



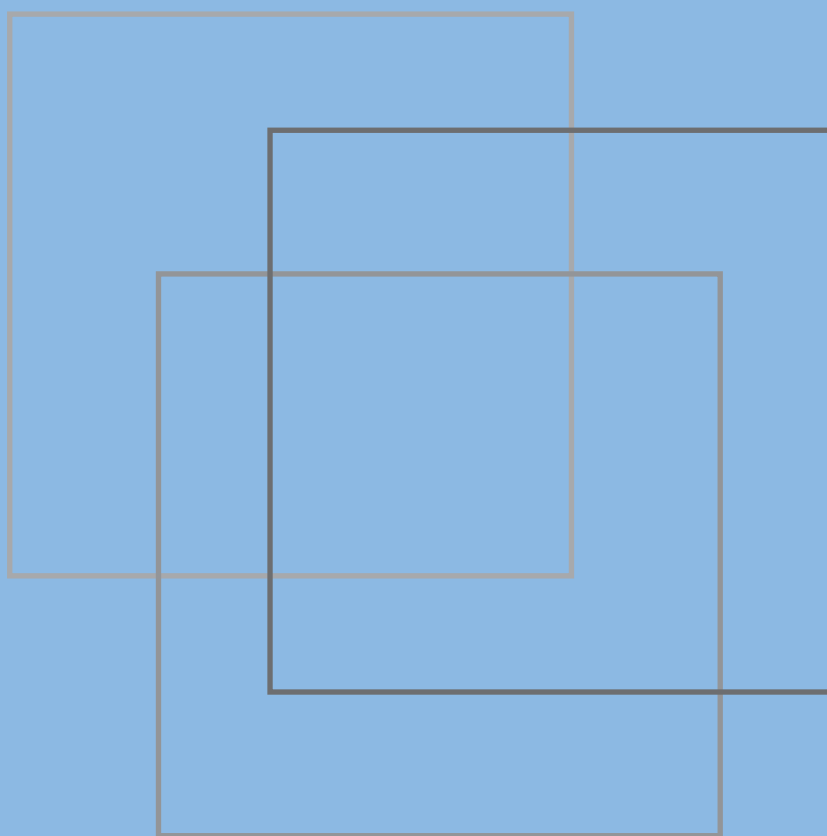
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Developing an external OSH service

Opportunities for employers' organisations concerning occupational safety and health issues



Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest

Developing an external OSH service

Opportunities for employers' organisations concerning occupational safety and health issues

This manual was drawn up with the assistance of presentations by ILO SRO Budapest representatives, Ms Annie Rice and Mr Jean-Marie Standaert, as well as by experts from PREVEMED, npo, Belgium, during seminars held by the Bulgarian Industrial Association and the International Labour Organization in 2003 and 2004

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Foreword: A pilot project for an external OSH service

An important element of the ILO's Decent Work Programme is the improvement of the working environment in factories and offices.

The provision of a safe and healthy working environment is the responsibility of the employer. However, while he or she may be ultimately responsible, workers have a duty of care to work safely and not to endanger others, and to cooperate with the employer in carrying out his or her responsibilities.

In addition, total quality management presupposes a policy of constant improvement of occupational safety and health in individual workplaces.

It is also well known that the European Commission considers non-compliance with OSH directives as a kind of distortion of competition, which is not allowed in the EU.

This is why employers' organisations can perform an important task in informing and advising their members on OSH issues and assisting them in implementing the rules.

One of the strategic objectives of the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) is to support the setting-up and/or the development of new services by employers' organisations. It is in this context that we, together with the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) and PREVEMED, the external OSH service of the Construction Confederation of Belgium, implemented a pilot project in 2003–2004 for the development of an external OSH service for the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora, a BIA member.

In order to give colleagues in Bulgaria, and in Central and Eastern Europe as a whole, the opportunity to benefit from the positive experiences of the pilot project, we are publishing the present handbook (in Bulgarian and in English), providing the main presentations given during the different workshops and meetings in Sofia and in Stara Zagora.

We would like to thank all who have contributed to this handbook, from BIA, PREVEMED, and the ILO's Sub-Regional Office in Budapest. Special thanks are due to the project coordinator, Mr Branimir Handjiev, Director General for International Organisations and Programmes of BIA and his team. We also convey special congratulations to Mr Ivan Lenkov, executive director of the Industrial Association in Stara Zagora, who, as a result of the pilot project, has doubled his staff and multiplied the number of subscribers.

The team is at the disposal of other colleagues for setting up similar external OSH services. All suggestions aimed at improving this handbook are welcome.

Petra ULSHOEFER
Director
SRO Budapest

Jean-Marie STANDAERT,
Senior Specialist for
Employers' Activities

Introduction: A case study in developing an external OSH service: the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria¹

With the aim of strengthening the services provided to its members and assisting the organisation in implementing the *acquis communautaire* on occupational safety and health, the Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA), ILO SRO Budapest and ACT/EMP agreed at the end of 2002 to develop a pilot project to develop an external OSH service for employers.

At that time Bulgarian employers were facing many problems:

- over 400 Occupational Health Centres were licensed by the Ministry of Health, but these centres did not provide any assistance in risk assessment;
- there was much competition between the centres, which offered medical services at low cost, but without guaranteeing quality;
- the implementation of the new Law on Improving Working Conditions had been delayed several times, which meant that the labour inspectorate could monitor working conditions only in new factories and plants;
- in Bulgaria, as in several other former communist countries, employers were obliged to compensate workers in certain hazardous industries through higher wages, shorter working days or weeks, early retirement, or by providing foodstuffs, usually milk products, supposedly as an antidote to hazardous exposure. There was absolutely no incentive, for neither the employer nor the worker, to eliminate hazardous work conditions.

The project started in January 2003 with presentations to both branch and local BIA members. These included:

- an overview of the obligations of employers under international regulations (ILO conventions and EU directives) by Ms Annie Rice, Senior Specialist for Occupational Safety and Health at SRO-Budapest; and
- how an external OSH service organised by employers can work in an EU country. The example chosen was the external OSH service PREVEMED, set up by the Construction Confederation of Belgium.

Interested members, such as the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora, then received a more detailed briefing on how to prepare a feasibility study for setting up such an external OSH centre. For this study, the initiator had to take into account the specificities of Bulgarian legislation and regulations.

The feasibility study prepared by the management of the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora was reviewed and discussed with PREVEMED and ILO/SRO Budapest/ACT/EMP during the ensuing months.

