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# **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY NETWORKS**

## **BSN Profile of the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety**

(<http://www.balticseaosh.net/>)



Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and  
Occupational Safety and Health Branch (LABADMIN/OSH)

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**International Labour Organization, Geneva**

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

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BAuA	Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (Germany)
BOHS	basic occupational health services
BSN	Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety
EU	European Union
EU-OSHA	EU Occupational Safety and Health Agency
FIOH	Finnish Institute of Occupational Health
IALI	International Association of Labour Inspection
ICOH	International Commission on Occupational Health
ILO	International Labour Organization
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NDPHS	Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being
NFA	Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Arbejdsmiljø (National Research Centre for the Working Environment) (Denmark)
NRCWE	National Research Centre for the Working Environment (Denmark)
OH	occupational health
OSH	occupational safety and health
SEE	South-East Europe
SEENWH	South-East European Network on Workers' Health
SEEWA	South-East European Workplace Academy
SME	small to medium-sized enterprise
STAMI	National Institute of Occupational Health (Norway)
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO/Europe	WHO Regional Office for Europe



## Foreword and acknowledgements

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The profile of the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety (BSN) was prepared by Professor Jorma Rantanen. It is published as an appendix to the ILO Working Paper presenting the results of the multiple case-study analysis of six regional occupational safety and health (OSH) networks. The study was initiated in order to inform the modernization of the ILO portfolio of activities in OSH knowledge and information. It benefited from financial support provided under the Partnership Agreement between the Government of South Korea and the ILO 2015-2017 (GLO/15/50/ROK).

The study covers the statutes, roles, functions, governance modalities, financing and challenges of regional OSH networks from Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The results allow a better understanding of how and why OSH agencies, institutions, organizations and experts collaborate with one another. They provide invaluable descriptive information covering the diversity of existing collaborative arrangements and key characteristics of productive regional OSH networks. They highlight similarities and differences in ways of organizing collaboration in OSH and provide new knowledge to support international cooperation which has always been and remains a key role of the ILO. They can be useful to a vast diversity of stakeholders, including policy-makers, expert groups and, of course, active members of the network.

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International Labour Organization



## Summary

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The Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety (BSN) has been active for over 20 years and has proved to be effective in carrying out inter-institutional and professional collaboration in the field of occupational health and safety, covering 10 countries around the Baltic Sea region. With efficient partnerships and coordinated policies, it has produced and distributed information for the members, and collected information on member countries for common use in the development of occupational health (OH) and occupational safety and Health (OSH). The BSN's activities can be summarized as follows:

- The mission of the network is to communicate and exchange information on OH and OSH, and to facilitate research, development, and collaboration between the national OH and OSH institutions and experts in the Baltic Sea region.
- The main activities are communication mainly through the Internet; organization of training courses; carrying out joint research projects; publishing reports on the basis of research; and organizing expert meetings. The policy, strategy, and management decisions are made in the annual network meetings.
- The BSN has also networked with the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS), the South-East European Network on Workers' Health (SEENWH), and with several European and international organizations including EU- OSHA, the ILO, WHO/Europe, IALI, and ICOH.

## 1 Introduction

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In the mid-1990s, the Baltic countries, as well as Poland and Russia, were in transition, as their socio-economic systems went through fundamental changes in all societal sectors, including OH and OSH. The Baltic States and Poland were also preparing for EU membership. In order to facilitate the restructuring of OH and OSH in these countries, a Consultation on Strengthening Occupational Health Services in the Baltic Countries was organized in the WHO Regional Office for Europe from 6–9 September 1995 (WHO, 1995). One of the outcomes of the consultation was an agreement on strengthening of institutional and professional contacts, and the development of information systems that support the OH and OSH in these countries, especially by supporting expert activities and services. Additional goals were to review and discuss the technical and educational support rendered so far to the Baltic countries, and to investigate the type of support needed in the future. The meeting also discussed possible mechanisms for international assistance to support the development of work environments OH and OSH services in the Baltic countries (WHO, 1996).

The establishment of the telematics information network was agreed upon by the participants, and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) was appointed as the secretariat of the network. The network's website was opened in 1997

Gradually the area and scope of the BSN was expanded to cover all of the countries around the Baltic Sea, and the substantive content was developed to collect and share OH and OSH information for all members, and on a broad scope of substantive items.

The Baltic Sea region has a population basis of 166 million, and about 60–70 per cent of the adult population belong to the workforce (in Russia, only the north-western region is considered.)

## 2 Formal status and constitution

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Initiated under the “patronage” of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the BSN network is a voluntary, collaborative, non-profit entity made up of 13 institutions and experts from 10 northern European Countries around the Baltic Sea. It has a decentralized architecture of fully autonomous national focal points located in the key OSH or OH institutions in each country. All institutions participate on a voluntary, peer-to-peer basis, and are responsible for the content, quality, and maintenance of their own country information. The focal points produce, collect, deposit, and update the information on their Web pages in their national servers. The Web pages provide information on the OSH systems and strategies, programmes and projects, as well as outcomes of the institutions.

