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

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Background

The construction site working environment — whether short, medium, or long term — is a scenario where the state of things should be checked every day in order to understand whether the operations are correct or not. The Associazione Nazionale Costruttori Edili (National Association of Building Contractors (ANCE)) was established on 5 May 1946 to help employers and employees create a better workplace environment in the construction sector. The objective of ANCE is the promotion and strengthening of entrepreneurial values and the construction industry workforce and its supply chain, while also contributing to the pursuit of the general interests of the Country. Today, about 20,000 private enterprises specialised in public and private, commercial and industrial, and civil and infrastructural workplaces are members of ANCE. The association’s network covers all of Italy, and is divided into 102 local associations and 20 regional bodies.

Assimpredil ANCE is the association of construction and complementary companies operating in the provinces of Milan, Lodi and Monza, and has served as the largest member of ANCE for the past 66 years. The aim of the association is to promote the development and continued progress of the construction industry. Assimpredil ANCE supports its members with any needs related to enterprise activity by providing information, advice and assistance from a team of experienced and highly skilled people. The societal aim of the association is to provide presence and assistance on the collective and individual level to the enterprises of the system in an effort to assist with problems that directly or indirectly affect them.

The association’s role is growing, especially through the network of joint bodies established with trade unions in terms of assistance to workers (Cassa Edile (Welfare Fund)), safety in the workplace (CPT, that is Regional/Territorial Joint Committees) and the professional organisation of workers (Ente Scuola (School Body)); all of these categories are primarily active ANCE entities from the construction sector.

The CPTs — with the respective national coordinating body CNCPT (National Commission CPT) organised into its Regional Coordinators (CRCPTs) — are active within the provinces by providing services to companies that are aimed to protect the safety and health of workers. The transposition of several European directives on safety and health at work (namely 89/391/EEC, 89/654/EEC, 89/655/EEC, 89/656/EEC, 90/269/EEC, 90/270/EEC, 90/394/EEC and 90/679/EEC), through the emanation of Legislative Decree No 626/94 and Legislative Decree No 494/96 (merged into the Legislative Decree No 81/2008 (Testo Unico)), represented a further qualification for CPT, giving renewed impulse to the institutional mission to realise the safety and prevention on construction sites contributing — in a capillary manner — to guiding and assisting companies and workers in the construction sector.

The Schools of Training (School Body) — with the respective national coordinating body FORMEDIL — organise into regional offices (Regional FORMEDIL). Building schools are aimed at promoting the improvement and updating of the conditions of workers and enterprise technicians in the construction sector. FORMEDIL leads a territorial network of 102 building schools that annually conducts more than 11,000 courses, attended by more than 142,000 technicians and employees in the construction industry.

The Welfare Fund established in each province represents the instrument for the implementation of contracts and collective agreements between ANCE and the trade unions FeNEAL-UIL, CISL and FILCA FILLEA-CGIL, and between territorial organisations affiliated with them respectively. Subscription to the Welfare Fund also allows the use of services offered by the School Body and CPT, which are (as just mentioned) the joint bodies of the construction sector in the field of professional training and safety at work. The intended audience is made up of 150,000 companies and 800,000 workers (http://www.cnce.it/).
For the provinces of Milan, Lodi and Monza, the Welfare Fund, ESEM (Building School Body of Milan) and CPT Construction Safety are managed jointly by Assimpredil ANCE and trade unions (FeNEAL-UIL, FILCA-FILLEA-CISL and CGIL). These three bodies are called ‘joint’ because management committees formed equally by business associations representatives (ANCE) and representatives of trade unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL) provide for their functioning.

### Target group

The target group is the construction industry, limited to companies registered with the Welfare Fund (more than 150,000 enterprises, most of which, according to the sector features, are small and medium-sized ones and comprise about 800,000 workers; CNCE, Report of the President, 2014).

The total number of registered companies in Lombardy (according to the Chamber of Commerce) at the end of 2015 was 150,549. The decline of the construction sector in 2015 (by 1.6 %) is in line with what was observed in 2014 and indicates continued difficulties.

### Description of the good example

Construction companies registered with the Welfare Fund (with registration fee proportional to company size) can take advantage of the wide training provided by the two bodies (CPT and ESEM) who are part of the joint system at no cost or at very reduced rates, thanks to the contributions of companies subscribed to the Welfare Fund. The advantages of registration and regular contributions are numerous and differ at the enterprise and individual worker level:

- Taking into account only the construction safety context, enterprises get the gratuity of the mandatory courses (by Italian legislation) of initial safety training for workers and technical/in-charge employees of construction. Enterprises also get free safety assistance on construction sites through technical advisory visits, which are intended to identify critical situations in the field of health and safety. Furthermore, advisors recommend prevention and protection measures to be taken to eliminate or reduce identified risks, preventing the attribution of any sanctions by competent supervisory authorities.
- Taking into consideration only the construction safety context, workers receive training amounts constrained by law and in accordance with the contract, at no cost (training provided by ESEM and ‘Safety in Construction CPT’).

