate in schemes most commonly include completing surveys, self-auditing (56 %) and participating in data analysis (52 %). Less frequent is taking part in steering groups (40 %) followed by contributing to the design of benchmarking processes, work in-kind and paying fees, which engage just over a quarter of members each.

▪ Topics about which benchmarking information is collected

There is a wide variety of data collected by benchmarking schemes in the research. Around half of schemes collect hard data on accident/incident rates and costs but significantly more schemes collect information on organisational structure, OSH policies and process/policy documents (75 %, 67 % and 67 %, respectively). Many schemes collect both types of data, although the emphasis might be on one or the other. For example, USHA is an example of a scheme which collects both, but its activities centre mostly on sharing and developing good practice, whereas the HSE's PABIACs have historically emphasised data collection and sharing, with process information and best practice activities taking a less prominent role.

Table 4.11: Breakdown of responses according to benchmarking topic

	N (23)	%
Staff competencies regarding OSH	5	20
Other	10	40
Accident/incident rates (e.g. DAFWCF/RIDDOR)	11	44
Employee perceptions of OSH	11	44
The implementation of OSH management policies	11	44
Accident/incident costs	12	48
Stakeholder perceptions of OSH	13	52
Auditing processes	14	56
The implementation of risk management and planning tools	14	56
Communications regarding OSH	15	60
Good practice case studies	15	60
Risk management and planning tools	15	60
OSH management policies	16	62
Process/policy documents	16	62
Organisational structures	18	72
Total*	25	780*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

DAFWCF, Days Away From Work Case Frequency; RIDDOR, Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations.

4.3.9 Professional groups responsible for collecting/submitting benchmarking data

Table 4.12: Breakdown of responses according to professional responsible

	N (24)	%
Contractors	1	4
Others	1	4
Employee representatives	4	16
Employees	5	20
Supervisors	7	28
Senior management	11	44
OSH managers	21	84
Total*	25	200*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

The vast majority of those collecting and contributing safety and health data to benchmarking schemes are specialist OSH managers (84 %); however, almost half of schemes identify senior management as having an involvement in this activity. It may be relevant to consider this figure in the context of the richer data obtained through the interviews in which senior managers were largely found not to have much input into day-to-day benchmarking activities; this figure could be interpreted as a maximum

representation of any involvement of senior management in schemes (whether it be in name only or they are fully involved in supporting and operating the scheme).

An example of senior involvement would be the Zero Accidents Network in the Netherlands, in which CEOs are engaged in the scheme through contact with OSH specialists with organisations. Although the CEOs are required to sign a commitment pledge on behalf of the organisation, other activities are quickly delegated to the organisation's OSH specialists to manage.

4.3.10 Base unit of analysis and comparators

Table 4.13: Breakdown of schemes according to base unit/comparators

	N (24)	%
Others	1	4
Job groups or 'job families'	2	8
Departments	7	28
Work sites or different geographical locations	13	52
Within the organisation	14	56
With other organisations	14	56
Whole organisation (with other organisations)	21	84
Total*	25	288*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

Most benchmarking schemes (84 %) collect and share benchmarking information at whole-organisation level. However, more than half (56 %) compare information gathered from department, site or job role level with the same kind of information in other organisations. Eight per cent of these do so at job family level, for example Step Change in Safety, which covers manufacturing in the United Kingdom, compares data at job family level.

Just over half (56 %) of schemes identified make comparisons within their own organisation rather than with other organisations at any level, for example ArcelorMittal, which, as a global organisation, is able to share information across international regions in line with its organisational structure.

4.3.11 How benchmarking data are collected

Table 4.14: Breakdown of schemes according to means of data collection

	N (24)	%
Auditing from third-party intermediary	3	12
Auditing from competitor	3	12
Other	6	24
Self-auditing	13	52
Submissions of documents	17	68
Total*	25	168*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

Most schemes ask organisations to submit documented information to the scheme, although more than half rely on self-auditing to produce the relevant data whilst small numbers require the data to be audited by a third party or competitor. The in-depth interviews revealed that the most productive benchmarking schemes tend to allow competitors to visit one another and one interviewee specifically remarked on the levels of trust between participants created by a shared concern for safety improvements across otherwise competitive organisations. Site visits were seen as particularly useful opportunities for participants to gather the most relevant information for their own improvement.

4.3.12 *How benchmarked data and information are presented to participants*

Table 4.15: Breakdown of schemes according to means of data presentation

	N (23)	%
Hard-copy documents	3	12
Web forum	9	36
Shared e-databases and/or electronic documents	16	64
Meetings and conferences	18	72
Total*	25	184*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

Many schemes (64 %) involve the sharing of electronic OSH documentation, but almost three-quarters of schemes (72%) create opportunities for participants to meet each other face to face through meetings or conferences. Several interviewees discussed the importance of networking as instrumental in creating the relationships of trust and mutual collaboration that enable benchmarking schemes to be successful. It is illustrative that ArcelorMittal changed its benchmarking meetings from site visits to telephone conferences in an effort to save participants time and money but that this negatively affected the success of the scheme and it was returned to being based around site visits.

4.3.13 *How regularly participants submit data/information*

Table 4.16: Breakdown of schemes according to regularity of data submission

	N (24)	%
Continuously	1	4
Weekly	1	4
Twice a year	1	4
Every two years	2	8
Monthly	3	12
Quarterly	4	16
Annually	5	20
Ad hoc/individual choice	7	28
Total	25	94

There is considerable variety in how often data are shared by participating organisations/individuals from real-time data sharing to every two years or more. The single most common schedule is ad hoc or determined by each individual organisation, which correlates with the view shared by a number of

interviewees that successful benchmarking schemes depend on allowing participants a fair degree of flexibility in how and when they participate.

4.3.14 How the scheme is promoted

A wide range of promotion methods are employed across the identified schemes with the largest numbers using a website (64 %) and promoting the scheme through OSH manager networks (60 %). A small number used other workplace representatives such as employee representatives (16 %) and human resources managers (20 %), but trade associations, conferences and magazines were more common, presumably in use largely for the 50 % of sector-focused benchmarking schemes (see Table 3.3).