## 3 Mission, policy, and strategy

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### **Mission**

The BSN is an expert information network. Its purpose is to strengthen peer-to-peer networking and collaboration between expert institutions and respective bodies in OH and OSH in the Baltic Sea Region. A major function of the BSN is to facilitate, through the Internet, the exchange of information among participating countries, and the provision of easy and immediate access to country OSH information in the region and in other countries.

### **Policy**

At the operational level, the BSN aims at bringing the essential country information in OH and OSH within easy reach of interested parties, by constantly transmitting up-to-date information in the network data sources. The network facilitates the search of information by keeping up useful links to other OH and OSH information sources.

Through inter-institutional networking, the BSN provides a forum for transmitting information and developing good models and good practice guidelines for OH and OSH policies and practices. The activities also include the dissemination of information on OH and OSH training possibilities in the member countries.

In creating permanent contacts between experts and OH and OSH institutions, the network can provide support to OH and OSH authorities when needed, and can encourage countries to develop national networking arrangements in order to strengthen the collaboration between OH and OSH institutions and organizations, and to develop the OH and OSH infrastructure within each country.

The network also offers a framework and stimulation for joint bilateral and multilateral projects among member countries.

## Strategy

Originally founded for support to ensure the best possible access to OSH research and expert information for Baltic countries that were in socio-economic transition, the BSN has changed its profile gradually to become a multidisciplinary, Internet-based network covering broad areas of development in OH and OSH, with geographical coverage of the whole northern European sub-region around the Baltic Sea. The scope of activities has been expanded to cover expert meetings and research and development projects, in collaboration with partners, particularly the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS) (NDPHS, 2018).

The initial orientation was primarily in occupational health, but has become more multidisciplinary, to cover occupational hygiene, ergonomics, psychology, safety, and the economic aspects of OH and OSH.

The BSN serves as a contact forum for leadership of the national institutions, and provides regular contacts for experts in OH and OSH institutions. The network provides scientific and professional expert support for OH and OSH authorities when needed, and encourages countries to develop national networking in the field of OH and OSH, in order to strengthen collaboration between institutions and organizations.

The network also aims to provide regular contacts with the international and European OH and OSH organizations such as the ILO, WHO, and EU-OSHA.

## 4 Structure, governance, and coordination

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### Structure

The backbone of the BSN is its national institutes and departments. The BSN network has a decentralized architecture between fully autonomous national focal points in each country. According to the basic principles of voluntary networking, the BSN is a “flat” organization with as equal membership as possible. Experience, however, shows that a sustainable network needs some kind of leadership, coordination, and organization.

The network collaborates closely with the WHO Regional Office for Europe; the ILO, Geneva; the European Commission; the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work; EU-OSHA, Bilbao; and ICOH, all of which participate in and observe the BSN activities.

The BSN national focal points are “nested” in the national member institutions, and enjoy institutional and financial support from them.

The BSN organization consists of a coordinating secretariat and national focal points located in one of the member organizations in each member country. The focal points are supported by the leadership of the host institute, which also provides institutional support including travelling costs, technical facilities, and information support.

The main organizational event is the annual meeting of all members. The meeting reports on activities in the member countries, and on network projects, and agrees upon the activities for the coming year.

The annual network meeting (the directors of 13 institutes) is the principal decision-making body, which decides on meetings, projects, and participation in external collaboration. Most of the practical programmes and tasks are carried out on the principle of division of work.

## Coordination

One of the network members' representatives (usually the director of the institute or national focal point) is elected by the network members as coordinator, and his or her institute as the coordinating institute.

Regular meetings for network member institutions are organized once or twice a year. These meetings discuss and agree on guidelines and directions for improving the structure and content of regional and national information, also from the technical point of view. The network serves as one subregional forum for regional collaboration between OH and OSH institutions and experts in an integrating Europe.

## 5 Members

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The BSN has 13 members from 10 countries around the Baltic Sea. The membership is mainly occupational health oriented: 60 per cent of members are institutes of occupational health; 40 per cent ministries' OSH departments or a government health agency; and the rest an OSH institute, OSH research and information centre, or a medical university. The members are:

- National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NFA), Denmark (<http://www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk/en>)
- Ministry of Social Affairs, Working Environment Department, Estonia (<https://www.sm.ee/en>)
- Health Board, Estonia (<https://www.terviseamet.ee/en/information/about-hb.html>)
- Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Finland (<https://www.ttl.fi/en/>)
- Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA), Dortmund, Germany (<http://www.baua.de/en/Homepage.html>)

- Kooperationsstelle Hamburg, Germany  
(<http://www.kooperationsstelle-hh.de/?lang=en>)
- Institute for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health, Riga Stradins University, Latvia  
(<https://www.rsu.lv/en/node/597>)
- Occupational Health Centre, Institute of Hygiene, Lithuania  
(<http://www.hi.lt/about-institute.html>)
- National Institute of Occupational Health (STAMI), Norway  
(<https://stami.no/en/>)
- Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority  
(<http://hw2014.healthy-workplaces.eu/en/campaign-partners/national-focal-points/norway>)
- Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine (NIOM), Lodz, Poland  
([http://www.imp.lodz.pl/home\\_en/](http://www.imp.lodz.pl/home_en/))
- North-Western State Medical University, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation  
([http://szgmu.ru/eng/s/143/about\\_mechnikov\\_university.html](http://szgmu.ru/eng/s/143/about_mechnikov_university.html)) (<http://www.medstudies.org/mechnikov/post.html> 32k 09/Dec/2005)
- Swedish Work Environment Authority, Sweden  
(<https://www.av.se/en/>)

