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## Call Announcement

NEW OSH ERA joint call for research proposals on psychosocial risks at work

### NEW OSH ERA launched its first joint call

Read more on [www.newoshera.eu](http://www.newoshera.eu)

### Preparing the NEW OSH ERA call: Defining the thematic content



*Katalin Sas, FIOH/EU-OSHA*

As a result of a strategic consultation process, the NEW OSH ERA Partners agreed on the thematic priorities for joint activities. One of those priorities is

- Psychosocial risks associated with organisational changes and new working and employment patterns (e.g. impact of precarious work), illnesses associated with psychological stress

The NEW OSH ERA Partners were requested to rank the agreed research priorities in a preliminary declaration of interest and this topic attracted the greatest interest. Consequently, the NEW OSH ERA Partners agreed that this

will represent the theme of the first NEW OSH ERA call for proposals for research projects. In order to further delineate this broad topic and develop the scientific content for the call, the NEW OSH ERA Consortium organised a seminar involving the research community, namely experts on work related stress to discuss the research themes for the call. The seminar was held on January 21-22 in Athens and it was attended by experts from NEW OSH ERA partner countries. The experts were requested to give a recommendation for research themes (3-4) to be included in the call, including a description and the rationale for each of the themes. The proposals for research themes prepared by the experts in advance – a total of 23 proposals – provided the basis for the discussions in the seminar.

The seminar started with a short presentation of the proposed research themes, followed by a discussion, after which the experts grouped the themes into thematic clusters. The clusters were discussed and further elaborated, and as a result the experts agreed on the following four research themes:

- Theme I: Leadership and company culture in relation to workers' psychological well being/health

- Theme II: Restructuring and changes in the world of work in relation to workers' psychological wellbeing/ health
- Theme III: Work-related psychosocial factors and health disorders
- Theme IV: Effects of stress and psychosocial factors on injuries and accidents

The NEW OSH ERA Call Steering Committee will take the final decision on the thematic content of the call based on the recommendation prepared by the experts. The call is planned to be launched in May 2009.

The participants at the seminar also heard the preliminary results of a pilot study carried out by Dr. Raija Kalimo. The aim of the pilot study was to map the state of the art of research into psychosocial factors at work in Finland with regard to the content, approaches and actors. A proposal was made that similar surveys should be organised in other NEW OSH ERA Partner countries.

## Extension of NEW OSH ERA Consortium – New Partners

### TNO Work and Employment and the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment



Paulien Bongers, TNO

TNO Work and Employment, is part of TNO Quality of Life which is one of the five core areas of TNO. Together with the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, we have become a full member of New OSH ERA in 2008. TNO manages two programs on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment concerning the field of interest covered by NEW OSH ERA.

1. Innovation of Work and Employment (budget 5.5 million Euro per year)
2. Dangerous substances and safety at work (budget 4.0 million Euro per year)

Innovation of Work and Employment consists of three main themes:

1. *Trends and new issues*, with focus area's such as monitoring, risk groups, risk factors, exploring new causal relations and exploring migration trends;
2. *Retention and enhancement of employment and employability* with focus area's such as: return to work of sickness benefit-receiving and handicapped employees, activation and qualification of people without a job or with low education, flex security issues, healthy aging at work with focus on productivity issues and evidence of HR policy and instruments, harmonization of health care chains from prevention and occupational care to cure and rehabilitation;
3. *Healthy workers and a healthy workplace* with focus area's such as: health management and health promotion at the company level, strategic business case of work related health care, mental health and musculoskeletal health, both with the focus on cost effectiveness; '
4. *Mainstreaming* with focus areas such as effective and new ways to disseminate information

Dangerous substances and safety at work consists of three main themes:

1. *Control of serious chemical and toxicological risks* with the main focus on elimination of the source, control of the chain and innovative solutions;
2. *Development of data-bases* with best practices for intervention and with exposure data for additional research;
3. *Development of innovative epidemiologic methods* to make optimal use of human experimental and field data for risk evaluation of substances;
4. *Development of research, methods and instruments that stimulate communication and optimal conduct in the chain* from producer to the end user. This also entails knowledge management and safety culture in order to prevent accidents and reduce risk;
5. *Innovative implementation methods* to prevent upcoming new and serious risks.

