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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)

## Sceptical feelings and a happy end – the first common call by NEW OSH ERA



*Angela Schieder, (BAuA)*

Many NEW OSH ERA members will remember it very well – that sceptical feeling when they opened the work plan and read that there would be a “common call”. How would that be possible? There were so many institutes with so many different ways of handling a call in their country not to mention the different financing systems. The presentation to the EU commission during the Constituting Conference in Rome in April 2006 brought some relief – no, a “common pot” for the call was not mandatory. Okay, but what then...?

However, work packages 8 and 9 which contained the call preparation were a long way away, and so everybody rolled up their sleeves to start devising the first work packages laid down in the work plan. But above all, there was the European idea! Somehow it had to be made possible to harmonise the different approaches in the Member States.

But the clock kept ticking and there were so many preparatory work packages that had to be prepared by the deadline.

But then, things started to speed up. In September 2008, the decision was taken to issue a common call in the up-coming months. An expert panel was convened to elaborate project call topics; sometime afterwards, the principal topic of the first call was determined: it would be work-related stress.

In the meantime, BAuA together with the call working group was facing one of the greatest challenges: to make sure that the call management procedures would be suitable for all participating institutes. A “Guide for Applicants” was set up to outline the application process. For example, it stipulated that only consortia from at least 3 European countries would be allowed to apply. What proved especially difficult to resolve, inter alia, was the problem concerning the decision structures. On the one hand, there was the Call Steering Committee, which was in charge of the scientific side of the call, with responsibility for all decisions in this respect. On the other hand, the funding institutes would presumably not be ready to let some outside authority decide about how they utilised their own funding. A similar difficulty was the question about who would be responsible for the evaluation of the project proposals – and at what stage.

Two workshops in Budapest were organised to answer these questions. The purpose of the workshop in March 2009 was to compare evaluation procedures in the NEW OSH ERA partner organisations and exchange experience with other ERA-NETs.



The workshop in April 2009 made real progress with regard to the clarification of the call management procedures. Furthermore, a Call Secretariat was created to support the call process and to be involved in future projects.

Slowly, the call started to take on an identifiable shape. And much of this can be contributed to a computer-based application system (EPSS) which meant that the application procedure was straightforward and equally accessible to all members of the European consortia.

The day came when the call was launched on the NEW OSH ERA website. Nobody knew how many consortia would apply – a day of breath-holding excitement. Ultimately 15 European consortia submitted an application. Thanks to EPSS, the submission of the proposals went without tears, as did the following evaluation by the funding institutes. Their task now was to check the eligibility and the other formal criteria. The final evaluation check was conducted by the Call Steering Committee, who attempted to assess the proposals according to their scientific content. Subsequently, 8 proposals were chosen to advance to the second stage of the application procedure. The evaluation of the second stage proposals will be conducted by an Evaluation Panel, consisting of five independent experts from different European countries. Their work will be eased by the preparation of document “Guide for Evaluators”.

At the beginning of the year 2010, the first projects funded by the NEW OSH ERA institutes will be initiated. In view of the sceptical feelings at the beginning of the NEW OSH ERA project, it is a pleasure to say that although we were pessimistic, it has turned out to be a great success!

## **SYNERGY — Pooled Analysis of European Case-control Studies on the Interaction of Occupational Carcinogens in the Development of Lung Cancer**

*Thomas Brüning, Beate Pesch, BGFA  
Kurt Straif, IARC*

### **Exposure to occupational carcinogens and lung cancer**

While doing a given job or during their occupational history, workers are frequently exposed to a variety of occupational carcinogens. Typical co-exposures to occupational carcinogens are radon and crystalline silica, asbestos and polycyclic aromatic

hydrocarbons (PAH), or chromium and nickel compounds. Little is known about the synergistic effects of these carcinogens in the development of lung cancer. This gap in knowledge impedes more efficient primary prevention and fair compensation of affected workers.

Experimental data may provide insights into the mode of actions and interactions but nonetheless extrapolations to humans are associated with substantial uncertainties. However, the effects of combined exposures to several carcinogens can only be estimated from extensive epidemiological studies. The evaluation of the interaction of occupational carcinogens needs to take carefully into account the potential confounding and effect modification of tobacco smoking.

