

# The History of EWHN

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**ewhn**  
WORK HAZARDS NETWORK

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## **The 1970s and 1980s were the years of development of science shops at the European universities and the years of worker - academic collaboration**

### **Science Shops**

There was a growing acknowledgement Europe wide in the university faculties, that science should be something available to lay people, and that such lay people should also have influence on the choice of scientific projects in the faculties. This acknowledgement resulted in science shops at the universities and action groups of worker-academic cooperation, made by critical trade unions and critical students or teachers from the universities.

In UK, the BSSR, British Society for Social Responsibility in Science was founded as early as 1969, criticising the myth that science was neutral and first organized around a pollution project. The Hazards movement emerged from it, and advice centres were set up in different towns in UK especially after the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1974, which introduced the trade union safety representative. This meant a need for information and education of shop floor workers. The unions could not meet this need, as they had no officers in the field of Health and Safety at that time. The first two advice centres were set up in London and in Birmingham in 1984, supported financially by local councils. The first national Hazards Conference for Safety Representatives was held in Birmingham in 1984.

In Denmark, the Activist Group of Workers and Academics, AAA was founded in 1975, when the painters' trade union wanted to know, if the new paints with organic solvents and with epoxy could damage their health. There was a close relation to the science shop at the Technical University of Denmark.

At the University of Amsterdam, several faculties founded science shops, including Wetenschaps Winkel, which was active from the beginning in the activities described below.

In Austria, the universities established an institute in Linz, called IFF, Institut für Fernstudien der Österreichischen Universitäten in 1983. Health and Safety of workers was one of the items of distance learning courses. When the courses shot down in 1987 some of the academic employees, amongst them Gerhard Elsigan, Günther Kittel and Gudrun Reisz decided to establish PPM to keep in touch with the Health and Safety groups still in function. They wrote the book "Chemical substances at work", especially designed for non-experts. In 1989 they took a significant part in the preparation and founding of an academy for teaching Occupational Health physicians, who are compulsory in Austria. This academy is still active.

Academics from the science shops and activist groups started visiting one another. The scientists met one another at ordinary scientific conferences of health or toxicology. Often trade unionists were also delegates at these classic conferences like ICOH (International Committee on Occupational Health) conferences.

During these conferences "look-alikes" started to discuss how to meet in smaller groups in order to exchange experience concerning worker-academic activities.

## **Activist groups, visits and Newsletter**

Henning Wriedt from Hamburg went on a study tour in the summer of 1985 to England to the Hazards Centres and to the Occupational Health Project in Sheffield, at which Simon Pickvance, amongst others, had been active since 1979. Henning met Naomi Brent, who was part of the Hazards group in Sheffield. Simon and other activists also started an international newsletter on work environment and health, WHIN (Workers Health International Newsletter) with a first edition appearing in autumn 1985. The newsletter was the result of a group decision amongst participants at an ICOH conference in Dublin in 1985; the group consisted of scientists, doctors and trade unionists from 8 different countries.

In autumn of that year (1985), the German Greens (Die Grünen) as part of a campaign against chlorine-based chemical production organised a so-called Entgiftungs-Kongress (detoxification congress) in Leverkusen, where Bayer had its headquarters.

One of the working groups focused on workers' health with regard to hazardous chemicals. Henning Wriedt prepared the working group who, as part of the preparations, got in contact with work and health activists both at local Hamburg level and at national German level.

Amongst the activists at national level were Eberhard Göbel and Beate Guthke from BILAG (Berliner Informationsladen für Arbeit und Gesundheit - Berlin info shop for work and health) and Wolfgang Hien who was in close contact with activists at the three largest German chemical companies of the time, Bayer, BASF, and Hoechst. Alan Dalton from the Hazards movement in England also attended the conference.

In the working group on workers' health, a considerable number of participants - works' councillors, trade union activists, critical academics - came from Hamburg and decided to initiate a local meeting in Hamburg. From that meeting in early 1986, Arbeit & Gesundheit in Hamburg emerged, the group that would set up the Beratungsstelle in Hamburg in 1988, inspired by the advice centres in the UK and the COSH centres in the US.