In the spring of this year, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment together with the Ministry of Health will launch a new four year programme (budget 12 million Euros) on the implementation and further development of effective interventions. This programme will consist of three parts 'Vitality and Productivity', Health and Safety and Participation and it will fund projects of research institutes



together with companies or government organizations (i.e. hospitals, police etc).

TNO is a large independent research organization, established by law with about 5,000 employees. The mission statement of TNO is: ***'To apply scientific knowledge with the aim of strengthening the innovative power of industry and government'***. The work of TNO concerns five core areas: **TNO Quality of Life**, TNO Defence, Security and Safety, TNO Science and Industry, TNO Built Environment and Geosciences, TNO Information and Communication Technology.



The mission statement of TNO Quality of Life is a specification of the TNO statement.

***'TNO Quality of Life wishes to help safeguard and improve human health and functioning, doing so through innovative applied research and consultancy services.'***

TNO Quality of Life focuses on three of the twelve central research themes that TNO as a whole is concentrating on: Healthy Living, Food, and Work Participation and Ageing. The mission of the business unit Work and Employment is closely linked to the Lisbon Strategy **"More people, productive, healthy and sustainable at work"**. We are with about 175 persons and have an annual turnover of 21 M €. About one third of the money comes from the Government and is spent in demand driven knowledge programs, the other two thirds of the budget is earned by external research funds and consultancy projects. Our Department on Work, Health and Safety focuses on risk prevention (physical load, psychosocial load, hazardous substances, safety climate and safety management), monitoring of (new ways of) work, evaluation of policy, the healthy company culture and in cost effective interventions.

## The DU-project on depression and exhaustion led by Marie Åsberg and Åke Nygren at Karolinska Institute in Sweden



Aila Määtä, AFA Insurance

The DU-project was initiated in response to the dramatic increase in long term sickness absence for psychiatric disorders which began in Sweden in 1997. "DU" is an acronym for the Swedish terms *Depression & Utmattning* (depression and exhaustion). The database of the AFA Insurance company (<sup>1</sup>), which records diagnostic information on cases of long term sick leave, suggested that increasing rates of depression accounted for most of the increase in sick leave.

In 2000, the AFA Insurance company decided to sponsor the DU research project, in order to elucidate what might lie behind the sick leave epidemic, at the individual and the societal level, and to suggest strategies for diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and prevention.

Rapid real life implementation of the findings was an important goal of the project, and much effort has thus been devoted to obtaining diagnostic guidelines, improved training, information and design of large scale treatment and prevention programmes in collaboration with different authorities.

### The pilot phase

The first step was to investigate what might lie behind the label "depression" used by doctors, most of them general practitioners, on the sickness certificates. A pilot study of 203 consecutive insurance cases found that most patients (82 per cent) had, at one time or another, fulfilled DSM criteria for major depression. The case histories and the clinical picture suggested, however, that the depression was atypical in most cases, and very often secondary to long term job stress. Symptoms of extreme tiredness and

<sup>(1)</sup> AFA Insurance is an organization owned by Sweden's labour market parties. We insure employees within the private sector, municipalities and county councils. Today more than three million people are covered by at least one of our insurances. More information at [www.afaforsakring.se](http://www.afaforsakring.se)



cognitive problems often persisted after the depressive symptoms had lifted and could, together with inadequate rehabilitation, explain why the duration was often prolonged.

Questionnaires sent to 4000 subjects sick-listed for affective disorders confirmed these observations, including the long duration and the poor outcome with regard to return to work. The research group has subsequently found support for an association between the increase in long-term sick leave and the personnel downsizing that took place in Sweden during the beginning of the 1990s, similar to that previously described in Finland.

