

Safety and health in micro and small enterprises in the EU: from policy to practice

Description of good examples

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▪ **Good example 24. Subsidies for companies — free training courses for the staff in charge of safety in SMEs - Italy**

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▪ **Background**

The aim of this intervention is to support the improvement and raise the level of knowledge and skills in the field of safety in the workplace. For this purpose, the General Directorate for Employment and Labour Policies of the Lombardy Region, with Executive Decree of 4 April 2012 No 2925, approved the 'Notice: Endowment for Companies — Health and Safety in the Workplace'. A huge amount of funding was made available (EUR 9,000,000) for both regional and national levels of the Italian workers' compensation authority (INAIL). The initiative consisted of a voucher for the activation of specific courses, aimed at supporting the OSH-related knowledge of owner-managers and employees appointed with formal OSH duties.

▪ **Target group**

The initiative enabled the activation of special training paths specifically (and only) addressed to staff from MSEs in Lombardy (at a regional level), who potentially belonged to every sector. Among the objectives of the intervention listed in the official document of the programme, particular attention must be paid to sectoral priorities identified on the basis of the graded risk criteria, shared and/or modulated under the Provincial Coordination Committees coordinated by ASL (the local health authority). From this, it follows that the sectors with the highest risk of accidents were favoured in the allocation of subsidies.

The training services provided by the subsidy had been granted to the persons employed in the operations of MSEs (0-49 employees) located in Lombardy who were in charge of an OSH function/duty. To this end, the company organisation must have so-called 'system figures': that is, professional profiles who must perform a series of specific tasks with the ultimate goal of ensuring the health and safety of workers. The system figures listed below are defined by Legislative Decree No 81/2008 (*Testo Unico della Sicurezza sul Lavoro*):

- employer;
- manager (often not present in SMEs);
- person in charge (typically the office manager, supervisor, team leader, construction site leader and so on);
- health and safety manager (RSPP in Italy);
- operator of the prevention and protection service (ASPP in Italy);
- occupational health physician ('Medico Competente' in Italy):
http://www.proz.com/kudoz/italian_to_english/business_commerce_general/4894301-medico_competente.html#10877539;
- workers' representative for safety (RLS in Italy);
- workers in charge of emergency management (evacuation, firefighting, first aid);
- worker.

▪ **Description of the good example**

The subsidy consisted of a voucher given to MSEs for the training of individuals with OSH functions. The allocation of vouchers occurred through a 'desk' procedure in chronological order of the submission of applications. The voucher was used for the training of workers only within the permissible training paths described in the notice, and was paid to the individual company and not the single person who benefited, and had a maximum value of EUR 5,000 for both micro enterprises and small enterprises. The payment of the voucher was in the form of reimbursement on presentation of the receipted invoice

for the training service received, and so it took the form of a single payment at the conclusion of the activated training paths.

Regarding the educators involved, the current legislation on safety training in the workplace identifies three types of persons charged with the implementation of the training courses:

1. Persons entitled by operation of law: regions and autonomous provinces; university; INAIL; Italian Institute of Social Medicine; Department of Firefighters, Public Rescue and Civil Defence; Defence Administration; Higher School of Public Administration; other high schools of individual administrations; trade union associations of employers or workers; joint bodies;
2. Associated persons treated as legitimated subjects: Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Production Activities; Ministry of Interior: Department of Land Affairs and the Department of Public Safety; Formez (association); industrial, aeronautical and nautical technical institutes; orders and professional colleges limited to its members; and
3. Accredited subjects for training operating in the region, who fulfil the following conditions: enrolment in the regional Register (available on the website www.lavoro.regione.lombardia.it); at least two years of experience in the field of prevention and safety at work; presence of teachers with at least two years of experience in the field of prevention and safety in the workplace.

It is obvious that the length, focus and content of the courses depends on the institution involved in the implementation of the courses themselves.