## **Preparing for the first European conference**

In June 1985 Tom van Dijk from the science shop Wetenschaps Winkel at Amsterdam University sent out a letter to 136 contacts, consisting of science shops, single persons and activist groups in 14 different countries. The majority of these addressees were within Germany. The letter mentioned the idea of a European meeting for these organisations and persons in the summer of 1986.

In Germany, an alternative health movement had been developing since the late 1970s, and "health shops", organised in a similar way as science shops, had begun to spring up in a number of towns. That movement had also organised three alternative medical congresses ("Gesundheitstage") since 1980.

At the second and third of these congresses, in 1981 and 1983, respectively, occupational health had been an issue, inspired by the Italian "workers' medicine" (in contrast to the traditional "occupational medicine" in German language: "Arbeitermedizin" vs. "Arbeitsmedizin"), and an informal network of activists had formed. After the Leverkusen congress, Eberhard Göbel, probably inspired by the letter from Holland and having been promised support by a member of "Die Grünen" in the European Parliament (EP), contacted Henning Wriedt suggesting a small European meeting of work and health activists.

Eberhard's idea was that "Die Grünen" in the EP might host and finance such a European meeting including the necessary simultaneous translation into several languages. Die Grünen were part of the Rainbow Fraction in the European Parliament (EP) and had access to funds concerning this kind of activities. The purpose of the planned conference/meeting was similar to the one proposed by the Dutch but limited to the issue of work and health: to exchange experience among groups who worked with work environment and health at shop floor level, that is among workers.

Eberhard also suggests that a first meeting in 1986 should be followed by a second meeting in 1987, the year when the Dutch science shop had existed for 10 years. Eberhard, Beate, and Henning started preparing such a conference/meeting in cooperation with some members of the Green Party in Berlin and Hamburg. The Greens sent out the invitations to existing contacts provided primarily by BILAG and the Hamburg group, and the first conference/meeting was held in Strasbourg early in 1987.

### **1987 Strasbourg, France 1st EWHN conference**

It was called the first European Conference on Work, Environment and Health, when in February 1987 a conference was set up in Strasbourg by BILAG from Berlin with the help of some MPs from the rainbow group in the European Parliament as explained above. Those invited included work environment activist groups from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland. Not all groups sent delegates. The participants came from Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Belgium, France and Switzerland.

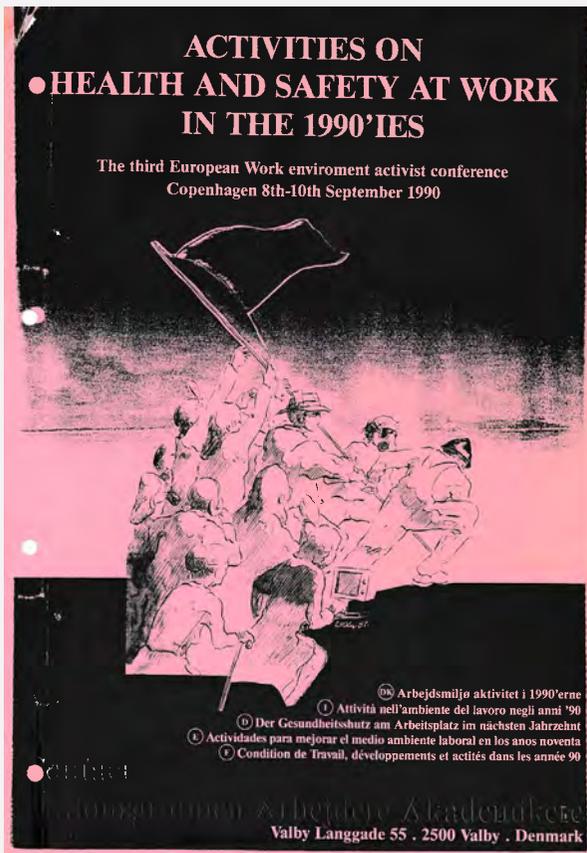
The purpose was to exchange information on work environment issues, to inform each other on one's activities, and to inform interested MEPs from the Rain-

bow fraction on these problems in work environments. There were 21 participants. A 48-page protocol in German was the result of this conference. This protocol was never translated into other languages.