### Diagnostic criteria

In 2002, the research group drew attention to the problem to the National Board of Health and Welfare, and the principal investigator of the DU project was appointed to lead an expert group which issued a report in 2003, suggesting diagnostic criteria for a stress-induced condition called Exhaustion disorder. In 2004, the Board accepted Exhaustion disorder as a formal diagnosis, with the ICD-10 code F43.8. The connection with the work psychology concept "burnout" was recognized, but it was emphasised that Exhaustion disorder was not exclusively related to job stress, but could also emerge after prolonged unrelieved stress of other origin.

### Assessment methods

The fairly typical clinical picture allowed the construction of a rating scale to permit the assessment of the severity of the syndrome. The Karolinska Exhaustion Scale, KES, is constructed on similar principles as the Montgomery Åsberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS) designed decades ago by the DU-project's PI. Like its predecessor, the KES exists in an interview based and a self assessment version. The association with job stress called for instruments for assessing the psychosocial work environment.

Departing from an extensive psychometric evaluation of the Nordic Questionnaire for Psychosocial Factors at Work (the QPSNordic), items predictive of subsequent psychiatric problems were included in a brief questionnaire that is currently being used in large scale interventions against stress and burnout. The research group has also examined different scales for assessing professional burnout, and finally selected the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) for further use after extensive validation.

### Group therapies

Once the diagnostic criteria and the rating scale were in place, it was possible to conduct studies of the effect of treatment intervention and attempts at prevention. Two types of group psychotherapy, based on cognitive and psychodynamic principles respectively, were developed, manuals written, and therapists were trained. A randomized controlled trial comparing the two treatments with treatment "as usual" showed good acceptance and relief of emotional symptoms with the therapies, but little difference between the two of them.

A further randomized comparison between group therapy with and without addition of coach-guided, work oriented rehabilitation is in its final stage. Training programs for simplified versions of the group therapies have been implemented in different parts of Sweden. The research group has also introduced and trained instructors in mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) techniques, which are being tested in an RCT.

### Prevention

The research group has developed a technique of using reflecting peer groups for the prevention of burnout and exhaustion in health care workers, which has been successfully tested in an RCT and is currently used in implementation projects in several regions in Sweden. The possible effect of leadership development on professional burnout in health care employees is currently being tested in an RCT. MBSR has been included in the curriculum for medical students and for other professional groups.

### Biomarkers

There have also been some new findings; for example, three types of biological deviations have been demonstrated in patients:

- (1) an overrepresentation of a certain genetic haplotype for the enzyme tryptophan hydroxylase, involved in the serotonin synthesis
- (2) an attenuated reactivity of the hypothalamus-pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis with lower than normal release of cortisol in the dexamethasone/corticotrophin releasing hormone (dex/CRH) test, and
- (3) markedly elevated plasma concentrations of the vascular and epidermal growth factors, VEGF and EGF, and of the inflammation factor MCP1.



## The Karasek-Theorell model on workplace stress is still alive



Carin Håkansta, FAS

The scientific discourse about workplace quality and the demands and control of employees has to a large extent been enriched by the so-called Karasek-Theorell demand and control model. The model has existed for more than 30 years.

Initially the model described the tension between working demands and the individual's capacity to cope with those demands. Later the model came to encompass the social support that employees receive at work.

If demands are too high, irregular, or difficult to understand, and the employee has difficulties controlling them or lacks the support from other people, then work stress increases. If these kinds of job strain persist for longer periods, it will have consequences for health.

A couple of years ago, in relation to the retirement of Professor Töres Theorell, the Institute of Psychosocial Medicine (IPM) held an international symposium around these questions. Documentation from the symposium is now available in a supplement to *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health*, **SJWEH Supplement 6 (2008): After 30 years with the demand-control-support model – how is it used today?**

The impetus for preparing the supplement are some twenty researchers who, in one way or another, have been inspired by the Karasek-Theorell model and developed different aspects of this model.

