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The mainstreaming of occupational health and safety into education and training in Europe: the role of the European Network Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health (ENETOSH)

Abstract

This article briefly describes developments for the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into education and training in Europe. It makes particular reference to the European Network Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health (ENETOSH). The objectives, tasks and results of this EU project are described. The article concludes by identifying the elements necessary for a coherent European strategy for the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into education systems in Europe.

Background

Discussion of the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into general and vocational education and training at European level was delayed by almost ten years. As early as 1986, the Council of Europe, together with the education ministers of the Member States, had issued a resolution on the mainstreaming of consumer education into primary and secondary education. This was followed three years later by a resolution concerning health education in schools. Not until the mid-1990s did safety in schools become an issue at European level: in 1995, the European Commission adopted the SAFE programme of non-legislative measures to improve health and safety at work, and the first European conference on the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into the education system was held in Dublin in November 1996 under the Irish EU Presidency¹. This development in OSH was supported by a clear commitment on the part of European education policymakers to the principle of lifelong learning².

In 2002, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao launched a project to mainstream occupational health and safety into education, and organized a conference on "Learning

about OSH" under the Spanish EU Presidency. The results of this conference were incorporated directly into the 2002-2006 Community strategy on health and safety at work. This Community strategy marked a turning-point in occupational safety and health: education and training were defined as key factors in the development of a genuine culture of risk prevention in Europe³. At its first meeting in 2003, the "Mainstreaming OSH into education & training" Contact Group founded by the European Agency discussed the draft of a possible strategy for the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into education. The result of this discussion formed the basis for the Rome Declaration, which was published in Rome on 3 October under the Italian EU Presidency. At the end of its second meeting, held in 2004 in Dresden, the Agency Contact Group called for the creation of a European network for education and training in occupational safety and health⁴.

ENETOSH: a European network for education and training in occupational safety and health is created

In October 2005, the "European Network Education and Training in Occupational Safety and Health (**ENETOSH**)" commenced its activities in the form of a project sponsored by the European Commission as part of the LEONARDO DA VINCI education programme (term: 10/2005 – 09/2007). The network currently comprises 30 partners from 15 European countries. It is supported by an advisory board in which the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the European social partners in the construction sector, and the partner networks ENWHP and ENSHPO are represented, together with other bodies. The network is co-ordinated by the BGAG Institute Work and Health in the German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV). In addition to the European network, national networks are being set up in some countries, including the Czech Republic, Austria, Portugal and Germany.

ENETOSH is conceived as a permanent transnational network of training and OSH professionals involved in OSH education and training. The network assures, consolidates and systemizes the level of experience gained to date in Europe in the area of OSH education and training, and facilitates access to and discussion of model good practices and innovative training methods. ENETOSH also develops standards of competence for instructors and trainers in occupational safety and health, in order to improve the quality of tuition and to promote the process of mainstreaming occupational safety and health into education and training. In the

long term, ENETOSH thus contributes towards reducing the accident and occupational illness rates in companies and in public facilities, primarily among young workers, but also among older employees.

ENETOSH is committed to an integral approach to the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into education and training. This means that ENETOSH encompasses all phases of lifelong learning, i.e. all levels of the education system, from kindergarten and school, through vocational and higher education, to vocational further training.



The integral approach of ENETOSH

ENETOSH implements the entire spectrum of possible intervention measures: from the provision of information, through awareness-raising campaigns, the incorporation of occupational safety and health into curricula, extracurricular measures, behavioural training, and programmes for promotion of a prevention culture in educational institutions and companies. Central to the network's creation is the issue of what form a strategy should take which is to permit and promote the incorporation of OSH into all phases of education and all areas of society⁵.

ENETOSH: how the European education and training network functions

The members of the network are organized in multinational and interdisciplinary groups of experts. The examples of good practice for example are collected by four groups of experts, each representing one of the areas of education. Each group of experts is co-ordinated by a member of the network. In addition to a catalogue of criteria for

selection and analysis of the good-practice examples, an editorial committee assures the quality of the material published on the ENETOSH Internet platform (brief descriptions, contact data, links, product information, video clips). A biannual two-day workshop is held at which topics of common interest are discussed and experience pooled. At the last workshop, held in Dresden in July 2007, one of the issues discussed was how the good-practice examples could be used to formulate possible principles for the successful mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into general and vocational education in Europe.

The annual Training & Innovation event is traditionally held at the BGAG in Dresden, following on directly from the summer workshop. Training & Innovation has been held since 2003 in conjunction with the European Agency, and provides OSH and education experts with an opportunity to pool information at a personal level. The 7th Training & Innovation 2007 was devoted to the standardization of education and training in occupational safety and health. In addition to representatives of the European Commission and the European Agency, 80 experts from a total of 19 countries attended the event. The sessions ranged from papers discussing principles in the area of standardization and certification to presentations of good-practice examples from a number of European countries and for all educational levels⁶.

