

## **REPORT OF THE DUTCH CIS-CENTRE OVER THE PERIOD 2006/2007**

### **LEGISLATION AND OSH POLICIES:**

The most important legislation in the field of occupational health and safety is: the Working Conditions Act ("Arbeidsomstandighedenwet" or "Arbowet"), containing a code of conduct for safety & health policy, and the Working Hours Act ("Arbeidstijdenwet"), forming a statutory framework for working hours. Both the Working Conditions Act and the Working Hours Act have recently been changed: the Working Conditions Act per January 2007 (the text of the legislation is available at <http://wetten.overheid.nl/cgi-bin/deeplink/law1/title=arbeidsomstandighedenwet> ) and the Working Hours Act per April 2007 (the text of the legislation is available at <http://wetten.overheid.nl/cgi-bin/deeplink/law1/title=Arbeidstijdenwet> ). Further information on the changes in the Working Conditions Act is available at: <http://www.arbonieuwestijl.nl/7/26/English.html>

One important element of the OSH-policy in the Netherlands, besides legislation, is the sector-based approach, aimed at encouraging self-activation among the social partners by e.g. concluding Safety & Health Covenants: agreements between employers' organisations, trade unions and the government, aimed at improving working conditions, curbing sick leave and reducing the number of cases of occupational disability. Evaluation of several of these covenants has shown positive effects in the various branches of industry; the results are published in reports published by the Ministry (available at <http://www.arboconvenanten.szw.nl/>)

### **ACTIVITIES OF THE LABOUR INSPECTORATE IN THE FIELD OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY IN 2006:**

In 2006 46 inspection projects were carried out in various sectors and branches of industry, and the total number of inspections and investigations in 2006 amounted to 38,040. With regard to working conditions, formal enforcement instruments in connection with violations observed were used in 51% of the inspection processes concluded. The instrument most used in this respect – in almost 75% of the cases – was the "warning". In 2006 a total, of 6,107 administrative penalties were imposed (2,095 in relation to the Working Conditions Act).

During 2006 the main OSH issues and priorities were: hazardous substances (such as organic solvents, and pesticides), physical workload / manual handling; hazardous machines and transport equipment; falling objects / risks of falling; work stress and aggression / violence at work.

In 2006, 2,138 reports were received of complaints about (the quality of) working conditions or (excessive) working hours. Of these, 1,395 were deemed worthy of investigation. The others were included as signals in inspection projects or dealt with in another manner. Enforcement action was taken during the investigation process with regard to 90% of the complaints declared fully or partially well-founded by the Labour Inspectorate. The Labour Inspectorate investigated 2,151 reports of industrial accidents in 2006. A severe enforcement instrument was deployed in 72% of the concluded accident investigations.

## **PUBLICATIONS (selection):**

Please note that all publications (unless otherwise indicated) are in Dutch.

### **OSH-brochures for specific branches:**

In 2006 the Labour Inspectorate started developing brochures for specific branches of industry. These brochures describe the main OSH risks in that sector, and the procedures of the Labour Inspectorate during inspections in that branch of industry. At the moment 10 brochures are available ([http://arbeidsinspectie.szw.nl/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp\\_document&link\\_id=86771](http://arbeidsinspectie.szw.nl/index.cfm?fuseaction=dsp_document&link_id=86771)) for several branches of industry, such as: health care sector; industrial cleaning; printing industry; wood industry, child care and hairdressers.

### **Study reports:**

Many of these studies were carried out within the framework of OSH covenants. Examples published in 2006/2007 are:

- OSH Covenant on RSI in the meat industry
- Maintaining the results obtained in OSH covenants
- OSH Covenant in the sugar and candy industry
- Evaluation of the project occupational physicians and OSH covenants
- OSH Covenant for orchestras
- OSH Covenant in public libraries
- OSH Covenant in the construction industry
- Use of methods for reducing manual handling in the construction industry
- OSH Plus covenant in the printing industry

It is the policy of the Ministry to publish these reports as much as possible free of charge on the internet as pdf-files (at <http://www.szw.nl> or <http://www.arboconvenanten.szw.nl/>).