## 6 Functions and programmes

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The main activities of the network are:

- a) collecting, compiling, organizing, and disseminating information on OH and OSH;
- b) reporting of occupational accidents and diseases, and harmonization of statistics;
- c) training and education of experts in OH and OSH;
- d) organizing expert meetings on OH and OSH; and
- e) carrying out research and development projects on OH and OSH.

### Network meetings

Decision-making and future planning, as well as the follow-up of network activities, takes place in the network annual meetings, which rotate between the national members. The co-chairs of the meetings are the network coordinator and the rotating co-chair from the host institution of the meeting. With only a few exceptions, the national focal points have participated in the annual meetings in corpore. The seminars and training courses may be organized in connection with annual meetings. In addition to the national focal points, observers from collaborating organizations also participate – for example, from the ILO Geneva; WHO Regional Office for Europe; the EU; the NDPHS, EU-OSHA, and ICOH. The two-day meeting may contain, for example, the following agenda items:

- a) situation analysis of OH and OSH policies in Europe and worldwide;
- b) OH and OSH strategies of the European and international organizations;

- c) theme sessions on key Baltic, European, or international items;
- d) important events and national plans in the member countries;
- e) strategies of member institutions;
- f) reporting on ongoing and completed projects;
- g) planning of new projects;
- h) BSN participation in partners' projects and programmes; and
- i) group work or workshops on important and topical themes.

## Projects

The BSN has carried out special projects since its foundation. Examples include the “Reliable occupational accident registration – an indicator for prevention” project, in collaboration with the NDPHS, and “Training of occupational health personnel in the BSN countries”. Currently discussion is ongoing concerning participation in the EU Cost projects. Collaboration in projects with the NDPHS will be continued (see below).

The BSN served as the leading partner for the NDPHS programme, Developing the National OH and OSH System and Improving Health and Preventing Accidents in the High-Risk Sectors in North-West Russia, 2008–09. It also took a leading role in the NDPHS-EU programmes on “Reliable occupational accident registration” 2013–14. At the beginning of 2017, a new two-year project was launched, funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI): “Better prevention, identification, and reporting of work-related and occupational diseases and emerging risks”. The expected results are lists of “comparable” occupational diseases; information on their criteria and recognition practice in the NDPHS member countries and Belarus; the estimated number of work-related diseases; and recommendations for reliably recording them. The BSN has also been a key partner in surveying the training programmes in occupational health in the Baltic countries.

In the early years of the BSN, priority was given to capacity building of members, and for network activities in training – for example, in the then-new computer-based communications and use of the Internet, and drawing up of national OH and OSH profiles. Later on, fewer training courses were organized, but there was more dissemination of information in the Baltic region and in Europe on OH and OSH courses and events. The reports published by the network are still used as material for training courses organized by BSN partners or member institutes.

## Web information

From the very beginning, the BSN has maintained a website for reporting the basic information of the network – on its activities, meetings, projects, and other topics. The main sites are the chapters on BSN in general, participating institutes, projects, meetings, current news, and publications.

## Country profiles

Each national focal point has prepared a basic information package on the country, and gives links to key actors and institutions that are relevant from the OH and OSH point of view. The

country profiles contain a brief description of the BSN member institute; contact information; OH and OSH legislation; other links in the country; training courses and conferences; public services website links; and information on the parliament, government, statistics office, social security system, and accident and other insurance.

A typical website structure is that of Germany:

Germany country profile		
<p><b>Germany national focal point</b></p> <p>Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA). www.baua.de</p> <p>Kooperationsstelle Hamburg IFE GmbH. www.kooperationsstelle</p>	<p><b>Basic information on the country</b></p> <p>Basic info on the institute.</p> <p>Contact information.</p> <p>Legislation.</p> <p>Information by subject area (see right).</p> <p><b>Links</b></p> <p>Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)</p> <p>Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA)</p> <p>Joint German Occupational Safety and Health Strategy (GDA).</p> <p>German Social Accident Insurance – umbrella association (DGUV).</p> <p>Länderausschuss für Arbeitsschutz und Sicherheitstechnik (LASI).</p> <p>OSH institutes in Germany (under construction).</p>	<p><b>Information by subject area</b></p> <p><b>Safety and health at work</b></p> <p>Annual Report on Safety and Health at Work (SUGA) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS): <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Informationen-fuer-die-Praxis/Statistiken/Suga/Suga_content.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Informationen-fuer-die-Praxis/Statistiken/Suga/Suga_content.html</a> (In German).</p> <p>The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) provides information from A to Z on their Web portal: <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Themen-von-A-Z.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Themen-von-A-Z.html</a> (In German).</p> <p>The New Quality of Work Initiative (INQA) promotes good practice in the workplace and is supported by institutional OSH stakeholders and social partners: <a href="http://www.inqa.de/">http://www.inqa.de/</a> (In German).</p> <p>Technical Rules for Hazardous Substances: <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS.html</a> (In German).</p> <p>Workplace Air Limit Values. <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-900.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-900.html</a> (In German).</p> <p>Workplace Biological Limit Values: <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-903.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-903.html</a> (In German).</p>