¹ Jean-Marie Standaert, Senior Specialist for Employers' Activities at ILO SRO Budapest

A special workshop was then organised in January 2004 on Risk Assessment with the participation of our colleague, Ms Annie Rice, Senior Specialist for Occupational Safety and Health at SRO Budapest, and ir. Lode Boeve, a PREVEMED expert, and the labour inspectorate of Stara Zagora. Several representatives of local associations who are members of BIA attended the two-day workshop, which included a practical exercise in a metal processing factory.

At the same time, as a conclusion of the review of the feasibility study prepared by the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora, and in order to lay the groundwork for successful implementation, BIA requested that the Ministries of Labour and of Health:

- set minimum standards based on quality for the licensing of occupational safety and health centres, in accordance with international norms, and verify their implementation periodically;
- set minimum tariffs for medical examinations in order to avoid dumping practices which endanger the quality of services;
- insist that the labour inspectorate verify compliance with the law on working conditions in all factories and plants;
- eliminate all forms of compensation for hazardous work, as required by the EU and ILO.

At a special meeting in June 2004, BIA and BIA member, the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora, presented a report on the outcome of the pilot project to the colleagues of other local organisations with the aim of encouraging them to set up similar external OSH services for their members.

The present brochure is the translation into English of the different presentations given at the meetings and workshops in preparation of the pilot project for the Bulgarian employers.

ILO Conventions and EU Directives on Safety and Health at Work¹

Safety and health at work has an important role in implementing the *acquis communautaire* in the social policy area.

The new legislation that came into force in the area of OSH in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe clearly identifies the responsibility of all stakeholders involved in establishing systems for occupational safety and health services. The philosophy of this legislation is based on European standards on safety and health at work, and its implementation is of particular importance in the process of EU accession. The objective is to move on from the prevailing practice of compensating employees exposed to hazardous working conditions towards prevention, especially as responsibility for providing a safe and healthy workplace rests with the employer. The integration of an OSH policy within the whole strategy for managing and developing a company has two aspects within the framework of a long-term plan:

- (1) the employer's contributions to occupational accident and disease insurance when these are differentiated, based on a risk assessment and the actual risk incurred for a particular company (such a system is to be introduced gradually in Bulgaria, according to the provisions of the Insurance Code); and
- (2) certification according to ISO quality standards, where the level of working conditions and workplace risk assessment are a compulsory element of Total Quality Management (TQM) in the certification procedure.

In accordance with the new legislation and following global trends and the strategy of the ILO, **the priorities** are:

- step-by-step **elimination of all forms of compensation** for hazardous work in favour of **prevention**, that is, the removal of production risks;
- assumption of **responsibility for safety and health at work by the employer** (the state shall define the rules and exercise control and workers shall work safely and cooperate with the employer);
- development of standards of conduct for enhancing labour cooperation and the **motivation of workers** to observe the rules on safety and health at work;
- integrating the policy and principles, as well as activities, relating to OSH with the whole system of economic management of the enterprise.

The employer's responsibilities have increased in accordance with the new standards and this has led to changes in the role of employers' organisations. Formerly, according to ILO Conventions – especially C.155 on Occupational Safety and Health, 1981 – it was the responsibility of the competent authority and the occupational safety and health services to determine which hazardous conditions and exposures should be prohibited or limited (and it was the responsibility of the employer to comply with the law).

¹ Annie Rice, Senior Specialist for Occupational Safety and Health at ILO SRO Budapest

In the 1990s the message changed, putting responsibility squarely onto the shoulders of the employer. The message is now clearly PREVENTION: not protection of workers' health or managing workers' illnesses so they don't get worse, but making sure they don't fall ill or get injured in the first place.

The obligations of the employer as stated in recent ILO Conventions are to:

- provide a safe and healthy work environment and working procedures;
- ensure safe machinery and equipment;
- use non-hazardous substances;
- monitor and assess airborne chemicals in the workplace;
- provide health monitoring of workers;
- provide first aid;
- report accidents and diseases to the competent authorities;
- train workers;
- provide information on hazards and means of protection against them;
- cooperate with workers and their representatives. (Workers also have the duty to cooperate with employers in applying safety and health measures and to comply with all procedures.)

EU Framework Directive 89/391/EEC also lays down minimum requirements for safety and health at work and focuses on the employer, who directs work activities and who is therefore responsible for ensuring that safety and health are built into work practices. Its provisions are very similar to those outlined above in relation to the ILO Conventions.

EU Framework Directive 89/131/EEC imposes duties on the employer to:

- ensure the health and safety at work of employees;
- develop a health and safety policy;
- assess risks and update assessments with changing circumstances;
- take preventive measures;
- record risks and accidents;
- inform workers and/or their representatives on all OSH matters;
- provide job-specific health and safety training;
- carry out appropriate health monitoring.

The general principles which can be distilled from these standards are that employers must do all they can to:

- avoid risks;
- evaluate risks that cannot be avoided;
- combat these risks at source;
- adapt the workplace to the individual (ergonomics);
- keep abreast of technological progress in implementing these objectives;

- in general, replace the hazardous by the non-hazardous or less hazardous;
- develop an overall prevention policy;
- give priority to collective means of protection and only resort to personal protective measures if other means are impossible.

In terms of these increased employer responsibilities, all employers shall define their own OSH policy, goals and objectives, aimed at complying with the above measures. However, to enable employers to perform these wide-ranging duties, the EU Framework Directive allows them to designate one or more employees to carry out OSH activities. If this cannot be organised for lack of in-house expertise, then the employer can hire external services with the necessary expertise and capacity.

Remember:
Delegation of duties does not discharge you from responsibility!

Occupational safety and health services – internal or external – may be of help in:

- developing a coherent written prevention policy;
- assessing risks;
- advising on and implementing appropriate measures for risk containment;
- monitoring these measures;
- advising on technological progress;
- providing training and information;
- providing health monitoring.

Support for employers – where to get help?

- employers' organisation (best option for members' needs);
- in-house expertise (OSH expert, workers, trade unions);
- labour inspectorate;
- occupational safety and health services;
- private OSH services.

In-house expertise – whether provided by a safety expert, occupational physician, nurse, trade union representative or shop-floor worker, this has the advantage of being performed by employees who know the enterprise and are able to propose simple solutions to known problems. Consultation with employees is also laid down in the law. The disadvantages of such a solution include the following: the employer bears the cost of employing full-time OSH personnel, which means that only larger enterprises may exercise this option; experts tend to be safety engineers or health professionals who will almost certainly lack certain competencies (it is very hard to find a good polyvalent expert); and trade union safety representatives may sometimes follow their own agenda, protecting the health and interests of their members while not necessarily being sympathetic to the needs of the enterprise and demands of running a business. (However, studies from Western Europe show that the pres-

ence of trade union representatives at the workplace has a positive effect on safety and health and reduces the accident rate compared with workplaces with no union presence.)

