

REPORT AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION OF CIS CENTRES IN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

GENEVA, 17-18 May 2005

INTRODUCTION

The first regional meeting of CIS National and Collaborating Centres was held at CIS Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, on 17-18 May 2005.

The meeting was held at the request of a number of representatives of CIS Centres in the region, in part because this year's regular CIS Centres meeting is scheduled to be held in Orlando, Florida, and it will be inconvenient for some European Centres representatives to attend it.

REPORTS ON SAFEWORK AND CIS ACTIVITIES

Jukka Takala, head of the ILO's SafeWork In-Focus Programme, greeted participants and presented the major elements of the programme's activities. He stressed the importance of the five main elements of the Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health, adopted in the 2003 (91st) session of the International Labour Conference:

- Promotion, awareness raising and advocacy
- ILO Instruments
- Technical assistance and cooperation
- Knowledge development, management and dissemination
- International collaboration

Dr Takala then elaborated on what the SafeWork programme had achieved in furtherance of these elements, including – in particular - the elaboration of the 2001 Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems (ILO-OSH 2001). These Guidelines had proved to be very popular, and had recently been adopted by Ireland, Israel and Argentina. The involvement of high-level policymakers in the adoption of these guidelines demonstrated their utility, insofar as it showed to the public in the countries concerned that occupational safety and health was not just a matter of interest to OSH experts.

Dr Takala also reported on the worldwide success of the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, which has become a regular event scheduled for April 28 of every year. A videotaped speech by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand honouring the World Day in his country was shown to meeting participants.

The renewed CIS web site and the CISDOC interface was demonstrated.

The following participants made a report on the activities of their organization or institution:

- **Mr Finn SHEYE** of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
- **Mr Malcolm GIFFORD** of the International Association of Labour Inspection (IALI)
- **Mr Nikolay Nikolaevich NOVIKOV** of the All-Russia Occupational Safety Centre (VCOT)
- **Mrs Maha ALY RAKHA** of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health [Egypt] (NIOSH)

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- CIS should have an information audit.
- CIS's target audience should be identified. Right now there is a conflict between serving CIS's paying customers and serving the ILO's "constituents", who influence CIS policies through their presence on the ILO's Governing Body.
- One problem is that information (in the eyes of many policymaker) is assimilated to propaganda, public relations and/or advertising. It is hard to get across the need for pure information needed before decisions can be taken.
- New collaboration partners should be investigated – multinationals, small and medium-sized enterprises.

CIS PRODUCTS

- The participants welcomed the fact that CIS products were now all available free of charge through the Internet.
- Although seeing Internet-based information dissemination is the right thing to do, we should realize that not everyone knows how to use computers or how to obtain OSH information efficiently through the Internet. And of course not everyone has a computer or has access to the Internet at all.

- It was suggested that the CIS thesaurus be updated and its scope enlarged, taking into account similar thesauri published by other sources (the EU, the NOHSC in Australia).
- Concentrating on quality information should be a CIS priority. Authoritativeness and reliability of information are essential.
- CIS should be in the forefront of providing information on upcoming trends (nanotechnology, new infectious diseases [e.g. SARS]).
- CIS should pay special attention to OSH research literature that appears on the Internet alone, as no other database covers that systematically. Another type of Internet-based information source that CIS should cover are the practical information sheets that many CIS Centres have made available free of charge on their sites.
- Gray literature is another area that CIS is ideally placed to compile information on.
- CIS's relationship with the producers of the information it abstracts should be revised as a result of changing copyright laws and customs. CISDOC-TEXT is at present only available to CIS Centres (who are considered as branch libraries of CIS), any wider distribution of this very popular product would necessitate an agreement by the copyright holders.
- It was suggested that CIS establish a "virtual database" of information resources held by CIS Centres.
- The compilation of "Latest documents received in CIS" that is now regularly updated on the CIS website was judged very useful. There was a suggestion that the source country of each document be indicated in the list.

