

STANDPOINT.TBV

Flexible guidelines

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The professional associations of occupational health-related core experts are developing communal multidisciplinary guidelines. A few have been completed, authorized and published (about lifting at work, work pressure, aggression and violence). These guidelines differ from earlier guidelines as the focus is not on a disorder or health problem, but on control measures for work risks. The headings are not 'anamnesis', 'physical examination', 'diagnosis', but 'establishing presence risk workplace', 'assessment lifting load', 'interventions for decreasing load', 'determining measuring instruments' etcetera.

This development agrees with one of the more widely welcomed approaches for a solution for the current stumbling blocks in occupational health care; a more branch-specific orientation of occupational healthcare (see also the contributions in this issue concerning the recommendations submitted by the social-economic council SER, 'System for health and safety at work'). This also entails that the social partners reach agreements on prevention, partly based on expert advice. The control measures-oriented guidelines form a fine starting point for this process.

However, various parties play a role in the formulation of control measures for work risks, each with their own responsibility: in the first place, of course, the employers and employees who are primarily responsible for the work conditions. There are some good examples of how they assume their responsibilities, for example the initiative '5 x better' in the metal working and metal and electro technical industries. The Health Council is also issuing a flood of recommendations on health-based limits for non-substance-related risks, and the SER is going to concern itself with socially acceptable risk levels with special attention to the physical load and psychosocial work conditions. The involvement

of multiple parties also means that the development of guidelines for and by experts does not even constitute half the work. Above all there will have to be support from the social partners; otherwise the practical implementation of the recommendations will fail. Are they actually waiting for guidelines and advice by core experts? Engaging the social partners in the guideline development trajectories is a difficult process.

Still, the professional organisations would be wise to investigate how the guidelines can fit in with the activities of the social partners themselves. Certainly in those cases where the point of departure and the recommendations in the guidelines are not completely (or not at all) in line with the interventions and solutions formulated by the social partners themselves in the OSH-catalogues – marginally tested by the inspectorate. A discussion about possible differences is welcome. Trade branches could also profit from well-founded recommendations that comply with the stipulation 'considering the state-of-the-art and professional services' of the Working Conditions Act.

Generic guidelines could be made branch-specific by using the term 'further considerations' when formulating recommendations. This means that guidelines can be employed in different ways – adapted to the context of the companies in the branch; making them flexible guidelines. Furthermore it will be easier to replace recommendations based on a consensus between the members of the work group with recommendations agreed upon with the social partners.

This approach will offer more openings for support from companies (and professionals), and simplify a branch-specific embedding of recommendations.

The professional associations would be wise to inform the social partners extensively on the topic of what they do – or do not – aim to achieve, and how this relates to the activities of other interested parties.

AGENDA

17-20 september Infectious diseases at work.

Three-day workshop with contribution of European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Met gelegenheid tot deelname aan Midsommarfeesten. Locatie: Stockholm University. Inlichtingen en aanmelden: www.efoh.eu.

28-31 oktober 5th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environ-

mental Health. Locatie: Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. Inlichtingen en aanmelden:

www.icoh2013-history.org.

5-8 november A + A 2013. Internationale vakbeurs met congres voor persoonlijke bescherming, veiligheid en gezondheid op de werkvloer. Locatie: Messe Düsseldorf. Inlichtingen en aanmelden: www.aplusa-online.com.