Germany country profile		
		<p>List of Carcinogenic and Mutagenic Substances, Reproductive Toxicants:  <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-905.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-905.html</a> (In German).</p> <p>List of Sensitizing Substances:  <a href="http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-907.html">http://www.baua.de/de/Themen-von-A-Z/Gefahrstoffe/TRGS/TRGS-907.html</a> (In German).</p> <p>Ergonomics                      Industrial Science:  <a href="http://www.gfa-online.de/englisch/english.php">http://www.gfa-online.de/englisch/english.php</a>.</p> <p><b>Environment</b></p> <p>Federal Environmental Agency (UBA):  <a href="http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/index-e.htm">http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/index-e.htm</a>.</p> <p>Federal Office for Radiation Protection:  <a href="http://www.bfs.de/bfs?setlang=en">http://www.bfs.de/bfs?setlang=en</a>.</p>

Profiles are available in the BSN website for nine other member countries and three international organizations: EU-OSHA, ILO, and WHO/Europe.

The new joint strategy with the OH and OSH Expert Group of the NDPHS includes further elements for profiling at the national level, and for strengthening and maintaining the information systems within the NDPHS-BSN.

The links to national focal points and international partners are available on the BSN website, and the profiles of the countries provide numerous further links to their national institutions, constituents, and partners, as well as national statistics. This facilitates and organizes the searching of data from the countries.

### Meeting reports

The network meetings are well documented, as is the information of the key decisions, agreements, and plans. The meeting information also covers the materials from the presentations in the meetings or associated seminars. The meeting reports are available on the BSN website: <http://www.balticseah> and [osh.net/meetings/](http://osh.net/meetings/).

## Data repositories on OH and OSH

The BSN does not have its own data banks or other repositories. The archives of the network describe only the events in the network activities, but the produced publications and reports are archived. The links to the national focal points, however, open the contacts to data banks and national statistics and publications of the institutions.

As the affiliate NDPHS membership and the joint strategy with the OH and OSH Expert Group of the NDPHS links the BSN with the NDPHS, the large data repositories of the NDPHS are available to the BSN, and the BSN data will be for the most important parts stored in that database.

## Contents of the network Web pages

The BSN uses Internet technologies for information distribution. The regional main homepage contains information about the network, links to international organizations, and electronic publications. It also provides access to each participating country's national homepage. Besides producing pages in the English language, the BSN encourages participating countries to produce and collect network information in their national languages.

The basic structure of the BSN Web pages has been standardized. Country home pages have the following main categories:

- a) background information;
- b) contact information;
- c) organizational profiles;
- d) OH and OSH information sources;
- e) information by subject areas;
- f) news and activities;
- g) training, courses, and conferences; and
- h) legislation.

Information activities are the most important issues for the BSN, which aims at bringing essential OH and OSH data to all member countries, by constantly transmitting up-to-date information in the network data sources. The network also maintains links to other OH and OSH information sources.

The regional main homepage of the network is maintained by the coordinator institute, earlier the FIOH, and nowadays the Institute of Occupational and Environmental Health, Riga. As a technical focal point, the coordinator institute gives secretarial support, e.g. in organizing meetings, and technical support. In principle, all the activities are carried out on an own-account basis; sometimes the individual institutes may provide support for special network activities or events, if needed.

The BSN is a forum for transmitting and developing good models and good practice guidelines, and for disseminating information on OH and OSH training possibilities in the member countries. In creating permanent contacts between experts and OH and OSH institutions, the network can provide support to OSH authorities when needed, and encourage member countries to develop national networking arrangements in order to strengthen the collaboration between OH and OSH institutions and organizations and to develop the OSH infrastructure within each country. The network may also offer a framework and stimulation for joint bilateral and multilateral projects among the member countries.

## 7 Financing

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The BSN does not have a special budget; all the resources are provided by the member institutions in kind. The costs of activities of the focal point – such as technical facilities, communications, and office space – are provided by the host institutes, as the personnel active in the BSN belong to the staff of the institute. The costs of participation in the network meetings are also covered by the host institutes. The costs of the coordinator, secretariat, and the network website, which naturally are higher than those of the members' national focal points, are covered by the coordinator institute. Funding for joint projects by the network is covered by special project applications from various external financing sources.

## 8 Outputs over the past few years

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Some of the key outputs of the BSN are listed here. Further examination of the relevant documents is possible at the BSN website.