## **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES:**

### **Database activities:**

The bibliographic labour database of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (that was started in 1987) is produced in co-operation with the Expert Centre of the Labour Inspectorate and other Dutch organisations such as TNO Work and Employment ("TNO Arbeid") in Hoofddorp (previously in Amsterdam). The database contains ± 124,000 records. Subjects covered in this database include: occupational health and safety, labour market, income, industrial relations, social security, equal opportunity etc. Approximately 35% of the records deal with occupational health and safety issues.

Since the end of 2000 the library catalogue of TNO Work and Employment (which overlaps to a certain extent with the SZW database) is available free of charge via the internet, at the address: <http://tno-arbeid.adlibsoft.com/adlib/>

At the end of 2002, a project was started to include a link to the full-text document in the record description. For this project, various organizations that publish relevant information were contacted for permission to download their publications for inclusion in the SZW-database (in order to comply with copyright regulations). At the moment (July 2007), about 7500 records contain a link to the full-text document (in pdf).

#### **Inquiries and reporting:**

The Central Public Inquiry Service responded to about 38,000 inquiries by telephone during 2006; about 10-15% of the inquiries were related to occupational health and safety issues. Although many questions could be dealt with by providing free leaflets or brochures, the majority of the questions required specific and detailed knowledge of those handling these questions. The number of inquiries by telephone has decreased during the last couple of years, due to the increased use of information on the SZW website ([www.szw.nl](http://www.szw.nl)), and the increased use of e-mail (see next paragraph).

Requests for information can also be sent by mail or e-mail; in 2006 a total of 2,400 letters and 13,000 e-mails were answered.

#### **Library:**

Loaning books and receiving photocopies by mail is only possible for employees of the ministry or through other libraries using the Interlibrary Loan system; employees from commercial businesses, occupational health services or social partners are referred to TNO Work and Employment ("TNO Arbeid") in Hoofddorp.

The Library (primarily aimed at SZW-employees, but also accessible to the general public) received about 18,000 visitors in 2006. Visitors can search the total library collection, the SZW labour database and all CD-ROMs / DVDs available in the library (such as: OSH-ROM, and EINECS).

Due to the increased offering of services through the intranet and e-mail the number of SZW-employees visiting the library is slowly decreasing. Examples of these intranet-services include: overview of documents of the Dutch Parliament relevant for SZW (full-text available), list of new publications (twice a week, with a request form), and folders of subject-related full-text documents (at present about 150 folders ("beleidsdossiers") on various subjects are available on the intranet).

#### **Internet:**

In the last couple of years several new websites were launched by the Ministry; of special interest are:

- an English language website ([www.employment.gov.nl](http://www.employment.gov.nl) or <http://www.socialaffairs.szw.nl>), describing the main policies and activities of the Ministry. This site was revised and updated in 2006. Policy areas discussed are: employment; social protection; safety and health; equality; socio-economic policy. For each policy area the information is divided into: (a) information aimed at citizens and (b) information on policies.
- a website presenting information on the introduction and application of Safety & Health Covenants ("Arboconvenanten") in various branches of industry (<http://www.arboconvenanten.szw.nl>).
- a website presenting information on OSH policy concerning hazardous substances "Versterking Arbobeleid Stoffen (VAST)": (<http://www.vast.szw.nl>)
- a website on the new Working Conditions Act and on policies concerning improving occupational safety (<http://www.arbonieuwestijl.nl/>)

- a revised edition of the Dutch portal site on occupational safety and health was launched in March 2007 under the name ArboPortaal or ArboKennisPortaal (<http://www.arbo.nl>).

**Relevant Dutch internet-sites:**

- Labour Inspectorate: <http://www.arbeidsinspectie.szw.nl> or <http://www.arbeidsinspectie.nl>
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: <http://www.szw.nl>
- Dutch Focal Point: <http://nl.osha.europa.eu/>
- Ministry of Housing, Social Planning and the Environment (<http://www.vrom.nl>): this Ministry (generally known under its Dutch acronym VROM) is responsible for the area of external safety (including issues as the Seveso directive and the REACH programme concerning chemicals substances). The issues of external safety and occupational safety are clearly linked and the policies and information from this ministry are therefore also relevant for occupational safety. Information on external safety can be found under the header "Environment" (<http://international.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=7391> )
- Portal site Dutch Government: <http://www.overheid.nl>  
(publications of the Dutch parliament and the Official Journal are available full-text since 1995 at: <http://www.overheid.nl/op> ; legislation is available full-text at: <http://www.wetten.overheid.nl> )

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