

Session 05: New work environment

Improving Work Safety for low-skilled and high-risk work.

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The composition of the labour market is changing due to trends in society such as globalization, the opening of borders and increasing flexibilization in work. Particularly the lower part of the labour market is evolving rapidly, with workers from new EU member states increasingly being engaged to do low-skilled and usually risky work. This includes work involving exposure to dangerous levels of radiation and substances as well working with machines, working on height and aggression on the work floor. This risky work is often performed by 'vulnerable' people such as low skilled employees, older employees without proper qualifications, 'drop outs', ethnic and/or migrant workers and so on. It has also been found that 20% of the victims of fatal industrial accidents are 'non-Dutch residents' (CBS, 2007).

Existing approaches to stimulate behavioural change and safe behaviour on the work floor level fail to devote explicit attention to the great diversity of people (and their different perceptions of work and safety) in terms of age, language, culture, religion, gender and also health status. In this research existing, mainly participative, (safety) programmes, are assessed on their usefulness and effectiveness. Especially we have been looking for ways to adjust these programmes to the specific needs of the target group: the lower part of the labour market. In this study, knowledge of diverse disciplines, such as safety sciences, HR policy, social innovation and health promotion I used.

In 2007 an exploratory study was carried out of current practices that were aimed at the prevention of unsafe conditions in low-skilled work. This has lead to a framework and a set of do's and don'ts for concrete intervention methods. This research is performed in co-development with companies in the following industries: Construction, Transport; Industry, Agriculture (greenhouse horticulture) and Cleaning.