### **1988 Strasbourg, France 2nd EWHN conference**

In May 1988, a second conference was organised, but not financed, by the Green MPs of the Rainbow Group of the European Parliament in cooperation with a small group of German activists, Henning Wriedt, Eberhard Göbel and Beate Guthke. The idea was to use the meeting facilities and translation facilities in the parliament. Delegates had to pay for themselves. This information about lack of finances came out too late to cancel the conference. There was no common accommodation, which meant little opportunity for informal contacts, which is actually of utmost importance in this kind of networking.

The number of delegates this time was around 40. Delegates came from France, England, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Austria and South Africa. All delegates were seated at a round table discussing how to bring forward the work environment matters, but there was no opportunity for informal networking. The official simultaneous translators did not always catch the meaning of the remarks from the delegates, the translators were simply not familiar with the work environment technical discussions. Several EU member countries had had new legislation on work environment and health, and EU was preparing the framework directive on the matter. The idea was to raise a critical voice from grass root level on the actual health and safety problems among workers. There was also a need to inform one another about the different campaigns and fights for better work environment in the different countries. Several countries had started groups at grass roots level



3. EWHN Konference Copenhagen 1990

of workers and academics who collaborated on campaigns and information concerning health and safety problems.

Some of the delegates had prepared themselves to discuss the up-coming EU directive on Work Environment and Health and had prepared questions for the participating MEPs. But they were met with a lack of knowledge and, worse, a lack of interest among the MEPs and gave up the more specific questions concerning TLVs etc. They had also hoped for a common Europe-wide campaign concerning work environment matters, but this was out of the question, the delegates were simply too different in relation to such an idea. Politically the delegates were wide apart. Some countries already had a good legislation regulating work environment and health and feared that a common EU directive would lower their standards. Other countries had very little of such legislation and was looking forward to the EU directive to heighten their national standards. The conference was a disappointment, nothing could be agreed upon and nothing was decided.

Conference notes were published in WHIN no 11, July 1988.

### After Strasbourg

Following the disappointing 2nd Strasbourg conference, it was decided amongst some Danish and German delegates, that some of them would meet in Hamburg the following year and continue networking, especially on toxic organic solvents. The initiative came from BILAG and the Hamburg group. They wrote papers called "Some thoughts in the aftermath of the 2nd Strasbourg conference", where they summed up good and bad experience from the first two conferences. Amongst the experiences were: the need for common accommodation so that fringe and informal meetings were possible; cheap accommodation because no

funding would be possible for a grass-root conference; there should be very little time in plenary and a lot of time in workshops in order to facilitate face to face communication. The need of translation would still be there. A common European Campaign on work environment matters should be carefully prepared on a specific subject. The activists had to arrange the next conference themselves so that the conference themes were well prepared, and facilitators appointed beforehand.

The idea was to arrange a conference, where trade unionists working around Work Environment and Health could meet with professional academics working in the same area.

A group of trade unionists and professionals met in Hamburg in May 1989 to discuss networking and to prepare a conference. During this meeting, it was decided to continue networking. Later in the year, the Danish group AAA decided to prepare a conference in Copenhagen in 1990. There was another preparatory meeting in Copenhagen (January 1990).

### 1990 Copenhagen, Denmark, 3rd EWHN conference

The Copenhagen conference was held in Denmark in Gimle, a public culture house. The conference was called the European Work Environment Activist Conference. A Danish group of AAA members arranged the conference, amongst them Frits Nielsen, Klaus T Nielsen and Niels Møller. Delegates were accommodated in a youth hostel. The conference had around 250 delegates from 15 different European countries.