- Kurppa K. Misleading indicators of non-fatal work injuries due to severe underreporting in many countries of the Baltic Sea Region. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, 18 November 2015.
- Järvensivu T. Principles of networking. BSN Annual Meeting 22 September 2016, Tampere, Finland.
- Lund Eikrem AM, Samant Y. Reliable Occupational Accident Registration – Indicators for Prevention. The Realocc Accidents Project 2013–15. Summary of the Survey. The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, Oslo, 2015, 32p.  
<http://www.balticseaosh.net/reliable-occupational-accident-registration-indicator-for-prevention/>.
- Kurppa K. Severe Under-reporting of Work Injuries in Many Countries of the Baltic Sea Region. An exploratory semi-quantitative study. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Helsinki, 2015.  
<http://www.balticseaosh.net/severe-under-reporting-of-work-injuries-in-many-countries-of-the-baltic-sea-region/>.
- Report on the current situation in relation to occupational diseases in EU Member States and EFTA/EEA Countries: Estonia, 24 September 2016.

- Training of occupational health personnel in the BSN countries: Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, and Sweden.  
[http://www.balticseaosh.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/OH-training\\_NETTIIN\\_BSN\\_low-resolution.pdf](http://www.balticseaosh.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/OH-training_NETTIIN_BSN_low-resolution.pdf).
- Sickness absenteeism in the BSN countries: Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation, and Sweden.  
<http://www.balticseaosh.net/sickness-absenteeism-in-the-bsn-countries/>.
- Profile of the Road Transport Sector in St. Petersburg – Working Conditions, Occupational Health and Safety, 2011.  
<http://www.balticseaosh.net/profile-of-the-road-transport-sector-in-sty-petersburg/>.
- Profile of the Road Transport Sector in St. Petersburg – Working Conditions, Occupational Health and Safety, 2011.  
<http://www.balticseaosh.net/profile-of-the-road-transport-sector-in-sty-petersburg/>.

## 9 Collaborative partners

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The BSN has regular contacts with several other networks in OH and OSH or related fields. Most important among them are briefly described here for general orientation and for the nature of collaboration.

### **Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being**

(<http://www.ndphs.org/>)

The NDPHS is a political and policy framework for cooperation involving the EU, its Member States in the northern European region, and the European Economic Area (EEA) countries, Iceland and Norway, and North-West Russia. It aims at providing a common platform for promoting dialogue and concrete cooperation, as well as strengthening stability and promoting economic integration, competitiveness, and sustainable development in northern Europe.

The following priority sectors have been agreed for Northern Dimension Cooperation: economic cooperation; freedom, security, and justice; external security; research education and culture; the environment; nuclear safety; natural resources; and social welfare and health care. Currently, there are four Northern Dimension partnerships in place for the implementation of those priorities: environment (NDEP); culture (NDPC); public health and social welfare (NDPHS); and transport and logistics (NDPTL). The NDPHS is a cooperative effort of ten governments, the European Commission, and eight international organizations in the northern European area, and provides a regional forum for concerted action to tackle challenges to health and social well-being in the region.

Collaboration with the BSN is continuous, regular, and close, and includes: coordinated strategies; the division of work; joint projects and courses; and mutual participation and representation in meetings and expert groups, one of which is the OSH Expert Group. (For further details see: <http://www.balticseaosh.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NDPHS-EG-OSHBSN.pdf>.)

The strategic activities of the partners are based on the long-term action plan of the OSH Expert Group, which was agreed on in the OSH Expert Group and BSN joint meeting in Tallinn, September 2015, and further confirmed in the Partnership Annual Conference (PAC) meeting in November 2015.

The plan has the following objectives:

**1. Tripartite situational OSH analyses for better decision-making and addressing OSH challenges in the Northern Dimension area.**

- Update and draft comprehensive national OSH profiles (outline available). During the implementation of the “Health at Work” strategy, most of the countries drafted tripartite OSH profiles, which are now in need of regular updating.
- Empower the members to draft in-depth profiles on specific topics.
- Encourage the members to ratify related OSH ILO conventions.
- Improve the comparability of relevant indicators (occupational accident and disease statistics).
- Disseminate and promote the results and recommendations of the “Reliable occupational accidents registration – indicators for prevention” project (Realocc), which ended in March 2015; now under discussion in EUROSTAT, EU-OSHA.
- Project to be launched: Better prevention, identification, and reporting of work-related and occupational diseases and emerging risks.

**2. Coordinate national policy frameworks for health and safety at work, and for the provision of working conditions conducive to health and well-being.**

- Draft and update national OSH programmes, based on the above tripartite analyses (profiles), including action plans that are in line with WHO, ILO, and EU strategies.

**3. Coordinate special national programmes for the development of OSH services for all working people.**

- Further improve the quality of OSH systems in countries with an operational system.
- Develop basic OSH concepts in countries in need of improved services. Concept to be approved at the highest political level. Drafting a questionnaire and survey of quality standards for OSH specialists’ training, initiated in autumn 2015.

**4. Higher national commitment to the prevention of occupational hazards.**

- Based on the priorities set in the above programmes (item 2), each member defines its targeted areas and hazards, and related prevention programmes.
- Development of an Arctic OSH network aimed at improving work and working conditions in the Arctic environment; part of the Finnish presidency of the Arctic Council 2017–19.

## 5. Providing a strengthened training framework for OHS staff in the Northern Dimension area.

- Exploring training needs in individual countries, with the aim of developing suitable curricula for several countries in the region.
- Organizing cooperation with European and national training organizations.