Table 4.17: Breakdown of schemes according to means of promotion

Promotion through:	N (23)	%
Employee representatives	4	16
HR –manager networks	5	20
Trade magazines	6	24
Trade association(s)	10	40
Trade conferences	12	48
OSH –manager networks	15	60
Website	16	67
Other	2	8
Total*	24	281*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

4.3.15 Scheme activities

Table 4.18: Breakdown of schemes, by scheme activity

	N (25)	%
Conferences	4	16
Presentations, workshops and forums	6	24
Case-study library	8	32
On-site feedback sessions for participants	8	32
Performance league tables	8	32
Awards and recognitions for participants	9	36
Document library	11	44
Minutes/meeting action points	11	44
Newsletters	11	44
Reports	17	68
Other	1	4
Total*	25	378*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

Collectively, the benchmarking schemes offer in a diverse set of activities including many types of opportunities for networking and sharing best practice and OSH information face to face. Interviewees reported that these were often seen as one of the most valuable aspects of the benchmarking scheme

they were involved in and something which significantly contributes to the success of schemes. Production of reports was also a common scheme activity and a third of schemes offer the chance for formal recognition or awards for participants, including the British Safety Council's Five Star Awards and the Facilities Management Association's Health and Safety benchmark Tool.

4.3.16 *Reported success factors*

Table 4.19: Breakdown of schemes by success factor

	N (24)	%
Level of political support	3	12
Range of stakeholders involved in the outputs of the scheme	6	24
Range of stakeholders involved in the setting up of the scheme	7	28
Supportive legislation or obligations	7	28
Level of intra-organisational support	8	32
Range of measurements used for analyses	8	32
Level of industry support	9	36
Range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of the scheme	9	36
Synergy with other organisational schemes, groups or activities	10	40
Ability to implement repeatedly over time	12	48
Easy and quick for participants to do	12	48
Quality of data analysis	12	48
Ability to use data to facilitate change	13	52
Implementation of good practices of other participants	14	56
Exchange of good practices	15	60
Usefulness of the information or data gained	17	64
Other	5	20
Total*	25	644*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

The survey responses indicate that a wide variety of factors influence success but that there is no one factor that all respondents agree on as being critical to the success of their scheme. The most commonly cited factor (64 %) is that the information gained from participation must be genuinely useful to the participants — naturally, if the scheme lacks perceived value then participation is likely to decline due to a lack of return on investment from the resource requirements of participation. Fifty-two per cent agreed that the ability to use information to facilitate change was central to the success of a scheme.

Exchange of good practice is valued (60 %), with 56 % saying that success depends at least partly on participants being able to implement the good practice shared by others.

Ease of participation is mentioned by 48 % of respondents as a factor underpinning scheme success, and interviewees supported this, discussing the importance of ensuring that participation is not too onerous. Considering external support, political support did not feature strongly as a success factor for benchmarking schemes (12 %) but the importance of industry support was suggested by almost three times as many respondents (36 %). Supportive legislation or obligations were, however, seen as useful to schemes (36 %).

Table 4.20: Breakdown of success factors, by respondent type

Respondent type	Lead organiser/creator		Participant		Awareness only	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Ability to implement repeatedly over time	9	50	1	33	2	67
Ability to use data to facilitate change	9	50	1	33	3	100
Easy and quick for participants to do	10	56		0	2	67
Exchange of good practices	11	61	2	67	2	67
Implementation of good practices of other participants	10	56	2	67	2	67
Level of industry support	7	39	1	33	1	33
Level of intra-organisational support	7	39	0	0	1	33
Level of political support	2	11	0	0	1	33
Quality of data analysis	8	44	2	67	2	67
Range of measurements used for analyses	5	28	1	33	2	67
Range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of the scheme	8	44	0	0	1	33
Range of stakeholders involved in the outputs of the scheme	5	28	0	0	1	33
Range of stakeholders involved in the setting up of the scheme	6	33	0	0	1	33
Supportive legislation or obligations	6	33	0	0	1	33
Synergy with other organisational schemes, groups or activities	9	50	0	0	1	33
Usefulness of the information or data gained	11	61	3	100	3	100

When success factors are examined by role in the scheme the numbers become very small and this makes drawing conclusions risky; however, if any tentative conclusions can be drawn it might suggest that both participants and leaders view exchange of good practices and usefulness of information shared as key priorities for successful schemes. A second possibility suggested from the data here is that there may be a difference between the breadth of success factors perceived by leaders and participants. Leaders or creators seem to see a wider range of benefits participation whilst participants are focused on a smaller number of tangible features such as usefulness of the information, quality of the data and the opportunity to exchange and implement good practice to create change.

It is perhaps not surprising that the two roles may be differentiated by focus as a result of perspective but also role imperatives: leaders and creators can see the entire picture of the scheme and its context whilst participants need to demonstrate value from their participation in their own organisation, department or manager. This may have implications for creators and leaders when promoting schemes, as focusing on those features of most value to participants is likely to lead to greater participation and success. The scope of the present research is insufficient to draw confident conclusions about what these might be but it indicates that sharing best practice and gaining implementable insights into OSH improvements are key to participants' involvement.

4.3.17 **Reported barriers to success**

Table 4.21: Breakdown of schemes, by reported barriers

	N (15)	%
Range of stakeholders involved in the setting up of the scheme	2	8
Range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of the scheme	3	12
Range of stakeholders involved in the outputs of the scheme	3	12
Inability to use data to facilitate change	4	16
Level of intra-organisational support	4	16
Level of political support	4	16
Range of measurements used for analyses	4	16
Other	4	16
Inability to implement repeatedly over time	5	20
Lack of utility of the scheme's data or information	5	20
Obstructive or over-complex/demanding legislation or obligations	5	20
Quality of data analysis	5	20
Scheme's overlap with existing schemes, groups or activities	5	20
Usefulness of data	5	20
Level of industry support	7	28
Onerous time or resource demands for participants	7	28
Total*	25	288*

*The numbers detailed are not discrete, so the cumulative percentage is greater than 100 % because the question allowed multiple responses.