### Workplace inspection of safety

A selected team of technicians and experts in the field of health and safety in construction is able to offer ‘solutions’ to many problems detected at construction sites or at the enterprise. More than 6,500 annual visits by CPT technicians have allowed the institution to become a real reference point, always present and updated for companies, workers and supervisors. The main activity of the CPT consists of free technical advisory visits on construction sites where the dual purpose is

1) to identify — with the presence of the site representative — the critical situations in the field of health and safety; and

2) to advise technical, organisational and procedural solutions to eliminate or reduce identified risk situations.

To carry out this activity, CPT uses 10 professionally qualified technical teams, each operating in their territorial jurisdiction area. There are different types of visits that distinguish the service: scheduled visits (according to an organised plan by consulting the data bank); visits required by construction companies operating in the area; special visits (MoUs — administrative measures used by public administrations to regulate areas of institutional collaboration and ways to implement community service projects,
agreements, ‘Quality Construction Site’ (a certificate of merit) and so on); and visits reported by trade unions or employers.

We have decided to mention two other activities offered by CPT, because they are related to a number of accidents and occupational diseases: the calculation of the probability of death by electric shock (electrocution) and the detection of levels of exposure to noise and mechanical vibrations that may cause risks to workers.

1) **Calculating the probability of electrocution**

Italian regulation requires that construction sites will verify the safety of metal structures (scaffolding, cranes, silos and so on). The technical CPT makes a preliminary site inspection necessary to verify the data provided by the company in order to draw up a proper technical report, updated constantly with local regulations, for each metal structure necessary for the execution of the calculation of the probability of a lightning strike. The technical report will be produced within 10 working days from the date of execution of the survey. The service is free for companies.

2) **Exposure assessment of workers at risk from noise and vibration**

This service consists of the evaluation of the level of exposure of workers to noise and mechanical vibration according to the criteria established by Legislative Decree No 81/2008 Title VIII subsequent amendments.

a) NOISE

The technician in charge of the CPT, an expert in environmental acoustics:

1) carries out the sound measurements on site, checking the noise level of machinery and equipment and the exposure times and the tasks of workers;

2) draws up a technical report that will enable the employer to identify the level of exposure of workers to noise, the degree of risk to which they are exposed and the consequent legislative obligations related to the identified risk level.

b) MECHANICAL VIBRATIONS

The technician in charge of CPT:

1) performs the necessary measurements on equipment and machinery in the company (in the case of a full-service request — noise and vibration — the measurements for the vibrations are carried out simultaneously with the sound level measurements);

2) draws up a technical report that will enable the employer to identify the level of exposure of workers to mechanical vibration and the degree of risk to which they are exposed; and

3) meets the consequent legislative obligations related to the identified risk level.

After performing the inspection agreed on with the employer, the report is scheduled and will be completed within 15 working days from the date of the execution of the examination. The service is not free, but requires a payment equal to 50 % of the total cost. CPT pays the remaining 50 %. On-site technical assistance is offered to the construction sites for free. CPT also offers their members and different company stakeholders informational meetings in the Milan and Monza headquarters where opportunities to clarify 'what to do' as well as to decipher numerous regulatory issues in place are offered with the same collaborative and consulting style. Within this purpose, CPT organises a series of services that are mainly educational initiatives focused on developing worker awareness and skills aimed at health and safety at work and training initiatives on how to use particular PPE. It is the same CPT that through their teams of experts and technicians directs the various stakeholders in the construction industry, carefully considering in advance what roles should be designated in the company: health and safety managers (employers or not), workers' representatives for Safety, and emergency workers for
first aid and fire prevention. The training also extends a special focus on the health and safety of the technical staff of public administrations and the bodies responsible for control and supervision. The actions of consulting and offering continuous assistance deserve special attention: the CPT staff employed at local offices provide suggestions and clarifications on various issues of safety legislation in force, with the guarantee of constant analysis and periodic updating. In support of information and training activities, CPT produces and elaborates multilingual material distributed to Italian and foreign workers, in-depth technical lecture notes designed for supervisors, and material collected in publications to keep and consult as needed.

**ESEM**

ESEM promotes an extensive training programme for worker and technician profiles operating in the construction industry. The goal is to allow continuous professional growth and gradual improvement of human resources in the construction sector both at the contractual and legislative level through the fulfillment of the constrained training.

