

Chemical Safety in Downstream Workplaces

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Background for H&S activities concerning chemical substances

- The REACH legislation has raised expectations that it will help to improve H&S as detailed data will be available
- More and better data or knowledge does not automatically lead to improvement of H&S and reduction of occupational diseases
- Chemical industry has a long experience in reducing occupational risks
- Sharing good practice could help to improve standards also in downstream industries, but needs active cooperation with other sector social dialogues



Sector Social Dialogue Chemical sector

- The Sector Social Dialogue in the chemical industry has dealt with H&S since its inauguration in 2004
- Already in 2003 CEFIC, ECEG and EMCEF have signed the “memorandum of understanding on RC” in which they have agreed to cooperate closely on RC
- Health and Safety is a priority in many sector social dialogues, as agreements between social partners could even replace EU legislation on H&S
- The NEPSI agreement is one example for such an agreement



Health and Safety at the workplace – chemical industry and downstream workplaces

- The EU Commission offers support to social partners for projects which help to improve SDs
- ECEG and EMCEF have conducted a first project on Health and Safety at the work place which was finalised in 2008
- Production of agrochemicals in Western Europe and CEE was evaluated in 2 workshops
- 3rd workshop was focusing on Health and Safety in agricultural production in Spain



Findings (1)

- Almost no occupational diseases caused by chemical substances in the production of agrochemicals – ***this does not mean that there are no accidents !***
- This was understood as being the result of high awareness for Health and Safety at the workplace on both sides - management and workers representatives/trade unions
- Improvement of H&S will remain an important target in many companies – target: 0 accidents



Findings (2)

- H&S standards in CEE have improved, but there is still a need to look at remuneration
- By contrast, the situation in agriculture is different – there are a number of (uncoordinated) initiatives to improve H&S at the workplace, but with little results
- Solution could only be found if the socio-economic situation of the sector is taken into consideration – further initiatives of SP of the sector have been recommended and SD chemical industry has offered further support



Follow up

- Since 2008 there have been talks in the sector social dialogue in the agriculture sector, but other issues have been more important : impact of the crisis and sector specific issues
- There is an interest to organize a follow-up project
- Most likely subject matter will be improvement of H&S in use of pesticides –good practice guide and tool box reflecting the specific socio economic conditions could be a result



Building and Construction Industry (1)

- Social dialogue in the building and construction sector has discussed ways to improve H&S for some time
- Chemical substances of different kinds play a more important role in building and construction
- Already in 2008 first talks have taken place to identify common initiatives and to prepare a project application to the EU Commission
- First initiative has failed as it was not approved, because too complex and too focused on one national experience and system of workers protection



Building and Construction Industry(2)

- In the meantime there have been several meetings to discuss aims and ways between industries and social partners
- In the last working group meeting on RC and H&S of the SSD in the chemical industry it was agreed with EFBWW to draft a new project proposal, starting with identification of risk from a few groups of substances
- Promote good practices could be starting point to improve H&S standards by raising awareness for risks, taking the special socio-economic situation in building and construction into consideration



Personal Care sector (1)

- The sector social dialogue in the personal care sector has discussed risks especially for hairdressers
- Skin irritations and allergic reaction are of high concern for workers which lead in a number of cases to occupational disability
- In the Netherlands there is even a hospital specialised on diseases of hairdressers caused by different kinds of substances
- In spring 2010 SD in the personal care sector has agreed on an initiative to improve H&S by using information on properties of chemical substances



Personal Care Sectors (2)

- There are different options for such an initiative
- SSD in chemical industry has expressed support and interest to contribute with experience and knowledge from the chemical sector
- Decisions will be taken later in 2010 or beginning of 2011



Thank you for your attention



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