Keynote presentations were given by both worker representatives and professionals. The five themes were Organic Solvents, Psychosocial Work Environment, Privatisation, Information and Activities in the Workplace and EU regulations. Workplace visits were included. Translation was available through funding from EU and from local trade unions. The first conference report in English appeared. Workshops of the length of several hours were an essential part of the conference.

A European campaign on "Organic Solvents Damaging Your Health" was launched, with posters in four languages: English, German, Spanish and Italian. Subnetworks emerged: One on Occupational Health Services, OHS. Another on Substitution of Organic Solvents. The latter turned into an EU funded information programme called SUBSPRINT (Specific Projects for Intracommunity Innovation Transfer). In the former subnetwork primary information about the British Occupational Health Projects was given, with collaboration between trade unionists and General Practitioners in the British Health Sector.

The editor of WHIN (Workers Health International Newsletter), Simon Pickvance, participated and was acknowledged for the newsletter, which collected information on workers' health from worldwide sources.

It was decided to form a coordinating group of workers and academics from the different countries to spread information across borders and to influence the EU directives concerning work environment and health. And to plan the next conference which was offered by England. A very early draft of the later European Work Hazards Network Charter was formed.

After the midday closing of the official conference on the Sunday, an activist meeting took place, where activist groups from the different countries agreed to form a steering group for further collaboration. Each country would nominate a couple

of activists for a steering committee. It was agreed that the country, which should arrange the next conference would be responsible for finances and arrangements and that invitations should be distributed in all the different countries by the national activist group, who should also be responsible for translation of the conference invitation.

### Four steering group meetings were held between conferences

Amsterdam in March 1991, Bologna in October 1991, Paris in February/March 1992, Amsterdam in June 1992.

### 1992 Sheffield, England, 4th EWHN conference

The fourth EWHN conference took place in Sheffield, England. The Steering Group consisted of members from the following organisations: Austria: PPM, Linz; Denmark: Action Group of Workers and Academics, AAA; Finland: Academic Labour Union, AKAVA; France: Association pour L'études des risques des Travail, ALERT; Germany: Informationsstelle Arbeit und Gesundheit, Hamburg; Berliner Infoladen am Arbeit und Gesundheit, BILAG, Berlin; Scotland: Lothian Trade Union Resource Centre; Ireland: Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union; Netherlands: Chemiewinkel, Amsterdam; Solidariteit; Spain: Confederacion Sindical de CCOO, Comisiones Obreras, Valencia; Programa de Salud Laboral, Barcelona; Italy: Societa Nazionale Operatori dell Prevenzioni, SNOP

The Steering Group secretary, Mick Williams, was based in Sheffield and funded by EU money. Some of the preparation of this conference was done by Rory O'Neil from the UK Hazards movement.

# 4th EUROPEAN WORK HAZARDS CONFERENCE



Sheffield University, UK, September 4th - 7th 1992

EWHN 4th conf. Sheffield 1992

## Occupational Health

N E W S  
FOR THE USE OF OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES



### A Primary Care Occupational Health Project

**Focus of Occupational Health Project**  
The project was initiated in 1991 in response to the growing awareness of the need for occupational health services in primary care. The project was funded by the Health Department and the local health authority. The project was led by a team of occupational health professionals and primary care practitioners. The project aimed to provide occupational health services to primary care practitioners and their patients. The project was successful in providing occupational health services to primary care practitioners and their patients. The project was funded by the Health Department and the local health authority. The project was led by a team of occupational health professionals and primary care practitioners. The project aimed to provide occupational health services to primary care practitioners and their patients.

COMP CAMDEN SOCIETY'S 'SUNSHINE' PROJECT

Occupational Health Project in Camden UK 1992



Collaboration Valencia 1992

There were 326 delegates from 16 different countries, including Japan. Workshop topics included Working Hours, Occupational Exposure Limits, Black and White Migrant Workers, Subcontracting, Technological Change, Substitution, Stress at Work, Repetitive Strain Injuries, Occupational Health Services, Workplace Designs, Visual Display Units, worker Representatives' Rights, Occupational Diseases.