In addition to refresher trainings for workers and technicians, along the lines of lifelong learning, all building schools carry out construction site entry courses, work start-up courses, apprenticeships, and safety courses together with additional activities in collaboration with schools and universities. Specific types of courses that are appropriate to fulfill the obligations under the *Testo Unico* on Safety at Work (Legislative Decree 81/2008, Articles 37 and 73) include the 'MICS 16hrs’ project, where MICS stands for ‘Integrated Modules to build in safety’. These courses are certifiable and cover the entire national territory. The courses are recognised by the Ministry of Labour and the Coordination of Regions. They include basic training for workers, qualifications of machinery use, and foreman and manager training:

- **Courses on basic training for workers:** The ‘16 hours before’ and ‘training of construction workers with expertise’ are an important contract innovation introduced by the Collective Labour Contracts (Construction Industry, Construction Craftsmen, Construction PMI and Construction Cooperatives), signed in June/July 2008 and confirmed on 16 December 2011. This requires that from 1 January 2009:
  
  a) Construction companies report the hiring of every worker who accesses the sector for the first time well in advance, but not fewer than three days from the true entry date of the worker on the construction site. Such notification shall be sent to the Territorial Welfare Fund, who will send the communication to the building school.
  
  b) The regional building school will call for the employee to attend a 16-hour course on the professional basics of construction jobs and safety training.

- **‘Courses enabling equipment’** is a training programme that:
  
  a) is specific to the sector of building and road construction and addressed to construction companies;
  
  b) is vocational and practical, serving to improve the professional skills of the operators (the practical training takes up more than half of the training time); and
  
  c) is modular with each attended module being certificated (If you want to do the qualification for another machine you do not need to repeat the basic module).

- **‘Foreman and manager training’:** The prevention and safety management (according to the levels of tasks and responsibilities assigned by law) has become, especially in recent years, an essential and qualifying component of the ‘job’ of the supervisor and the manager. Organising (plan and control), overseeing and ensuring the prevention and safety system function are tightly integrated with the daily work of production management on the construction site. The courses for supervisors and managers are of a vocational and practical nature (intended to improve professional and operational skills), and they refer to the specific context of building and road construction.

- **Results and evidence of impact**

The following data were collected from the whole national territory.
Presently, approximately 150,000 firms, most of which, according to the sector features, are SMEs and more than 800,000 workers are registered with the Welfare Fund.

**CNCPT**

It is important to analyse the visits from CNCPT at work sites. According to the report from this year, there were 103 collaborating institutions — two more than last year — but with reference to May 2016, there were 85 entities performing site visits (the same number from the previous year). However, the total number of visits made over the course of 2015 showed a significant reduction, and followed a declining trend observed over the past five years, from a peak of 52,176 visits in 2011, 45,827 in 2013, 41,486 in 2014, to 38,556 in 2016. As previously explained, this phenomenon has been generated as a result of the sharp slowdown in the construction sector, which was caused by the economic crisis. However, although significant, the reduction in the activity of CPT visits is absolutely in line with the dimensions of construction braking; indeed, it can be argued that the CPT system showed good sealing capability during this difficult phase (Moretti et al., 2016).

In 2015, 71 CPTs performed information campaigns — only two fewer than last year — but the structures operating in the training were 76, versus 74 in 2014, 55 of which specialised in construction site activities. The same growth dynamic is detected for the provision of other services, with 62 active regional organisations in 2015 versus 59 in 2014 and 57 in 2013. The information and promotion of safety culture seemed to also revitalise information campaigns, with 397 in 2015 versus 67 in 2014. However, structural decline seems confirmed when compared with the levels in previous years (924 initiatives in 2012). Training is becoming one of the core activities of CPT, with the numbers clearly showing this trend (77,628 workers were involved in training activities in 2015, compared with 54,023 in 2014 and 55,423 in 2013; Moretti et al., 2016).

The assessment of the situation observed in subsequent visits to the same sites can be a good starting point to reflect on the effectiveness of CPT activities. The reference population is made up of 259,240 verifications (stroke lightning, noise, vibrations and so on) carried out in the 12,287 visits made until 27 June 2016, composed of 7,517 first visits, 2,621 second visits, 723 third visits, and so on, up to a maximum of six sites that were visited 38 times. During the first visits, 167,488 inspections were carried out, 128,136 of which ended without recognition of contraventions; 11,382 with notification of serious breaches; 20,106 with no serious contraventions; and 14,898 carrying out observations. Thus, for the first visit it is calculated that an average of 1.1 serious breaches and 2 less serious breaches occur per visit, a parameter in which it is possible to assess the situation observed in subsequent visits where the situation looks much better (Moretti et al., 2016).

