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Minutes of the Project meeting “Better prevention, identification and reporting of work-related and occupational diseases and emerging risks” (EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/Multi, Lot 8, RfS no.: 2016/380168/1)

Date: 28-2-2017

Location: Helsinki

Attendants

Magnus Svartengren (Sweden)
Ingemar Ködin (Sweden)
Pija Tint (Estonia)
Eva Pelchi (Estonia)
Raimonda Eicinaite-Lingiene (Lithuania)
Tatsiana Rybina (Belarus)
Nailya Mazitova (Russia)
Eda Merisalu (Estonia)
Jolanta Walusiak Skorupa (Poland)
Timo Leino (Finland)
Riita Sauni (Finland)
Hanna Riutamia (Finland)
Markku Aaltonen (Finland)
Brigitte Froneberg (Germany)
Axel Wannag (Norway)
Ivars Vanadzins (Latvia)
Nina Rubtsova (Russia)
Timo Tuomi (Finland)
Pävi Hamalainen (Finland)
Wiking Husberg (Finland)
Judit Erdos (Hungary)
Dick Spreeuwers (The Netherlands)
(Appendix: list of attendants)

Introduction

The meeting is a combined meeting with EU OSH. The morning session was dedicated to the project as well as a part of the afternoon session. The project plan and the drafting of the questionnaire have been discussed. In the afternoon session there was a common meeting of the project group and EU OSH, discussing issues that are both relevant for EU OSH and for the project

group. This report does not contain the complete minutes of the EU OSH meeting, but only the issues relevant for the project.

Welcome

Dick Spreeuwers, project leader, welcomes everybody and thanks EUROPE Ltd for the organization of the meeting, travelling and hotel arrangements and EU OSH for the hospitality, the organization of the venue and support for the meeting. Dick Spreeuwers gives a brief explanation of the agenda.

Short introduction on the project by Judit Erdos

Judit Erdos, representative of the Contractor company, EUROPE Ltd, welcomes the participants of the meeting on behalf of EUROPE Ltd.

Discussion on Goals, Methods and Planning of the project

(Appendix: ppt presentation)

Dick Spreeuwers provides a presentation on the project based on information from the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the project plan.

The purpose of the presentation and discussion was to get a clear picture of the assignment and of the goals, methods and planning of the project.

The following issues have been discussed related to the ToR and the project plan:

1. Strategy of the NDPHS in relation with the project: Wiking Husberg gives a brief explanation of the NDPHS strategy (see <http://www.ndphs.org/>).

2. Definitions of the concepts of occupational diseases, work-related diseases and emerging risks (OD, WRD, ER).

The definitions of these concepts are not univocal. In general the term “occupational diseases” refers to legally defined entities within legal systems for compensation. The case definitions in many cases are not evidence based, but more or less based on negotiations between social partners. For practical reasons we adopt the ILO list of occupational diseases for this category (http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms_125137.pdf).

“Work-related diseases” is a broader term for all diseases that have a causal relationship with exposures in the work. Relationships can be determined in individual cases or on a population level. Case definitions should be based on evidence based research results.

With respect to the term “emerging diseases” can be referred to the definition of the Bilbao Agency (https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Introduction_to_occupational_diseases):

- Risks previously unknown and caused by new processes / technologies / types of workplaces, or social / organisational changes. For example, nanotechnology is a key technology of the 21st century with far-reaching implications for science, industrial development and new product design. However, despite the potential adverse effects on human health, the toxicology of these nanostructured materials (nanotoxicology) has not been investigated sufficiently. The Compendium in Projects in the European NanoSafety Cluster gives an overview of the topic.
- Long-standing issues such as stress or bullying are now considered as risks due to a change in social or public perceptions. Work-related stress is recognised as a major obstacle to productivity in Europe. A European work-related public health report on Cardiovascular Diseases and Mental Ill Health (2007) has revealed that cardiovascular diseases (CVD) and mental ill health are interrelated, and that mental disorders can be risk factors for CVD and

vice versa. The report states that 6% of all CVD cases among men and 14% in women can be attributed to job strain. Mental ill health is as much a risk factor for cardiovascular disease and mortality as the lack of physical activity or high cholesterol.

- Long-standing issues, such as electromagnetic radiation, identified as a risks because of new scientific knowledge in the field. Although the occupational aspects of electromagnetic fields are undeniable, their health effects are much more debated in relation to public health policy.

3. Influence of language and cultural differences:

Language and cultural differences might have an influence on the interpretation of the concepts OD, WRD and ER and their application in practice. We should be sensitive for these possible influences in the project.