Labour inspectorate – the advantage of this service is that it is a nominally ‘free’ service to ensure that employers comply with the law (they also sometimes provide valuable advice). However, labour inspectors are not a substitute for consultants on a fee-for-service basis. The big disadvantage in Central and Eastern Europe is that labour inspectors protect workers by punishing employers if they are not in strict compliance with the law: using their discretion to give preventive advice to employers rather than systematically punishing them is not part of their operating procedures, although the principle exists in ILO Convention 81 on Labour Inspection, which Bulgaria has ratified. Furthermore, the labour inspectorate has insufficient resources for regular visits to all enterprises.

Occupational health services – these are usually made up of professionals with expertise in health monitoring. The staff are often well qualified and have access to treatment centres should an occupational health problem be diagnosed. Their disadvantage is their academic specialisation and lack of polyvalence – they tend to look at the sick worker and not the ‘sick workplace’.

Private occupational health services – the advantage of these is that they offer professional advisory services, and knowledge of law and its requirements, and can offer a broad range of services provided by a multidisciplinary team with a range of expertise, on a fee-for-service basis. The disadvantage of this alternative is the high cost, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the present difficulty of finding appropriate services.

Employers’ organisations as OSH providers – Why?

- fundamental to members’ needs (their primary role is to look after their members’ interests and offer a range of services);
- need to raise awareness of OSH and legal responsibilities of members, as well as to provide support in this area;
- concern with cost of accidents – educate and enable members to examine the true costs of occupational accidents and diseases in order to motivate them to invest in OSH as a cost-effective measure and a necessary part of managing their business;
- regulatory burden of responsibilities (members will need support to cope with the huge number of broad requirements imposed on them, especially SMEs);
- unions pushing for OSH improvements. Unions already provide advice, information and training for their members and safety representatives on the shop-floor. They can also be very vocal at national level. Employers can benefit from similar support from their employers’ organisation in the OSH field.

There are many advantages to employers’ organisations providing OSH services:

- they represent in practice a ‘one-stop shop’ offering a broad range of services to their members. An OSH service is as much a core service as any other within the EO, and can be linked to other activities;
- they are employer-friendly (recommendations made by the EO OSH services will be appropriate and not excessive);
- they are easy to access by the members, through already-established contacts;
- they have the necessary national profile with the government and government agencies, such as the labour inspectorate, which puts them in a good position when negotiating OSH provisions in legislation and the means of implementing the requirements imposed on employers by legislation;
- they also have a national profile as a bargaining partner with trade unions. OSH can be discussed as it is of concern to both employers and workers and solutions can be driven by practical as well as political factors;
- they often have access to the latest international information as EOs often belong to international organisations, such as IOE and UNICE, and have contact with the ILO, which greatly increases not only access to information but also exchange of experience with other EOs;
- they can offer preferential rates for member services, as well as additional services at no cost, such as mass information campaigns.

In conclusion, we may say that providing OSH services for members is an opportunity for employers’ organisations. OSH services are relevant to the needs of members, enhance the image of an employers’ organisation and have revenue potential. If the organisation offers a range of services in accordance with its members’ needs, existing members will be confident they can rely on it and new members will be attracted, enabling the organisation to grow.

Risk Assessment¹

Under EU law, employers are obliged to carry out risk assessments at the workplace (these are not to be confused with the ‘risk assessments’ carried out by labour inspectors and OSH services with the present intention of classifying enterprises for the purpose of hazard pay). So, what is a risk assessment?

I. A risk assessment is nothing more than:

- a careful examination of HAZARDS (what in the workplace could cause harm);
- weighing up the RISK (the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard);
- deciding what PRECAUTIONS should be taken to prevent harm;
- necessary ACTION to reduce risk.

A risk assessment is NOT a minute check on whether all legislative requirements are being complied with.

The important thing is to decide whether a hazard is significant and whether it is covered by satisfactory precautions so that the risk is small. For example, electricity can kill, but the likelihood of it doing so in an office environment is remote – provided that ‘live’ components are insulated and there is no damage or defects.

II. Definitions:

- HAZARD is anything that has the potential to cause harm, for example, injury or disease to people, damage to the environment, property, plant or equipment;
- RISK is the chance, or likelihood, that a hazard will result in injury, illness, loss or damage to people, the environment, property, plant or equipment.

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Severity} \times \text{Probability}$$

III. Legislative requirements:

EU Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 obliges employers to be ‘in possession of an assessment of the risks to safety and health at work, including those facing groups of workers exposed to particular risks’.

This Framework Directive states that:

- risk assessment is an employer responsibility;
- he or she can designate a competent worker or workers to carry out activities related to protection and prevention of risks at work;

¹ by Annie Rice, Senior Specialist for Occupational Safety and Health at ILO SRO Budapest

- if in-house personnel cannot be organised then he or she shall enlist competent external services or persons.

UK legislation, as an example of an EU member state's legislation based on the Framework Directive, states that:

- **all** employers must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of all risks to workers and any other person who may be affected by their undertaking;
- employers with five or more employees must record the significant findings of the assessment;
- a competent person is to be appointed as responsible for carrying out the risk assessments (a competent person is someone who 'has a thorough knowledge of the tasks involved and of the working environment; the ability to identify hazards; an understanding of the necessary controls [means of protection]).
- the labour inspectorate can prosecute or fine individuals for non-compliance with risk assessment requirements. (Insurers will also require evidence of risk assessment in pursuit of any claim.);
- risk assessments should be 'adequate' and 'suitable and sufficient', not over-complicated, merely good enough to achieve the purpose stated in regulations.

IV. When should a risk assessment be carried out?

The UK regulations provide for risk assessments to be done:

- before setting up and using a workplace;
- when planning work processes;
- before installing, commissioning or erecting plant;
- before selecting any personal protective equipment which must be provided;
- whenever changes are made to the workplace, system or method of work, plant used, chemicals used, etc.;
- whenever new information becomes available.