There was less agreement between respondents on what characteristics of environments or schemes were disadvantageous to a scheme than on what made a scheme successful; however, the greatest number of respondents cited low levels of industry support and onerous time or resource demands as damaging to the operation of a successful scheme. Less influential were levels of political or intra-industry support, at 17 % each, and the least influential barrier to success by number of respondents citing it was the range of stakeholders involved in setting up the scheme.

The lower agreement here may reflect the fact that a majority of schemes identified through the review are successfully in operation, so the question may have had less relevance to a good proportion of respondents than the question about factors contributing to success of the scheme. In addition, it may take only one or two factors to lead a scheme into decline whilst several or many contextual and integral features may need to be in play to support a successful benchmarking scheme which overcomes complex boundaries and creates real value.

▪ **Barriers to success by respondent type**

Table 4.22: Breakdown of barriers, by respondent type

Respondent type	Lead organiser/creator		Participant		Awareness only	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inability to implement repeatedly over time	2	11	2	67	1	33

Respondent type	Lead organiser/creator		Participant		Awareness only	
Inability to use data to facilitate change	2	11	0	0	1	33
Lack of utility of the scheme's data or information	3	17	1	33	1	33
Level of industry support	5	28	0	0	2	67
Level of intra-organisational support	3	17	0	0	1	33
Level of political support	2	11	1	33	1	33
Obstructive or over-complex/demanding legislation or obligations	4	22	0	0	1	33
Onerous time or resource demands for participants	3	17	2	67	2	67
Quality of data analysis	3	17	1	33	1	33
Range of measurements used for analyses	2	11	1	33	1	33
Range of stakeholders involved in the delivery of the scheme	2	11	0	0	1	33
Range of stakeholders involved in the outputs of the scheme	2	11	0	0	1	33
Range of stakeholders involved in the setting up of the scheme	1	6	0	0	1	33
Scheme's overlap with existing schemes, groups or activities	2	11	1	33	2	67
Usefulness of data	3	17	1	33	1	33

The issues outlined above regarding the low respondent numbers in the participant group are equally relevant to the barriers to success by respondent type and conclusions drawn cannot be relied upon. In terms of factors which hinder the success of benchmarking schemes there is no one issue which emerges as a common problem for leaders and creators. The most commonly cited barrier to success is level of industry support, but this is mentioned by only 28 % of respondents. This was also noted by two of the three observers of schemes but not mentioned by any of the three participants. Alongside this, 22 % of leaders and creators mention obstructive legislation or obligations, and again this was not mentioned as a barrier to success by any participant.

This difference is perhaps not surprising as it is likely that these types of structural barriers to benchmarking schemes are more apparent to those who are trying to start up and lead schemes whilst much less so to those taking part. The barriers perceived most commonly by the small group of scheme participants in this research focused on onerous time or resource demands and inability to participate repeatedly.

4.4 Features of benchmarking schemes

The benchmarking schemes identified in the survey and case studies tend to be well established and successful schemes with the majority in existence for more than three years and over half operating for more than six years. Many of them operate across national boundaries, and as might be expected from the survey mailing list European schemes featured most frequently but 25 % of schemes operated worldwide.

Just over half of schemes cover large private organisations and 30 % include governmental organisations and not-for-profit organisations, but these figures are not necessarily exclusive. Traditional higher risk sectors are well represented amongst benchmarking schemes (manufacturing, construction, electricity and construction) and there is less coverage of more office-based sectors such as finance, administration and the arts, suggesting that benchmarking schemes identified may focus on

activities with higher rates of acute occupational injury rather than chronic work-related illnesses such as stress. Taking a broad picture of sector coverage, half of the schemes covered only one sector whilst the other half operated across sectors.

Most benchmarking schemes explored are operated by OSH specialists but almost half include the involvement of senior management, albeit in some cases probably in name only. Most schemes share and compare information at organisational level but significant numbers focus also or exclusively on sharing information at other levels: for three-quarters of all schemes this will include hard data such as OSH indicators of accident rates and sickness absence, and the same proportion will share process or soft data such as OSH prevention processes and best practice guidance.

4.5 Cross-cutting issues

Some interesting cross-cutting trends emerge when the shortlist is considered as whole, some with potential implications for future EU-OSHA involvement.

4.5.1 *Activities with opportunities for relationship-building*

There was a notable tendency for those involved in schemes to particularly value those activities that enabled them to meet others involved in OSH, learn about their OSH practices and then have the opportunity to implement them in their own workplaces. Building mutually beneficial relationships appears particularly helpful in the success of schemes over the longer term, and meetings and conferences are a staple of many schemes.

4.5.2 *The relative value of hard and soft data to participants*

Although quantitative data were often shared and calibration of own performance against the market is one of the motivating factors for half of respondents to join a scheme, the range of more process-orientated activities engaged in suggests that this may be the lesser draw to participation in the scheme. This observation is supported by the factors which participants feel are important to the success of a scheme.

The most common joining motivation for participants is to create a zero-accident environment and one of the most common benefits cited is achieving improvements in accident and incident rates. Both of these factors are clearly linked to a desire to achieve an improvement in OSH data; however, access to good practice case studies is most commonly seen as a benefit (71 % of respondents note this) and sharing OSH policies also features highly as a benefit. Whilst useful information is highly valued, it appears that this is most appreciated when it is in the form of processes and practices that can be adopted to positive effect back in one's own workplace. Sharing of these processes will be facilitated by enabling the development of trusting, mutually beneficial relationships through regular, face-to-face networking opportunities.

4.5.3 *Features of successful and unsuccessful schemes*

Respondents felt that the usefulness of the information obtained through membership of a particular scheme and the exchange of good practices were the most common contributors to a successful scheme. The opportunity to implement others' practices and make changes to their own workplace processes as a result were also seen by a significant number of respondents as instrumental in scheme success. Awareness of this can support EU-OSHA's guidance to other organisations or individuals who may want to set up schemes.

Leaders of schemes were conscious of the effect of resource or time requirements on participants, indicating that they see it as an important factor in scheme success, and, although participants did not note this as a success factor, they were quicker to note when high levels of demand impeded the

success of a scheme. This may also be a feature to be aware of in supporting the creation of new benchmarking schemes.

