

IMO Virtual Live Conference

26.01.2010

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Minutes



Attendants:

Ursula Bach (Germany), Prof. Frank Emspak (USA), Prof. Francesco Garibaldo (Italy), Prof. Annika Lantz-Friedrich (Sweden), Dr. Sabine Reszies (Germany), Dr. Claudius Riegler (Germany), Prof. Tarja Tikkanen (Norway), Prof. Peter Totterdill (UK), Sven Trantow (Germany), Prof. Gerard Zwetsloot (Netherlands)

Introduction of the Participants

Sabine Reszies: works within a project which develops a network for innovative health management in enterprises; member of the editorial committee of the “Aachen Impulse”

Claudius Riegler: works for the project agency (PT-DLR) on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research which is running a program on OSH

Tarja Tikkanen: works at the International Research Institute of Stavanger, Head of Research in the area Organization, Management and Competence, focusing on lifelong learning and competence development

Annika Lantz-Friedrich: works at the Department of Psychology at the University of Uppsala; responsible for the area work and organizational psychology

Frank Emspak: works as a manager of a media organization focusing on the issue of safety and health at work; did consultancy on work reorganisation

Gerard Zwetsloot: works at TNO and the University of Nottingham on management issues related to health, safety and corporate social responsibility, interested in the innovative capacity of enterprises

Peter Totterdill: works at the UK work organization network (UKWON) concerned with the balance between production organizations and the quality of working life

Francesco Garibaldo: works as freelancer; interested in the transformation of work and work design

The “Aachen Impulse”

- defines the German research requirement in the field of occupational safety and health in a short way; agreement on 5 main research topics
- set up at the conference in Aachen by a community of more than 100 scientists, entrepreneurial actors and occupational health service providers which are participating in more than 50 research projects funded by the Ministry of Education and Research
- aim of the “Aachen Impulse”: foster and promote interdisciplinary research in the field of occupational safety and health in order to convince the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research that further research is required

Sabine Reszies

- Five central questions with regard to the stated research requirements:
 1. How can the society stimulate management commitment and employee participation in comprehensive workplace and health programs?
 2. How can we improve the quality of work and life by overcoming the barriers between these two parts of life?
 3. How can we create a corporate and learning culture which includes the knowledge and measurements of occupational safety and health?
 4. How can we establish a corporate policy with proactive risk assessment?
 5. How can we integrate all actors of occupational safety and health in an innovative Alliance?

Comments on the “Aachen Impulse”

Frank Emspak:

- excellent questions which would be a major move forward in the USA
- questions 2 and 5 are extraordinarily important
- idea: take the paper and do some blogs and podcasts to get the agenda out to people

Francesco Garibaldo:

- a really advanced statement for the Italian standard
- the implementation is difficult especially for small enterprises
- new trend of the employer association to transfer the problem of health and safety into an individual problem; adoption of the system of the University Missouri called BBS

Annika Lantz-Friedrich:

- reflects on how the issues could be implemented within companies and organizations
- we need more good arguments in order to convince companies

Claudius Riegler:

- very differentiated position and good impulse to a renewal of the main questions of occupational safety and health
- there is a lot of European activity in this field, e.g. ERA-NET
- solutions in the “Aachen Impuls” go beyond traditional work
- connection to the agenda of the European Union (e.g. EU 2020 strategy)

Tarja Tikkanen:

- very good set of questions addressed
- from Norwegian perspective, there is legislation, annual reviews etc. and still the work place health situation is not improving
- the challenge is to make people follow the procedures and systems

Peter Totterdill:

- very interesting initiative; question 1 is the key question
- problems especially in the UK: fragmentation of different policy narratives; one policy strand focuses on competitiveness and innovation, another focuses on work place health and the quality of working life
- reason that so many initiatives fail: discordance

Gerard Zwetsloot:

- we need to develop health and safety from a corporate strategy point of view and combine it with corporate social responsibility
- we only do focus the risks

- we have to question our mental models in the health and safety community
- health is also determined by the leadership style
- How can you really measure learning culture or effectiveness of innovative alliances?

1st Work Phase: International Best Practice

Against the backdrop of the stated research requirements in the „Aachen Impulse“: What are examples for international best practice and existing research approaches?