V. How to do a risk assessment

Five stages of risk assessment:

1. *identify the hazards;*
2. *decide who might be harmed and how;*
3. *evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done;*
4. *record your findings;*
5. *review the assessment and revise it if necessary.*

1. Identify the hazards

- Walk around the workplace – what can reasonably be expected to cause harm? This is an important step in the risk assessment process – a hazard which is not identified cannot be managed.
- Use checklist.
- Question employees and/or their representatives – they may have noticed problems which are not immediately obvious during a risk assessment.
- Develop a list of activities whose risks are to be assessed and managed.
- Break down each activity into consecutive tasks and each task into steps.
- Identify all negative outcomes arising from each step and all possible causes of the outcomes.
- In identifying hazards you have to decide:
 - whether people could be injured or made sick as a consequence of the work done, for example through exposure to noise, extreme temperatures, electricity, falling objects;
 - what could go wrong during the production process (What if equipment is misused? Are there heavy or awkward lifting jobs? Is the work repetitive? Are workers properly trained?);
 - how might these injuries happen to people (broken bones, eye damage, hearing problems, respiratory problems, etc.);
 - what would happen if a child were to enter the work area;
 - whether there are any other special hazards, for example, during occasional work, such as maintenance.

Tools that can help you identify hazards include:

- previous workplace inspections or surveys;
- written or verbal accident reports;
- personal observations;
- talking to the working conditions committee;
- warning labels or signs;
- material safety data sheets;
- manufacturer's manuals or instructions;
- consultants' reports.

2. Decide who might be harmed and how

After identifying the hazards, you have to decide who might be harmed, taking into account all those who may be at risk. This is not to say that you should name individuals, but you do have to consider:

- young workers, trainees, new and expectant mothers who may be at special risk;

- cleaners, visitors, contractors, maintenance workers, who may not be in the workplace all the time;
- members of the public, who may be harmed by the workplace activities.

3. Evaluate the risks

Risk is a function of both likelihood and consequences. You therefore have to define what is the likelihood of the hazard resulting in injury or harm, how severe an injury is likely to be and how many people are likely to be harmed. Each risk can be prioritised by categorizing it 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. Record your findings. The following classification is an example of risk categorisation:

		Consequences			
		Major	Moderate	High	Medium
Likelihood	Expected	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM
	Could occur	HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
	Rare	HIGH	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW
	Probably never	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	LOW	LOW

High risk – unacceptable, implement measures of protection immediately. Job must be stopped until action is completed.

Medium risk – unacceptable, low cost measures are to be undertaken. Action to be undertaken within two weeks.

Low risk – considered acceptable. Action to be undertaken within one month if necessary.

Risks can be managed by taking adequate protection measures. In this connection you have to decide whether the hazard can be eliminated altogether. If not, can the risks be controlled through:

- preventing access to the hazard;
- organising work to reduce exposure to the hazard;
- use of personal protective equipment;
- provision of welfare facilities?

4. Record your findings

A risk assessment will report significant hazards found and indicate groups at risk. The findings must be shared with employees and others who may be affected. Reasonable measures of prevention and protection must also be formulated.

The risk assessment is a written report. You have to prove by this report that:

- a proper check was made;

- you dealt with all obvious significant hazards, taking into account the number of people who could be involved;
- the precautions are reasonable and the remaining risk is low.

The risk assessment must be kept by the employer for reference, to show compliance with the law, and to assist in monitoring hazards and precautions.

5. Review the assessment and revise it if necessary

The risk assessment does not stop with the completion of the report. You have to ensure that the protection measures proposed in the assessment are actually implemented, revise the assessment each year and supplement it if necessary when new hazards are introduced into the workplace.

OSH Services: The experience of PREVEMED, Belgium¹

Belgian legislation permits the existence of internal and external OSH services:

1. Internal:

- there is an obligation for every company is to have an internal service that works together with an external service in relation to certain aspects of the law;
- small companies with no safety engineer (fewer than 20 employees) are obliged to cooperate with external services;
- large companies with a safety engineer (more than 20 employees) shall cooperate with external services in accordance with needs and internal expertise.

2. External (for example, PREVEMED):

There were 67 external OSH services in Belgium before 1996, but as of 2004 only 22 were left. This is the result of improved circumstances in the workplace and new legislation that requires extra investment on the part of the employer.

External OSH services in Belgium are non-profit organisations in most cases formed and owned by employers and controlled by:

- an advisory committee with representatives of employers and employees;
- the Ministry of Public Health's Department of Preventive Medicine (Flemish Community);
- the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (Federal Government of Belgium)

Every five years, external OSH services must file a new application to operate in Belgium as a whole or locally.

Important legal aspects

At the OSH Conference 2002 in Amsterdam an analysis of legal aspects of OSH in EU member states was carried out and the different organisational models compared (for example, they are non-profit organisations in Belgium, while in other countries they may be private or public, government or insurance-company owned). The general public supported the suggestion that the ideal governance structure of OSH institutions would be **independent and non-profit**.

¹ Dr. Frans Vermeiren, Director-General, and ir. Bart Vanderschrick, Director Risk-management, of PREVEMED, npo

Recognition criteria of OSH services in Belgium:

- Multidisciplinary organisation consisting of two departments:
 1. medical department: doctors and nurses
 2. risk management department:
 - safety engineers;
 - ergonomists;
 - industrial hygienists;
 - psychosocial specialists.
- Criteria of recognition:
 - principles of TQM (total quality management)
 - fixed bookkeeping plan
 - necessary material, technical, scientific and financial means
 - sufficient number of prevention advisers (doctors, engineers ...)
- medical department:
 - 1 hour/worker with an annual medical examination
 - 20 min./youngster under 21 years
 - 20 min./worker at risk of external stress – strain
- risk management department:
 - 10 min./worker for ALL workers.

For PREVEMED this means:

- medical department: 40,046 hours = 20 full-time doctors;
- risk management department: 13,822 hours = 7 full-time prevention advisers.

Financing OSH services in Belgium

This depends on the total hours that the OSH service must provide:

- in case of an annual medical check-up: 1 hour/year;
- medical check-up 1/3 or 1/5 year: 12 or 20 min/year;
- not exposed to medical risks: 8 min/year.

Tariffs (costs) are per person/year, not per medical examination.

Additional tariffs apply for specific medical acts related to the OSH risks facing the examined person in their work situation.

Categories of person who must undergo an annual medical check-up:

- occupational risks:
 - chemical agents (benzene, toluene, lead);
 - physical agents (noise, vibrations);

- underage persons (between 18 and 21 years);
- persons with a physical disability;
- 'safety' function (chauffeur, etc.)
- contact with foodstuffs;
- persons subject to specific demands, for example those whose eyesight might be affected by working with personal computers, or whose back might be injured lifting heavy weights;
- shift work;
- psychosocial risks;
- persons who work in control rooms.

PREVEMED's structure:

Staff – 35 persons. These are specialists with seven years' basic medical training and an additional four years' specialization in occupational health.

