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Health and Safety in Construction

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ABSTRACT

The securing of a safe and healthy work environment is a common, strategic target for the countries of the European Union. The main purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance of safety and health preventing accidents and occupational diseases at work, with special emphasis in the construction sector, as it remains one of the most dangerous occupational sectors, due to its particularly severe and serious work-related accidents. The prevention of dangers and the promotion of healthier and safer conditions at workplace constitute significant elements, that can improve the quality of work and the productivity. They also promote competitiveness, while they contribute to the improvement of the sustainability of the social insurance systems. The achievement of the promotion and preservation of high health standards and safety in work implies that employers should at first evaluate the hazards about the Health and Safety in the workplace they are responsible for and then decide, in case it is required, to take the necessary measures in prevention and security and, finally undertake the responsibility to enforce the application of these measures. The Occupational Risk Assessment, provided by the current institutional framework, is a complex, timeless and dynamic process of assessing the hazards of the work environment. However, the practice that has been applied and continues to be applied in our country is the preparation of risk assessment studies, which are neither complete nor satisfactory, and consequently, the serious dangers that arise from the exercise of the work activity, either remain unnoticed or are treated superficially. The Health and Safety Plan, includes among others the risk assessment in the construction projects, which was treated and it is still being treated in a faulty way, as a simple bureaucratic procedure and not as a tool, on which the prevention of workplace accidents could be based. Although official minimum wages have been set for the formation of Health and Safety Plan and Health and Safety File in public works, there has been no significant difference in the quality of the studies and their completeness. The establishment of the Hellenic Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (H.I.O.H.S.) in 1992 was an effort to cover -at national level- the large gap in scientific and technical infrastructure to support policy to improve working conditions. The consequences of an accident at work have human, financial, social and protection costs. Therefore, the complete and correct application of the existing rich legislation remains a demand, as it often hits both the specificities of the productive base of the Greek economy (many small and very small enterprises) and the absence of a coherent institutional administrative mechanism, which will coordinate the multilateral interventions of the State, will ensure the effective promotion of Health and Safety issues beyond a formal legal compliance of employers and, above all, contributes to shaping a mentality of prevention across the whole range of working life.



KEYWORDS

Health and Safety, Prevention, Health and Safety Plan, Health and Safety File, constructional project