Frank Emspak:

- USA has models that have worked over the last years, e.g. in the construction industry, but particularly joint models of research have not been successful
- many institutes studying OSH from an institutional rather than a personal responsibility point of view have suffered major funding cuts
- the models were good, but not the execution and application

Francesco Garibaldo:

- introduction of simple self-assessment-tools for health and safety
- critical point: “no blame culture”
- individualistic trend is a disaster for Italy

Annika Lantz-Friedrich:

- new trend in our country: trying to come up with a new thinking and new models of how we can combine the two perspectives (1) work, health and safety and (2) competitiveness and innovation
- need to show that there are models where we can create work conditions which give positive effects on both perspectives
- need to mainstream the two perspectives at the same time in order to introduce organizational change

Sabine Reszies:

- the pressure for SMEs will augment within the next years and, as scientists, it will be our task to answer their concrete questions

- we should consider the development of the future not only in a global way
- we miss younger specialists, so we have to change our community

Claudius Riegler:

- two directions: (1) emphasis on the social aspect of sustainability, (2) participation oriented private projects, e.g. in the German automotive industry
- the two aspects sustainability and participation connect employees and employers even in a critical confrontation: instrument to convince management that there are win-win-situations

Tarja Tikkanen:

- there are successful national initiatives in the nordic countries, but the effects are not on the level of the investments made
- successful national initiatives in connection with national policy: more comprehensive approaches, dialogues, acceptance and agreement

Peter Totterdill:

- the importance of national programs needs to be stressed
- European programs go back up to 30 years: enormous amount of evidence for taking health seriously
- we should not reinvent the wheel, but use the knowledge that we have more effectively
- good programs and diverse agencies have been very good in networking

Gerard Zwetsloot:

- PRIMA-project: tried to harmonize the different qualities of approaches available in Europe
- we should focus on the organizational benefits of investing in health and safety; also learning capativity and innovative capability are benefits
- focus should be also on health and safety cultures; “the healthiness of the organization”

2nd Work Phase: Further Research Requirements

Against the backdrop of innovative ability: What are further research requirements in the field of "Proactive Measures in Occupational Safety and Health" that are not mentioned in the "Aachen Impulse"?

Gerard Zwetsloot:

- the health and safety communities need new types of thinking and research as we are facing new challenges
- problem: new innovative approaches are understood in traditional models and values; issue of attitude and reflection

Peter Totterdill:

- one of the key issues: obstacles
- why do approaches not work at the work place level?

Tarja Tikkanen:

- need to focus on how to turn the knowledge into good practice
- more important to study the obstacles than producing new knowledge
- need to promote the interdisciplinary dialogue

Claudius Riegler:

- problem of transfer has also to do with the restriction of safety and health at work places; should be connected with the question of new life styles, exclusive or inclusive society, work-life-balance etc.
- transfer: an outmoded concept which has to be transformed
- orientation towards action research needed

Sabine Reszies:

- the point of transfer can be located in "marketable transfer strategies"
- difference between research and business: communication with new marketing strategies

Annika Lantz-Friedrich:

- need to deal with the issues from a competence perspective

- how can we create conditions and a learning culture within organizations that make individuals develop the competence to actively deal with safety and health issues themselves?
- the gender issues have to be stressed in the “Aachen Impuls”

Francesco Garibaldo:

- problem of how to distribute the “Aachen Impulse” along the supply chain
- big firms with good standards are simply dispatching the problem along the supply chain; but it’s a problem for small and medium enterprises
- key point: transform a good statement into a realistic policy

Frank Emspak:

- issue of transfer is important
- major firms with high standards are in process of reorganisation, but the last thing on their agenda is health and safety
- we have the techniques, but the overall and financial framework has to be addressed; firms investing in health and safety should not be punished

Feedback

Frank Emspak:

- tremendous idea to have a virtual conference
- possibility to expand the horizons and helps to bridge tremendous barriers
- great to involve more people; making connections

Francesco Garibaldo:

- very positive experience
- virtual conference needs to be a more natural interaction; more room for free discussion needed

Gerard Zwetsloot:

- interesting that we explore new perspectives/ great to formulate new questions and new methodologies to the community
- second round to develop new perspectives, work together and exchange experiences

Tarja Tikkanen:

- more free discussion needed, but absolutely positive experience
- worked without technical problems
- virtual conference might be expanded

Peter Totterdill:

- positive approach and new experience
- a more natural approach when we get to know each other better

Claudius Riegler:

- length of meeting and number of questions should be expanded
- more differentiated questions needed in order to assure the possibility to give concrete answers

Annika Lantz-Friedrich:

- nice to keep in contact and to meet old and new friends
- next time: discussion and more time on one topic/ narrower topics

Sabine Reszies:

- we should train this tool more often, then we'll find a better way to use it and to combine all the tools asked for

Thank you for your participation!

