

# Annual Report 2008

Summary

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

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European Agency  
for Safety and Health  
at Work

# Key Activities in 2008

The role of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) is to help protect workers in Europe, by collecting, analysing and disseminating information on safety and health at work, and by promoting a culture of prevention of accidents and ill health.

In 2008 this involved activities in a number of key areas, as the Agency sought to emphasise the fact that, in a time of global economic difficulties, organisations cannot afford to downplay the importance of occupational safety and health (OSH).

The Agency's work in 2008 was shaped by the [Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work, 2007-2012](#), which aims to cut work-related accidents and illnesses across the EU, and which underlines the importance of the Agency's role.

In 2008 the Agency's Governing Board also adopted a new five-year [Agency Strategy 2009-2013](#), which includes a new multi-annual Work Programme, tied closely to the Agency's long-term aims and values.

## COLLECTING AND ANALYSING INFORMATION

Among its activities in collecting and analysing information on OSH, the Agency, through its European Risk Observatory (ERO), carried out a feasibility study of different methodologies for anticipating the future OSH risks that may come from new technologies and new ways of working. The Agency's *Foresight project* will involve looking towards a ten-year time horizon, and helping policy-makers take action now to keep European workers safe.

The Agency finalised its [Expert forecast on emerging chemical risks](#), which is the last in a series of high profile reports that bring together the latest information in fast-changing areas related to OSH, and identify subjects on which researchers and policy-makers need to focus their attention. The report on emerging chemical risks identifies groups of substances, including carcinogens and sensitising and allergenic chemicals, which are of particular concern because of their effect on workers' health.

Other ERO publications summarised the state of knowledge regarding [occupational skin exposure and work-related skin diseases](#); [exposure to vibration](#) and the health effects that it can lead to; and [nanoparticles](#) and their possible impacts on health and safety in the workplace.

The *OSH in figures* project continued to provide an evidence base for the prevention of workplace accidents and diseases, by comparing statistical evidence from different sources and European countries. In 2008 the project focused on waste management and respiratory diseases.

A new [Expert forecast on emerging psychosocial risks](#) showed how increasing numbers of European workers are affected by stress and other psychosocial risks. A seminar was organised on psychosocial risks and their implications, and statistics related to stress were collected in the report *OSH in figures: Stress*.

The [European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks \(ESENER\)](#) was launched in 2008. This project will involve gathering information from health and safety representatives and managers on the way that risk management is currently carried out in the workplace, focusing particularly on psychosocial risks.

A *Memorandum of Common Understanding* was endorsed as part of the [NEW OSH ERA project](#), which helps to co-ordinate European research on new and emerging risks. The *Memorandum* sets out the subjects that will be a priority for joint research activities between different countries in Europe.

In the area of *Working Environment Information*, which promotes Member State co-operation on information collection and research, the Agency prepared three major reports to support the *Healthy Workplaces campaign* for 2008-2009 on risk assessment, and organised *Good Practice Awards*, which recognise companies and other organisations that have made outstanding contributions in promoting risk assessment in the workplace.

A new report, [Protecting workers in hotels, restaurants and catering \(HORECA\)](#), gives an overview of the sector, some of the risks that are prevalent in it, and ways that workers can be protected.

The Agency also prepared information on health and safety risks in the road transport sector.

Work was carried out on a forthcoming report on economic incentives, which will provide an up-to-date view of the various enticements that countries in Europe offer to encourage good OSH performance, while a literature review on *OSH and economic performance in small and medium-sized enterprises* examines the link between economic benefits and good working conditions.

The Agency was involved in planning the *Occupational Health Promotion project*, which will collect and disseminate information that can help develop occupational health promotion campaigns.

Practical information was developed on the safety and health problems that affect [cleaning workers](#), as well as case studies of ways to integrate or *mainstream* occupational safety and health into education.

Following its 2007 campaign on musculoskeletal disorders, [Lighten the Load](#), the Agency published its [Prevention report on MSDs](#), giving advice on how to tackle MSDs in the workplace.

Preparatory work and information-gathering was carried out on the subject of the maintenance of buildings and equipment in the workplace, which will be the subject of the Agency's Europe-wide *Healthy Workplaces campaign* in 2010-2011.

A contract was signed in 2008 for a new, single Topic Centre, which is a consortium of major OSH institutions across the EU. The Topic Centre will be the major provider of OSH expert information to the Agency. The contract is renewable for up to four years.

## COMMUNICATION, CAMPAIGNING AND PROMOTION

In terms of its activities to communicate and disseminate information on OSH, the Agency worked to promote the [Healthy Workplaces](#)

[campaign on risk assessment](#). Thorough assessment of risk is the cornerstone of health and safety management. So far the campaign has involved more than 7,000 participants in seminars, training events and workshops, with some 2 million print publications being distributed.

The campaign is the first to be based on a new two-year model, giving more time for preparation and follow-up, especially in promoting good practice, and to develop the networks and partnerships that are central to its success. By the end of 2008, 17 organisations had signed up as [official campaign partners](#).

The *European Week for Safety and Health at Work* was held from 20-24 October 2008, during which hundreds of campaign events and activities took place all over Europe.

For the campaign a new, more flexible support model was introduced for the focal points, which are usually the national OSH bodies in the different European countries. The *European Campaign Assistance Package* (ECAP) is based on the supply of services through the Agency's contractors.

The 2007 [Lighten the Load campaign's Closing Event](#) took place on 26 February 2008, and included the [European Good Practice Awards](#), which are given to organisations that have made outstanding contributions to tackling MSDs.

The Agency publicised its work through Google AdWords, and promoted its new reports on psychosocial risks and the HORECA sector via localised news releases.

An [external evaluation of the Agency's past campaigns](#) and initiatives was carried out in 2008.

New tools and Single Entry Points were added to the [Agency website](#), and a website was launched for [Napo](#), the popular cartoon character. A user panel was set up to monitor the effectiveness of the Agency's website.

The Agency also continued with its programme of publishing, bringing OSH information to a wide range of audiences.

## DEVELOPING THE NETWORK

The Agency continued to develop its networks at EU level, with the Brussels Liaison Office co-ordinating its work with the European Commission, European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and others.

The Agency continued to be involved in programmes which prepare countries potentially to join the EU, by harmonising their health and safety activities with those of the existing Member States.

In 2008, the Agency continued its work to strengthen collaboration with its international partners – especially the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) – to exchange experience and examples of good practice, and to find synergies in campaigning and awareness-raising activities.

## OUTLOOK FOR 2009

Areas of particular focus for 2009 will include implementing the Agency's methodology for

forecasting new and emerging risks (probably looking first at energy and the environment), collecting data on the risks faced by women at work as part of the 'OSH in Figures' project, presenting the first results of the [ESENER Survey](#), developing reports on OSH risks in the transport sector, and research on public and private procurement and its role in providing economic incentives for good OSH.

In addition, campaigning activities in 2009 will include the second year of the [Healthy Workplaces campaign](#) on risk assessment, with the presentation of [Good Practice Awards](#), campaign reports and online risk assessment tools being made available, and the campaign's closing event in November. At the same time, preparations will be made for the Agency's next Healthy Workplace campaign, which will focus on Safe Maintenance in 2010-2011. Campaign partnerships will be again set up, and campaign material (including the campaign website) will be prepared in 22 languages.

An external evaluation will be carried out of the new campaign model and of the new ECAP funding package.