



# Editorial

## Casualisation, worst threat to young

The theme for this year's European Health and Safety Week was young workers. It is a big issue. More than a million young workers are injured in work accidents in the European Union each year. Tens of thousands end up crippled for life. And they are widely exposed to other health risks that will leave them damaged long after the exposure has ended. It is a situation that is creating big social inequalities in health.

There are different ways of coming at the health and safety of young workers. Most common is the paternalist approach, which tries to persuade young people to get into a "preventive culture". It focuses on individual cases – risk-taking, poor training, recklessness, etc. – to disregard any analysis of the employment relationship.

Trade unions believe that the health and safety of young workers depend on tackling casualisation. If there is one common thread in the widely differing situations between countries, branches of industry and occupations, it is casualisation. A prevention policy cannot focus just on specific things like training, information, and reducing individual risks. It must marry better preventive practises to a process that will help turn around the current spread of contingent employment. Behind the many accidents and countless incidents of health damage and other forms of suffering at work lie exploitative relationships.

Young workers are often hired on short-term contracts in order to push down wages, fragment collective solidarity, and downgrade their jobs. Because of this, they often find a gulf between the paper rules and how things are actually done. Even where they know the risks and how to avoid or reduce them, they are denied the means of collective action and representation which would enable them to effectively protect their health and safety.

Job insecurity has enabled employers to enforce creeping deregulation in practise. The rules are still generally there, but increasingly less applied.

## workers' health

This year's European Week came amidst the debates that will shape the new Community HSW strategy for 2007-2012. The relevant policy conclusions need to be drawn from this. The new strategy's priorities should include tackling job insecurity and strengthening the structures that underpin prevention – workers' representation in safety, the health and safety inspectorate, and protective services. It should ensure that all workers bar none have access to these structures.

**Marc Sapir,**

Director of the Health and Safety Department, ETUI-REHS

### Check out our Scoreboard of European OHS legislation!

European occupational health and safety legislation is complex and constantly evolving. Some directives are being updated, new initiatives taken by the European Commission are put out for the European social partners' opinion, ambitious regulations like REACH are long in the making. Even those well-versed in the ins and outs of Europe may be at a loss to find their way through the maze.

We thought, therefore, that what was needed was a quick reference tool for tracking progress on the big European issues in health and safety at work through the system. Check out our first Scoreboard of European OHS legislation. It gives you updated details not just on recently adopted texts, but also Commission proposals that are being negotiated or will be put out to consultation soon.

You can also find the Scoreboard online on our website <http://hesa.etui-rehs.org> > Main topics.

And as if one new feature wasn't enough, this issue also sees the start of a new section "Recommended reading" where we feature recent publications that the HESA Department thinks are worth a look at. If you publish or have written publications that might feature in this section, please feel free to send us a review copy.

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