The documentation can also be seen as a reflection of the collective memory of Swedish working life research during an era when international contacts and the dialogue between researchers were intense and creative. A part of this tradition has been transferred to the newly initiated Stress Research Institute at Stockholm University, who took over the activities of the now closed IPM.

## European Risk Observatory: Expert forecast on emerging chemical risks related to occupational safety and health



Emmanuelle Brun, EU-OSHA

The Agency's European Risk Observatory (ERO), together with its Topic Centre, produced an expert forecast of emerging risks related to occupational safety and health (OSH). Three reports were already published on emerging OSH physical risks (2006), biological risks (2007) and psychosocial risks (2008). The last report of the series, published in March 2009, sets out the results of the forecast on emerging chemical risks. The emerging risks highlighted were validated by 49 experts from 21 European countries in a questionnaire-based survey run following the Delphi method.

According to estimates from the International Labour Office, each year 167,000 workers die in the EU-27 as a consequence of their work. As many as 159,500 of these fatalities can be attributed to work-related diseases, of which 74,000 are attributable to exposure to dangerous substances.

In the forecast, **particles, dust and aerosols were considered as a major concern, with nanoparticles the top emerging risk.** Although nanoparticles are already used in a range of applications, the degree of damage they may cause to human health is not yet established. A number of EU-funded projects have started which will hopefully shed light on these knowledge gaps and enable the development of competitive and safe nanotechnologies. In addition, **man-made mineral fibres** were identified as emerging risks as they are continuously evolving. New compositions may pose novel health hazards and complicate epidemiological studies. Inhalation of fibrous structures increases their inflammatory and carcinogenic potential.

**Diesel exhaust, crystalline silica, asbestos and wood dusts are among the main carcinogens** in Europe. **Carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances** such as organic solvents, endocrine disruptors, persistent

organic pollutants, aromatic amines, biocides, azo dyes and combined exposures to several carcinogens were also highlighted. **In the EU-27, each year over 95,000 cancer deaths could be work-related.** In 2009, the ERO will publish two reports with data collected across 25 Member States on exposure to carcinogens, occupational cancer and occupational exposure limits for carcinogens and mutagens.

A third group of emerging risks was linked to the **increasing use of allergenic and sensitising substances such as epoxy resins, isocyanates and detergents.** The skin is the largest organ of the body exposed to chemical risk factors. **Skin disorders are the second most common occupational diseases in the EU, and chemicals are responsible for 80-90% of these cases.** However, there is still no validated scientific method to assess dermal exposure to dangerous substances. Therefore, it is all the more important that there should be a thorough identification and control of risk factors involved in dermal exposure.

**Construction and waste treatment** – where chemicals are rather incidental products of the work – were agreed as two sectors bearing emerging risks. **Waste treatment was considered as one of the most hazardous industries.** The illness rate is 50% higher in waste workers. In some workplaces, high levels of dust and over 100 volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were detected. Electrical and electronic equipment as well as end-of-life vehicles are increasingly being recycled and contain lead, cadmium, mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).



(Courtesy of INSHT, Spain)

In the **construction sector**, one of Europe's largest industries, workers are exposed to a variety of dangerous substances in addition to e.g. noise, the risk of falls from

height and musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Respiratory problems are widespread, not only due to **asbestos** – although its use is now virtually banned in the European Union, but also to **wood dust**, which increases the risk of occurrence of nasal cancer, or **dust generated from cutting or handling crystalline silica-based products.** Construction workers may also be exposed to **solvents, oils, resins and cement-based products containing chromium (VI).** Significant contact with lead may also occur when working with old **lead** piping or removing lead-based paints.

Part of the survey was dedicated to **combined exposures to dangerous substances**, which are the reality in many workplaces. In fact, the survey respondents adopted a genuine holistic view of OSH as they also highlighted the combination with other risk factors than chemicals, such as related to **labour market trends that contribute to the increase of workers' groups found to be less protected and at higher risk**, such as the increase in the numbers of subcontracted workers, migrant workers, or in **SMEs**, which employ about 66% of the workforce in the private sector and **where the control of chemical risks is poorer.** Only a short time ago, the predominant approach tended to consider each risk factor independently; this is likely to lead to an underestimation of the real risks posed to workers. Today concern about multiple factors, multiple exposures and multiple outcomes is increasing as was also shown in the three other Agency's forecasts. To respond to these concerns, the Agency initiated a series of projects aimed at mapping out combined exposure situations and understanding how these exposures increase the impact on health, for example impact of psychosocial risk factors on MSDs.

