

## THE TOPIC CENTRE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Providing Quality Occupational Health and Safety Information for Europe

### What is the Topic Centre Work Environment?

The Topic Centre Work Environment is a consortium of 16 institutes from various European Union Member States. The Kooperationsstelle has been working on this TCWE in cooperation with a number of renowned European institutes since 1999. The Topic Centre is financed by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in Bilbao and is coordinated by the Finnish Institute of Occupation Safety and Health. The German partners in this Topic Centre are the German Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), BG-Institute for Occupational Safety and Health - BGIA and the Kooperationsstelle Hamburg.

### What does the Topic Centre do?

The Topic Centre's principal task is to collate, evaluate, and process information on important aspects of workplace health and safety protection on the international and on the European level. The processed information is then provided by the European Agency via its Website.

The TCWE deals with all topics connected with occupational health and safety. Examples of best-practice/good solutions in OHS are often only available at the national level and part of the work of the Topic Centre is seeking out and documenting such solutions, so that they will be available to the European Agency.

### Web articles

So-called Web articles are written on selected OHS issues. These texts are specially written for Internet publication on the European Agency Website, either as complete texts or as selected passages. Amongst the Kooperationsstelle's publications are:

- Risk assessment for biological agents
- Checklist for the prevention of accidents in laboratories
- OSH in European's forestry industry
- Preventing vehicle accidents in construction
- Young workers: rights to safe and healthy work
- Young workers: risk and hazards in bars and entertainment venues; in hair dressing; in construction; key

- hazards; risks from vehicles in the workplace.
- Work Experience Schemes: advice for educators on health and safety
- Hazards and Risks in the Retail Trade: advice for young workers
- Dangerous substances in HORECA and cleaning
- Slips, trips and falls and cleaning workers
- Health and safety management of workers with learning disabilities
- Training support tool: power point slides for the cleaning sector

### Finding and evaluating links - Checking currency of sites - Providing expert support

The Kooperationsstelle searches for and evaluates interesting Internet links for the Agency. The information on the Websites is regularly checked to make sure it is up-to-date.

The Kooperationsstelle also provides expert support for the Agency in running workshops/lectures, for example during the European Week for Safety and Health at Work: Forum 12 - Working with dangerous substances: The European policy challenge. ([http://osha.europa.eu/publications/forum/12/forum12\\_en.pdf/at\\_download/file](http://osha.europa.eu/publications/forum/12/forum12_en.pdf/at_download/file))

### Factsheets

For selected topics, the European Agency published so-called Factsheets in all EU languages. Factsheets comprise the most important information on a topic within the short space of 2 to 4 pages. The Kooperationsstelle drafted the Factsheet for Elimination and substitution of dangerous substances, for instance.

(<http://osha.europa.eu/publications/factsheets/34/factsheetsn34-en.pdf>)

### Policy Overviews

Policy overviews offer a concise collation of the activities of government bodies (national, regional, local), authorities/ministries, and important non-governmental



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bodies (business, industry, unions). The overviews are intended to facilitate an evaluation of the European status quo and to foster a preparedness to learn from one another.

The Kooperationsstelle had overall responsibility for the following studies:

- Policy overview of occupational exposure limits in the European Union Member States
- Policy review: Noise in the entertainment sector
- Policies and practices overview: cleaning workers

### Case Study Reports

In case studies examples of best-practice from the various member states are collated, the aim being to present in a uniform way how concerns have introduced and carried out real improvements. The focus is on the background conditions for taking positive and active steps for improving health and safety protection and on learning from one another regardless of national borders. An Example here is:

- Prevention of risks in construction in practice  
([http://osha.europa.eu/publications/reports/108/gp\\_booklet\\_2004\\_web\\_en.pdf](http://osha.europa.eu/publications/reports/108/gp_booklet_2004_web_en.pdf))

All the above studies are available via the Homepage of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

### Our services

Due to its work/participation in the TCWE project, the Kooperationsstelle possesses considerable expertise in the description and analysis of OHS policy and practice in the European Union Member States. At present (2008) it is carrying out a study on "A comparative analysis of national strategies in health and safety at work" on behalf of the German Federal Institute of Occupational Safety and Health in preparation for the Common German OHS Strategy.

The Kooperationsstelle's expertise is available for carrying out similar comparative studies on a contract basis.

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