## 6. Implementing policies more practically, by improving information dissemination and ensuring the present level of information dissemination.

### South-East European Network on Workers, Health (SEENWH)

(<http://seehn.org/partnerships-in-health/partners/south-east-european-network-on-workers-health-seenwh/>)

The SEENWH network is an international network of WHO collaborating centres for occupational health, occupational health institutes, and WHO national focal points in South-East Europe, that collaborate with WHO/Europe on occupational health issues. The members of the network are occupational health institutions from 9 participating countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey.

This network serves as a forum for exchanging and disseminating information and knowledge; a platform for developing and sharing good models and good practice guidelines; a basis for developing programmes for training and education of professionals; and a framework for bilateral and multilateral projects enabling the best possible use of resources available. The main focus in the activities is the implementation in the SEE subregion of the WHO Global Strategy on Occupational Health for All, and the WHO Global Action Plan on Workers' Health. The South-East European Workplace Academy (SEEWA) serves as the expert training network for the subregion.

A strategic agreement has been concluded in the form of an MOU between the BSN and SEENWH. The MOU includes collaboration in the field of occupational health; exchange of information; collaboration in training; research; and mutual participation in meetings and joint projects. For future themes in collaboration, the following items were listed in the 21st Annual Meeting of the BSN, with the participation of the SEENWH chair, Professor Bislomovska (Bislomovska, 2014; BSN and SEENWH, 2015):

- Occupational health services for all, including SMEs and farmers.
- Situation analysis of asbestos exposure, and elimination of asbestos-related diseases.
- Prevention of occupational diseases and accidents in high-risk sectors.
- Improving the work ability of ageing workers.

For further details see: BSN and SEENWH 2015 and [http://hdmr.hlz.hr/6kongres/pdf/6k-prez--Karadzinska--See\\_Network.pdf](http://hdmr.hlz.hr/6kongres/pdf/6k-prez--Karadzinska--See_Network.pdf).

## European and international partner organizations

### **Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS)**

([www.ndphs.org/](http://www.ndphs.org/)).

Collaboration is very close with this EU network, and particularly with its OSH Expert Group. The collaboration covers wide topics in OSH, including, among other things, the development of statistics and reporting of occupational accidents and diseases.

### **European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), Bilbao, Spain**

(<https://osha.europa.eu/fi>)

EU-OSHA is the EU information agency for OSH. It contributes to the European Commission's Strategic Framework for Safety and Health at Work (current strategy period 2014–2020) and other relevant EU strategies and programmes, such as Europe 2020. The main activities are:

The Healthy Workplaces campaigns; Online Interactive Risk Assessment (OIRA) project.

- Two-year campaigns to raise awareness of OSH topics across Europe.
- Provision of online risk assessment tools for SMEs, to assess and manage risks in the workplace.
- The Extensive Enterprise Survey provides a snapshot of how safety and health risks are managed in European workplaces.
- “OSHWiki” – a collaborative online encyclopaedia of accurate and reliable information on OSH.
- Foresight projects highlight and study new and emerging risks in OSH.
- OSH overviews – on specific OSH topics, to identify priorities.

NAPO film is a series of short, light-hearted, language-free films on important workplace safety and health topics.

EU-OSHA participates in the BSN meetings, and the BSN uses information provided by the EU-OSHA. For further details, see: <http://www.balticseaosh.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/BSN-EU-OSHA-activities.pdf>.

### **WHO Regional Office for Europe**

(<http://www.euro.who.int/en/home>)

The WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe) is one of six regional WHO offices, covering 53 countries and carrying out all the key WHO activities. The Regional Office is governed by the Regional Committee (RC), consisting of the representatives of the ministries of health of 53 Member States. The regional director (RD) is the chief executive responsible for the RC. The WHO/Europe implements several themes in occupational health; national programmes for the elimination of asbestos-related diseases; prevention of cancer; national occupational health profiles; and promotion of the health of working people. The WHO/Europe office participates reg-

ularly in the BSN meetings. For further details see: <http://www.balticseaosh.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OH-EURO.pdf>.

Participation in, and support for WHO policies, takes place through participation in the WHO/Europe contribution to the WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health.

## Collaboration with international organizations

### International Labour Organization, Geneva

Collaboration with the ILO is focused on the development of good OSH practices, on statistics and reporting, and on capacity building, training, and education in OSH, for experts and social partners.

### International Commission on Occupational Health

(<http://www.icohweb.org/site/homepage.asp>)

The International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) is the leading global professional association in the field of occupational health, with a membership of 2,000 professionals from 93 countries. The main functions of ICOH are research, training and education, information and development of good practices, plus activities to foster the development of professional occupational health ethics in all its aspects throughout the world. ICOH has decided on substantive strategic priorities for the present strategy period 2015–18 as follows: death, disability, and disease; risk management 2.0; exposure elimination; and better analysis on:

- a) non-communicable cancer, CVDs, and respiratory disorders;
- b) communicable diseases – tropical and others;
- c) injuries, in particular in low- and middle-income economies;
- d) musculoskeletal disorders; and
- e) psycho-social factors and disorders.

