

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL

1 A jigsaw falling into place

COMMUNITY POLICY

3 A New Impetus for Community Occupational Health Policy

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

5 Revision of the Machinery Directive

12 The implementation of the Machinery Directive. A TUTB survey

13 Noise Directive: a step forward under the Swedish Presidency

16 Workers' exposure to vibrations : Council common position

19 SPECIAL REPORT ASBESTOS BAN
Asbestos disputes in the WTO : battle won - but not the war
Asbestos - not wanted in the world
"Doing away with asbestos" : what strategy for health protection ?

TECHNICAL STANDARDS

35 EN 292 : the internationalization challenge

36 Standards on biomechanics : close to formal vote

37 General ergonomic standards face international impact and overlapping concerns

MSD

38 Opinion on MSD : An impulse for new initiatives from the European Commission

EVENTS

40

NEWS IN BRIEF

41

TUTB PUBLICATIONS

43 New "Discussions papers" series
TUTB publications in Greek, Italian, Czech and Swedish
MSD and Work Organisation in the European Clothing Industry

EDITORIAL

A jigsaw falling into place

This June, the ETUC adopted a resolution which gives major input into the groundwork on the Commission's new health and safety programme flagged up in the Social Policy Agenda adopted at the Nice Summit in December 2000. The resolution is informed by a state-of-play and outlook review by the Workers' Group of the Luxembourg Advisory Committee.

The ETUC calls on the Commission to bring the new programme within the framework of the general employment strategy, involve the social partners more, and develop a programme focused on efficient legislation supported by instruments like the "open method of coordination". It lays down a set of concrete aims and proposals like extending the scope of the framework directive to self-employed workers, setting guidelines for the development of preventive services, establishing a four-year programme to support the applicant countries which underscore the need to rekindle the Community debate and forge links with other Community policies - not just internal market policies, but gender equality, environmental and public health policies, too.

The Advisory Committee, as a tripartite European body, should play a prominent part in framing and implementing the future Community programme within the spirit of the joint ETUC/UNICE proposals on the procedure for consultation of the social partners on occupational safety and health. UNICE made its position clear in August 2000 in a document entitled *Occupational safety and health - a priority for employers*. The employers argue that the legislative framework is in place, so efforts must now focus above all on application of the law in SMEs through the development of a prevention culture among individuals and putting employers in a position to choose the best-adapted prevention measures.

While the Governmental Group has not yet come up with hard proposals, some governments have published¹ their views and others

¹ Britain's HSE has published its draft contribution :
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/new/content/eu-osh.htm>

spoke at last April's seminar co-hosted by the Swedish Presidency, the Commission and the Bilbao Agency on "Quality of work: A future Community strategy for safety and health at work". The governments' approach can be found in the declarations of the Nice and Stockholm Summits and the press releases put out by the Social Affairs Councils which, in reference to employment policies, talk about the importance of stepping up efforts to promote a safe working environment *for all*. At the Nice Summit, the States agreed to respond to new risks by initiatives on standards and exchanges of good practice. This idea of quality and what it implies in the way of governments' commitment through employment policies is underscored in a Commission Communication which proposes developing the European employment strategy and framing new guidelines for 2002 which include health and safety².

This policy approach can only be welcomed, but it is hard to see how it can be put into practice unless the relevant actors are involved, specific resources allocated, and appropriate indicators set. In a field like health and safety which is - and must always be - essentially legislative, the open coordination method should supplement but clearly must not supplant rule-making. Relevant as it may be to set objectives on which to focus all players' energies, these objectives themselves must stem from real needs (which requires a comprehensive knowledge base on risk situations and exposed workers) and an ongoing evaluation to avoid hollow statistical victories that bring no improvement in working conditions, which is the main focus of any strategy at all levels. That is also what the Economic and Social Committee wants with the call made in its Opinion for an evaluation of national experiences followed by a pilot study. ■

Marc Sapir,

Director of the TUTB

² The guidelines for 2001 make the first ever linkage between employment policy and health and safety at work policy: the Member States will "endeavour to ensure a better application at workplace level of existing health and safety legislation by stepping up and strengthening enforcement, by providing guidance to help enterprises, especially SMEs, to comply with existing legislation, by improving training on occupational health and safety, and by promoting measures for the reduction of occupational accidents and diseases in traditional high risk sectors" - Council Decision of 19 January 2001 on Guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2001 (2001/63/EC).

THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION TECHNICAL BUREAU FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY was established in 1989 by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). It provides support and expertise to the ETUC and the Workers' Group of the Advisory Committee on Safety, Hygiene and Health Protection at Work. The TUTB is an associate member of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN). It coordinates networks of trade union experts in the fields of standardization (safety of machinery) and chemicals (classification of hazardous substances and setting occupational exposure limits). It also represents the ETUC at the European Agency for Health and Safety in Bilbao.

TUTB - Bd du Roi Albert II, 5 bte 5
B-1210 Brussels
Tel.: +32-(0)2-224 05 60
Fax: +32-(0)2-224 05 61
E-mail: tutb@etuc.org
Internet: www.etuc.org/tutb

TUTB Newsletter No. 17 June 2001.

The information contained in this issue is mainly as at 30 June 2001.

The **TUTB Newsletter** is published three times a year in English and French.

Responsible Publisher:

Marc Sapir, Director of the TUTB
Bd du Roi Albert II, 5 bte 5
B-1210 Brussels

Editor: Janine Delahaut
(jdelahau@etuc.org)

Production assistant:
Géraldine Hofmann

Contributors:

Stefano Boy, Janine Delahaut, Theoni Koukoulaki, Marc Sapir, Laurent Vogel

Translation: Glenn Robertson

Reference material: Jacqueline Rotty

Circulation: Géraldine Hofmann

Graphic design: Célia Carrera Schmidt, Cynthia Legrand

Printed in Belgium by JAC Offset