Occupational Health and Safety Networking in Eastern Europe
OSH EAST NET Project: the network between Italy, Western Balkans and Turkey for occupational hygiene

Esperienze di OHS Networking nell’Europa dell’Est
Il Progetto OSH EAST NET: un network per l’igiene occupazionale tra Italia, Turchia e Paesi Balcanici

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As part of the European IPA Programme 2008, the Project OSH EAST NET (Occupational Health & Safety Networking in EASTern Europe) was established to promote a transfer of knowledge, good practices and experiences in the field of health and safety at work, among Italy, Western Balkans countries and Turkey. The final purpose of the Project was to develop partnerships and cooperation networks, improving the level of health and safety at work in these countries, engaged in the accession process to the European Union.

OSH EAST NET was started in January 2010 and in the following 18 months has attained several concrete results: among others, the construction of the web site www.oshnet.eu, the establishment of exchange programmes between universities, the development of partnerships among stakeholders, the creation of the OSHNET School, the adoption of the Manifesto for Health and Safety at Work drafted by AIDII, the creation of the National Association of Industrial Hygienists in Macedonia and the improvement of existing associations in the other countries.

The Project time ended in September 2011 but the aim is to continue developing and strengthening the network in the field of OSH: there is still a long way to go but the results of OSH EAST NET offer a great opportunity to go further.

**Key words**: health; safety; work; occupational hygiene; network; Balkans; Turkey

**Introduction**

IPA - acronym of “Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance” - is a programme set up by the European Union Commission to provide financial support for projects involving countries engaged in the process of accession to the European Union for the period 2007 - 2013 in order to strengthen their level of knowledge, institutional capacity, cross-border cooperation, and economic and social development, compared with the EU Member States.

In the framework of the IPA Programme - Civil Society Facility: Support to Partnership Actions “Environment, Energy Efficiency, and Health and Safety at Work” - the 2008 Call for proposals’ (EuropeAid/128287/C/ACT/MULTI) mission was to promote a transfer of knowledge and experiences about environmental protection, energy efficiency and health and safety at work; for this purpose, it encouraged cooperation between organisations, institutions, associations and companies in the Western Balkans and Turkey on the one hand and their counterparts in the EU countries on the other hand. The logo of OSH EAST NET Project is reported in Figure 1.

So, the general objective of the OSH EAST NET Project, which has been fully achieved, was sharing knowledge, principles and good practices between the Italian Association of Industrial Hygienists (AIDII) and associations and organisations located in Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey, operating in the Occupational Health and Safety field (their logos are reported in Figure 2).

The Project has been conducted by AIDII (Italy) as leader partner with the support and contribute of the other co-beneficiary partners, which are:

- National Association of Public Health (Albania)
- Confederation of Employers of Republic of Macedonia - Medical Companies Association (Macedonia)
- Association for Safety and Health at Work (Serbia)
- Association of Public Health Research (Turkey)

Besides these partners, the Project has been developed with the contribution of some associated partners:

- International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA)
- ex ISPESL (now INAIL - Italian National Institute for Work Accident Insurance - according to the Italian law D.Lgs. 78/2010);
- Institute of Occupational Health (Serbia).
Specific objectives and purposes of the Project

The objectives which have been attained during the 18 months period of the action implementation, are the improvement of knowledge and awareness on occupational health and safety and occupational hygiene, and the harmonization of risk evaluation standards and of safety educational offer.

Thanks to OSH EAST NET, a fruitful exchange of good practices has been set up between the Italian Association of Industrial Hygienists (AIDII) and the other existing or under construction organisations and institutions located in Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey, as a first step towards the establishment of a permanent network involving the Balkan Countries engaged in the accession process to the European Union.