ICOH aims to seek new partnerships and strengthen collaborative links with existing partners. For further details, see: <http://www.balticseaosh.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ICOH-Key-points.pdf>.

## 10 Follow-up and evaluation

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The member institutions include a chapter on BSN in their annual reports. The externally funded projects will be reported to and evaluated by the financier. The BSN annual meeting receives activity reports on the contributions to the network activities and outputs. No systematic evaluation of network activities, outcomes, and effects has so far been made.

## 11. Future challenges

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The future challenges for all member countries are approximately the same, and are well recognized by the international organizations, the EU, NDPHS, national OH and OSH bodies, and research communities (European Political Strategy Centre, 2017) – for example:

- a) providing an evidence basis for policy-making;
- b) identifying emerging trends in OSH;
- c) generating effective responses to new problems;
- d) considering the growing problems in new modes of employment (non-standard work);
- e) new working schedules and working hours;
- f) ageing and vulnerable workers, and protecting their health and work ability; and
- g) the overall increase in occupational stress among working people.

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## ANNEX 1.

# Members of the Baltic Sea Network on Occupational Health and Safety

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The BSN has 13 members from 10 countries around the Baltic Sea. The following institutions act as national focal points of the network. Brief descriptions of their profiles are presented here:

### **National Research Centre for the Working Environment, Denmark**

(<http://www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk/en>)

The National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NRCWE) is a national research institute under the Danish Ministry of Employment. It has the following tasks:

- a) to provide consultancy services within the institute's core areas;
- b) to communicate research-based knowledge to workplaces, authorities, social partners, and health and safety consultants;
- c) to participate in the training of researchers, and in educational activities at the universities within its core areas;
- d) to perform tasks for the authorities; and
- e) to perform development work that has a clear social mission.

### **Ministry of Social Affairs, Working Environment Department, Estonia**

(<https://www.sm.ee/en>)

The objectives of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Estonia, emerge through compiling development plans for social security, as well as organization-based development plans. The ministry's five objectives are:

- a) to ensure the people's economic prosperity and good work;
- b) to ensure the people's social development;
- c) to support the well-being of children and families;
- d) to promote mutual care, equal opportunities, and gender equality; and
- e) to ensure long and high-quality life.

The Ministry's activities cover:

- a) health, including occupational health;
- b) labour, including OSH;
- c) social security;
- d) children and families; and
- e) gender equality.

### **Health Board, Estonia**

(<https://www.terviseamet.ee/en/information/about-hb.html>)

The Health Board is a government agency that operates within the remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs. It has a direct function within the scope of its authority to exercise state supervision and apply enforcement powers of the state pursuant to the Health Services Organization Act and other legislation.

The Health Board operates in the general national administration of health in the country, covering supervision of all health organizations, registering health personnel, organizing emergency medical care, and developing legislation. In the field of occupational health, the Health Board, through its Bureau of Occupational Health, pursuant to the Occupational Health and Safety Act:

- a) participates in the preparation of occupational health programmes, and organizes their implementation;
- b) analyses information concerning occupational diseases and illnesses;
- c) organizes in-service training for occupational health specialists;
- d) authorizes maritime doctors; and
- e) supervises OHS providers.

### **Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Finland**

(<https://www.ttl.fi/en/>)

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), is an independent legal entity in the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The FIOH is a multidisciplinary research institute that carries out research, disseminates information, and provides expert services and training for occupational health and safety specialists, employers, and workers. The institute's mission covers improvement of occupational safety, occupational health and well-being at the level of individuals, working populations, enterprises, and society at large, through the development of safe and healthy working conditions, work environments, and work communities.

### **Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Dortmund, Germany**

(<http://www.baua.de/en/Homepage.html>)

The Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (BAuA) is a governmental research institute that conducts research and development in the field of safety and health at work; promotes the transfer of knowledge into practice; advises policy-makers, and performs sovereign functions – under the hazardous substances law, in product safety, and with a health data archive. The BAuA is within the purview of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

### **Kooperationsstelle Hamburg (KOOP), Germany**

(<http://www.kooperationsstelle-hh.de/?lang=en>)

Kooperationsstelle Hamburg IFE GmbH (KOOP) is an independent research and service institution in the fields of OSH and environmental protection, standardization, and labour market

development research and services. For more than 25 years, KOOP has been carrying out national and international projects in research and development, and good practice dissemination. Recently, KOOP has been increasingly active in conducting both national and European-wide projects on the impact evaluation of OSH policies, strategies, and laws.

#### **Institute for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health, Riga Stradins University, Latvia**

(<http://www.rsu.lv/eng/science-and-research/research-organisation/structure/institutes-and-laboratories/institute-for-occupational-safety-and-environmental-health/about-the-institute>)

The Institute of Occupational Safety and Environmental Health (IOSEH) is a leading training and research institute on OSH in Latvia. The IOSEH has more than 40 years of work experience. It is an academic, scientific, and training institution, providing training for undergraduates and post-graduates. It participates in research projects and provides information on occupational safety and health issues. The IOSEH is a structural unit (agency) of Riga Stradiņš University.