Within the last decade, several case-control studies have been conducted to identify the risk factors for lung cancer. Although many studies have been large in size, the low joint prevalence of occupational exposures in the general population limits the power to conduct a detailed statistical analysis of synergistic effects within the scope of single studies. In parallel, large occupational exposure databases have been created during the last two decades with several millions of measurement results. Examples of these are the German MEGA database of the *Institut für Arbeitsschutz* (BGIA) and the French COLCHIC database of the *Institut National de Recherche et de Sécurité* (INRS). These databases represent valuable resources for a quantitative assessment of exposure to occupational carcinogens for epidemiological studies.

### **The SYNERGY project**

The German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV) acts as main board of the insurance organisations of both employers and employees. It has requested that BGFA as its research institute for occupational medicine should initiate a project on the interaction of occupational carcinogens in lung cancer development. BGFA consulted the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to support a pooled analysis of eligible lung cancer studies. In 2007, the project SYNERGY was launched with a financial contribution from DGUV. DGUV established an advisory board that supervises the conduct of the study and evaluates the results according to the objectives of the project

SYNERGY intends to analyse the interaction of occupational carcinogens in the development of lung cancer. Asbestos, PAH, chromium, nickel, and crystalline silica have been selected for a quantitative assessment of exposure. Data from ten studies have been pooled to create the most powerful database on lung cancer cases, comprising 13412 lung cancer cases and



16320 controls. SYNERGY is co-ordinated by IARC (Lyon, France) and BGFA (Bochum, Germany). The following research institutes (with epidemiological expertise in lung cancer or exposure assessment) are contributing to the project: *Institute for Risk Assessment* (IRAS, The Netherlands), Karolinska Institute (Sweden), *Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale* (INSERM, France), University of Turin und *Clinica del Lavoro „L. Devoto“*, Milano (Italy), U.S. *National Cancer Institute*, University of Montreal (Canada), and the German Helmholtz Center Munich, Bremen Institute for Prevention Research and Social Medicine, and Essen University. Measurement databases have been made available by BGIA, Germany, and INRS, France. The *Institut für Gefahrstoff-Forschung* (IGF), Bochum, Germany is supporting the exposure assessment.

## Work packages of SYNERGY

The project is structured into three scientific work packages (WP). WP1 is aimed at establishing a common database created out of the available epidemiological data from the pooled studies. The exposure to the selected carcinogens will be assessed as part of WP2. WP3 comprises the statistical analyses of the data. Additionally, IARC is undertaking the administrative coordination of the project as WP4.

In WP1, data from eligible studies have been pooled according to a coding manual that documents the set of core variables. One major task was the harmonization of the classifications of job titles and industries according to the *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (ISCO), 1968 version, and *International Standard Industrial Classification of Industries* (ISIC), revision 2.

WP2 intends to quantitatively assess exposure to asbestos, PAH, silica, chromium, and nickel. A systematic search of exposure databases was conducted and their responsible bodies were contacted to ensure co-operation. Accessible measurements will be assembled and statistically analysed to develop a job-exposure matrix (JEM). Conversions of national into international classifications of industries and occupations are needed in order to link measurement information with the epidemiological dataset. The characteristics of the workplaces, technological processes, measurement devices and strategies will be documented. Information on historical exposure levels is scarce and cannot be provided by these databases. Therefore, historical exposure will be reassessed with the assistance of expert knowledge.

Statistical analyses will be performed on the basis of the pooled epidemiological data and the exposure variables within the framework of WP3. Quantitative exposure variables will be

created by linking the SYNERGY JEM with each subject's occupational history. The analysis will assess exposure-response relationships for each carcinogen with different exposure metrics and defined lag periods. Smoking will be considered as a confounder as well as potential effect modifier. The analysis of interactions between occupational carcinogens is the major task of SYNERGY. The derived risk estimates will provide a better decision foundation when trying to recognise lung cancer as an occupational disease in workers who have been exposed to more than one lung carcinogen, perhaps in combination with tobacco smoking.

For more information, please contact:

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## A new German web-based portal provides information regarding “risk assessment” at work



Dieter Mantei, BAuA

In close co-operation with the GDA (Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy), the BAuA (Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Germany) has created a new online-portal at <http://www.gefaehrdungsbeurteilung.de/>. It offers practical support for enterprises to carry out and implement risk assessment at the workplace level. In addition to meeting legal requirements, risk assessment serves as a basis for a systematic and efficient OSH management in enterprises.

