



Topic Centre New Member States and Topic Centre Enlargement Action: structures and activities

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Since the beginning of the 1990s the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been experiencing intensive socio-economic transformations. Those changes intensified after their decision to apply for EU membership and included the process of intensive adoption of the EU *Acquis Communautaire*, including OSH regulations. Transposition and implementation of those regulations into practice often took place under difficult economic and social conditions. This was seen mainly through the difference between the status, required by legal regulations and social expectations, and the real situation arising from the level of knowledge, technical solutions and economic potential.

Taking the above situation into account - and according to the Work Programmes of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EASHW) - the following three projects were carried out within the grant agreements financed by the Agency:

- Topic Centre Good Practice Candidate Countries, TCGPCC (May 2003 - April 2004),
- Topic Centre New Member States, TCNMS (May 2004 - November 2004), and
- Topic Centre Enlargement Action, TCEA (April 2005 - November 2005).

The project proposals for the establishment of TCGPCC and TCNMS were prepared and submitted by the Central Institute for Labour Protection - National Research Institute (CIOP-PIB) in response to restricted calls published by EASHW, while the TCEA project started as an extension of TCNMS. All those projects were (and in the case of TCEA still are) carried out by consortia coordinated by CIOP-PIB as the Topic Centre Leader.

The TCGPCC project was carried out by a consortium of 14 institutions from 9 countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic. The project mainly concerned identification and collection of information on good practice (GP) in OSH. GP information was then entered into an Agency database via the Content Management Application (CMA). The scope of the project covered four sectors/domains: construction, agriculture, dangerous substances and psychosocial risks. The GP solutions collected within the project were to be applicable at workplace level in all participating countries.

The TCNMS project was carried out by a consortium of 9 institutions from 7 New Member States: the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. Project activities involved a continuation of TCGPCC tasks, i.e. collecting GP, as well as two new tasks. The most important task, i.e. *Collection and analysis of research data*, focused on identifying the sources of data and information that are used in NMS to monitor working life. The task covered, in particular, collecting and analysis of data on working time and temporary agency work as well as on accidents at work, exposure to noise and occupational hearing loss.

The TCEA project is a continuation of TCNMS. Its main objective is to contribute to the development of a preventive culture in NMS and to support the implementation of the Community Strategy on OSH. Therefore the project's specific tasks are as follows: 1) development of a risk assessment tool for SMEs; 2) adaptation of projects from the Agency's SME scheme to the needs of the NMS; 3) development of SME-oriented web features on: integration and retention at work of people with disabilities, prevention of biological hazards, and prevention of violence and harassment at work; and 4) organization of a campaign workshop ***OSH campaigning in an enlarged Europe*** intended for top-level institutions involved in OSH from all NMS.