



The application of the EU Health and Safety Strategy and the progress achieved

Barcelona, June 3-4 2010

Kris De Meester

Director health and safety affairs, FEB-VBO

Chairman BUSINESSEUROPE Health and Safety Working Group

General comments

- Implementation of the Community Strategy is the responsibility of all actors
 - ✓ European Commission
 - ✓ Member States
 - ✓ Institutions (European Agency for Health and Safety,...) and experts
 - ✓ (European) social partners
 - ✓ Companies
 - ✓ Workers
- BUSINESSEUROPE agrees on importance of the Strategy
- Key role of employers in health and safety performance

General comments

- We support the objectives of the strategy
 - ✓ General objective = reduction of occupational accidents by 25%
- -25%
 - ✓ Not focus on the figure as such
 - ✓ It should reflect an ambition
 - ✓ What is important is what action has been taken

Policy framework

- Strategy correctly emphasises the importance of a modern and effective policy framework on health and safety
- Policy must be designed in such a way that it meets its objectives and can be effectively implemented by companies in a cost-effective and simple way
- Ensuring implementation of the well-established OSH regulatory framework is the most appropriate course of action
- Better implementation also means looking at better regulation and simplification

Better implementation

- Responsibility of Commission and governments:
 - ✓ Making/changing regulations is not enough
 - ✓ From the cradle to the grave approach
 - ✓ Implementation ! (not just on paper)
 - ✓ Better regulation
 - ✓ A level playing field
 - ✓ Policy that allows employers (and workers) to take up their responsibility
 - ✓ Practice what you preach

Credibility

- Ensure implementation
- Ensure level playing field
- Legitimacy and proportionality
- ...

- If not... adversaries have argument to do nothing, to resist, to undermine the goals,...

- TO DO FOR ALL: step up efforts in implementation with prevention as key element

Policy framework

- Better regulation and simplification
 - ✓ Is not an objective in itself
 - ✓ In the light of effectiveness and efficiency
 - ✓ Includes reduction of administrative burdens
 - ✓ Returning to the original objectives (e.g. “assess risks and take preventive measures” instead of “have a written risk assessment”)
 - ✓ Looking for better ways of achieving objectives
 - ✓ Non-legislative measures should be part of the options

Examples

- Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders
 - ✓ Non-legislative means would be a more appropriate way to deal with the issue
 - ✓ Broad directive on ergonomics will not lead to real improvement, will lead to more complexity and loss of acceptance and credibility by employers, especially SMEs
- Electro-magnetic Fields
 - ✓ Amendment should lead to legislation which is appropriate and compliance-friendly for all companies

Policy framework

- Practical guides are a useful tool
- But
 - ✓ Need for better dissemination, in particular to SMEs
 - ✓ More understandable language
 - ✓ More good practice examples
 - ✓ Better timing (procedures to produce guidelines are too complex and lengthy)

National strategies

- Effectiveness of Community Strategy to be ensured by development of national strategies
- Commission has important role (to be strengthened) in encouraging development of national strategies and monitoring effectiveness
- Social partners at national level should be involved in the preparation and implementation of such strategies.

Specific elements in strategy

- Better (re)integration of workers at the workplace
 - ✓ Due to accident at work or occupational illness
 - ✓ Benefits for all
- Promoting changes in behaviour

Changes in behaviour

- Development and strengthening of a preventive culture must be a central element of any strategy aiming at improving occupational safety and health
- Development and strengthening of a preventive culture = achieving better OSH performance by fostering changes in behavioural patterns
 - ✓ Governments
 - ✓ Employers
 - ✓ Workers
 - ✓ OSH-Experts
 - ✓ Financial world
 - ✓ Students, young people
 - ✓ ALL PEOPLE
- Cannot be achieved through legislation !

Changes in behaviour

- Strategy to promote a preventive culture must
 - ✓ Address and challenge all parts of society
 - ✓ Go beyond the workplace and the working population
 - ✓ Should help create a general culture that values health and risk prevention
- Elements
 - ✓ Awareness raising
 - ✓ Promote appropriate health and safety management as an integral part of effective business management
 - ✓ Education system
 - ✓ Workplace training
 - ✓ Enabling environment
 - ✓ Leadership
 - ✓ Practice what you preach
 - ✓ Guidance, assistance
 - ✓ ...

Conclusion

- Companies committed to health and safety at the workplace
- An appropriate framework should exist to encourage company-led initiatives tailored to their sector, size and specific needs
- Further promotion of the business case for health and safety at work is needed
- The mid-term review is an important moment to assess implementation
- The mid-term review is an important moment to launch or review policies and/or measures in order to reflect the ambition of the 25% reduction of occupational accidents

Thank you!

www.businessseurope.eu