The activities of the Project were mainly addressed to scientific and professional associations, besides public institutions and bodies, in charge of policy and law making and application in the field of industrial hygiene and occupational safety in the committed countries. Agencies and institutes in charge of control and monitoring, trade unions and social partners from the different countries, have been directly involved in the Project, de facto representing all the stakeholders - businessmen, workers, public bodies and consultants - who were and are those responsible for the implementation on the territory of the Project actions proposed. During the 18 months of OSH EAST NET activities, the foundations of the regional network on OHS (Occupational Health and Safety) have been laid down. The network, managed by the Project’s partners, aimed to involve other institutions located in their territory but also in other countries of the Balkan area sharing the needs and the problems which have led to the Project development. To foster the exchange of information concerning the issues of the Project and to promote its public dissemination, the web site www.oshnet.eu was created; it contains an organic collection of information and documents of help to those in charge of designing, updating and adapting the national systems of industrial hygiene.

Within the Project, documents on the state of art of these systems have been collected, besides the organisation, in each of the partner countries, of technical seminars and thematic workshops, using the European Awareness Scenario Workshop method (EASW).

Starting from the collected information, a framework including both the general context and the peculiar situations of each single country has been outlined, highlighting the shortages and the incongruity of law, rules and regulations. The different aspects characterizing the efficiency of occupational health and safety systems management have been underlined through regional, national and sectorial levels of priority.

The Project helped the creation of new associations of industrial and occupational hygienists (or their incubators) in the countries where they were not existing. The International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), as international supporter of the Project, has welcomed these new associations created thanks to the OSH EAST NET contribution and has hosted a meeting about the Project on the occasion of its international conference in Rome in October 2010.

From the kick-off meeting, which took place in Brussels in March 2010, to the final event of September 2011, 16 different events have been organized - meetings, workshops, round tables and visits; information leaflets, CDs and technical documents about the discussed issues have been produced. Moreover, some experiences, meant to continue also after the Project life time, have been set up: among them: the agreement between the Postgraduate School in Occupational Medicine of the University of Florence (Italy) and other academic bodies of partner countries, like Faculty of Medicine “St. Cyril and Methodus” of the University of Skopje (Macedonia) and other Turkish Universities.

The 11 steps and 16 events which have characterized the development of the Project are listed in Table 1. In Figure 3 some pictures from the meetings in Brussels, Tirana and Belgrade are shown.

The OSHNET School

Since the first months of activity, all partners reported that in all countries the need of a system for certified education is evident and suggested that it could be implemented in the Project framework, addressing it to the education and training of experts from the countries of the Area. That was the reason why the partners decided to create a real school of higher education, with a range of courses structured in modular programmes, inspired by the EU
Directives based education system and similar to those that the Italian Association of Industrial Hygienists (AIDII) organizes in Italy according to the lifelong learning and certification given by ICFP (Italian Institute of Certification of the Professionals for Prevention).

More specifically, the OSHNET School for High Certified Education in the field of Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health presents a series of courses, structured in modules, to be hold in the Balkan Countries which are partners of the OSH EAST NET Project, according to the scheme described in Table 2.

These courses and modules, whose programmes are planned on the basis of the lifelong learning scheme - according to the Italian law - of RSPP (Person Responsible for the Prevention and Protection Service) and of ASPP (Operator for the Prevention and Protection Service) and on the basis of the requirements necessary to sit for the exam scheduled by the ICFP certification system, provide to deserving participants up to 9 credits each. Besides these thematic modules, a course of fundamentals of industrial hygiene, also structured on the basis of AIDII scheme, is expected to be organized in Italy in 2012. Those who attend the OSHNET School modules, and who pass the scheduled final tests, receive a certificate showing the competences acquired, besides a collection of teaching material, produced by the teachers or coming from the lifelong learning system OHLearning (see www.ohlearning.com and Figure 4).

The OSHNET School teachers are professor and lecturers, experts in the field of occupational and environmental safety and health coming both from Italy and from the host country where the course/module is held.