Paramedical staff – 35 persons

Support staff – 20 persons

Safety engineers – 20 persons. Hygienists, ergonomic experts, psychological experts.

Examinations are carried out in both fixed centres and mobile medical centres. PREVEMED has nine vehicles or trailers equipped as medical centres, which give them greater flexibility.

The following types of medical examinations are performed:

- chemical risks;
- physical agents;
- potential respiratory risks;
- biological risks;
- potential dermatological risks

Total number of medical examinations carried out in 2004 – about 54,000.

The medical department of PREVEMED uses a computerized medical program, ERGOMED.

PREVEMED is an occupational safety and health organisation which is regionally active and provides services to about 8,555 employers in seven provinces, involving a total of about 85,000 employees and 54,000 medical check-ups annually.

Goals of the OSH Service

Primary goal: Full satisfaction of the members' needs

This is achieved through multidisciplinary cooperation between the medical department and the risk management department.

Risk management department

This encompasses five activities:

- industrial safety;
- industrial hygiene;
- ergonomics;
- psychosocial aspects of labour (stress, bullying, etc.);
- occupational health.

The department has an advisory role in relation to all companies and an obligatory role in relation to small companies, since they are obliged to prepare a global risk prevention plan and analysis of accidents at work (more than three days' absence).

According to Belgian legislation all companies are obliged to:

- promote interaction between internal and external OSH services;
- provide these companies with support in relation to everything they need to carry out their activities but for which they do not have internal expertise. This is based on a written contract between the parties.

Industrial safety:

- risk analysis;
- training (general safety, fire, explosion, etc.);
- protective measures and management;
- safety coordination for construction projects;

Industrial hygiene:

- analysis of chemical substances in the workplace;
- noise analysis;
- analysis of water distribution;
- HACCP (food industry);
- training (working with chemicals).

Ergonomics:

- advice on working in offices;
- advice on manual handling and heavy loads;
- training.

Psychosocial aspects of work:

- stress – analysis and advice;
- bullying – analysis and advice;
- alcohol and drug campaigns;
- post-traumatic stress disorder after accidents;
- training (stop smoking, assertiveness courses, stress management, etc.).

Occupational health:

All advice that goes beyond basic health checks.

Challenges of the OSH service

- different types of clients – small (fewer than 20 workers), medium (20-100 workers), large (over 100 workers);
- finding a good balance between the interests of the employer and the employee.

How PREVEMED carries out a risk assessment¹

The legal obligations of the Risk Prevention Department of the Occupational Safety and Health Services are to:

- assist in hazard analysis and draw up preventive measures;
- advise the company on a global prevention plan and annual action plan;
- conduct onsite investigations following industrial accidents in the workplace.

The Risk Prevention Department of PREVEMED provides consultation which includes risk analysis and working out a global prevention plan, investigation of industrial accidents and other activities. This is accomplished through visits to enterprises, annually or every three years, which means 6,800 annual visits with a standard report .

Analysis of industrial accidents involves:

- immediate investigation (within eight days) for severe accidents (more than 30 days of work incapacity);
- investigation during annual visit (accidents that have caused more than three days of work incapacity).

Tools for performing a dynamic risk check include:

- risk assessment (mandatory);
- global action plan (plan, check, action);
- annual plan (what must be done).

Risk assessment

According to the Kinney Method – the risk is determined by probability of occurrence (P), frequency of exposure (E) and severity of possible damage (G) or

$$\text{Risk figure } R = G \times P \times E$$

Applying the following indicators to specific situations:

Severity of possible damage	G
‘worst case scenario’	
Disaster (many dead)	100
Calamity (a few dead)	40
Very serious accident (dead)	15
Serious (serious injury)	7

¹ ir Lode Boeve, Director Risk-Management, at PREVEMED, npo

Important (disability)	3
Incident (first aid)	1

Probability	P
Expected	10
Possible	6
Unusual, but possible	3
Possible in an exceptional case	1
Practically impossible	0.2
Virtually impossible	0.1

Frequency of Exposure	E
Continuous	10
Frequent (once a day)	6
Occasional (once a week)	3
Unusual (once a month)	2
Rare (several times per year)	1
Very rare (once a year)	0.5

Remarks: A risk assessment demands thorough preparation. The objective is to make changes in order manage risks in good time. It should not be forgotten that the quantification of risks is subjective, but an assessment provides an opportunity to compare risks and to define priorities.

Global action plan:

- the employer takes the initiative to draw it up;
- directs the 'welfare' of the enterprise for a five-year period;
- contents:
 - activities;
 - responsibilities;
 - means (financial, organisational, material);
 - evaluation (yearly) and adjustment.

Company visit

First visit

The objective of the first visit to the company is to become familiar with the enterprise, to work out a first risk assessment, to determine the level of safety and to prepare for a standard visit. A doctor and an engineer take part in the visit on behalf of the Occupational Safety and Health Service, and an in-house risk prevention officer on behalf of the employer. The visit takes between one and two hours and a report is made based on a 'Basic risk analysis and identification of hazards' checklist.

Standard visit

The standard company visit is an obligation of the external occupational safety and health service and is performed on its own initiative. This visit is made either annually or every three years. A doctor, an engineer and an assistant shall participate in this visit on behalf of the Occupational Safety and Health Service, and an in-house risk prevention officer and a delegation of employees from the side of the company/employer. The visit lasts between one and four hours and its purpose is to update medical risks (subject to medical supervision), and to draw up a list of activities with third parties, workstations, an inventory of products and prevention measures, collective protective equipment (rails, ventilation, noise insulation, scaffold) and personal protective equipment (helmets, boots, ear-plugs, safety glasses). A survey is made during the standard visit also of toilets, canteens, changing rooms, washing facilities and lockers, as well as of first aid facilities (procedures, first-aid kits, first-aid helpers, first-aid rooms), fire and emergency exits (evacuation procedure, fire extinguishers, in-company fire service, emergency exits). Safety signs are also checked, measurements made (air samples, noise, humidity, etc.) and reports by other organisations examined (labour inspectorate, fire service, periodic inspections), as well as training given and information made available. After investigating industrial accidents (during the past year) a risk analysis is made and a global prevention plan drawn up.

BIA programme to train Bulgarian employers to ensure OSH at regional and sectoral levels

Background

The BIA training programme on occupational safety and health at work was developed in response to the need to inform Bulgarian employers both on what was required to bring Bulgarian companies into compliance with OSH legislation and supplementary regulations, and on OSH best practice, including how it might be implemented by Bulgarian companies as part of the national strategy on Bulgaria's integration in the European Union.