On 2-3 March 2009, the Agency organised a seminar which brought together EU policy-makers, social partners and high-level representatives of the OSH community in order to explore concrete ways to tackle the emerging chemical risks identified. The conclusions of the seminar, as well as all the results from the ERO's work, will be available at: <http://osha.europa.eu/en/riskobservatory>.

The Agency is also setting up a follow-up, larger-scale foresight study that will start in the second half of 2009 and examine, as a first step, emerging OSH risks arising from technological innovations in the next 10 years, taking into account the societal, political, economic and scientific contexts.



## Carbon Monoxide – A Hazard of Storage and Sea Transport of Wood Pellet



*Asko Aalto, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Finland),  
OSH Department*

The use of wood pellets as an energy source has increased considerably during the last decade in Finland and in some other Member States. In some cases measurements carried out on board ships transporting wood pellets and also in pellet warehouses in both Sweden and Finland (by FIOH) have recently revealed dangerously high levels of carbon monoxide in these premises. The causative process seems to be a low-temperature oxidative degradation of fats and fatty acids contained in the wood material. In addition to carbon monoxide, irritating aldehydes, such as hexaldehyde (hexanal), are emitted.



(Courtesy of FIOH, Finland)

As a consequence, reports of fatalities and near-fatalities during ship transport have emerged from cases in Sweden and in the Netherlands. In Finland, a fatality occurred at a warehouse in 2006, and a rescue person was hospitalised due to the same incident. Subsequent inspections indicated that the cause of death was carbon monoxide poisoning. Another death at another pellet silo took place in Finland at the end of 2008. According to the OSH inspector in charge, the cause of this death was also carbon monoxide poisoning.

Considering this as a new emerging risk, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in Finland issued an alert notice emphasising the need for adhering certain safety rules in December 2008.

The warehouses need to be well ventilated. One must respect safety guidelines when entering confined spaces. Safety is ensured by using direct-reading and alarming carbon monoxide monitors. The selection of appropriate respiratory protective equipment is vital, as ordinary filter masks do not protect against carbon monoxide.

Certain workers are at particular risk comprise e.g. persons with coronary heart disease as well as pregnant workers. Based on published human studies on irritation, an OEL has been proposed for hexaldehyde.

Further information: [asko.aalto@stm.fi](mailto:asko.aalto@stm.fi)

## European research partnership for safe and healthy work is renewed



Deutsche Gesetzliche  
Unfallversicherung



*Dietmar Reinert, DGUV*

On 7 November 2008, thirteen European research institutes met in Dublin to establish a research partnership. At this meeting, the heads of the institutes involved amended the charter of the existing Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH). The objective is to arrange networking of the scientific institutes even more closely and of co-ordinating their research activities. In addition to conducting joint research projects, PEROSH is intending to be represented in Brussels from 2009 onwards by its own co-ordinator for European affairs.





The Partnership for European Research in Occupational Safety and Health (PEROSH) has been in existence since November 2003. Originally, the principal concern of those involved was to organise lobbying jointly for the interests of OSH research at European level and to ensure a high priority for OSH research on the European Commission's research agenda. The lobby has now become a research partnership in its own right, and intends to address eight topical OSH issues on its own initiative in the coming years. The reason is that the same OSH issues often arise at different locations throughout Europe; the institutes therefore wish to learn from each other and to exploit research resources jointly and consequently become more effective in their efforts. Within the research association, certain topics will therefore be studied such as the safety and health requirements of older employees, the potential hazards posed by nanotechnology, and the influence of a safety culture on the accident patterns in the workplace.