Barriers to scheme success were less universally agreed upon; however, leaders most commonly cited a lack of industry support and the time or resource demands on participants. Although not definitive, this provides a steer for potential scheme creators who might usefully make an initial judgement about whether a scheme in a particular sector might have set-up or sustainability difficulties, and it can also shape the type and level of contribution they ask of members.

Understanding that participants appreciate the sharing of process, policy and practice — perhaps even more than the opportunity to share OSH performance indicators or benchmark themselves against quantitative data — are likely to be of value to potential scheme creators. As raised by some participants in the in-depth interviewees, collecting and sharing of data can present participants with problems around issues of confidentiality, interpretation and information management. If potential creators understand that the value of schemes is seen by participants as residing largely in the softer information-sharing processes, and even simply in the opportunity to build long-term, information-sharing, personal relationships with peers around a shared concern for safety, they may be encouraged to set up schemes sooner and without feeling the need to solve the data collection and sharing issues beforehand.

5 Issues to consider in supporting the development of benchmarking schemes

This chapter brings together various emergent messages from the review findings and highlights issues that any interested organisation should consider with respect to supporting the development of OSH benchmarking schemes in the EU and encouraging employer participation.

5.1 Basic aspects of setting up a scheme

5.1.1 Topic area and ‘vision’

Many different approaches are represented by the OSH schemes reviewed in this report and a number of industrial sectors are covered. In terms of remit, the schemes tend to cover a wide range of OSH issues; schemes with broad (e.g. Finnish ZAF) and narrow (e.g. PABIAC) sectoral bases can work well.

There was a tendency for psychosocial issues to be overlooked. This apparent oversight could possibly be remedied either by supporting the introduction of new, topic-specific schemes or by ‘bolting on’ a psychosocial aspect to existing schemes.

Other findings indicate that a radical slogan needs to be carefully considered: the wrong one can alienate potential members, particularly if it seems unrealistic in the context of their sector or market or the wider economic context. It was suggested that framing the attainment of potentially ambitious targets (such as zero OSH incidents) as a process can be helpful in encouraging employers to share their own ‘journeys’.

The need to have a ‘vision’ was stressed by some review participants: any benchmarking scheme needs to have a tangible outcome to justify involvement in the scheme. Scheme organisers should have a clear idea of ‘what success would look like’ to convey to potential members. This can inform the wording of pledges (see below), which some scheme organisers have also found beneficial.

5.1.2 Sponsors and leaders

Start-up funds should be secured to cover necessary staffing and material inputs and this means gaining the backing of sponsoring organisations with resources to invest. This means considering vested interests and how these might be viewed from the perspective of members.

- **‘Neutral brokers’**

It appears that a number of different types of organisation can successfully be involved in the running of benchmarking initiatives, including tripartite national bodies specialising in OSH, statutory (part-privatised) corporations, academic institutions, government ministries, insurance companies and charities with an OSH remit. The nature of the lead organisation is not a trivial concern, however. Repeatedly, case-study representatives emphasised the importance of a scheme being led by ‘a trusted neutral broker’ ideally lacking commercial self-interest in the process. When this is the case potential members are more likely to buy in to the scheme with confidence. Organisations viewed as neutral parties tended to be those which were including public (or semi-public) institutes with a tripartite remit.

- **Insurance companies**

Insurance companies are a special case as their involvement in a scheme presents the possibility of incentivising members by reduced premiums. Another advantage to working with this sector is the potential to utilise any datasets they make available which (for example) quantify incidents resulting in claims and in doing so identify emerging OSH issues and help drive the initiative.

Another special case is the ‘stick’ rather than ‘carrot’ approach to fostering good practice that can result when an enforcing body (such as the United Kingdom’s HSE) leads the scheme. This review indicates that in some circumstances a legislative threat can compel members in the same industry to act in a

more collaborative manner, encouraging benchmarking in the process. There is also a suggestion that, in the long term, this can lead to improved self-regulation.

- **Enforcers/regulators**

A disadvantage of enforcers having a high-profile role is that aspirational improvers might be discouraged from submitting data, particularly if there is a concern that published data are attributable. Likewise, concerns about how the data might be used can arise (e.g. to inform inspection strategies).

Finally, arrangements made at the beginning need not be permanent for the scheme to be sustained in the long term; for example, there may be agreement that the particular body and/or the funding they provide will be withdrawn after a particular period.

5.1.3 Membership

- **Recruitment of members**

At the set-up stage, the identification of members by name is critical and a 'black book' of existing contacts can be a good place to start. Potentially 'interested parties' should be approached before the launch of the scheme and afterwards (spaced at appropriate intervals) as the scheme becomes more established.

Participants emphasised the need to be realistic; depending on their nature, most schemes can aim to recruit only companies strongly committed to OSH prevention. Levels of success at recruiting members varied considerably among review participants; it appears that the tendency of companies to prioritise OSH can vary according to sector and geographical region.

- **Employer size and type**

Most the reviewed schemes did not have restrictive entry criteria and, as noted, schemes with broad as well as narrow sectoral bases can work well.

Some review participants noted that smaller organisations can lack the time and resource needed to contribute information or attend events. They can also be disproportionately affected by staff turnover.

- **Use of OSH performance criteria**

This is a key consideration: some scheme representatives saw no valid reason to exclude businesses from the schemes on the basis of OSH performance, while others took the opposite view. Some schemes have deliberately targeted good OSH performers and proceeded with a 'positive selection' process. A potential advantage to this is that those companies (i) may show more inclination to provide data and (ii) are likely to provide data of the type that is useful for benchmarking, i.e. data set a high standard in practice for others to follow.

On the other hand, recruitment of 'aspirational underperformers' is seen as important if the scheme is to make a real difference. A mixture of performers at different levels maximises the opportunities for peer learning and support.

Ultimately, for an information-sharing scheme to be successful, participants need to share a common goal and be willing to actively contribute to the development of competitors' business strategies.

- **Fees and incentives**

Free-to-end-user initiatives are inevitably more appealing to potential members, and this appears to be important to the success of the scheme reviewed here, particularly where 'in kind' support is required to set up events or prepare materials for circulation.

