

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The hotel, restaurant and catering (Horeca) sector covers a wide range of different businesses, including hotels, pubs and restaurants, contract caterers in various industrial and commercial premises, fast-food takeaways, cafes and bistros. It plays an important role as a job creator in the service sector and in the economy as a whole in many EU Member States.

Employing as it does more than 7.8 million people, it is important to manage the risks and prevent the causes of accidents and ill health in the Horeca sector.

The aim of this report is to make available information relating to occupational health and safety in Horeca and to provide an overview of good practices at both the policy and workplace levels.

The hotels and restaurant sector includes a range of tasks and jobs that pose different risks. The complexity of the sector makes it difficult to present an exhaustive view of the situation. Much attention goes towards working in kitchens and to a lesser extent, to waiting staff. Supporting activities such as cleaning jobs, goods supply, etc. are randomly represented in scientific literature.

The first part of the report presents the key issues relating to the Horeca sector and the relevant statistics, such as employment market characteristics, occupational accidents, and diseases.

The report then examines policy initiatives that have been undertaken to reduce the risk to workers' health and safety at the national and supra-national levels, providing a representative coverage of activities across the EU, and identifying success factors.

It is difficult to assess the real impact of the existing European, national and local policies on the working conditions of the sector. Over the years the legislation on Occupational Safety and Health has become more complex. Ninety percent of all Horeca venues employ less than 10 people and many of them are family run. Employers often lack the time and resources to understand and follow the legislative issues that are applicable to the sector. The implementation of legislation at company level seems to be a real problem in the sector.

This section also illustrates the fact that branch-specific policies are an exception for the Horeca sector. The discussion and introduction of different miscellaneous policies, e.g. HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) or the smoking ban, has focused the attention of state institutions and prevention service providers more intensely on this sector, and in some cases this has resulted in further measures in the field of health and safety. Looking at the different approaches that can be observed in Europe it is often difficult to assess when a measure or a limited prevention programme can be said to become a 'policy'.

The following section provides — through analysis of existing research and literature — an overview of the state of occupational health and safety in the hotels, restaurants and catering sector and of working conditions, and identifies changes taking place within the sector that (may) affect the occupational health and safety of workers.

The workforce in the sector faces a large number of physical and psychosocial risks.

The sector characteristics give rise to atypical employment and working conditions. This is reflected in working time as well as in the type of contracts. In general, the sector asks



for more flexibility in working relations and the distribution of working time in order to cope with the competition. It is important though that the employees' needs are also taken into account.

The hotels and restaurants sector is rapidly changing with regard to the use of technologies, administration, customer demands, etc. This is also affecting the structure of the sector.

In terms of occupational accidents, slips, trips and falls, as well as cuts and burns represent the largest share. In the field of occupational diseases, musculoskeletal diseases and skin diseases predominate. Hazards and risks, difficult working conditions and work-related accident and disease rates are described in many places for the Horeca sector; the branch-specific prevention strategies in Europe are, on the contrary, hardly described at all.

The next section provides an overview of policy initiatives undertaken to reduce the risk to workers' health and safety at the local, regional and sector levels. These include guides, actions and strategies, including action undertaken by social partners (e.g. through voluntary agreements).

The report then focuses on the prevention of risks to workers in this sector. It provides descriptions of 18 practical actions at workplace level and their background, including the groups who are targeted, and ways of identifying and assessing results, side effects, success factors, and problems.

The case studies included in this report were chosen to show the range of different risks that the Horeca sector sees, reflecting the great variety of working environments in this sector. They cover restaurants and hotels, but also school canteens and clubs and bars. The keys to the success of risk prevention actions include:

- good risk assessment;
- worker involvement;
- management commitment;
- successful partnership for large-scale actions on a regional, national or sector level;
- training being adapted to different groups of people;
- a combination of the various means of action.

The main conclusion of the report is that the future challenge is to develop prevention strategies which protect employees in the Horeca sector effectively. The following factors of success seem to be important here.

- Strategies should be oriented to the specific requirements of this sector and to the specific target groups (e.g. female workers, young workers, migrant workers, entrepreneurs).
- Reliable partners must be found who serve as champions, and promote nationwide implementation (employers' and employees' associations, vocational schools, etc.). Networks should be created for this purpose.
- Enterprises and employees have to be sensitised in relation to health and safety, and as far as possible have to be included in the development of measures.
- Motivated enterprises need to be given practical advice and information.
- Methods of analysis have to be developed in order to identify enterprises with a high risk potential and there should be practical support for putting in place adequate prevention measures.