Risks and health impacts differ within specific sectors and occupations. For this reason, especially SMEs need assistance to meet their real needs. The new online-portal provided by BAuA helps them initiate remedial action. It represents a clear and transparent process and makes access to the guidelines and check-lists much straightforward.

## The structure of the website

The website is divided into four main sections: The section “basic knowledge” provides fundamental information about the process, its aims and how they can be achieved.

The chapter “guidelines” is based on a database, which allows easy access to existing risk assessment tools. It is possible to search by text or, in addition, to use specific criteria like provider, sectors and risks, in order to focus the search. All instruments were quality-checked by the most important German stakeholders in the field of prevention.

The chapter “knowledge of experts” offers support in evaluating all potential risks and health impacts. This information is derived from the BAuA publication “Ratgeber zur Ermittlung gefährdungsbezogener Arbeitsschutzmaßnahmen im Betrieb” (Guideline for the identification of risk-related safety measures in enterprises).

Last but not least, the chapter “service” delivers useful links and tips on how to use the online-portal, as well as FAQs and contacts for other practical information, a glossary and a compilation of literature.

The online-portal is one way with which the BAuA is actively participating in the European campaign “Healthy workplaces” 2008 – 2009 of the EU-OSHA. This campaign is focusing on reducing work-related accidents and diseases by means of “risk assessment” at workplace level.

The website <http://www.gefaehrungsbeurteilung.de/> is addressed to all interested parties in the field of OSH not only employers but also employees, trade unions, preventive services, safety engineers, occupational doctors, labour inspectors and technical advisers of the accident insurance companies.

By end of the year 2009, the online portal will also be available in English.

## International Cooperation on OSH: the Twinning Project between Italy and Egypt



*Maria Castriotta, Valentina Bucciarelli – ISPEL,  
Department of Organisation Processes*

Increasingly, health and safety at work issues are being dealt with in the context of international and European intervention

strategies and cooperation plans. Indeed, in the last years, the European Union has promoted cooperation programmes and twinning projects between different Member States and North Africa countries, in order to address different topics and problems for which the intervention of national governments is not enough. These initiatives concern also occupational health and safety issues and involve different subjects: governments, institutes, organizations and companies, both at national and local level.

An example of a way of cooperating is twinning. Twinning is an agreement between the authorities of two States both of which make a specific commitment intended to achieve a general result for a specific part of the acquis communautaire.

At the moment, ISPEL is involved in a Twinning Project between Italy and Egypt designated “Organizational Modernization of the Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) Management System”. It is financed by the European Commission in the context of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), by means of the Support to the Association Agreement Programme (SAAP), and it will run for a duration of 18 months. The SAAP is an extensive (25 million €) programme intended to support the governments of the developing countries in the implementation of Cooperation Agreements and the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Italian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies is the project leader while other parties are, besides ISPEL, the Italian workers’ compensation authority (INAIL), the agency of the Ministry of Labour, Italia Lavoro, the agency of the Ministry of the Public Administration and the Innovation, Foromez and Tuscany Region.

The general purpose of the project is to achieve modernization of the management for OSH systems in Egypt and the improvement of public policies in the field of OSH, in order to reduce the numbers of injuries and deaths at work. The project is structured into three different areas of intervention. The first aspect involves a comparative analysis between Egyptian legislation on OSH and those of the European Commission. This activity will be followed by the individuation of the differences and the development of schemes to align national legislation to the European system.

The second action is intended to promote institutional building capacity. This is an important aspect as development of national and local authorities and institutions which play such a crucial role in OSH, especially when related to control and surveillance systems. The third aspect of the project is the implementation of communication and training activities and schemes to encourage infrastructure funding.



The Italian partners of the projects are supporting the Egyptian institutions in the planning and realization of these activities through their researchers and experts who will make visits to Egypt where they will coordinate and collaborate with national authorities. In this context, a widespread information campaign will be organised and Italian researchers and technicians will be engaged in an intensive training programme to educate Egyptian trainers. In this way, it will be possible to start a new cycle of benefits for Egyptian OSH operators, especially for the supervisors. Training courses will also be planned and implemented dedicated to risk assessment and management in specific production sectors to improve the preparedness of supervisors and to implement more extensive and practical safety and health management in Egyptian companies.