The work of developing the ENETOSH standards of competence was also conducted in mixed groups of experts. In the run-up to development work, two working papers were produced in the network: the first on changes in the world of work and their influence upon the requirements for competencies in occupational safety and health⁷, the second on the development of standards for teaching staff in the OSH area. The latter of these working papers compared existing educational standards in Finland, Austria and Poland and described the principles of the European Qualification Framework (EQF)⁸. Based upon this preliminary work, areas of competence were first defined for which the skills, knowledge and further personal competencies required of teaching staff were then formulated in a second stage. In a third stage, the competencies were assigned to the levels of the EQF.

ENETOSH: the results of the European education network

One of the most important results of the work in the network to date is the personal contacts forged within it during co-operation on specific tasks. In addition, the network has added 17 new partners and 5 further countries to the original 13 project partners

within the projects term. This trend suggests that the network may continue to grow in the future. Since its launch in April 2006, approximately 300 examples of good practice have been published on the ENETOSH Internet platform. Of these, just under 50 have also been described in detail. The news page of the ENETOSH platform is continually updated with the latest information on the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into education and training in Europe. A "Who's Who" currently listing 80 training and OSH experts completes the resource⁹.

Within the ENETOSH project, a standard of competence for OSH educators and trainers has been developed. The ENETOSH standard covers the following fields of competence:

1. Education and training
2. Safety and health at work
3. Workplace health promotion

OSH Management.

The standard of competence is supplemented by checklists for trainer assessment. These checklists provide teaching staff with a tool for assessment of their own competencies, and education and training bodies with an aid to selecting teaching staff. The referencing of standards to the levels of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) simplifies comparison between the qualifications of OSH teaching staff across Europe.

Conclusion

If a risk prevention culture is to be developed which permeates all levels of the education system, it is essential that the experience and expertise gained with examples of the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into education and training in Europe be brought together. As early as 2004, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work presented a model describing key factors for the success of mainstreaming¹⁰. Since the European "Safe start" week in 2006, the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into general and vocational education has become an established concept in the majority of EU Member States. What remains lacking, however, is a clear, common European strategy for the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into the area of education policy. Such a strategy could address key aspects of the Rome Declaration, such as the definition of qualitative and quantitative objectives for the integration process¹¹.

In the course of ENETOSH's network activity, the needs which must urgently be met for promotion of the development of a risk-

prevention culture through education and training become apparent:

- Stepping up of research in the area of education: analysis of the needs of teaching staff in the area of occupational safety and health and of the needs of companies with regard to qualification in occupational safety and health, of their younger personnel in particular but also of their older employees; evaluation of the effectiveness of different educational approaches and methods for the development of a risk prevention culture
- Guidelines for the mainstreaming of occupational safety and health into the various areas of education and into corporate management at national level
- Instruments for the stimulation of joint activity between those responsible for the respective areas of occupational safety and health and education
- Systematic initial and further training of teaching staff at all levels of the education system in the principles of occupational safety and health and in transfer methods and integral strategies
- Greater and continuous representation of OSH projects in the European Union's Life Long Learning programme.

ENETOSH facilitates access to examples of good practice, and in conjunction with its members, has created a consensus on what teaching staff can and should know in order to communicate occupational health and safety in a sustainable manner. The next logical step would be the creation of a European centre which focuses the available resources on the subject of OSH education and training, systematically organizes the pooling of information between those responsible for the areas of OSH and education policy, and offers transnational initial and further training for experts in the areas concerned.

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 4. For documentation of the meetings of the Agency Contact Group, see: <http://osha.europa.eu/topics/osheducation>
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6. For documentation of the papers presented at the 7th Training & Innovation, "Standardization of education and training in safety and health", see: <http://www.dguy.de/bgag/de/Veranstaltungen/tundi/index.html> and www.enetosh.net/webcom/show_article.php/veranst/train7. A publication containing the proceedings is currently in preparation.
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Jörn Janssen

Agency Workers: Social Justice Long Overdue

Institute of Employment Rights, London, 21st April 2008.

In the light of the battering of the British Labour Party in local elections on the 1st May, it seems most difficult to imagine any progress in labour rights. The British Government had already been lobbying against the draft European Directive for equal rights for agency workers. There is little chance now that this obstruction will cease just because the Prime Minister's power has been undermined again.

The dominant position of the British trade unions was put forward in a seminar of its legal think tank, the 'Institute of Employment Rights' in order to muster support for a new private members bill to be discussed in the House of Commons 7th May 2008. Andrew Miller/MP, however, presented his bill in a rather defensive way, as just another initiative to move the Government in the direction of equal rights for agency workers.

Fortunately Jack Dromey of Unite made a really convincing and unequivocal case that it is not just for the sake of migrant workers