



The interaction between the Expert Group on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH EG) and the Expert Group on Labour and Employment (EGLE)

1. The Expert Group on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH EG)

The wealth in the Northern Dimension Partnership region as elsewhere is based on human work. The workforce of the Northern Dimension area (13 countries) covers a total of close to 125 million working people. The working-aged population (15–74 years) covers an even larger share of the whole population (e.g. full-time and part-time workers, home-based work, migrant workers, young people, handicapped, distance work, unpaid work, informal and unregistered work). The smooth integration of all groups, including ageing and young people, into the labour force is crucial for every country.

Therefore, achieving and keeping high standards of occupational safety and health (OSH) is an important task for the respective authorities in all countries in the region. Rapidly changing forms of work and work environment and introduction of new technologies often constitute a challenge for the governmental policies in this sector. A coherent and holistic approach is indispensable for reducing health hazards, improving the productivity and the level of social well-being of every employee. The Declaration concerning the establishment of a NDPHS pays special attention to the OSH and emphasizes the importance of safe and supporting work environment.

The OSH EG is comprised of high-level experts who come from national ministries and agencies of Partner Countries and Organisations, OSH institutions, the research community, NGOs and other relevant parties. The Expert Group's work is led by the Lead Partner (Finland), supported by the Co-Lead Partner (Lithuania). Member countries are Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Member organizations are The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and World Health Organisation (WHO). OSH EG works closely with the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety (BSN) which is an official knowledge network for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS). BSN is the network on occupational health and safety institutions around the Baltic Sea.

2. Expert Group on Labour and Employment (EGLE)

The Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) has a "sister organization" Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which has proposed to establish a new Expert Group on Labour and Employment (EGLE).

The mission of the EGLE is to

- foster closer cooperation in the fields of labour and employment for an improvement of the labour market and the Baltic Sea Region's overall competitiveness and social welfare,
- contribute actively towards the advancing of the Long-term priorities of the Council of the Baltic Sea States,

- promote innovative regional cooperation, built on multilevel governance and partnership of diverse stakeholders, in terms of labour, lifelong learning and employment across the borders.

The objectives and tasks of the EGLE are:

- To act as a platform for mutual learning, communication and exchange of experience and good practices on a regular basis between the key labour market actors in the Baltic Sea Region
- To contribute to the strategic planning and decision making in the field of labour in coherence with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization, the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, as well as national strategies of the CBSS Member States, being complementary and contributing to avoid duplicity
- To strengthen more holistic and comprehensive approach by pooling the joint efforts of the key actors of the BSR in the field of Labour and Employment – national governments, regional and local authorities, the research and academia, social partners and NGOs, providing the bottom up perspective
- To foster synergies among relevant CBSS expert groups and cooperation platforms in the BSR: BSLF, BSPC, NDPHS, Baltic Development Forum (BDF); EUS BSR PA Education and other actors
- To distribute the conclusions and recommendations, if appropriate, based on the relevant outcomes of its work and taking account of good practice in the BSR to decision makers in the field of labour and employment
- To promote initiatives which benefit the priorities of BSR cooperation and generate synergy and foster partnerships between various actors acting in the field of labour and employment in the BSR countries
- To create thematic ad-hoc groups, if appropriate, to tackle topical issues

The EGLE will focus its work to the areas of cooperation defined as of common concern. These are:

- Migration and Labour mobility;
- Demographic challenges and chances,
- Future work and qualification, Knowledge supply/research/ forecasting
- Youth employment;
- Involvement into the labour market the vulnerable groups of population, including persons with disabilities

3. Interaction between the OSH EG and the EGLE

The CBSS has asked the OSH EG to participate in the work of the EGLE. Themes mentioned above are all with some connection to occupational safety and health. Under the theme *Demographic challenges and chances* is to provide good working conditions, which allow employees to work safely in healthy manner to retirement. That is very much related to occupational safety and health at workplaces. Under the theme *Youth employment* it is important that young people starting their career get enough information how to work safely and stay healthy both physically and mentally.

Migration and Labour mobility are partly connected to the theme *Vulnerable groups* which both are important issues also from the occupational safety and health point of view. One of the big labour issues especially in Sweden and Norway has been Social dumping (Grey economy) which gets also into OSH with regards to workers from Baltic countries. It would be profitability if the EGLE and the OSH EG could build some bridges and find common ground to address

the problems of higher OSH risks for workers. The OSH EG and the EGLE share also common target groups, for example employees, employers and social partners.

The OSH EG support collaboration with the EGLE in issues that are relevant in occupational safety and health. However, as the resources are very limited the OSH EG might not have possibilities to take part in the meetings of the EGLE. The OSH EG suggests two possible solutions:

- the member of the OSH EG will take a part to the meeting when the EGLE's meeting is in the country of the member of the OSH EG.
- the secretariat of NDPHS could participate in the meetings of the EGLE, when appropriate, and bring information to the OSH EG. The EG OSH could collaborate with the subgroups of the EGLE on an 'ad hoc' basis, if the perspective of occupational safety and health is needed and have the resources.

4. Other issues

The EGLE should avoid the overlapping and recognize the work already done in the occupational safety and health field. It should also notice that the NDPHS is in the planning level at the horizontal flagship project concerning ageing. The theme is part of the EGLE's theme *Demographic challenges and chances*.