This twinning project is a direct result of a long and far-sighted path started on by the European Union in 1976, when the first Cooperation Agreement with Egypt was signed. In 1995 the Barcelona Conference launched the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership between the European Union and the countries in the South Mediterranean. This is based on three pillars: political dialogue, economic and commercial integration and socio-cultural cooperation. The partnership represents also the legal framework for the Association Agreements signed in 2004 and for the Action Plan 2007. Italy is the first European commercial partner and the second at international level, with more than 500 Italian companies operating in Egypt. In 2006, the Italian-Egyptian Business Council was constituted. It is a bilateral organization – its mission is to improve economic integration between the two countries through an increase in commercial exchanges, investments and joint ventures.

Several Memorandums of Understanding were signed in 2008 for the establishment of strategic reinforced partnership, for the cooperation in the fishing industry and in different sectors: foreign policy, agriculture policy, arts and infrastructural projects.

## Research into the health effects of mobile phones continues in Finland



*Tommi Alanko, Maila Hietanen, FIOH*

The rapid spread of mobile phones and other wireless messaging devices over the last few years has increased the population's exposure to electromagnetic fields in the radio frequencies (RF). Even though the RF fields emitted by mobile phones and base stations are weak compared to international safety limits, there has been

press and public discussion about some recent research findings over possible health effects.



A new national research project on the health effects of mobile phones' RF fields has been initiated in Finland. The main funder of the research programme is the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation, TEKES. The joint project, which goes under the acronym of WIRECOM (Wireless Communication Devices and Human Health), is made up of four different projects. These projects deal with the research questions that are the highest priority for the World Health Organisation (WHO) and thus support the WHO's planned evaluation of the health risks of radio frequency fields.

The objective of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health's sub-project is to clarify whether the exposure of trial subjects to the RF fields produced by wireless communication devices, can cause a change in the levels of temperature in the tissues of the head area which could be detrimental to the health of the user.

The primary interest of Turku University's Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience is in the possible links between RF exposure and metabolic changes in brain tissue as well as in links between functional changes in neurobiological mechanisms and cognitive functions. The research was carried out in cooperation with the national PET Centre.

The Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) is responsible for the construction of the exposure device to be used by trial subjects as well as for measuring exposure (dosimetry) in other sub-projects.

STUK will also carry out the monitoring research of the mobile phone users as part of a large-scale European project COSMOS (Cohort Study of Mobile Phone Use and Health). People who use mobile phones for different time durations will be invited to take part in the research and will be contacted through their service providers. In the monitoring phase, data about the participants' incidence rate of illness will be collected, in an attempt to answer the question of whether there is a link between use of mobile phones and the risk of illness.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is coordinating the project and will maintain the project's internet pages. The three-year project will last to the end of 2011.

For further information: [www.ttl.fi/wirecom](http://www.ttl.fi/wirecom)

## The "ProMenPol project": Mental Health promotion in schools, workplaces and residential homes for older people



*Katrin Zardo, BAuA*

The ProMenPol project funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme is being undertaken by partners from Germany, Austria, Ireland, Finland, Estonia, Greece and Belgium and is coordinated by the Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA).

It aims to support the practices and policies of mental health promotion in the three settings - schools, workplaces and residential homes for older people over the 2007-2009 period by:

- developing a database and toolkit of mental health promotion tools;
- assisting practitioners in implementing relevant tools (field trials); and
- providing research-based policy support.

Each year ProMenPol runs a practitioners' conference that is followed by a policy workshop for national and European policy makers.

These activities allow for the mutual exchange of information between experts concerning positive mental health and to provide timely feedback to those responsible for designing services and policies.



## The ProMenPol Database and Toolkit

The ProMenPol database can be accessed from the ProMenPol website ([www.mentalhealthpromotion.net](http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net)).

To date some 443 tools are available in the ProMenPol database of which 191 are associated with the education setting, 120 deal with the older peoples' residences and 140 with the workplace settings. The tools are available in English, German, Finnish, Estonian or/and searches can be conducted by using simple, advanced or free text search modes. All tools are categorized according to an extensive coding system that is based upon the ICF and mental health promotion models and guidelines. Additionally the tools were rated according to four descriptors: Application in the field, Stage of Development, Evaluation and Research, Beneficiary Involvement in Design.