Programme objective

The strategic goal of the Programme is to provide Bulgarian employers with the basic knowledge, motivation and skills to optimise the management of working conditions. BIA set itself the difficult task of establishing a new 'culture' among Bulgarian employers, enhancing awareness of the need for OSH measures in the workplace as a prerequisite of obtaining a competitive market advantage and sustainable long-term investment in human resources.

The training is intended to help employers identify what factors might improve health and safety and to develop strategies for healthy and safe conditions by:

- strengthening prevention activities;
- encouraging cooperation;
- building a company policy and strategy for OSH;
- increasing awareness of the significance of OSH in company and personnel plans;
- increasing awareness of specific roles and tasks;
- preventing accidents and promoting health at work;
- building a new culture of OSH, based on awareness of the law.

The training methodology demonstrates the new style of management based on:

- principles and methods of management which acknowledge that workers are an indispensable factor in the organisation's success;
- a culture and appropriate guidance principles which include workers' participation and encourage motivation and responsibilities at all company levels;
- principles of work organisation which establish a good balance for workers between duties, control of their work, skills and social assistance;
- human resource policy which actively promotes safety and health in the workplace;
- integrated occupational health and safety service.

It is a specific objective of the programme to provide the basic knowledge, motivation and skills necessary to put companies in compliance with OSH legislation and regulations in the Republic of Bulgaria.

Target groups

Representatives of important sectoral companies, as well as representatives of SMEs in the following groups:

- employers;
- representatives of employers in working-conditions committees (LCC) and working-conditions groups (LCG);
- OSH personnel in companies;
- heads of human resources departments;
- legal advisers;
- chief accountants;
- OSH specialists;
- freelance OSH consultants.

The BIA OSH training programme is designed for employers and their representatives on working-conditions committees, as well as a broad circle of clients and practitioners at different levels of the company hierarchy, to put Bulgarian organisations in compliance with legislation and regulations on safety and health at work. The organisation of this training on a modular basis allows integrated training with different emphases, as required, on technical safety issues, work hygiene and so on.

OSH services of an employers' organisation in Bulgaria (Industrial Association of Stara Zagora)¹

Introduction

Short description of the economic structure of the Stara Zagora region.

The region of Stara Zagora is situated in Central South Bulgaria and features a relatively wide variety of industrial, agricultural and social activities. There are about 3,000 companies engaged in, for example, machine-building, chemicals, food and beverages, meat processing, dairy, bakery and confectionery, printing and publishing, farming. The regional industrial association has more than 50 local (company) members.

The share of enterprises in the region employing fewer than 10 persons is 82.8%, mostly in the private sector; craft firms alone number more than 1,000. The share of enterprises with more than 1,500 employees is less than 1%.

The following table presents the situation as regards accidents at work:

Year	Work accidents			
	Total accidents	“Typical” accidents	Accidents resulting in disability	Fatal accidents
2001	401	384	5	12
2002	413	400	5	8

Analysis of accidents at work in the region in the past two years shows a persistent trend in the number of accidents in manufacturing. One major reason for this is the lack of preventive activity. According to government data, many significant accidents are not registered at the National Insurance Institute and the General Labour Inspectorate.

Existing organisations in Stara Zagora offering occupational safety and health services – challenges from the competition

Twelve occupational safety and health services are registered in the Stara Zagora region. According to the relevant legal documentation they have concluded contracts and serve over 250 small and medium-sized enterprises. All are private and profit-oriented, and their regular personnel includes at least the three persons minimally prescribed by Bulgarian legislation: occupational health physician, engineer and economist or lawyer. In most cases, training is insufficient in respect of European standards.

¹ ir Ivan Lenkov, Director of the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora, member of BIA.

Experiences of the OSH service set up by the Industrial Association of Stara Zagora

Establishment

The Industrial Association of Stara Zagora (hereafter: Industrial Association) has been active in occupational safety and health since 1999. With the adoption of the Occupational Safety and Health Law (OSHL) in 1999, a group of experts was set up to consult with companies and assess workplaces and risk. An OSH service was officially registered with the Industrial Association in 2002 mainly to cater for small and medium-sized companies and organisations in the Stara Zagora region.

The established OSH service does not have legal personality. It forms part of the Industrial Association, and contracts with companies and organisations are concluded on behalf of the Industrial Association's OSH Service section.

The service operates in accordance with OSH legislation and sanitary/hygiene norms. It works directly with the company departments and employees concerned with working conditions.

Personnel – Qualifications and requirements

The minimum regular staff of the OSH service consists of four specialists, employed by the Industrial Association:

1. a physician who has completed a one-month course on workplace hygiene theory in Trakia University, Stara Zagora, and one month's practical training at the Hygiene-Epidemiological Institute of Stara Zagora;
2. a nurse;
3. an engineer specialising in machine-building;
4. an economist (level: secondary or further education).

If necessary, and depending on the risks involved and the activity of the company or organisation with which a contract has been concluded, the OSH service temporarily contracts-in additional specialists, for example, in the fields of ergonomics, psychology, toxicology, social medicine, engineering, work organisation, law.

Services

The OSH service provides external services for improving the working environment, work safety and optimisation of the work process through:

- risk assessment of workers' safety and health;
- measures for implementing OSH legislation, sanitary-hygiene norms, and other rules and requirements;

- the working out of rules, norms and instructions to help enterprises to ensure safety and health at work and advice on their proper implementation;
- organisation of preliminary and periodic medical examinations and of studies and analyses of the health condition of workers;
- the working out of recommendations to employers regarding the restructuring of workplaces, work improvements and organisation, including workload;
- the working out and involvement in the implementation of training programmes for management staff, workers and their representatives concerning the regulations on safety and health at work, observance of sanitary-hygiene norms and requirements governing the working environment and the work process.

The OSH Service of Stara Zagora, in cooperation with ILO-Budapest and as a result of the training conducted and the business plan model provided, developed its own marketing and investment plan. This provided an opportunity to evaluate achievements so far and to plan the next steps to strengthen the service's market presence. As a positive consequence, the OSH service has increased its membership and now provides services to 120 companies, employing more than 1,500 workers, from the regions of Stara Zagora, Kardjali and Momchilgrad. The service relies entirely on the revenues generated by membership fees.

From 2005 the OSH service intends to use mobile units to conduct medical examinations and other tests.

Implementation of the Work Improvements in Small Enterprises (WISE) programme and its action manual 'Better productivity and better place of work'

WISE constitutes a systematic approach to raising productivity and improving working conditions in small and medium-sized enterprises. The method also includes some training materials in the form of separate handbooks.