### The OSHNET Manifesto

In March 2010 the Manifesto for Health and Safety at Work, proposed by the Italian Association of Industrial Hygienists (AIDII), was adopted and signed by more than 30 associations and shared by political subjects who manage safety issues (included those Members of Italian Parliament involved in OHS related ministries and commissions). The Manifesto is a document presenting a list of actions aimed to improve awareness and to create a global culture about occupational health and safety, on the wake

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**Table 1: The “road map” of OSH EAST NET Project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>March 25-26</td>
<td>Kick-off meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>May 6-7</td>
<td>Round table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>June 24-25</td>
<td>Project meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>August 4-5-6</td>
<td>Workshop n.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sept 28-Oct 02</td>
<td>IOHA Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>October 25-27</td>
<td>Workshop n.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>December 6-7</td>
<td>Project Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Round Tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>February 24-25-26</td>
<td>Workshop n.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 7-8</td>
<td>Round table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>December 11</td>
<td>Workshop n.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>September 14-15</td>
<td>Final event</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Pictures from the meetings in Brussels, Tirana and Belgrade**
of the Seoul Declaration on Health and Safety at Work adopted on 29th June 2008 by some 50 high-level decision-makers from around the world (see www.seouldeclaration.org).

In the frame of OSH EAST NET actions, as a regular agenda point of the 4 local workshops, the Manifesto has been translated into the languages of the partner countries, following the tested strategy adopted for the creation of the OSH Dictionary on www.oshnet.eu web site, and presented on the occasion of the meetings held with the stakeholders coming from the different countries; it has finally become the OSHNET Manifesto, adopted by the OSH EAST NET members and uploaded on the Project official web site. In some of the Oshnet partner countries the Seoul Declaration has been adopted as well. Figure 5 illustrates some examples of the translated versions of the Manifesto for Health and Safety at Work drafted by the partners and presented during the meetings held in the relative countries; Table 3, instead, contains the OSHNET Manifesto glossary.

In particular, the ten points listed in the Document were firstly proposed and discussed during the four workshops of the Project, trying to identify which of them were prior according to each of the partner countries. For this purpose, a scale of general and local priorities was created using a ballot which results have been disaggregated and interpreted, providing in such a way a schematic image of the state of art of the shortages and needs of OSH systems in the different countries. Table 4 contains the ten points listed in the Manifesto with a short description of each one.

More below, Figure 6 illustrates a scheme of the ballot results; it is clear that the four partner countries - Albania, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey - consider as main priorities of the Manifesto “education and training” (point 7), “prevention” (point 1) and “simplification” (point 10). More details about priorities in each country can be found on the official web site of the Project (www.oshnet.eu).

The Memorandum of Understanding

One of the Project action led to the formalisation of strategic agreements in the shape of a general memorandum of understanding or of bilateral twinning agreements between corresponding institutions. Moreover, the Project has promoted the establishment of
### Table 3: The OSHNET Manifesto glossary in five languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Albania</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Macedonia</th>
<th>Serbia</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parandalim</td>
<td>Prevenzione</td>
<td>Превенција</td>
<td>Prevencija</td>
<td>Önleme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higjienik</td>
<td>Igiene del lavoro</td>
<td>Индустриска хигиена</td>
<td>Kulta rada</td>
<td>Endüstriyel hijyen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profesionalizëm</td>
<td>Professionalità</td>
<td>Професионалност</td>
<td>Profesionalnost</td>
<td>Profesonelliik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e drejtë</td>
<td>Diritti</td>
<td>Права на вработените</td>
<td>Prava zaposlenih</td>
<td>Haklar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risi</td>
<td>Innovazione</td>
<td>Иновативност</td>
<td>Inovativnost</td>
<td>Yaraticilik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nxitje</td>
<td>Incentivazione</td>
<td>Потик</td>
<td>Podsticaj</td>
<td>Özendirici</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trajnimi</td>
<td>Formazione</td>
<td>Обуки - Тренинзи</td>
<td>Obuke-Treninzi</td>
<td>Eğitim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ndihmë</td>
<td>Assistenza</td>
<td>Помощ</td>
<td>Pomoć</td>
<td>Yardim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>përfshirje</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Вклучување</td>
<td>Uključenje svih u rad</td>
<td>Kapsam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thjeshtësim</td>
<td>Semplificazione</td>
<td>Упростување</td>
<td>Uprošćavanje</td>
<td>Yalinlaštirma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: Ten points of the OSHNET Manifesto

**Ten points of the Manifesto for Health and Safety at Work**

1. **PREVENTION**
   - To strengthen and promote direct assistance for the activities of the supervisors.
   - For a state action planned and coordinated, with a strong proactive and preventive, repressive action next.