A dozen fringe meetings ('Info Meetings') on industrial sector group problems or other specific work environment topics not covered by the workshops were also held. All workshops and fringe meetings had a facilitator, whose contact address appeared in the final conference resource book. A campaign on substitution of Organic Solvents was launched with posters in four different languages. This campaign was funded by EU.

The first edition of the European Health and Safety Charter was printed and put in the Conference Resource Book. Several workplace visits were included. During this conference, the European Work Hazards Network (EWHN) was founded.

The Club of European Scaffolders adopted the EWHN Charter as their official policy, and because of this, they were granted a sum of money from their unions which enabled them to send a group of scaffolders for the next conference.

## Steering Committee Meetings between conferences

Valencia in February 1993, Copenhagen in May 1993, Dublin in Sept. 1993, Hamburg in February 1994, Linz in July 1994.

## 1994 Riccione, Rimini, Italy 5th EWHN Conference

This fifth EWHN conference was arranged by SNOP (Societa Nazionale operatori dell Prevenzioni). The lead organisation was undertaken by Dr. Graziano Frigeri in collaboration with the trade unions CGIL, CISL and UIL, amongst others Gino Rubini.

This was the first conference in the Mediterranean area and the one with the highest percentage of delegates from Spain and Italy. The conference had 310 delegates. Italy had just ratified the 1989 EU Directive and was eager to discuss the consequences of this directive with grassroots from other European countries. This conference ended with an activist meeting, where the different countries tried to agree on some common activities for the future, but they did not succeed.

## Conference finances

The intention was to keep the conference fee as low as possible so that ordinary workers representatives could afford to participate. As EWHN had no formal status it became more and more difficult to get EU funding.

## Networking between conferences

It has never been systematically registered how much networking was done amongst delegates between conferences.

As described above we know that some EU financed projects were the direct result of networking during conferences, like SUBSPRINT. We also know that the campaign against organic solvents was a conference result and was EU funded.



EWHN 5th conference Riccione, Italy 1994

## **Exchange visits between countries**

During the very first meetings in Strasbourg, acquaintances had been made and it was decided, that a Danish group from AAA should visit Sheffield on a pilot visit in order to arrange for a bigger study tour for the Danes, including both workers and academics. The pilot visit was made in 1987, arranged by London Hazard Centre and Sheffield Occupational Health Project with Simon Pickvance and Naomi Brent. The plan for the study tour was changed when it was decided to make the EWHN conference in Copenhagen.

As a result of the new contacts between Denmark and Spain during Rimini conference, CCOO from Valencia arranged a study tour for AAA members in Spain in 1993 and a revisit was made in 1994, when a Spanish group visited Denmark. A visit was made by Keighley TUC, UK to Denmark in 1995.

## **EWHN participation in national or local conferences**

During the years, the network was also used to find good lecturers for local conferences. Examples are: CCOO conference in Valencia asked Thora Brendstrup from Denmark and Naomi Brent from England to speak on their local conference in 1992. Pieter van Broekhuizen was invited by the Finnish Health Front to Finland in 1993 to inform about EWHN in a presentation. CCOO invited Thora to Madrid in 1996 and to Pamplona 1997, where Norbert Wagner from Germany was also invited.

## **Sub networking between conferences**

The subnetworks which were created after the first conferences and shortly described above had different fates. Three on chemicals, working hours and electronics only lasted for a short time. One on stress network faded out but was maintained in England, where the stress network is still very much alive. Since then work related stress has been a workshop item in almost all the EWHN conferences.

## **Stress Networking**

The UK National Work Stress Network ([www.works-tress.net](http://www.works-tress.net)) was established out of work done initially by teacher trade unionists in NASUWT (major UK teachers' Trade Union). This work commenced in the very early 1990s, at a time when UK teachers faced huge changes in their jobs through more intensive inspection and accountability; loss of job security which was something they had never previously experienced; drastic changes in the way that schools were funded leading to reductions in resources and staffing. Pressures on teachers became so intense that ill-health retirement and premature retirement with enhancement where appropriate became the two most common reasons why teachers left the profession in droves.