It should not be considered a substitute for implementing legal standards, but rather complements other efforts directed towards improving working conditions.

The method aims to reflect real conditions in small and medium-sized enterprises, and focuses on:

- giving practical advice;
- providing cost-effective solutions;
- proposing solutions that help to raise productivity and quality.

Implementation of WISE is based on the **practical training** of owners/managers or entrepreneurs in the small enterprise sector. This kind of training differs considerably from conventional classroom teaching, emphasising **voluntary participation** based on the expectation of concrete results in productivity and product quality, and using local examples and practical activities for participants in manufacturing plants and setting up groups for mutual support and advice. Above all, however, this kind of training is built on the dissemination of positive ideas and practices between different enterprises.

The technical issues covered by the course include a large number of improvements in working conditions relevant to productivity, social facilities and safe and healthy conditions in the workplace. In general, the material stresses getting the process of improvement under way rather than specific activities.

The main objective of the course is, by the end of training, to enable the participants – managers of small and medium-sized enterprises – to **identify** potential improvements in the work process and work conditions and to **develop** cost-effective solutions based on local experience. Moreover, the participants have to be able to *implement* these solutions in a real environment, showing them that the method is really effective and giving them the self-confidence to apply this experience in practice.

Work in small and medium-sized enterprises is often the hardest, the number of accidents highest and working conditions the most unfavourable. Of course, many people consider that investing time and resources in improving the work environment is a luxury when there are millions of unemployed. They contend that the primary task should be employment creation. Such arguments rest on the assumption that working conditions have no relation to productivity and that their improvement is merely a financial burden bringing no advantages to the enterprise or to society in general. However, elementary measures such as the regular cleaning of the workplace and machinery, or the proper storage of raw materials and fin-

ished products, can considerably diminish risks at work while simultaneously increasing efficiency. Some changes in workplace design and lighting or the work environment can lead to similar benefits. Equipment design changes and organisational improvements may turn out to be important factors and to increase efficiency and workers' motivation, while at the same time reducing tiredness, strain, work absences and staff turnover.

While much has been done to improve working conditions in larger enterprises, there are fewer effective methods for realising improvements in small enterprises.

Increasing productivity is one of the course's core emphases. This is extremely important bearing in mind the voluntary nature of the course: if owners/managers see no opportunity to raise productivity they will rapidly lose interest.

The technical content of the course is oriented more towards possible solutions than to the problems themselves. The examples used from the participants' enterprises must represent good illustrations with the potential for wide application, and not merely demonstrate that particular problems exist.

The technical materials are organised under eight technical headings. Each subject is selected because it concerns common problems for small and medium-sized enterprises related both to working conditions and to productivity:

1. ***Storage and handling.*** Improving storage and handling helps employers to free poorly utilised space; reduces the time lost in searching for tools and materials; decreases capital costs resulting from incorrect storage and handling; simplifies control of warehouse stock; reduces operations to minimum; and improves the outward appearance of the factory.
2. ***Workplace design.*** Most production activities are performed in workplaces or workstations where workers carry out the same operations hundreds of times a day. Benefits from small improvements are thus multiplied. The introduction of elementary improvements such as stands, easels, steady work surfaces and placement of instruments and materials where they are easy to reach is compensated many times over.
3. ***Machinery safety.*** Although no one wants accidents to occur, machinery safety is often disregarded as a costly and ineffective measure by both workers and managers. Nevertheless, the use of some techniques often makes it possible to increase productivity while at the same time reducing potential risks.
4. ***Control of dangerous substances.*** Dangerous substances of one kind or another are to be found in many small and medium-sized enterprises. Most problems in this field can be dealt with by simple and inexpensive means.
5. ***Lighting.*** Better lighting and improvements in visibility often increase productivity and reduce strain. This is especially important when the work requires rapid and accurate movements or when products of very high quality are being produced. Better lighting does not necessarily mean higher costs. The use of daylight and regular cleaning and maintenance may improve lighting and simultaneously reduce electricity bills.

6. ***Social facilities and services related to work.*** Social facilities are important for every enterprise. Every working day workers have to drink water and other liquids, eat, wash their hands, use the bathroom, rest and relax. Good facilities are very important for enhancing productivity. They improve state of health, morale, motivation, work satisfaction and attendance.
7. ***Working premises.*** Most small enterprises are located in buildings which were not specifically designed for such activities. New equipment is usually set up simply where space is available, creating risks for workers. There are many things that could be done even in older buildings to improve ceilings, walls and floors. The positive effect of simple measures concerning ventilation, heating and air pollution can be enormous.
8. ***Work organization.*** Improvements in the way production is organised and planned can greatly influence productivity and motivation. Modern techniques of work organisation, such as combining work processes, creating buffer storage, use of multiple skills, development of group workstations and use of product-based organisation, offer numerous advantages. They promote smoother and more effective work processes, higher quality productivity and greater flexibility, reducing the down time of costly machines and requiring less supervision.

Setting up occupational health services at branch level organisations (construction sector project in Bulgaria)

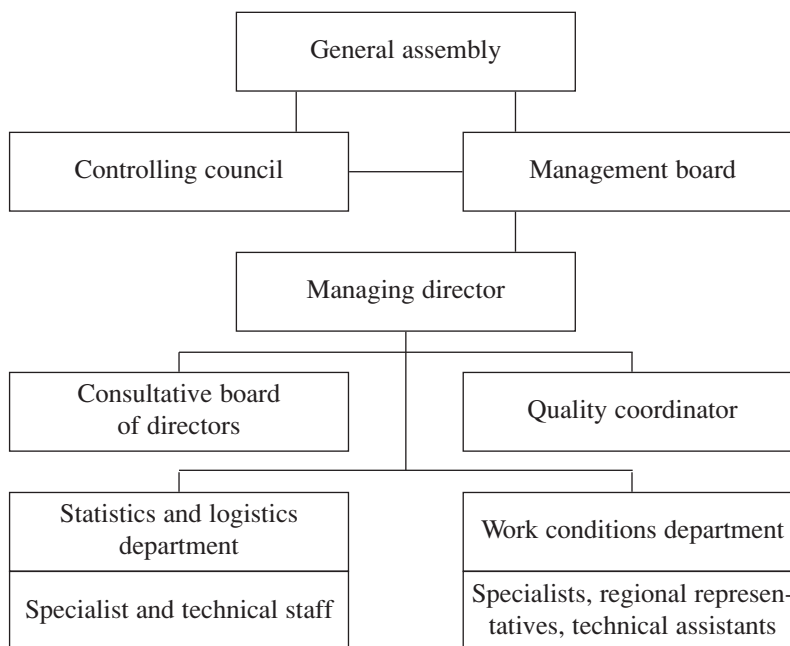
I. Major objectives of branch occupational health services:

- supporting employers in OSH implementation;
- contributing to the formation of universal high standards governing work conditions and their attainment throughout the branch.