THE CIS NETWORK

- The CIS network is the best means for obtaining OSH information from other countries, particularly on less frequently used topics.
- Being a CIS Centre was a source of prestige for many centres.
- The CIS Newsletter (published by Sheila Pantry) is highly successful. The problem of a time-lag between the online and printed versions (3-4 weeks) persists.
- It is regrettable that there is little or no communication between CIS and its Centres in between Meetings. It was proposed that Working Groups be set up with very specific subjects of common interest to be discussed in between regular meetings.
- A new or revised agreement between CIS and its centres should be designed, in part because of changed technology, products and information needs. The supply of original documents with analyses to CIS by the Centres and the publication of the CIS Bulletin with free copies sent to the Centres by CIS were now obsolete, and should be replaced by practices in line with current needs.
- There seems to be no conflict between work related to the CIS and to the European Agency – insofar as the work is similar, it can be mostly done as a single job item. It must be pointed out, however, that the European Agency pays some European Centres for the maintenance of their agency-related web site, a payment of between €20-40,000 per year.
- It was recommended that the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work become a regional CIS Centre.

THE CIS CENTRES PORTAL

- The existence of two separate CIS networks was confusing to users.

- The very small number of entries with real information in the CIS Centres Portal was a real impediment to its usefulness.
- It was possible to abandon the passive country pages while keeping the search engine, which was an innovative and useful feature of the Portal.

CIS PRESENCE ON CENTRES' WEB SITES

- Although the Institutions of which CIS Centres are situated in often have their own sites, the Centres themselves quite often do not, and may not even be identified as special units within their organizations. This may explain why it is so difficult in some cases to have a CIS logo or a link to CIS on Centres' web pages.
- It was suggested that CIS create a characteristic banner or pattern (including its logo), which could then be furnished to the Centres for display on their sites.
- CIS Centres should try to include the CIS logo and a link to CIS on their sites, but where exactly they do it is their own business.

WORKING GROUPS

Annick Virot made a presentation, proposing to set up a number of working groups with participation from people both from CIS and the Centres, whose function would be to work – essentially through e-mail - on issues raised at Centres meetings in between meetings. A large number of possible themes were mentioned:

- The SafeWork Bookshelf
- LEGOSH
- CISDOC
- Information on chemical substances, with particular attention paid to lists of exposure limits
- The CIS Portal (presently housed at CCOHS in Canada)
- Promotion of the CIS Logo
- Data sheets on occupations
- Other datasheets
- Information in specific languages
- Translations
- Matters of regional interest
- Development of regional and subregional centres
- Training
- Developing information for vulnerable workers and for workers in specific sectors
- Developing the CIS network in western French Africa

After some discussion, four working groups were set up:

- **Publicity and Promotion.** Coordinator: Annick Virot. Members: Irja Laamanen, Roman Litvyakov, Sheila Pantry.
- **The CIS Portal.** Coordinator: András Szücs. Members: Katalin Balogh, Begoña Casanueva, Roman Litvyakov.
- **The Thesaurus and the Glossary.** Coordinator: Gábor Sándi. Members: Katalin Balogh, András Szücs.

- **Training.** Coordinator: Annick Viot. Members: Boryana Barbukova, Catherine Blotière, Maria Castriotta, Irja Laamanen, Sheila Pantry.

The working groups were asked to submit to CIS an interim report before the Orlando Meeting, and an activity report before the end of 2005.

WRAPPING UP SESSION

There was some discussion about where the 2006 Centres meeting will be held. It was suggested that it may be convenient to associate it with the 2006 International Congress of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH). Although not unreasonable, this proposal was rejected because of the likely expense it would impose on CIS.

Although the final decision would be announced at the Orlando meeting, the consensus of the participants was that the best location for the 2006 CIS Centres Meeting would be at CIS Headquarters in Geneva.

Assane Diop, Executive Director of the ILO's Social Protection Sector, thanked participants for attending the Meeting. He pointed out that unlike most other ILO Meetings, which were held at the behest of the organization at a location chosen by itself, the time and location of this CIS Regional Meeting was the result of a strong demand by the participants. This showed the importance attached to the CIS Centres Network by its members. He hoped that at least one regional meeting like this could be organized every year in the future.

Mr Diop welcomed the new trend towards Regional CIS Centres and the increased attention CIS was paying to the needs of its centres in the developing world, particular in Africa and the Middle East.

The meeting was adjourned.

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