Because of the connections between NASUWT and Hazards Campaign UK, it was soon realised that this scenario was common across much of the UK Public Sector and the health and well-being of many thousands of workers was being undermined by pressures created through the impact of Thatcherism, and the continued onslaught on public sector workers.

After involvement in Hazards Conferences and EWHN Conference in Sheffield 1992, broader contacts were made specifically in the Netherlands, and from the Rimini EWHN Conference agreement was reached to establish a European Stress Network. This created the impetus for the UK Network to take off, which happened in 1993 following a successful 1-day Conference in Birmingham. The network came into being and established itself as a free-standing campaigning organisation run very much on Trade Union lines but entirely dependent on sponsorship and donation.

Since those early days, the Network has participated in UK hazards events every year and in EWHN Conferences, providing information meetings and workshops as well as plenary session speakers.

The Network has grown into a recognised campaigning organisation supported by several major Unions in the UK and providing speakers at Union Branch and Regional Training sessions as well as Conference Fringe meetings. The Network is also invited to address high profile conferences and to provide information to the broadcast and newsprint media. The Network's website continues to be very popular with over 15,000 hits per month for several years now. A central person in the Network is Ian Draper.

## **Occupational Health Service Subnetwork**

The subnetwork on Occupational Health Services was formalised during the Italian conference in 1994 in a workshop with 60 delegates and several separate seminars were arranged. First in Livorno, Italy in October 1995. The preparation arrangements were made during a meeting in Hamburg in March 1995 and in Copenhagen in June 1995; the

group was: Merete Petersen and Thora Brendstrup, Denmark; Norbert Wagner, Germany; Simon Pickavance and Dave Trafford, England; Anna Maria Loi, Italy.

Italy had passed a new law on OHS and the items to be discussed were: worker control or influence on OHS, multidisciplinary services, exchange of experience and information from different countries. In Livorno, the number of delegates was 41 representing 8 European countries, and including 25 professionals and 16 worker representatives. For a couple of years, the subnetwork meetings were funded by EU.

To follow up on the Livorno activity the subnetwork group met in Stockholm in September 1996 in relation to an ICOH conference (International Committee on Occupational Health), under WHO in this city.

A second working seminar was held in Vienna in September 1998, the items were sickness absence control, multidisciplinary, how do occupational health practitioners and worker representatives change organizations and improve working conditions? In all 16 persons from 7 different countries participated.

## **Steering Committee meetings between conferences**

London in January 1995, Copenhagen in June 1995, Amsterdam in November 1995, Ki java (and Helsinki) in March 1996, Edinburgh in October 1996, Egmond aan Zee in June 1997.

Report of the  
Sixth European Work Hazards Conference,  
March 14-16 1997,  
Egmond aan Zee,  
The Netherlands

**WORK, FIT FOR PEOPLE**



EWHN 6th conf. Egmond aan Zee, Holland 1997

## **Constitutions on the EWHN was agreed on in October 1996**

### **1997 Egmond aan Zee, The Netherlands 6th EWHN conference**

The sixth EWHN conference was held in the Netherlands. There were 266 delegates from 20 different countries. This was another very good conference arranged by the Dutch group, Stichting Netwerk, Chairman Pieter van Broekhuizen. A journalist collected important information from the workshops and summed it up in the final plenary.

The first EWHN website was launched [www.geocities.com/RainForest/8803/](http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/8803/). Unfortunately this website is not available anymore.

The workshop issues included Stress, Transfer of Risk, Asbestos, Labour Culture, Repetitive Work and Heavy Lifting, Health Screening and Health Surveys, deregulation, Production Chain, Small and Medium Size Enterprises, Responsible Technology, Working Hours. One of the main results was that national networks would start coordinated campaigns on Workers Memorial Day on 28th of April, with a specific focus on working hours, stress and work pressure.

### **Steering committee meetings between conferences**

Copenhagen in February/March 1998, Beverwijk in November 1998, Copenhagen in April 1999.