II. Legal status of OSH services:

- non-profit employers' association:
 - unit of a branch organisation, or
 - independent organisation of branch association members;
- the service must be in compliance with branch association requirements.

III. Administrative structure:



IV. Financing the service (possibilities):

- by branch organisation
- by employers and external clients
- by projects and programmes

V. Services that may be offered by the occupational health service:

- Advisory services:
 - risk assessments and reports or expert opinions and supplements to the risk assessments made by the employer;
 - development of a coherent (written) preventive policy and annual plans;
 - risk management programmes and preventive measures;
 - consultation on the ergonomics of new equipment and in reconstruction;
 - assisting employers with information and advice in negotiations within tripartite co-operation and contacts with the labour inspectorate.
- Training – programmes, organisation and running of courses.
- Information base:
 - creating and maintaining a database on work conditions, accidents, measures taken;
 - providing statistical information, with analytical reports on specific current problems for the sector or for the specific employer; information on average and limit values of different ergonomic characteristics of the sector;
 - information on new OSH (including technical) developments both domestically and abroad;
 - reports with accident analysis.

VI. Advantages of the branch OSH service:

- specific profile of problems designed for the sector;
- services are entirely focused on the employer;
- easy access and contact;
- national profile in bargaining;
- quick access to latest international information;
- preferential cost of services;
- possibility to generate income from external clients.

VII. Standards and models in accordance with which the products are created:

- introduction of ISO standards and sub-systems, including OHSAS 18001:2002 on Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems;
- introduction of integrated models on quality management, maintenance and organisational safety, including:
 - labour safety management, and
 - management of emergency cases;
- products also conform to:
 - Regulation No. 2/22.03.04 concerning minimum requirements for health and safety at work in construction and assembly works;
 - Regulation No. 7, which is in compliance with Directive 92/57/EEC of 24.06.1992;
 - Law on Safety and Health at Work;
 - other relevant laws and regulations;
 - Regulation No. 3 of 14.05.96 concerning instructions to workers and employees.

VIII. Characteristics of OSH in the construction sector:

- large number of different activities;
- constantly changing conditions on building sites;
- use of workforce with a wide range of qualifications, including very low;
- workplaces are often mobile.

IX. Current OSH problems in construction which could be improved by the branch service

- Switching from formal to real work on the part of OSH committees and groups by means of methodological instructions and good examples.

The General Labour Inspectorate (GLI) investigation in 2003 found that, concerning the OSH committees and groups:

- *initial and periodic training for members is lacking;*
- *staff are not informed;*
- *there is a lack of activities;*
- *meetings are too formal.*

A number of positive and negative examples are shown below

- Creating conditions for occupational health service efficiency.

It is obvious from the GLI investigation that:

- *a relatively large number of companies have no OSH management system;*
 - *very often OSH is reduced to risk assessment. There are few cases where the OSH service consults and assists employers to ensure safety and health at work. There are no health records and sickness rates are not analysed;*
 - *the OSH service still does not provide information on the relation between working conditions and workers' health;*
 - *some OSH services do not engage in real activities at all*
- Analysing typical risks in construction and providing assessments by encouraging employees and committees to participate.

The GLI examination ascertained that the assessments made only by OSH services are in most cases 'academic' and do not address the real situation. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is prescribed without being specified. On the other hand, in assessments made by persons working in the construction industry, emphasis is put on collective protective equipment.

Model assessments are often encountered: formal dangers are mentioned which do not exist.

Sometimes in quantitative risk assessments inadequate values are set, which leads to paradoxical results aimed at showing that there is no need for additional protective measures.

It is evident that the discrepancy between OSH needs and resources is still significant.

- Looking for ways to surmount formality and neglect of systematic instructions.

The GLI investigation unambiguously established the existence of this problem.

- To share European and world experience in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) to overcome the disparaging attitude to them in Bulgaria.

The investigation found that either PPE was not used or the workers were not instructed in its use.

- Supporting the employers in joint OSH measures where there are two or more companies on one building site.
- Drawing up special instructions for safe work with machinery and proper identification of risks in workplaces.
- Developing instructions for delivery, testing and utilisation of building equipment (gigs, compressors, drilling equipment, mosaic machinery, vibrators, and so on).

Machinery is frequently leased either without an insured mechanical specialist to take delivery of, test and run it, or without specially trained operators. This increases the risk of accidents considerably.

Useful Websites on Occupational Safety and Health

International:

Organisations:	Web-address:
ILO – Safework	http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework
International Occupational Safety and Health Information Centre (ILO)	http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/cis/index.htm
WHO	http://www.who.int/occupational_health/en/
WHO Regional Office for Europe	http://www.euro.who.int/healthyworkplaces
European Agency for Safety and Health at Work	http://europe.osha.eu.int
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions	http://www.eurofound.eu.int/working/working.htm
Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Safety and Health	http://www.balticseaosh.net/index.shtml

National:

Countries:	Organisations:	Web-address:
Canada:	Canadian Center for Occupational Safety and Health	http://www.ccosh.ca
USA:	Occupational Safety and Health Administration	http://www.osha.gov
	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health	http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html
	National Fire Protection Association	http://www.nfpa.org/index.asp
	National Safety Council	http://www.nsc.org
France:	Institut National de l'Environnement Industriel et des Risques (INERIS)	http://www.ineris.fr
	Institut National pour la Recherche et Sécurité (INRS) (French National Institute for Research and Occupational Risk Prevention)	http://www.inrs.fr (in French and English)
Germany:	Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin:	http://www.baua.de
	Hauptverband der gewerblichen Berufsgenossenschaften (HVBG) (German Occupational Accident and Disease Insurance System)	http://www.hvbg.de/e/pages/
Belgium	Institut pour la prévention, la protection et le bien-etre au travail (PREVENT)	http://www.prevent.be
Sweden	Swedish Work Environment Authority	http://www.av.se/english/default.shtml
U.K.	Health and Safety Executive	http://www.hse.gov.uk
Ireland	Health and Safety Authority	http://www.hsa.ie
Russian Federation	Institute of Industrial Safety, Labour Protection and Social Partnership, OSH Information Centre, Saint Petersburg	http://www.safework.ru