As detailed above, where insurance companies are involved there is scope for offering financial incentives for joining; for example, discounts can be offered to companies who implement particular OSH management measures. Participants in this review emphasised the importance of not putting smaller companies at a disadvantage in this respect. Among interview participants, there was a view

that non-motivated companies which are unable to benefit from incentives are likely to disengage with the scheme over the long term. Our findings suggest that focusing incentives on processes rather than outcomes can help ensure that poorer performing members stay engaged, particularly if they have to make an insurance claim during the course of their membership.

- **Unit of membership**

This is a complex issue and involves deciding whether membership from individual plants/sites should be encouraged (i.e. as well as whole companies). In general, it appears to work well when membership occurs at the plant/business unit level, especially for schemes with a varied membership profile including large multinationals and SMEs from many sectors.

For some employers encompassing a large number of administrative divisions, scheme membership can provide a conduit for improved communication across the organisation, facilitating the sharing of good practice 'in house'.

- **Size of membership**

The OSH schemes covered by this review were not prescriptive with respect to membership, but it appears that large numbers are usually advantageous. Some of our findings suggest a 'critical mass' of membership is needed for activities to be seen as valuable by potential participants.

5.1.4 Maintaining momentum

- **Administration**

Key partners should be assembled early so they can steer the scheme through the set-up process and into the longer term. It can be an advantage when collaborative partners have a history of working together.

- **Pledges**

The use of pledges signed by senior staff can facilitate continued engagement of companies. Those based around a 'zero' accident slogan, for example, provide a clear statement of intent. A radical message has the potential to raise the profile of the campaign, propel the dissemination strategy and sway senior management.

A radical slogan needs to be carefully thought through, however; the wrong one can alienate potential members, particularly if seems unrealistic in the context of their sector or market or the wider economic context. Framing the attainment of potentially ambitious targets (such as zero OSH incidents) as a process can be helpful in encouraging employers to share their own 'journeys'.

There was also a view that in-project learning could be a stated explicit aim of the scheme and that this too could encourage sustained participation.

5.1.5 Benefits of benchmarking

The benefits to employers of active participation can be wide ranging. As well as OSH expertise of those directly involved (usually OSH professionals), membership can benefit within-company safety and health culture and leadership culture. Where learning is disseminated within companies there can be positive knock-on effects on the quality of internal communications and breadth of learning opportunities.

Another function a scheme can serve is to empower OSH professionals to lever influence within their employing organisation. Armed with information about other organisations, OSH professionals can readily demonstrate to superiors that a particular issue is seen as relevant by competitors and therefore merits attention.

5.1.6 Information-sharing requirements and the benchmarking process

Regarding the type of OSH information shared, there was a broadly held view that practical examples of good practice are of greatest benefit to members, although some schemes collect (or are considering the collection of) quantitative data.

▪ Qualitative data

Among the schemes reviewed, illustrative examples of good practice predominate as the main form of benchmarking data. This type of information is user friendly in the sense that it does not require the application of complex measurement or analytical processes on the part of the contributor or user. In addition, relative to numerical data, there is arguably greater potential for transferability across businesses of different sizes and types.

There are several applications of this type of information. Documented practical examples can potentially be used to publish good practice guidance which can be disseminated among members (a distinction was made between good practice and best practice; the latter is viewed potentially too prescriptive when there is a diverse employer membership).

Some schemes encourage or require members to share details of incidents and near-misses. This can lead other companies to take action to prevent further, similar, incidents in other companies. Openness about incidents can also encourage other members to capture and code their own incident data more effectively.

It should be noted that benchmarking activities that involve recording of OSH incidents can be problematic, as this may require an incident description by a company solicitor. For example, a United Kingdom CPI representative reported that lawyers are increasingly insistent that embargoes should be placed on details of incidents which could implicate them in civil or criminal cases. The extent to which this applies in other sectors or in other Member States is unclear, but it is obviously important to be aware that requests for sensitive information could put members in a difficult position and potentially disengage members from a scheme.

▪ Quantitative data

Schemes with a quantitative data-collection element require outcome data on OSH performance (e.g. accident rates) and utilisation of OSH management systems (e.g. number and frequency of processes undertaken).

The appeal of quantitative data is arguably that it provides 'harder' evidence of success than evidence of an anecdotal nature (e.g. good practice examples). However, there are frequent comparability issues because of the range of different measures used by different organisations and transferability issues owing to operational context. In addition, quantitative data can be resource intensive to collect from members (unless it is routinely published by companies) and difficult to analyse and interpret. Scores may need to be weighted if small and larger employers are to be compared fairly, and this may require specialist knowledge. Formalised benchmarking processes which measure progress against annual performance targets appear to be vulnerable to failure and some schemes have been forced to drop attempts to implement this.

Cost-benefit calculations in particular (with respect to the pay-offs for companies investing in OSH) can be prohibitively complex. Organisers of a scheme which sought to identify the economic benefits of preventative OSH strategies found that many companies possessed neither the data necessary to make these calculations nor the analytics resources to do so. On another scheme, problems were experienced when members were asked to determine injuries of both 'high frequency, low severity' and 'low frequency, high severity' injuries, from ill-health data: those issues required a level of expertise on the part of those submitting the data that was not always available, potentially negating the reliability of the data collected.

Finally, collecting data at company level can obscure important differences across sites and locations. Participant reports suggest that, for large employers, it is advisable to collect data at the business unit/plant level, particularly where there are multiple subsidiaries and capital links. In those cases, it can

be difficult to pin down workplace prevention at the company level. For a multinational, a unit of analysis needs to be found that consistently makes sense across multiple business cultures and infrastructures.

5.1.7 Context and format of information-sharing activities

There was a widely held view among research participants that involving members in ‘personal contact within real-world environments’ is a crucial success factor. Nevertheless, online forms of communication play an important role, especially when bearing in mind the travel and timetable constraints on busy OSH professionals.

▪ Online communication

Newsletters and other online resources can provide an efficient means of updating members and sharing information. Among the scheme initiatives reviewed, successful initiatives include website repositories, which allow companies to share good practice guidance documents electronically, and online discussion forums, which enable members to consult with each other about OSH issues they encounter (although the latter are useful only when they are busy over a sustained period; ‘prolonged silences’ can mean that electronic forums lose momentum quickly). In addition, topic-specific resource packages can be produced, which may appeal to particular sub-groups of members, for example the ‘traffic-light’ toolkits produced by the Dutch Zero Accidents Network.