Since the new form of the partnership requires considerably more co-ordination, PEROSH is looking for a co-ordinator of its own, to be based in Brussels from 2009 onwards.

Additional information: <http://www.perosh.org/home.html>

## New Research and Innovation Bill from the Swedish Government



FORSKNINGSRÅDET FÖR ARBETSLIV  
OCH SOCIALVETENSKAP  
SWEDISH COUNCIL FOR WORKING LIFE AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

*Carin Håkansta, FAS*

The new bill covers the period 2009-2012 and is larger than the total sum allocated in the three most recent bills. This SEK 5 billion investment (appr. 500 million EUR) means that the Lisbon goal to allocate 1 per cent of GDP to R&D will be achieved by 2009.

Some of the important items in the Bill are:

### Universities and higher education institutions to be allocated increased resources

The largest portion of central government research funds will go to academic institutions and will be distributed in accordance with a new system in which quality will determine how much each university or higher education institution will receive. Quality will be measured by means

of two criteria – publications/references to publications and external research funds.

### Strategic investments

Since World War II, Swedish central government-supported basic research has in principle been funded in two ways: through direct appropriations to universities (faculty funds) and through appropriations via the research councils (council appropriations). An important element of the reform of the appropriations system proposed in the Bill is that a third, major type of funding will be introduced: strategic investments. A total of SEK 1.8 billion of the SEK 5 billion allocated in the Research Bill will provide a permanent, annual increase in appropriations to research in a number of strategically important areas.

### Innovation

In order for publicly funded research to be used more extensively by the community and the business sector, an initiative is being introduced to increase the commercialisation of research results. Innovation offices will be set up in a number of higher education institutions and industrial research institutes will be allocated additional funds.

### Increased appropriations to FAS

The four research funding institutions will be allocated SEK 675 million. In the instructions to FAS, two areas are of specific relevance: funding to research about company health care and an additional 65 million SEK (over 4 years) earmarked for working life research. The additional funding will be used to finance research programmes and centres of excellence related to the improvement of work (see also FAS' Newsletter 3 2008 at [http://www.fas.se/fas\\_templates/Page\\_1355.aspx](http://www.fas.se/fas_templates/Page_1355.aspx)).

### WORK IN NET Foresight seminar in Stockholm



FORSKNINGSRÅDET FÖR ARBETSLIV  
OCH SOCIALVETENSKAP  
SWEDISH COUNCIL FOR WORKING LIFE AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

*Carin Håkansta, FAS*

During two days in September 2008, FAS organised a WORK-IN-NET seminar in Stockholm on the theme "Future



challenges of work life development and work-oriented innovation activities in Europe”.

All WORK-IN-NET partner organisations were invited to participate in the workshop. They were encouraged to contribute with short foresight reports about future challenges of work life development and work-oriented innovation activities, for example around the following themes:

- Who will instigate and carry out work-oriented innovation activities in your country in 2020? How will new technology affect the division of labour in the future?
- How will globalisation and the integrating European labour market affect working conditions and health promotion at work in 2020?
- What has happened to corporate social responsibility in 2020?
- Describe industrial relations, job security and employment contracts in your country in 2020.
- Elaborate on equity, gender, ethnic inclusion & diversity as well as generation gaps at work in 2020.

In addition to the country specific reports, the following experts had been invited to make presentations and provide background papers: Raija Koivisto, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland; Peter Docherty, Chalmers University of Technology and ATK Arbetsliv Sweden; Peter Totterdill, UK Work Organisation Network; and Jari Kaivo-oja, Finland Futures Research Centre, Turku School of Economics. The following two participants contributed with insights about the European context: Elisabeth Lagerlöf, previously of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and Werner Wobbe, DG Research, European Commission.

The two days contained a broad range of thought provoking presentations and lively discussions among the 25 participants. A report from the seminar (available on the WORK IN NET web page) captures the essence of those presentations and discussions, as well as the submitted background papers.

