



10TH PERMANENTE CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS' TRADE UNIONS

**16,17,18 SEPTEMBER 2010
ATHENS**

DRAFT RESOLUTION ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY (OHS)

OHS a challenging issue for the European Capitals Trade Unions

The 10th Permanent Conference of the European Capitals' Trade Unions held in Athens from 16-18 September 2010 had main theme the OHS, in order to point out the special aspects of working conditions in the European Capitals due to the specific role which Capitals cities play to countries' development.

Major occupational health problems not only include traditional questions as physical, chemical and biological hazards, but also modern challenges like stress or physiological factors, situation which is deteriorating due to the new situation of the industrial relations and the wider socio-economic environment due to the economic crisis, related to unemployment, to flexible forms of work, to precarious work etc.

The cost in human lives and in terms of health and able-bodied of workers is unbearable for the workers and their families.

All these happen because, on the one hand the employers do not assume their responsibilities according the legislation considering measures taken for the

prevention of professional risks and workers protection are not an investment but an extra cost, and on the other hand the competent authorities do not give the necessary attention and severity to the observance of the law, considering OHS as a marginal issue.

For the above reasons the 10th Permanent Conference of the European Capitals' Trade Unions, demands that the Governments should put OHS among the issues of first priority on their political agenda and to act properly.

Common aspects of OHS at the European Capitals

- ✚ Despite legislation and the improvement made during the last decades at scientific and technological level the situation of OHS ranges from mediocre to alarming. Liberal and conservative governments have contributed to weakening of OHS and deregulating the relevant legislation.
- ✚ Employers do not assume their responsibilities according to the law.
- ✚ Despite the fact that Labor Inspectorate contributes to improving working conditions and reducing professional risks is decisive the support from the State is weak.
- ✚ Constructions, industry (chemical, mine, metallurgic, ship repair and shipyard, transports, slaughterhouse etc), are sectors with most serious problems.
- ✚ In the services sector apart from traditional problems new factors of deteriorating working conditions appear such as stress, musculoskeletal disorders, physiological problems which in some cases have lead to suicides.
- ✚ Commuting workers and exposed to accidents in their way to and from the work towards home.
- ✚ Workers in SME's and Micro companies are usually exposed to poor working conditions due to the lack of resources dedicated to OHS and due to weak or inexistent trade union representation.
- ✚ Young people, aged over 55, immigrants and women are more exposed to professional risks, labor accidents and professional diseases.

- ✚ Subcontracting, outsourcing, part time work, flexible timetables, precarious work etc deteriorate working conditions increasing professional risks.
- ✚ Bad working conditions affect all involved in the working process no matter the hierarchy is.
- ✚ Both public and private sector workers cope with problems related to OHS.

Effects of the economic crisis on working conditions in European Capitals

Deregulation of labor relations, decomposition of labor law and the abolition of the social state on behalf of labor cost decrease, leave the workers unprotected worsening working conditions in the European capitals. Crisis imposes restructuring of companies, changes on work's organization (subcontracting, outsourcing) which modifies working conditions, deteriorating them.

Due to the fact that resources spent for prevention and protection of workers are considered by the majority of employers as a cost and not as an investment, the first cuts occurring in a period of crisis affect OHS deteriorating working conditions. Downsizing in various companies due to the economic crisis obliges the remaining workers to work and to have productivity with fewer people. Others should execute works without having the necessary formation. This creates stress at work combined with labor accidents and other problems at work place.

The Capitals' Trade Unions consider that for the improvement of working conditions among others it is necessary:

- ✚ Permanent inclusion of OHS issues in the social dialogue and all trade unions vindications.
- ✚ Support of the election at all workplaces of OHS Committees. Special attention must be given to SMEs and Micro companies for which a networking might be useful.
- ✚ Launch of awareness raising campaigns dealing with prevention of labour accidents and professional diseases in combination with dissemination of publications to aware workers of new risks and risk prevention.

- ✚ Organizing informative meetings in schools as a way to send the message to future workers before they begin their labor activity.
- ✚ Training courses to update the relevant information on legislation and good practices.
- ✚ Involvement of all trade unionists and not only those of the Committees of OHS.
- ✚ Creation of networks of workers in charge with OHS.
- ✚ Promotion and support of scientific research on the themes of OHS at the workplace by Universities, Institutes etc. Research should focus on the new forms of stressing mental and physical (mobbing, burn-out, musculoskeletal disorders etc)

Perspectives of cooperation

- ✚ Dissemination and exchange of information related to professional risks and how they are addressed by the Capitals' trade unions.
- ✚ Share of best practices and safety initiatives.
- ✚ Creation to this end of bilateral or multilateral partnerships.
- ✚ Participation in European projects relevant to OHS.
- ✚ Co-operation in relation to the international OHS day (the 28. of April).