

Special issue "Forum SSM"

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEES RESULTS, FACTS AND FIGURES

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SINCE JUNE 2009 – APRIL 2011?

- ✚ We conducted a **research in order to have a clear view of the situation of the H&S Committees** in the companies selected to participate in the project. The research has been translated in English and will be uploaded on the project website;
- ✚ We developed a pilot training kit (training curriculum) which we tested and then revised and adapted to the needs of our trainees;
- ✚ We already completed two series of seminars;
- ✚ A series of 5 training courses for members of the Health and Safety Committees:
 - 110 persons – representatives of trade unions and of the management coming from various companies of the following sectors: food processing; mining, chemical; concrete and construction materials; aerospace; water protection; health care
 - 8 trainers – 2 per training session
- ✚ A series of 2 training courses for new members of the Health and Safety Committees: **30** participants from different branches;
- ✚ We completed the 3rd series of seminars for trade union representatives who are members of the HSC and we trained **50**;
- ✚ We set up a **Resource and Information Centre** which also includes a multimedia library accessible to union members from partner organizations;
- ✚ We **created a website** dedicated to the project, which includes sections dedicated to training, materials used during the courses, information about Health and Safety at the working place, useful links

- ✚ We developed a fully functioning forum which enables online tutoring of the participants and discussions on the topic of health and safety;
- ✚ We already conducted **4** sessions of online tutoring;
- ✚ We published **5** issues of the Newsletter (quarterly) – and a special issue in English;

FACTS & FIGURES

- ✓ We trained about **200 persons**: members and new members of the HSC, TU leaders who are part of the HSC;
- ✓ We involved in the project about **31 Health and Safety Committees**, representatives of the management from different branches;
- ✓ We produced **1200 training kits**, which we distributed to the participants
- ✓ Three issues of the quarterly newsletter were produced and distributed among partner organization, as well as to various public institutions (Labour Inspection, Ministry of Labour, other concerned ministries etc.) – 5 issues and a supplement
- ✓ We produced **1500 CDs** and **1500 flyers** which we distributed in companies



PARTICIPANTS FEED-BACK

- All of the training sessions were well appreciated by the participants
- More practical examples were requested
- The adaptability of the training sessions to participants proposals was appreciated
- Practical examples and experience exchanges in daily activity were also well appreciated
- Several proposals regarding the legislation improvement were formulated

<http://www.comitetessm.ro/>

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

A STUDY ON TRAINING TO IMPROVE HES IN BULGARIA, ROMANIA AND NORWAY

This report originates from two projects supported by grants from Norway through the Norwegian Co-operation Programme for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development.

The theme of the projects was Health, Environment and Safety (HES) in the workplace and they were mainly carried out in Bulgaria and Romania.

Within these projects there was a strand allowing researchers in the three countries to investigate a special topic coming up during the project activities, which concentrated on setting up HES training courses in Bulgaria and Romania.

The present report contains three chapters and is structured in the same way as similar reports produced by the project teams in Bulgaria and Romania:

1. Summary of existing training requirements for workers' representatives in matters of Health, Environment and Safety.
2. Signs and evidence of how workers' representatives in charge of Health, Environment and Safety are being trained.
3. Suggestions for efficient follow-up of national rules on HES training for workers' representatives.

In a separate annex we present, observations based on a short comparison of the three countries are formulated.

This report has been drafted by *Nadezhda Daskalova* (Bulgaria), *Valeriu Frunzaru* (Romania), in addition to *Odd Bjorn Ure* and *Line Eldring* (Norway).

We are grateful for the continued support from the project coordinator *Hans Øyvind Nilsen* (Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions, LO) and the input from the trade unions involved in the three countries.

MAIN OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE NATIONAL REPORTS FROM BULGARIA, ROMANIA OR NORWAY



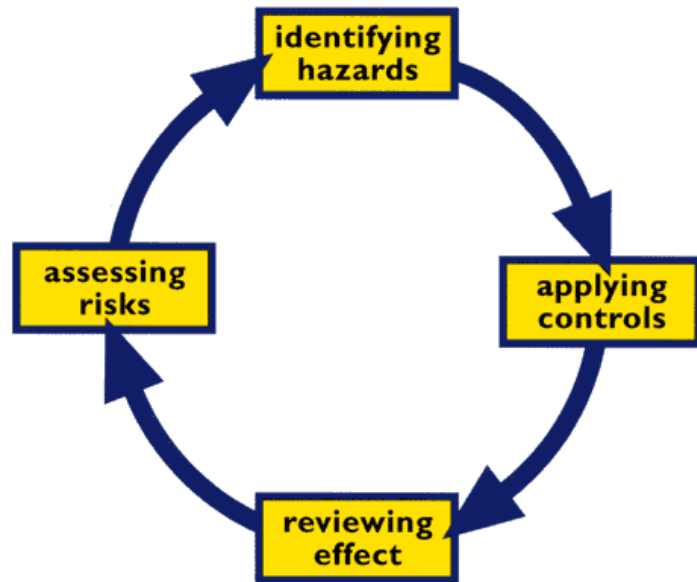
It was agreed that this topic should be training to improve HES, with a particular emphasis on training of workers' representatives.