Further information: <http://www.workinnet.org/>

## The impact of national legislation of safety and health at work regarding workers with a fixed duration employment relationship or a temporary employment relationship – A national study in Greece



*A. Papadakis, ELINYAE*

Several international surveys have revealed the impact of temporary work on safety. Francois and Lievin, 2000; Morris, 1999 observed that for workers on fixed term contracts and temporary work appear to have a higher risk of accidents. A Scandinavian study from 1995-96, estimated that the rate of accidents for temporary workers in industry was 10-15% higher than for workers with permanent jobs.

In Greece it is estimated that 11.7% of workforce consists of temporary contracts, a similar situation to the European average (10.9%).

The aim of the present study was to describe the impact of national legislation of safety and health at work regarding workers with a fixed duration employment relationship or a temporary employment relationship in Greece.

This study was part of a European study: ‘Study to Analyse and Assess the Impact of National Legislation of Safety and Health at Work relating to Council Directive 91/383/EEC’ conducted by a consortium of national institutes with Project Leader the ‘Labour Asociados , S.L.L’. The survey was conducted for the benefit of the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of the European Commission.

In the present study, a qualitative approach to the subject was adopted. A total of 25 representatives of key social partners such as top rank union representatives, employers’ associations representatives, representatives of workers in temporary employment agencies, officials of the Labor Inspectorate etc. were interviewed between June and October 2006. A common set of questionnaires was utilized to provoke answers which would be readily comparable. All available studies and data related to the matter were also taken into account.



(Courtesy of ELINYAE, Greece)

So far, there have been no statistical studies in Greece relating occupational accidents and diseases with the form of employment. No discriminative practices have been observed regarding safety measures against workers with fixed-duration employment as opposed to workers with permanent employment relationship. After processing all responses and data we came to the conclusion that the most prominent problem for both of these types of workers is the form of employment and more precisely the uncertainty deriving from their disadvantageous employment status. The stressful environment in both their professional and personal lives makes them vulnerable and susceptible to compromises in occupational health and safety matters.

There have been no targeted information campaigns and actions aimed at these types of workers and the safety policy of undertakings do not take into consideration the form of employment as a determinant factor in health and safety matters. They are not excepted from potentially dangerous jobs and duties; on the contrary they are assigned the least favorable jobs at the workplace since they are in general new at the job and in a less advantageous position than their permanent colleagues. Therefore, we can conclude that temporary workers tend to be more exposed to safety risks in comparison to workers with other types of work contracts.

In addition to health and safety issues, the general working status was examined as well as the terms and conditions of employment.

The results of our statistical study have not shown any correlation between the frequency of occupational accidents and the form of employment in Greece. Nevertheless, it is questionable if these results represent the actual national situation, since there are several other factors affecting the integrity of the data (i.e. poor reporting of occupational accidents, especially those of temporary workers).

## 2nd BMBF-Zukunftsforum “Working – learning – developing skills”



*Claudio Zettel, PT-DLR*

In view of structural change and constantly changing working environment and in view of globalization and demographic developments, efforts must be made to continuously strengthen the potential for innovation over a broad scale so that Germany will remain an attractive business location in the long term. This means that personnel, organization, and skills development are equally important.

Growth and creation of jobs will only be possible if efforts to develop the skills of individuals, staff and management are coordinated. With its funding programme “Working – learning – developing skills – Potential for innovation in a modern working environment”, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) will systematically address vital issues in order to develop new practical solutions through research and development. This BMBF research programme responds to the new demands, which have to be met in the world of work due to recent developments in industry and society.

The programme takes into account the increasing inter-linkage of work and learning and it aims to ensure that

- People use their knowledge, creativity and motivation at the workplace and develop their skills (further);
- Companies create the prerequisites for successful skills development and thus become a source of new ideas, successful products and new jobs;
- Networks and cooperation are organized in a way which opens up sales and employment opportunities

The conference “Personnel Development – Organization Development – Skills Development” focused on these goals. One specific target of this conference was on prevention and occupational health due to the fact that one of the current sub-programmes is dedicated to this subject.