The ProMenPol toolkit is composed of the database and a How-To-Manual on Mental Health Promotion. In addition to the generic core modules which provide users with detailed information about the implementation process (on the basis of the 4 step model of the implementation process: planning, needs analysis, implementation, follow-up), the 'How To' Manual has three setting specific modules. In these chapters further information tailored to the setting specific needs is provided.

The final version of the toolkit has been available on the ProMenPol website since October 2009.

The database and toolkit have been evaluated in the context of so-called type I field trials.

## The ProMenPol Field Trials

Within the framework of ProMenPol, three types of field trials are underway:

- **Type I** is a usability-test of the online database and toolbox for mental health promotion and protection instruments.



The questionnaire will ask users, e.g. those who have tested the toolboxes about the toolsets' utility, functionality and practicality for the organisation.

- **Type II** will document the experiences of implementing the tools that the practitioners have chosen from the toolset of mental health promotion instruments.
- **Type III** is a standardised report on a tool which is already in use by the organisation in the course of an existing initiative. In addition, organisations will be asked to report on its utility and practicality, too.

The field trial phase started in July 2008 and finished at the end of October 2009.

## The ProMenPol Conferences and Policy Workshops

The first two conferences and the first policy workshop have been carried out successfully involving practitioners and policy makers from various countries across Europe.

While the first conference focused on the conceptual framework, i.e. the classification system which constitutes the basis for the database, the second ProMenPol conference dealt mainly with the different types of field trials. Additionally participants discussed the recently published European Pact for Mental Health and Wellbeing. ProMenPol partners have been active in the preparation of background papers and in the corresponding High level EU conference of the Pact. Karl Kuhn and Richard Wynne were closely involved with the development of the workplace consensus paper; STAKES are partners in the EC Mental Health Process consortium and SUPPORT project; and Mental Health Europe took part in the development of the consensus papers on youth and education and on older people. ProMenPol was praised as an example of cross policy action in the **Background Paper** for the conference produced by the SUPPORT Project.

The practitioner's feedback on the European Pact received at the 2nd ProMenPol conference was a key theme at the 2nd ProMenPol policy workshop that took place on December 11th 2008 in Brussels.

ProMenPol held its first and second annual policy workshops in Brussels with representatives from DG Employment, Research, Sanco and Education, national policy makers as well as other important stakeholders. The aim of the workshops was to make

participants aware about the project in general and in particular to inform them about the unique approach that ProMenPol is developing to effective communications between policy makers and practitioners. The workshops also encouraged extensive discussions on important issues such as identifying appropriate policy makers and on the types of information that policy makers need to improve policy making. A distinction was drawn between policy makers, policy administrators and policy influencers.

In October 2009, the third ProMenPol conference was held together in conjunction with the policy workshop in order to promote information exchange between the sphere of policy, science and practice. Additionally, the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENHWP) launched its new campaign on "Mental Health Promotion at Work".

If you are interested in the project or its outputs, feel free to contact Mrs Katrin Zardo ([zardo.katrin@buaa.bund.de](mailto:zardo.katrin@buaa.bund.de)) or visit the ProMenPol website [www.mentalhealthpromotion.net](http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net), where one can also register for free to obtain the project's newsletter.

## WORK-IN-NET joint call

The WORK-IN-NET Joint Call was carried out successfully with the participation of 7 institutions from 6 countries (Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden). As a result, there will be at least 16 projects working in cooperation for at least 18 months. The kick-off meeting of the international projects – a brokerage event with a poster exhibition took place in Stockholm on October 27, 2009.

The event was linked with the "Conference on Sustainable work – a Challenge in Time of Economic Crises", October 27-28, 2009 in connection with the Swedish EU presidency organized by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS), The Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems (Vinnova), and the Swedish ESF Council in collaboration with WORK-IN-NET and European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) (contact: [Carin.Hakansta@fas.se](mailto:Carin.Hakansta@fas.se)). The conference placed the spotlight on the post-Lisbon vision, i.e. how working life research can be viewed as a force to promote sustainable work arrangements in Europe. This is of particular relevance in times of crisis in order to prepare for the financial upturn and to avoid social dumping. The WORK-IN-NET brokerage event was held in Stockholm.



## 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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