The eligible and fundable training paths were:

- Operator and Supervisor of the Prevention and Protection Service (ASPP and RSPP in Italy).
- Operator and Supervisor of the Prevention and Protection Service (ASPP and RSPP in Italy) — Module B — Update.
- Operator of Business First Aid.
- Operator of Fire Prevention, Fire Fighting and Management of Emergencies.
- Operator of Installation, Removal and Transformation of Scaffolding.
- Operator of the Use of Access and Positioning System Through Ropes.
- Workers' Representative for Safety (RLS in Italy).
- Workers' Representative for Safety (RLS in Italy) — Update.
- Workers' Basic Course in OSH.
- Specialised Workers' Basic Course in OSH.
- Managers' Basic Course in OSH.
- Employer who intends to directly perform the tasks of prevention and risk protection.
- Employer who intends to directly perform the tasks of prevention and risk protection — Update.
- Work-Related Stress: Basic Training for Managers and Supervisors, and Updates for the Employer Who Performs the Task of RSPP.
- Work-Related Stress: Basic Course for Workers.
- Work-Related Stress: Basic Course and Update for Workers' Representative for Safety.
- Work-Related Stress: Updated Module B for Operator and Supervisor of the Prevention and Protection Service (ASPP and RSPP).
- Results and evidence of impact

The number of companies that have been funded totals 1,800 (unfortunately, the number of subsidised courses differentiated for each type of course and this has not been possible to obtain). Based on informal in-depth talks with an OSH consultant and President of the Association of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (API), who is also an owner and manager of a small company, this project can be considered successful because it reached a considerable number of MSEs (but the distribution among micro versus small is not known), which were helped through training courses for staff in charge of safety. The number of companies involved is more relevant when considering that the duration of the programme was only a year.

As with most programmes based on incentives, it is very difficult to measure the direct impact on the work environment, particularly in relation to OSH performance. In fact, there are no data available regarding to what extent improvements have been made in the companies after the participation of employers and employees in the training courses. However, based on the informal in-depth talks with an OSH consultant and the President of API, we can confirm the (perceived) satisfaction from the MSEs that applied for the subsidy.

The amount of money available (EUR 9,000,000) comes from the combined action of some operating bodies in the Lombardy region. In any case, the subsidy did not continue, supposedly on account of lack of funding. In the last few years, there has been very little budget available for this kind of activity. Therefore, the Lombardy region is only occasionally able to run some strategies and programmes in the field of safety and health in the workplace.

▪ **Conclusions**

In order to achieve the objectives in regard to safety, the Lombardy region put together a network of professionals (i.e. 'peer network') to consolidate a method of sharing between the different actors (institutions, businesses, trade unions and so on) taking part in strategies and common guidelines, stimulating participation and consent. The agreement, which gave rise to the funds, comes under Legislative Decree (9 April 2008) between the government (Minister of Labour and Social Policy, the Minister of Health), the Regions and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano in order to identify priorities for the financing of activities to promote the culture of health prevention and safety in the workplace. The Endowment for Companies — Health and Safety in the Workplace is one of those.

Moreover, the programme is potentially replicable and sustainable over time, because, if compared with its yearly budget, the resources involved are not so significant (also considering that the majority of funding came from INAIL managing a sizeable budget).

▪ **Transferability of the results**

The programme is intrinsically transferable, given its nature. The largest problem is replicating large amounts of money needed to enable the training courses. For this type of programme, it is not always possible, especially when the training courses cannot — at least in the short term — self-sustain the creation of the original funding. However, the structure for providing OSH courses would seem easier to implement. At least in Italy, companies that deal with counselling and training, even in respect to the field of safety and health at work, are well rooted. If possible, it is a good idea to take advantage of the training and consulting companies already present in the national territory.

▪ **References, key literature, web pages and so on**

The current overview has been compiled from web-based sources, supplemented with informal talks with an OSH consultant and the President of API, who is also an owner and manager of a small company.

<http://www.ue2007-2013.regione.lombardia.it/shared/ccurl/584/838/Decreto%207209%20-%20Proroga%20scadenza%20Dote%20Sicurezza.pdf>

http://www.unioncamerelombardia.it/images/file/OE%20FocusCongiunturali2015/DEMO_TOT_anno_2015.pdf

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) contributes to making Europe a safer, healthier and more productive place to work. The Agency researches, develops, and distributes reliable, balanced, and impartial safety and health information and organises pan-European awareness raising campaigns. Set up by the European Union in 1994 and based in Bilbao, Spain, the Agency brings together representatives from the European Commission, Member State governments, employers' and workers' organisations, as well as leading experts in each of the EU Member States and beyond.

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