The conference took place on 2nd and 3rd of April 2009 in Berlin.



## New Publications

### Restructuring in Europe Report 2008

The Restructuring in Europe Report was published by the European Commission on 16 December 2008. The report presents a global overview of the European Union's main strategies, policies and actions to anticipate change and tackle the negative effects of restructuring, that is to say when companies, industries and economic sectors are reorganised. This is the first of a series of regular reports that will be dedicated to analysing restructuring processes and their effects on jobs.

The report reviews the principal factors of change affecting our economies and analyses each in turn: globalisation, transition to knowledge based economy, ageing of the population and climate change. It also examines the enlargement of the EU to countries in central and eastern Europe, which led to important changes in their economies.

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=103&newsId=434&furtherNews=yes>

### Report – Health in Restructuring: Innovative Approaches and Policy Recommendations (HIRES)

Enterprise restructuring can no longer be understood as a temporal crisis. Current developments show that for many organizations and even regions or sectors restructuring became a recurrent and continuous process. But often restructuring processes fail to produce the intended effects of secured or increased organizational profitability. On the contrary restructuring puts the physical and psycho-social health of all organizational members at risk.

should be considered for “healthier restructuring”. The results of this project are based on the interdisciplinary expertises from 15 European project partners and 12 external experts. With its policy recommendations and the case studies of innovative approaches on a company and regional level the report addresses policy makers, governmental structures like labour inspectorates or federal institutes, unions, managers, occupational health and safety personnel, shareholders and workers alike.

The European Expert Group on Health in Restructuring (HIRES) was coordinated by Thomas Kieselbach from the University of Bremen and supported by DG Employment of the European Commission. It presents with this report a concise overview of the effects of enterprise restructuring and the social frameworks and change procedures that

The HIRES recommendations are even more important if we consider the current crisis with its unprecedented effects on employment and the health of employees.

[http://www.ipg.uni-bremen.de/research/hires/final\\_report.php](http://www.ipg.uni-bremen.de/research/hires/final_report.php) (coming soon)

## Upcoming events

### NEW OSH ERA Forum on new and emerging OSH risks

29-30 October 2009, Brussels, Belgium

The Forum aims

- to provide a platform for exchange of information on new and emerging risks at work
- to make available scientific knowledge to policy makers and other stakeholders
- to function as a link between the research community, the Commission, national governments, policy/decision makers, funding bodies and social partners

More information will be available on [www.newoshera.eu](http://www.newoshera.eu)



## About NEW OSH ERA

NEW OSH ERA is a project funded by the European Commission within the ERA-NET scheme in context of the specific programme 'Integrating and strengthening the European Research Area'. It aims at building a European dimension in research on new and emerging risks in the workplace by rationalising and pooling of resources.

## Members of the Consortium

### Coordinator

- Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, FIOH, Finland

### Partners

- Finnish Work Environment Fund, TSR, Finland
- Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland
- Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, BAUA, Germany
- Central Institute for Labour Protection - National Research Institute, CIOP-PIB, Poland
- Project Management Organization at DLR, Project Management Organization for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, PT-DLR, Germany
- German Social Accident Insurance, DGUV, Germany
- National Research Centre for the Working Environment, NRCWE, Denmark
- Research Unit for the Improvement of Working Conditions DIOVA/DiRACT, General Directorate for the Humanization of Work, Ministry of Labour, FOD WASO, Belgium
- Italian National Institute for Prevention and Safety at Work, ISPESL, Italy
- Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, FAS, Sweden
- Hungarian Institute of Occupational Health, OMFI, Hungary
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, EU-OSHA, EU
- Hellenic Institute for Occupational Health & Safety, ELINYAE, Greece
- Ministry of Employment and Social Protection, Greece
- Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Germany
- Ministry of Health, Italy
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Poland
- French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety, Afsset, France
- TNO, Netherlands
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Netherlands

### Affiliated partner

- AFA Insurance, Sweden
- Instituto Nacional de Seguridad e Higiene en el Trabajo, INSHT, Spain

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