



FACTS

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Challenges of the changing world of work for the competencies of OSH

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Numerous factors shape the developments in the first decade of the new millennium, such as a new political climate, a rapidly growing world economy, ecological changes and threats, exponential growth of technology developments, changes in the work force and enterprise structures, demographic changes, a growing role of the media and new developments in social systems. The world has become "smaller" and we live in a global village where political, economical or social isolation is no more possible.

While the general health situation in Europe is changing into a positive direction some new threats to health are recognized in environment, social changes and behaviour. The changes in the work life and those in occupational health are a challenge regarding the competencies and skills of occupational safety and health specialists, but additionally a challenge to the knowledge of employers and employees.

"MEGATRENDS" in the world of work

Restructuring of the global economy

- Competitive world economy and increased productivity
- Restructuring and new management principles

New technology and new production

- Increasing automation
- From manufacturing industries to service production
- New production models and job contents

Demographic shift

- Rapidly ageing European work force
- Changing age attitudes
- Demands on working ability
- Challenges facing young workers and immigrants
- Competence and training needs

Social change

- Employee participation
- Balancing work and family life

The present world is characterised by unpredictable changes, high turbulence and it often shows chaotic features. This new situation has made the management of change an important issue.

A relatively rapid ageing of the work force increases the need for flexible working hours and for the adjustment of work and the working conditions according to the ageing work force. Enterprises face a number of challenges and workers try to arrange the work life with the new world order. Simultaneously, new hazards to health are recognized as well as new possibilities for elimination or prevention of hazards.

Rapid changes challenge the OSH of organizations

- 1 Rapid decision-making is needed in:
 - chaotic and fast-moving events
 - weakening of communities, social coherence and support
- 2 Borders between work and leisure with more "timeless" jobs with "24 hours - 7 days" of work have health influences
- 3 Job security, fairness and flexibility are in trial
- 4 Increasing psycho-social problems and illnesses with psychological harassment and violence at work
- 5 Repetitive and monotonous work and safety risks increase
- 6 Gender segregation and age discrimination may increase

Threats to the sense of coherence (SOC) and feeling of community

A resource for health which and can be promoted through:

- good management
- competent development of work, the work community and the organization and
- a positive influence on factors related to the working environment and life styles

Consequences for competencies of OSH specialists

1 More emphasis on comprehensive activities

- a Including a bio-psycho-social, multidisciplinary approach.
- b Looking for strong networking and partnerships.
- c Collaborating with human resource management (HRM).
- d Involving non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and social partners.
- e Emphasizing the interference between general health determinants and work:
 - overweight, nutrition,
 - physical condition,
 - psycho - social factors, stress, smoking, alcohol, narcotic abuse.

2 Widen the tasks of OSH specialists

The following new models of implementing OSH programs must be taken into account:

- Safety Management, WHP Management
- Collaboration with public health, NGO's and e.g. with general practitioners, environmental health and safety authorities as well as with local and regional authorities in general
- Media „management“ and maintenance of appreciation of OSH in mass media, among citizens and in public awareness, campaign skills
- Local "policy skills" and means of influence.

3 Increase awareness of Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and investing in people (liP)

- a CSR as an economical and political driver towards a sustainable economy.
- b liP as a tool to advance organization's performance through its people.

4 Develop the competencies in "Change Management"

- a Foster organizational and individual buffers (coping mechanisms) for changes of the work.
- b Find solutions on healthy restructuring.

5 Assure the management of "vulnerabilities" among the work force

- a Female workers (in reproductive age), young workers in transitions
- b "Age Management" and senior programmes
- c Risk branches (construction, agriculture, traffic, chemicals, EM radiation etc)
- d Monotonous and ICT/VDU work and ergonomics
- e Increased pace of work (psycho-social, circadian rhythms and physiology, safety risks e.g.)

6 Strengthening actions for a better balance of Life and Work

Simultaneously, there is a growth of the regulatory framework and e.g. a continued weakening of traditional partners of labour inspection. To remain up-to date there is a need to develop more highly skilled OSH experts and authorities by cultivating skills and knowledge in new areas, improving existing education and training and increasing flexibility of inspectors.

Training of OSH experts

should help to implement principles of the European Community, OSH policy and principles of "good governance": Openness, Participation, Responsibility, Effectiveness, and Coherence.

OSH training should help the experts in occupational safety and health, occupational medicine and health services, in labour inspection and in work places to find solutions of how to stimulate all enterprises and organizations to a systemic and sustainable improvement of working conditions and to the development of a culture of prevention.

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