▪ Face to face

Seminars and meetings also provide valuable face-to-face contact for members and allow attendance of a large number of individuals. They can also offer a potentially neutral setting. For schemes with a large membership, annual events attended by several hundred members can be effective. Interactive and small-group sessions can also work well, although ‘lecture-style’ sessions are advised against. Events organised thematically can work well to raise the profile of important and emergent OSH issues for members. Other examples of networking activities and information-sharing include informal dining sessions.

On-site demonstrations of good practice are viewed as particularly helpful benchmarking activities, for example those organised as part of the ZAF or EU-OSHA schemes. Host organisations see these as beneficial in terms of the opportunity to receive industry feedback, while visiting representatives are able to see good practice *in situ*. Events organised by members can encourage a sense of ownership and help reduce a sense of dependence on the founding organisation(s) to move the scheme forward. They can also be effective in persuading attendees of the importance and applicability of other companies’ policies and processes to their organisations. An approach that worked well in one example was a ‘critical friend’ approach: a group of OSH managers were encouraged to scrutinise a member organisation’s site and make recommendations during a subsequent debriefing session.

Getting the venue right for an event can be key to its success. In some circumstances (e.g. if serious OSH incidents are to be discussed) it may be advisable to host events in a non-competitive, ‘safe’ environment to allow individuals to discuss contentious and sensitive issues. Environments not perceived as neutral, such as those where lobbyists or journalists may be present, can fail to secure the collaborative mindset needed to promote benchmarking.

5.1.8 Maintaining momentum of schemes

▪ Management and administration

A core committee regularly convened to discuss the development and performance of the scheme and identify any new and emerging issues.

Events should be planned well in advance: circulating invitations early and through multiple channels helps ensure good attendance. Scheduling activities at regular intervals can set a purposeful ‘rhythm’ which helps maintain momentum.

- **Securing commitment from the top**

It was seen as an advantage for company managers to proactively engage in the scheme as far as possible. OSH prevention specialists can be easier to engage than board members, but often they are not in a position to implement large-scale changes to OSH practice. Some schemes have had success in securing sign-up to a 'pledge' at director or CEO level. The pledge needs to clearly sum up the scheme's 'vision' and benefits and describe the actions that are required as a condition of membership.

One view was that pledges are a very good mechanism to raise awareness of the scheme, but might not guarantee subsequent action. In practice, time demands on senior roles may lead them to delegate day-to-day responsibilities to OSH specialists. In addition, the requirement to sign a pledge can be problematic for some individuals, so it may not always be desirable to make this a compulsory requirement of participation.

- **Disseminating benchmarking data**

Benchmarking data have the power to influence only if they are seen, so dissemination to members and potentially outside the membership is critical. The production of tailored feedback reports can provide an incentive for participation; this could be undertaken at company or national level. In one case study the sponsoring institution benefited from the information and used it for the purpose of targeting employers for future engagement. Clearly, permission should be sought for any dissemination exercise which results in publication outside the scheme membership audience.

- **Celebrating success**

There was a consensus that achievements (such as the large fall in accident rates among ZAF members relative to national accident figures) — where determinable — should be publicised. It presents an opportunity for member organisations to be explicitly associated with a good news story. Where 'hard' quantitative data are available, league tables can be published; the prestige of finding oneself on 'Page 1' of the produced league tables motivates CEOs to improve their company's performance, fostering OSH leadership from the top of the organisation in the process.

Other benefits should also be captured where possible such as reputational gains and tangible changes in safety culture should also be noted and published where appropriate to promote membership and reward progress. Awards schemes can incentivise those members to continue their membership as well as reward and promote good practice. They also create a (photo) opportunity for promoting the schemes throughout the business world and among a company's employees, clients and shareholders. Participants stressed the need for fair data collection and comparison processes to be applied in these circumstances.

5.1.9 Ensuring sustainability

Where schemes have been government led, a move to self-financing status can help ensure a sustainable forum resilient to political change. It may be possible for members to contribute a small fee: graded by company size. Discounted fees could be applied where multiple units of the same company are members.

Change can be difficult to initiate. A finding of this review was that founding organisers of a scheme can find it hard to delegate and hand over their leading role and employers can be reluctant to commit their own resources.

It may not always be appropriate to introduce membership fees to sustain the project, especially when substantial contributions have been made in kind by some members. Among research participants there was a view that if those same members are then expected to pay again this could lead to the most engaged employers dropping out of the scheme.

There may be advantages to narrowing or widening a scheme's scope as it gathers momentum or changes may be seen as necessary if sign-up is low. For example, a change to the wording of pledge or a project's overall vision may be necessary if in practice it demands too much — or too little — of those who sign up. In some cases, the 'goalposts' might need to change as a result of a scheme's success.

Annex A: Practical guide to setting up a successful OSH benchmarking network

This section applied the main findings in the Chapter 4 and translates them into practical messages intended to be of use to individuals considering starting up a benchmarking scheme or improving an existing one.

A.1 First steps

A. 1.1 Set-up

- At a basic level, topic area needs to be decided. Interest should be gauged through existing networks at low cost and relatively informally. Non-physical risk areas such as psychosocial health, which may be ‘off the radar’ in some sectors, should be considered.
- Ideally, a core steering group should be charged with developing and promoting the project. These members should be invited to a kick-off meeting to plan the development of the project.
- Some companies with the intent of strengthening OSH processes may already be known and appropriate representatives of these could be recruited to the group as founding members.
- The central point of contact for the scheme is of high importance. Ideally, this should be a trusted ‘neutral broker’, lacking a commercial self-interest, who allows companies to buy in to the scheme with confidence.
- Lead and/or sponsoring organisations can include:
 - tripartite national bodies specialising in OSH
 - statutory (part privatised) corporations
 - academic institutions
 - government ministries
 - insurance companies
 - charities with an OSH remit.
- Start-up funds should be secured to cover necessary staffing and material inputs. Possible funding opportunities are likely to vary according to topic area, sector of focus, geographical area and nature of the lead organisation.
- Sponsorship by insurance companies offers the possibility of incentivising members by reduced premiums. Another advantage to the scheme could be presented by the rich data held by these companies which can be utilised to quantify incidents resulting in claims and in doing so identify emerging OSH issues.
- The involvement of high-profile charities can be advantageous in terms of the contacts they have access to, the dissemination strategies they can deploy and their reputation among potential members.
- A ‘stick’ rather than ‘carrot’ approach to fostering good practice can result when an enforcing body leads a scheme. In these circumstances, ‘aspirational improvers’ might be discouraged from submitting data if they worried about attributable poor scores. Likewise, concerns about how the data might be used — for example, to inform inspection strategies — may arise.