#### **Occupational Health Centre, Institute of Hygiene, Lithuania**

(<http://www.hi.lt/occupational-health-centre-3.html>)

The Institute of Hygiene is a governmental budgetary institution, which implements the state policy in Lithuanian health and health care monitoring; public health disparities and public health technology assessment; patient safety; and occupational health care. The Institute of Hygiene is administrated by its director – Doctor of Medicine Science Remigius Jankauskas. The Occupational Health Centre is a structural unit of the Institute of Hygiene, and it is mainly involved in the implementation of the state's policy and research in occupational health care. The centre is administrated by Raimonda Eicinaite-Lingiene.

#### **The National Institute of Occupational Health, Norway**

(<https://stami.no/en/>)

The National Institute of Occupational Health in Norway (STAMI) is a research institute funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. It aims to facilitate good working environments; prevent illness; and promote good health. The institute has over 100 employees who create, use, and promote knowledge on occupational health. STAMI has an interdisciplinary research environment consisting of people with various professional backgrounds including medicine, physiology, chemistry, biology, and psychology.

#### **The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority**

(<http://hw2014.healthy-workplaces.eu/en/campaign-partners/national-focal-points/norway>)

The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority is a governmental agency under the Ministry of Labour, focused on OSH. The Labour Inspection Authority has approximately 600 employees and consists of a central office – the Directorate – seven regional offices, and 16 local offices throughout the country. The Directorate in Trondheim regulates the agency's overall strategy, programmes, and information. The district offices guide and supervise individual enterprises in local communities.

### **The Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, Lodz, Poland**

([http://www.imp.lodz.pl/home\\_en/](http://www.imp.lodz.pl/home_en/))

The Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine (NIOM) is a governmental national institute that provides background research and expertise for the Ministry of Health, and serves as an advisory body to numerous governmental agencies. NIOM promotes healthy lifestyles among Polish workers, aiming at the improvement of quality of life and workers' health, work capability, and work environments. NIOM provides post-graduate training, information, and supports regulatory activities for OSH and environmental health. The research profile is multidisciplinary, covering occupational medicine, toxicology, epidemiology, environmental health physiology, health promotion, occupational health services, and the promotion of work ability. NIOM also provides a wide spectrum of consultancy services in the field of occupational health for Polish workplaces. With its broad scope of activities and quality of expertise and technical capabilities, NIOM aims at taking a leading position in occupational health in Poland and within the Central and Eastern European region.

### **North-Western State Medical University, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation**

(<http://www.medstudies.org/mechnikov/post.html> 32k 09/Dec/2005)

The North-Western State Medical University was created in 2011, as a merger of the two oldest educational medical institutions in Russia – Saint-Petersburg Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies and Saint-Petersburg State Medical Academy n. a. I.I. Mechnikov.

The activities of the University are:

- a) postgraduate training in several specialties of medicine, including occupational health and industrial hygiene;
- b) biomedical research on health protection, and the sanitary and epidemiological welfare of the population;
- c) diagnostic and clinical services in six clinics of the university; and
- d) the effective transfer of fundamental and applied research results for building supportive scientific and educational environments.

St. Petersburg University has carried out, in the NDPHS and BSN frameworks, a number of projects with the support of the FIOH and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, including:

- a) three regional OSH profiles (Karelia, Murmansk, Leningrad Oblast);
- b) a national OSH programme (Karelia, Murmansk);
- c) a project to implement basic occupational health services (BOHS) (Federal-level – piloting in Karelia);
- d) risk assessment and risk reduction activities (St. Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast), and related activities including health promotion activities in the transport industry;
- e) provision of information (North-West Russia and all NDPHS countries); and
- f) developing the national OSH system and improving health and preventing accidents in the high-risk sectors in North-West Russia.

**Swedish Work Environment Authority, Sweden**

(<https://www.av.se/en/>)

The Swedish Work Environment Authority is a government agency under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Employment. It has a mandate from the government and the parliament to see that laws on work environments and working hours are followed by companies and organizations. The agency is also responsible to some extent for the Tobacco Act and the Environmental Code, when it comes to questions about genetic engineering and pesticides. The goal is to reduce the risks of ill health and accidents in working life, and to improve work environments, from a holistic perspective. The agency's areas of responsibility are:

- a) to produce provisions, which clarify the Work Environment Act (some of the most fundamental regulations are those dealing with systematic work environment management, which means that all employers should regularly investigate whether there are risks in the work environment, and fix the shortcomings);
- b) to check compliance with the Work Environment Act and OSH regulations, through inspection of workplaces;
- c) to produce statistics on work environments, and on work-related accidents and occupational illnesses;
- d) to promote cooperation between employers and employees regarding work environments;
- e) to realize, together with other authorities, a policy for integration of workers with lower work ability; and
- f) to disseminate information about the Work Environment Act and the agency's provisions.

The main activities of the authority are work environment and OSH inspection; development of healthy work environments and effective work organizations; control of chemical, physical, ergonomic, and psychosocial hazards; prevention of occupational accidents; control of indoor air; and the development of production, industry, and logistics in view of safety and health.

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