

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

# European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

EU-OSHA SINGLE PROGRAMMING DOCUMENT 2021-2023



## Annex XII – Strategy for Cooperation with Third Countries and International Organisations

### 1. Legal base and policy base

The objective of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work is to *provide the Union institutions and bodies, the Member States, the social partners and other actors involved in the field of safety and health at work with relevant technical, scientific and economic information and qualified expertise in that field in order to improve the working environment as regards the protection of the safety and health of workers.*"

As one of its specific tasks, the Agency is required to *"collect and make available information on safety and health matters from and to third countries and international organisations"* and to establish a strategy for relations with third countries and international organisations concerning matters for which EU-OSHA is competent.

Article 30 of the founding regulation<sup>22</sup> states that EU OSHA may cooperate with the competent authorities of third countries and with international organisations. Working arrangements with these competent authorities and international organisations may be established with the authorisation of the Management Board and approval of the Commission. Such arrangement shall not create legal obligations incumbent on the Union or the Member States.

The EU *Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020*<sup>23</sup> identifies the need to reinforce coordination with international organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to contribute to reducing work accidents and occupational diseases and to improving working conditions worldwide.

### 2 Strategic approach

In its engagement with third countries and/or international organisations, EU OSHA will remain within its mandate as set out in its founding regulation and the institutional framework. It will ensure that it does not appear to be representing the European Union.

#### 2.1 Reasons for engagement

EU-OSHA engages with international actors to:

- Support the implementation of activities identified in EU OSHA programming documents,
- Ensure a coherent approach with international organisations,
- Raise the profile of the EU and EU OSHA as global leaders in occupational safety and health,
- Support existing and planned EU initiatives with international actors,
- Avoid duplication of effort with other EU actors and international actors, collaborating so that any intervention has maximum impact and delivers a common message,
- Support capacity-building in states to permit the promotion and adoption of the EU tripartite model of worker protection based on goal-setting legislation such as the "framework directive",
- Support the broad goals of EU external policies,

- Support the pre-accession process by facilitating the integration of these countries into EU OSHA networks and activities, and

<sup>22</sup>

REGULATION (EU) 2019/126 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 16 January 2019 establishing the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) <sup>23</sup>

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0332>

- Support international activities led by international organisations that aim to achieve common occupational safety and health goals.

## 2.2 Priorities for EU-OSHA

EU OSHA will continue to work with the EEA and EFTA States (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) under established arrangements through which these countries are integrated into EU OSHA activities.

The Agency will continue to participate in EU programmes such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) actions where available. EU OSHA has been running IPA projects since 2011, and participated in ENP actions between 2013 and 2015.

The following is an incomplete list, not in priority order, of ongoing EU OSHA activities with an international dimension. EU OSHA will continue to:

- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with intergovernmental organisations, particularly the ILO, ISSA, and WHO.
- Interact with key non-intergovernmental organisations, particularly professional and social partner organisations such as ICOH and IALI.
- Interaction with identified regional organisations and networks that obviate the need for more direct action with non-Member States (e.g. Northern Dimension, Baltic Sea Network, ASEAN)
- Welcome visitors to EU OSHA (at their own cost) to share knowledge. In the past, visits have been received from organisations such as KOSHA (Korea).
- Support international activities led by international organisations that aim to achieve common occupational safety and health goals (e.g. the Global OSH Coalition, Vision Zero).
- Collaborate on an ad hoc basis at a thematic/project level with competent authorities in third countries. Such collaboration has included knowledge sharing on survey methodologies and on specific themes (e.g. demographic change).
- Support existing and planned EU initiatives with international actors. In the past, this has included support to European Commission engagement with China, Taiwan, the United States, and international organisations via the International Chemical Safety Cards Project.
- Provide access to EU OSHA material by non-Member States. For example, where third countries have requested to use Agency publications with appropriate acknowledgements.

## 2.3 Limitations on engagement

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When engaging with third-country competent authorities and international organisations, EU OSHA must have the authorisation of the Management Board, approval of the European Commission, must include the activities in the relevant planning documents, and must not create legal obligations on the European Union or the Member States.

The number of actors with whom EU-OSHA could usefully interact is considerable, and it is not feasible for the Agency to engage with all. Therefore, there is a need for EU-OSHA to prioritise its engagement and restrict its involvement taking into account the limitations in available human resources.

### **3 Resources**

EU OSHA has no specific budget for international activities; the Agency follows an activity-based approach to management and budgeting. Resources for international activities are allocated within existing activities such as “Strategic and operational networking” or “Awareness raising” and are included in the planning and reporting documentation accordingly.

Coordination of international activities is carried out by the Network Secretariat reporting to the Executive Director.

### **4 Associated actions: Current and planned activities (2020 – 2023)**

Much of the international work of EU OSHA is reactive, following requests from the Commission, international organisations, and third parties. Such requests may be for visits to EU OSHA, exchange of information, or provision of speakers to training courses and events. Planned and past reactive activities include:

- Support to EU activity with Georgia Labour Inspectorate
- Visit by Taiwanese Government delegation to Bilbao at request from European Commission
- Visit by section of International Social Security Association (ISSA)
- Speakers at WHO summer school
- Speakers at course at ILO Training Centre, Turin

In addition to these reactive actions which are coordinated and reported under strategic and operational networking, there are anticipated activities with international engagement that are aligned with the work programme of the Agency. In particular, there is the activities associated with the Global Occupational Safety and Health Coalition.