An additional measure to gauge the effectiveness of activities carried out by CPT may be obtained by evaluating the results of checks on the same element of the site with the highest level of detail (classification worksite areas in 192 elements), verifying the results from the first and last visit. The collected data show that 2,820 alerts of serious non-conformity were carried out at the first visit, and at the last visit 1,949 had no breach, only 89 had observations (OSS) and 140 had minor non-conformity (NC-) (Moretti et al., 2016). Only 642 inspections of serious non-conformity were carried out at the first visit; the last visit still showed serious non-conformity. Of the initial 2,820 inspections of serious non-conformity, 1,949 (69.1 %) had radically changed status, highlighting no problematic issues at the last visit. Another 229 (89 observations and 140 minor non-conformity), 8.1 %, showed a significant improvement, resulting in overall 2,178 improvements cases from the initial situation: a success rate of 77.2 %.

**FORMEDIL**

In 2015, there was a significant increase in training activities supplied by building schools compared with 2014, both in terms of the number of courses and the number of students trained (Carapella et al., 2016). The courses increased from 12,322 in 2014 to 13,831 in 2015, with an increase of 12.2 %, while the trained students increased from 144,527 to 161,827, representing an increase of 12 %. However, the trend of decline recorded from 2012 onwards continues in regard to the number of training hours, which declined from 370,970 in 2012 to 343,095 in 2013, 329,977 in 2014 and 294,414 in 2015, representing a decrease of 10.8 % from 2014 and 14.2 % from 2013. Changing educational needs combined with the demand for more specific courses has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of hours per course, which changed from 26.98 (hours per course) in 2013 to 26.78 in 2014, and to 21.29 in 2015, with a decrease of 20.5 % from 2014.
As for the MICS 16hrs project, which mainly focuses on safety and health in construction sites, it racked up to 5,336 courses in 2015, or 73,155 hours attended by 50,505 students. This increase, compared with 2014, was equal to 12% for the number of courses, 5.2% for the number of hours, and 11.8% for the number of students, emphasising the wide popularity of these types of courses. Only the student numbers from the schools in the south of Italy have declined, by 5.2%, compared with 2014 (Carapella et al., 2016).

Even in 2015, the MICS 16hrs project was confirmed to be the largest mass education campaign of safe working behaviour in the Italian construction sector, with 31.2% of students trained stables in respect to the total number of students trained by FORMEDIL (Carapella et al., 2016).

In regard to market situations in construction, there are some difficulties and obstacles that cannot be overlooked. The work of CPT has recorded about 13,620 visits in less than five years on construction sites. This phenomenon is mainly caused by the sharp drop in the construction sector since the financial crisis, which marked a decline in the value of production by over 30%, a reduction of investment in new buildings by 60%, a decline in physical volumes of new construction by 65%, and resulted in the loss of almost a third of employment capacity. Again (as already noted above), the reduction of CPT’s visits is absolutely in line with the dimensions of the sector braking (Moretti et al., 2016).

• Conclusions
FORMEDIL coupled with CNCE (Commissione Nazionale Paritetica per le Casse Edili (National Commission Welfare Fund)) and CNCPT constitutes SBC, bilateral system of construction. Through a widespread presence across the country, the construction training system guarantees education in each local region and provisions favouring the continuous updating and constant professional development needed by specialists in the building production process. SBC works with businesses and workers on the forefront to promote innovation, quality and safety in the construction sector by emphasising training.

The key feature of the training approach, followed by the bilateral system of construction, is to put into the foreground the real value of experience. This ensures the substantial quality of training, thanks to the close connection between theoretical education and practical experience on the worksite. Many of the initiatives are undertaken through a methodological approach of training on the real worksite (school sites) in the context of training for the recovery and building renovation as well as joint actions between construction and vocational and technical schools.

• Transferability of the results
The programme is intrinsically transferable, given its nature. The training provided by the programme is required according to regulations, which makes it easy to demand. In other contexts, and without that regulatory demand, the incentives for OSH training would be weaker.

The training organisation as well as workplace visits are dependent on the organisations’ funding and the organisation of training and visits. Without such organisations fulfilling this function, it would be difficult to implement a programme like this.

The demand for OSH training is not common and even less common in sectors other than construction. This kind of programme will most likely be more difficult to implement in other sectors.

• References, key literature, web pages and so on
The current overview has been compiled from web-based sources, supplemented with some preliminary unstructured interviews with Arch. Alfonso Cioffi, Area Legale Contratti Lavoro (Legal Department, Working Contracts) and member of Assimpredil ANCE.

In addition, the majority of the content comes from two reports (FORMEDIL and CNCPT), kindly made available by the secretary office of the FORMEDIL association.

http://ww2.cassaedilemilano.it/
http://www.ance.it/
http://www.cnce.it/
http://www.cncept.it/Pages/Default.aspx
http://www.cptmilano.it/Pages/it_servizicantiereredirect.aspx
http://www.esem.it/Pages/Default.aspx
http://www.formedil.it/


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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