A. 1.2 Explore feasibility of free membership and/or incentives

- Free-to-end-user initiatives are clearly more appealing to potential members. This should be a prime consideration when setting up a scheme.
- Where insurance companies are involved, the scope for offering financial incentives can be explored, for example discounts can be offered to companies which implement an appropriate number of OSH prevention measures. This should be done on a fair basis so as not to

disadvantage smaller companies. Please find more information in the EU-OSHA report on 'economic incentives to improve occupational safety and health' (2010) ⁽³⁶⁾

A. 1.3 Have a 'vision of success'

- Any benchmarking scheme needs to have a tangible output which justifies involvement in the scheme. Scheme organisers need to have an idea of what success would look like to convey to potential members.
- If this is clear it will help engage companies. Those based around a 'zero' accident slogan, for example, provide a clear statement of intent. A radical message has the potential to raise the profile of the campaign, propel the dissemination strategy and sway management.
- A radical slogan needs to be carefully thought through; the wrong one can alienate potential members, particularly if it seems unrealistic in the context of their sector or market or the wider economic context.
- Framing the attainment of potentially ambitious targets (such as zero OSH incidents) as a process can be helpful in encouraging employers to share their own 'journeys'.
- In-project learning could be a stated explicit aim if this is viewed as important.

A. 1.4 Decide on the nature of membership

- **Sector**
 - On the basis of schemes reviewed there appears to be no valid reason to exclude on the basis of size or OSH performance. However, smaller organisations can lack the time and resource needed to contribute information or attend events. They can also be disproportionately affected by staff turnover.
 - Schemes with broad (e.g. Finnish ZAF) and narrow (e.g. PABIAC) sectoral bases can both work well.
- **Unit of membership**
 - A decision needs to be taken as to whether membership from individual plants/sites should be encouraged (as opposed to whole companies). For some employers encompassing a large number of administrative divisions, there may be potential for the scheme to provide a conduit for improved communication across the organisation, maximising the impact of the sharing of good practice.
 - In general, it appears that schemes with a varied membership profile, including large multinationals and SMEs from many sectors, work well when membership occurs at the plant/business unit level.
- **Identify members**
 - In targeting OSH professionals the authority/seniority of these is a key consideration as, ideally, they need to be able to implement change within their organisations or influence those who can.
 - Prior identification of members by name is desirable and a 'black book' of existing contacts can be a good place to start. It is important to be realistic: most schemes can aim to recruit only companies strongly committed to OSH prevention. Bear in mind that the tendency of companies to prioritise OSH could vary according to sector and geographical region.
 - Aim for a large membership. The reviewed evidence suggests a 'critical mass' of membership is needed for activities to be seen as valuable by potential participants.
- **Criteria for membership**
 - Consider where a 'positive selection' process is desirable, i.e. deliberate targeting of good OSH performers who may
 - show more inclination to provide data; and

³⁶ https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/economic_incentives_TE3109255ENC

- be more likely to provide data of the type that is useful for benchmarking, i.e. data sets a high standard in practice for others to follow.
- Recruitment of ‘aspirational underperformers’ is seen as important if the scheme is to make a real difference. A mixture of performers at different levels maximises the opportunities for peer learning and support.
- Ultimately, for an information-sharing scheme to be successful, participants need to share a common goal and be willing to actively contribute to the development of competitors’ business strategies.

A. 1.5 Attract a membership audience

- Potentially interested parties should be approached before the launch of the scheme and afterwards as the scheme gains momentum.
- The benefits of schemes can be wide ranging and it is important to ‘sell’ all of these to would-be participants. As well as potential improvements to safety management processes and reductions in accident rates members should be encouraged to think about the advantages participation can offer to (for example):
 - company safety culture;
 - OSH leadership culture;
 - internal communications and learning opportunities;
 - networking and strengthening relationships.
- Another function a scheme can serve is to empower OSH professionals to lever influence within their employing organisation, i.e. convince senior managers to make improvements on the basis of what is known about competitor practices.

A. 1.6 Decide on the nature of information required

- Focusing on features likely to be of most value to members is likely to lead to greater participation and success, although this should not preclude collection of data that scheme organisers believe will be of benefit, especially if it is key to tracking progress.
- On the whole, benchmarking participants prefer a focus on processes rather than outcomes. Practical examples of best practice are highly valued by members (note that submission of these does not require the application of complex measurement or analytical processes on the part of member organisations).
- Compared with numerical data, there is arguably greater potential for transferability of best practice examples across businesses of different sizes and types. They can potentially be used to publish guidance which can be disseminated among members.
- Use of the phrases ‘good practice’ or ‘best practice’ should be considered carefully: the latter can be seen as too prescriptive, especially if a scheme has a very varied membership.
- Decide on method of comparison: when comparing quantitative data, scores may need to be weighted if small and larger employers are to be compared fairly, and this may require specialist knowledge.
- Reporting accidents can be a sensitive issue and some members may be advised against sharing information about these: anonymous reporting could provide a means of addressing this.
- Collecting data at company level can obscure important differences across sites and locations. For large employers it is advisable to collect data at business unit/plant level.
- Where schemes involve collection of large amounts of empirical data they can come to resemble research projects and may be extremely resource intensive: methodologies such as face-to-face interviews or on-site audits of OSH processes should be approached with caution.