4. Already available information:

It is remarked that there are already several publications on our research topic and to avoid double work it would be helpfull to gain access to these publications. During the meeting the following publications (or papers not yet published) have been mentioned:

- a. Cochrane review (to be published within a few months), people from the Modernet group are involved.
- b. Unpublished Paper of OSHA (Riita has sent it to Dick)

It was decided that everybody who has relevant publications will send them to Dick so that he can use it for drafting the report.

5. Collaboration with other parties:

There are several international organisations or working groups with knowledge on our topic, eg Modernet, Occustat, BSN-network. We can make use of their knowledge and publications and many of the reporters are within relevant networks.

The ToR requires to collaborate with OSH EG and BSN and organize the dissemination activities in line with ILO-, ICOH- and NDPHS-events.

6. The global and specific objectives of the project are presented, as well as the three work packages (see ToR and presentation in Appendix). There have been many projects in Europe making comparisons between countries. It is not our intention to copy this sort of work. There is a general agreement that the project should focus on tracing best practises for collecting information on OD, WRD and ER from a preventive scope.

Discussion on the Questionnaire

(Appendix: ppt-presentation)

It was suggested that the term “inventory” is more appropriate than “questionnaire”. All reporters have access to information provided by registers, national websites, national publications and institutes and have their network from which they can collect the information.

Information of other systems can be helpful in drafting the inventory/questionnaire, e.g. the THOR system in the UK.

Important issues for the inventory/questionnaire, discussed at the meeting are:

Occupational diseases:

There might be more projects or systems in a country besides the official registration of occupational diseases. In the project we are not only interested in the official figures, but also in new ways to collect information on occupational diseases.

The inventory must contain basic information on the official system (legal context, case definitions, process of notification, who reports etc.), but we also want to collect information on other projects and best practices aimed at gaining information on occupational diseases.

The information on these **characteristics of the systems** is more important than total numbers of reported occupational diseases and related figures (per branche, occupation etc.). We will ask for statistical figures, but not exhaustive and if available, information on attributable fractions.

Occustat has also made comparisons between countries and we will request for these publications to avoid extra work.

Work related diseases:

Some of the registers contain information on work-related diseases as well. In some countries there are separate projects to collect information on WRD.

Emerging risks:

We expect that in most countries there are no figures on emerging risks or newly occurring occupational diseases. It is important to collect in the inventory/questionnaire which tools do countries or research groups use to get information on emerging risks. Information on the process of tracing emerging risks is more important than the exact figures.

Education and staffing:

Information on education in OD, WRD and ER in countries is important for our aim, as well as staffing of OSH and institutions for registry.

Information on the workforce in countries: It is important to estimate the denominator, although it will be difficult to get information on the population at risk.

Further planning of work

We will work according to the time schedule in the projectplan.

Following actions:

- **Dick** will complete a report of the Helsinki meeting and distribute it to the reporters and OSH EG (March 2017);
- **All reporters** will send relevant publications to Dick (March/April 2017);
- **Dick** will make a draft inventory and distribute it to the reporters, OSH EG and BSN (March/April 2017);
- **All reporters and OSH EG** will comment on the inventory (April 2017);
- **Dick** will draft a next version of the inventory, which can be used in 2-3 pilot countries (April/May 2017);
- The inventory will be tested in 2-3 pilot countries (**selected reporters/Dick**, May 2017);
- Adjustment of the inventory on the basis of the comments of the selected reporters (**Dick**, May 2017);
- Data collection (**All reporters**, June-August 2017);
- First presentation of the data (**Dick**) and discussion at the St. Petersburg meeting (**All reporters, OSH EG, BSN**) (September 2017)

Next meeting in St. Petersburg

The project meeting will be organized in the context of the Russian Congress on Occupational Health, 26-29 September 2017. Everybody is asked to register on time.

The project meeting is planned September Thursday 28th. There is an option to have a meeting on Wednesday September 27th also if necessary.

References

ILO list of occupational diseases. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms_125137.pdf

https://oshwiki.eu/wiki/Introduction_to_occupational_diseases

<http://www.ndphs.org/>

New and emerging risks in occupational safety and health. OSHA, European Risk Observatory, 2009. https://osha.europa.eu/en/node/6842/file_view

European Commission (Asrti/van der Laan): Report on the current situation in relation to occupational diseases' systems in EU Member States and EFTA/EEA countries, in particular relative to Commission Recommendation 2003/670/EC concerning the European Schedule of Occupational Diseases and gathering of data on relevant related aspects (2013)

<http://research.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/epidemiology/COEH/research/thor/>