The fact that the projects aimed at improving the social dialogue in Bulgaria and Romania implied that the topic of HES training for managers was also tabled.

The issue of how specialised the shop stewards should be and whether they should have a bird's view on all sides of the work organisation, is presently debated in the area of employee training (cf. UK experiences with learning representatives¹).

¹ <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/>

In this context, the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) has launched a “development project” between three unions aiming to enlarge the structure of workers’ representatives with a shop steward devoted to supporting the training of employees².



One consideration is to what degree a specific shop steward with the prime responsibility of training, can increase the volume and the quality of the workplace training that employees are offered by the enterprise, often combined with assistance from local learning centres or other providers.

To link this with HES, it is worth noticing that a case study on training in Norwegian SMEs revealed that local trade unions are not among the main instigators of company training, which often is left to the responsible for Human Resources Development within the enterprise.

The unions influenced however training in matters of Health, Environment and Safety (Ure, O.B. 2009).

A similar point is made in the Romanian report, more specifically on the interplay between shop stewards and “workplace health and safety committees”.

²<http://www.lo.no/s/Utdanning/Livslang-laring---EVU/Kompetansetilitsvalgte/>

Along the same line of thought, the Bulgarian report calls for “an enlarged role of collective agreements at all levels (...) for improvement of the training” (in HES). There are therefore reasons for raising this issue as a general point in the three-country project between BG-RO-NO. In addition to the aforementioned point about HES training in the context of industrial relations and shop stewards’/ trade unions’ influence at and beyond the workplace, the three national chapters devoted to such improvements have - at least - singled out two more communalities.

The first touches on the outreach of training arrangements set up to improve HES. In this regard, the report from Norway refers to concerns about the absence of rules for the minimum duration of HES training for employers.



The Bulgarian report evokes elaboration of joint training programmes between organisations for employees and employers, while ensuring that the training is consistent with respective roles in Working Conditions Committees/ Groups (cf. also Petkova 2010). Conducting training needs analyses (TNA) will contribute to such consistency (Bulgaria) and TNAs may be one solution to the present rigidity in the sectorial implementation of Norwegian rules for HES. An extension of this argument is whether HES training courses should be organised by employers, trade unions or labour inspectorates (cf. Romania), above all with a view to improve communication around the importance of HES at the workplace and between those involved.

For the trade unions, one question to consider is the influence on the *contents* of training which they could have while being involved in developing courses, vs. the control exercised when arranging courses. Sometimes trade unions cannot engage in both processes and may have to choose one way of influencing HES training.



A third common point in the three country reports is the wider involvement of institutions surrounding the actors trying to spur HES training at the workplace. The Romanian report features the historical patterns of public or social partner institutions that frame the present work on HES.

One example is Labour Inspectorates. The role of the national inspectorate in improving HES training is also evoked in the Norwegian and Bulgarian report.

In a wider context, institutionalisation is important in Bulgaria for developing and sustaining a network around Working Conditions Committees/Groups.

In Romania, improvements in the institutional framework may alleviate some problems reported on financing training courses in HES.

FINAL REMARKS CONCERNING H&S IN ROMANIA

The Romanian history from 1848 is dominated by the dispute between two big theoretical/ political approaches: 1. the first one criticises the forms without substance and 2. the second one supports the forms (even without substance) because they will may determine the substance to ,fill up' forms. The workplace health and safety committees, the balanced participation of the employer and employees in the workplace health and safety-related issues and all the institutions and rules adopted from abroad are ,forms' that, as we could see from the research findings, doesn't fit well with the employees and employers attitudes, values and knowledge (with the substance). In a similar situation Robert Putnam *et al.*, after analysing the influence of the negative cultural determinism on the development of southern Italy, states that: „institutional history moves very slowly. As for setting-up institutions (not just the mere drafting of necessary laws), times is measured in decades”. We cannot wait so long. Strengthening the organisation and operational capacity of workplace health and safety committees or bring the reality to the spirit, nor the letter of the law can be done faster if the recommendations from this paper are taken into consideration. The unions can play a key role in this necessary and daring project. They can inform, demand, draft applications to access funds, so they can be the accelerator that speed up the process. The laws (even sometime they are not very clear), the TU and the cultural organisation imported by the multinational companies that are more aware by the health and safety issues could together make possible efficient workplace H&S committees.