A.2 Ongoing management of the scheme

A. 2.1 Create opportunities for networking and discussion

- Face-to-face personal contact within real-world environments can be key to a scheme's success. Seminars and meetings provide valuable face-to-face contact for members and allow attendance of a large number of individuals in a neutral setting.
- Interactive and small-group sessions can also work well, although 'lecture-style' sessions are advised against. For schemes with a large membership, annual events attended by several hundred members can be effective.
- Events organised thematically can work well to raise the profile of important and emergent OSH issues for members.
- Getting the venue right can be key to success. Hosting events in non-competitive 'safe' environments allows individuals to discuss contentious and sensitive issues.
- On-site demonstrations of good practice are viewed as particularly helpful benchmarking activities. Events organised by members can encourage a sense of ownership and help reduce a sense of dependence on the founding organisation(s) to move the scheme forward.

A. 2.2 Be aware of time/resource limitations of members

- If there are too many bureaucratic hurdles, individuals can be put off participating in benchmarking. This applies to questionnaires and other paperwork. It also applies to requests to compute complex analytics.
- Cost-benefit calculations are particularly complex. It should not be assumed that companies possess the data necessary to make these calculations or the analytics resources to do so.
- Member organisations need to see a return on investment from the resource requirements of participation, otherwise they will disengage.

A. 2.3 Be clear about how data will be used

- When companies share health and safety data or descriptions of OSH systems, this can involve disclosure of information that is potentially sensitive for legal and/or commercial reasons. Bear in mind:
 - poor OSH performers may feel exposed to the scrutiny of, for example, insurers or enforcement bodies;
 - better performers may not wish to share information about processes that may give them a competitive edge, but normally in the field of OSH companies are ready to share good practice information because this is not felt as an area of competition.
- Clarity is needed regarding use of data, whether it will be anonymised, and the extent to which it will be shared with other members or made public. Testing member views may help guide decisions about this.

A. 2.4 Consider multiple methods of dissemination

- Benchmarking data have the power to influence only if they are seen, so dissemination to members and potentially outside the membership is critical.
- Newsletters and other online resources can provide efficient means of sharing and updating information.
- The production of tailored feedback reports can provide an incentive for participation; this could be undertaken at company or national level.
- Topic-specific resource packages can be produced, which may appeal to particular sub-groups of members.
- Online discussion forums, if well used, can stimulate change. Discussions about benchmarking data can be as important as the data itself.
- Other potential online products that can be useful include website repositories which enable the sharing of good practice guidance documents electronically.

A. 2.5 Maintain momentum

- A core committee should regularly convene to discuss the development and performance of the scheme and any emerging issues that require a change in strategy.
- Procedures should be agreed for refreshing the core team with new members on a rolling basis to address potential fatigue and disengagement from long-time members and also help ensure the sustainability of the scheme.
- Participant events should be planned well in advance; circulating invitations early through multiple channels helps ensure good attendance. Scheduling activities at regular intervals sets a purposeful 'rhythm', which helps maintain momentum.

A. 2.6 Secure commitment from the top

- Company directors and CEOs should be proactively engaged in the scheme where possible.
- Encouraging organisations to make 'pledges' can be effective in securing commitment from organisational leaders, especially if this requires the CEO to sign up. The pledge needs to sum up the scheme 'vision' and its benefits clearly and describe the actions that are required as a condition of membership.
- Bear in mind that pledges are not guarantees of subsequent action.

A. 2.7 Publicise achievements

- Awards schemes can incentivise members to continue their membership as well as reward and promote good practice. They also create a (photo) opportunity for promoting the schemes across the businesses world and among a company's employees, clients and shareholders.
- Because of the need to link awarding to OSH processes and outcomes, it is important to ensure that fair data collection and comparison processes are applied.
- Achievements (such as reductions in accident rates among members) — where determinable — should be publicised. A headline presents an opportunity for member organisations (or an entire sector) to be explicitly associated with a good news story.
- Where 'hard' quantitative data are available, league tables can be published; this has potential to capture the attention of CEOs and consolidate engagement from the top of organisations.

A. 3 Sustainability and forward planning

A. 3.1 Look to the future and be adaptable

- Maintain a flexible approach; it is important to be reactive to changing circumstances.
- OSH issues of concern to members should be monitored so that schemes can be re-orientated on new priorities as they emerge.
- There may be advantages to narrowing or widening a scheme's scope. A change in focus can be useful when a scheme has been successful in a particular area (i.e. goals have been reached).
- A change to the wording of the organisational pledge may be necessary if in practice it demands too much — or too little — of those who sign up.
- Arrangements for running the scheme need not be permanent; for example, there may be agreement that a particular body and/or the funding it provides will be withdrawn after a particular period.
- Be mindful that original organisers of a scheme can find it hard to delegate and hand over their leading role; employers can also be reluctant to commit their own resources.

A. 3.2 Consider potential for the initiative to become self-financing

- Where schemes have been government led, a move to self-financing status can help ensure a sustainable forum resilient to political change.

- It may be possible for members to contribute a small fee, graded by company size. Discounted fees could be applied where multiple units of the same company are members.
- Bear in mind that organisations that contribute significant work 'in kind' may disengage if asked for an additional financial contribution.

A. 3.3 Be aware of the potential for spin-off and wider networking opportunities

- There may be potential to link the scheme with larger campaigns or international networks.
- Scheme leaders should be open to the possibility of sharing their experiences and lessons learned with peers striving to achieve similar aims in different sectors and geographical locations.
- Some factors can limit transferability, however, such as the wider national and political environment:
 - traditional worker–manager relationships and the influence of trade unions may vary from one national context to another and affect on the effectiveness of various approaches to benchmarking;
 - there is a possibility that OSH information may be seen as too sensitive to share in some industrial contexts and cultures;
 - a common language does not always facilitate transferability.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) contributes to making Europe a safer, healthier and more productive place to work. The Agency researches, develops, and distributes reliable, balanced, and impartial safety and health information and organises pan-European awareness raising campaigns. Set up by the European Union in 1994 and based in Bilbao, Spain, the Agency brings together representatives from the European Commission, Member State governments, employers' and workers' organisations, as well as leading experts in each of the EU Member States and beyond.

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