2. **OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE**
   - To mobilize the country and foster awareness about the issue of occupational diseases.

3. **PROFESSIONALITY**
   - To develop and institutionalize the role of the RSPP / ASPP.
   - To empower and qualify professionals for health and safety at work and to promote the establishment of an annual thematic conference.

4. **RIGHTS**
   - For a bill of rights for workers in health and safety.
   - To promote a greater awareness of workers and the creation of a national network of representatives of workers safety, because there is no prevention and security without the participation of workers.

5. **INNOVATION**
   - To encourage innovation and scientific and technological progress aimed at preventing.
   - To provide new and better technical responses to situations of risk, whenever the scientific-technological progress allows.

6. **INCENTIVES**
   - To develop the system that rewards INAIL prevention and its results.
   - For virtuous mechanisms to trigger investment in security, promote good practices and efficient business models, exploiting the potential of INAIL.

7. **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**
   - To improve education and training on prevention.
   - To reorganize and coordinate university courses, higher education and lifelong learning; to address the economic resources of ESF funds and professional know-how of prevention at all levels.

8. **HELP AND ASSISTANCE**
   - To organize assistance for prevention in small and medium-sized enterprises and by artisans.
   - To encourage the creation of multi-company technical support local services for SMEs and craft activities, including the enhancement of bilateral joint committees.

9. **INCLUSION**
   - To promote policies and best practices inspired by integration and inclusion of disabled and foreign workers.
   - To spread the culture of safety among the vulnerable groups, promoting all forms of useful and innovative linguistic and cultural mediation.

10. **SIMPLIFICATION**
    - To develop formal procedures to re-think a strategy aimed to realize concrete results for a cultural change in OHS that could include also competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises.
partnerships and active cooperation programmes both among universities and among institutions and business companies which act in the different countries in the field of health and safety at work. Of course, it is assumed that the relationships established or reinforced during and through the Project shall continue after it ends.

The project has produced more than its own purpose, establishing and launching successfully the OSHNET School, sharing with the partner countries the Manifesto of Health and Safety at Work and promoting several Scientific Exchange Programmes between Italian universities and universities from Turkey and the Balkan area.

However, besides these successes, there is a great deal of effort to spend yet: we have come a long way but...there is still a long way to go!

The OSH EAST NET Project ended in September 2011, when the final event took place in Istanbul (see Figure 7), but the aim is to go further. For this purpose, taking advantage of the network created by the Project, we need the contribution, the experience and the knowledge of all Italian experts in the field of occupational hygiene, that AIDII represents and aims to represent more.

Conclusions

OSH EAST NET has been a great challenge, an experience which has taught so much to who participated in its establishment and development, surely to the authors of this article that as responsible of the OSH EAST NET central office, have carried on organization and management of the Project.

The results achieved in the field of occupational health and safety at work have been many. Several meetings have been organized, with an attendance up to 300 people, made of academics, professionals and other stakeholders. Among other results, twinning agreements have been signed and the National Association of Industrial Hygienists in Macedonia has been created, as first in the whole Balkans. Moreover, the partners have always tried to give prominence to the Project and its results through the construction of an official web site and the creation of a page on Facebook.

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Acknowledgement

First of all, on behalf of the Italian Association of Industrial Hygienists (AIDII) and of the Central Office of OSH EAST NET, the authors would like to thank the partners and the associated partners for helping to the establishment and development of the Project and to the success of its related activities.

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