#### **4.1 The Global Occupational Safety and Health Coalition**

Proposed at the XXI World Congress in 2017 and launched on 12 November 2019 at the Vision Zero Summit, Finland, the Global OSH Coalition is a multi-stakeholder partnership to promote the critical contribution that safe and healthy working environments make to decent work, global health and sustainable development. Its founding partners are:

- International Labour Organization (ILO)
- International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH)
- European Commission
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)
- Ministry of Manpower, Singapore
- World Health Organization (WHO) as an observer.

The aim of the coalition is to introduce practical solutions to improve working conditions around the world by implementing the commitments of the UN, the G7 and the G20 countries and the European Union on improving occupational health and safety. EU OSHA, alongside the European Commission, is on the steering committee.

The priority is the recording, collection, and compilation of reliable and comparable OSH data and statistics at enterprise, national and global level. A number of task groups have been created, with each task group having an estimated lifespan of 2 years:

- Occupational safety and health and the future of decent work (Lead organization: EU OSHA)
- Introduction of the Vision Zero Concept at enterprises (FIOH)
- Global estimates of Occupational Accidents and Work-related diseases (ICOH)
- Construction of a multiregional OSH information system (European Commission)

EU OSHA engagement in this action is under activities including Strategic and operational networking (coordination), Networking knowledge, and where relevant other project activities (e.g. EU OSH information system).

#### **4.2 Occupational safety and health and the future of decent work**

As an initial step for the task group on occupational safety and health and the future of decent work, EU OSHA agreed to carry out an initial mapping exercise via a survey to national focal points. The results of the pilot mapping will be presented at the World Congress on OSH in October and subsequently the initiative may be extended to other world regions. The purpose of mapping exercise is to:

- Foster collaboration and the pooling of resources
- Share knowledge from relevant research and data sources as well as research methodologies and dissemination strategies
- Provide greater visibility for research and other initiatives to achieve higher awareness and impact on key target groups
- Identify gaps in knowledge with the aim of stimulating research initiatives and funding
- Avoid duplication of ongoing or completed work

This work is complementary to the EU OSHA programmed work on “the future of work”.

#### **4.3 Global estimates of Occupational Accidents and Work-related diseases**

The purpose of this task group is to obtain a regular update of the knowledge and magnitude of major problems caused or partially caused by work-related factors, including fatal outcomes, disabilities, lost years of worklife and whole life.

The task group consists of ILO, WHO, EU Commission, EU OSHA, ICOH, the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), and the Singapore Ministry of Manpower. There is also a subgroup on the economic costs arising from occupational accidents and work-related diseases with FIOH, ICOH, EU OSHA, and Singapore as Members. The work of this group ties in closely with ongoing EU OSHA work on the costs and benefits of occupational safety and health.

#### **4.4 Participation in OSH World Congress**

EU OSHA will participate in the 2020 World Congress in Toronto and is assuming participation in the 2023 event. The congresses are organised by the ILO, ISSA, and a national partner. In previous years EU OSHA has participated in the world congresses in Frankfurt and Istanbul.

At the world congress, EU OSHA promotes awareness of the EU approach to OSH, the work of EU OSHA, and looks to establish collaboration opportunities. Additionally, it supports activities by the ILO, WHO, European Commission, and other established partners.

Participation in the OSH World Congress is under activities Strategic and operational networking (e.g. coordination and keynote activities), Networking knowledge (e.g. Global OSH Coalition), and Awareness raising (e.g. stand and promotional actions).

#### **4.5 Participation at the ICOH International Congress**

EU OSHA participates in ICOH congresses, and anticipates participation in the 33<sup>rd</sup> international congress in Melbourne in February 2022. EU OSHA was active at the 32<sup>nd</sup> congress in Dublin in 2018. Participation at the congress not only promotes the work of EU OSHA, it also provides training opportunities for staff.

### **5 Annex: Risks in engagement with international actors and mitigating actions**

- Failure to collaborate effectively (e.g. due to limited resources) may lead to a loss of reputation
- Risk to health and safety of Agency workers on mission due to sudden significant instability (political, environmental, or otherwise),
- In engaging in financial actions (e.g. low value contracts for translation into local languages) there is a risk that some of those with whom EU-OSHA would engage would not follow the financial norms anticipated and associated with European-funded projects, and
- In engaging in Grant contracts with the DG Enlargement and DG DEVCO to support enlargement and ENP country activity, there is a risk that some countries would not participate in activities as foreseen, leading to a budget imbalance.

Such risks can be mitigated by:

- On-going dialogue with informed EU bodies (e.g. DG EMPL, DG NEAR), seeking “early warning” where possible and following guidelines for engagement from these institutions,
- Including in the planning for specific projects where there is international engagement, an assessment of risks
- Having in place appropriate risk assessment, prevention, and recovery procedures for staff on mission,
- Minimising financial engagement and maintaining financial control (e.g. by purchase of flight tickets on behalf of participants to a seminar),
- Involving also the relevant department of the Ministries of Foreign affairs and the Representations to Brussels of the countries when establishing co-operation, and
- Using the experience of and cooperating with existing global networks such as ILO and WHO, which have already established offices or are involved in EU funded projects in these countries.