## **1999 Edinburgh, Scotland 7th EWHN Conference**

This 7th conference had 326 delegates from 18 different countries. The following workshops were held: Responsibility for Occupational Safety and Health, a Risk Assessment Approach to Workplace Stress, Environment Assessment, New Management Techniques, Occupational Health Services, Hazards of Working with Computers, Workplace Pressure, Bullying, Cancer and working with Toxic Substances, Isocyanates, Globalisation, Enforcement of Regulations. Workplace visits had now become a standard part of the conferences. As usual the conference was very well evaluated by the delegates, who also were asked about further possible improvements for future conferences. It was now apparent that many delegates repeatedly come back for the next conference.

### **Steering Committee meetings**

Hamburg in November 1999, Vienna in April 2000, Copenhagen in October 2000, Amsterdam in April 2001.

## **2001, Vienna, Austria 8th EWHN Conference**

The 8th conference involved around 200 delegates from 17 different countries. It was arranged by Gerhard Elsig and Günther Kittel from PPM and by Brigitte Schiegut in collaboration with the Austrian TUC. The workshops were: Work without limits. WTO working conditions. Role of H&S Representatives in the health system. Isocyanates and PUR in the working environment. Shoulder to Shoulder, Preventing Work Related Stress. Bullying. Electro-magnetic fields. Migrant workers. Partnerships in



Workshop a Vienna Conf Austria 2001



Workshop b Vienna Conf Austria 2001



Workplace visit 9th conf 2003



Workplace visit 9th conf 2003

H&S. Corporate crime. Regulation, Inspection and Enforcement. Occupational Health Services. Health Promotion. OHS and Trade Union Strategy. OHS Management Systems. The conference report was distributed to participants on CD ROM.

## Steering Committee Meetings

Bremen in March 2002, Copenhagen in October 2002, and in Manchester, UK in March 2003.

## 2003 Elsinor, Denmark 9th EWHN Conference

The 9th EWHN conference had 225 delegates and was arranged by the Danish Activist group of Workers and Academics, AAA. The format of the conference was more or less the same as in the previous conferences. It began with workplace visits on Friday morning when the factories and institutions were still working. Followed by an opening plenary with simultaneous translation in English, German, Dutch, Spanish and Italian. Workshops during most of Saturday, took five hours in all. Many themes of the workshops were identical to those from previous conferences but prepared and presented by different facilitators. A closing plenary was held on the Sunday morning. Each delegate had the EWHN charter in their conference material and was free to use it in their own networks.

## The EWHN charter

The original charter, which had been agreed upon in Sheffield 1992 was modernised in 2003-04. During the Danish conference, all workshops were asked to discuss the charter and to give inputs to changes. During closing plenary these changes

were added by Caroline Bedale from UK and it was agreed to continue working with a new version. Finally, a new charter was adopted.

## Steering Committee Meetings between conferences

Holland in March 2004, Copenhagen in October 2004 and in March 2005 in Italy, where it was decided to make the next conference in a Baltic country.

## Seminars in association with Steering Committee Meetings

In order to make the best planning for the Baltic conference we invited Charles Woolfson, the director of the European Centre for Occupational Health, Safety and Environment at the University of Glasgow. Now being at the Euro-Faculty at the University of Latvia. Woolfson gave us information about the trade unions of the three Baltic States and their interest in work environment and health. Woolfson was at the Copenhagen meeting and gave us a good introduction. This model of having subject specific seminars in connection with the Steering Group meetings was repeated in some of the future SGM's.

## 2006 Riga, Latvia 10th EWHN conference

The conference had 180 delegates, 60 of whom were from the Baltic countries. This 10th EWHN conference was planned in a new way. Our contacts in Latvia were few, so the EWHN steering committee decided to plan and organise the conference themselves instead of leaving the responsibility for the



Latvia 2006

planning to a national group. Different parts of the conference was planned by different members of the steering committee. One member taking care of the budget, another was in charge of application forms and information to delegates. Others taking care of workshop preparations, one was in charge of the information meetings etc. This worked out very well, thanks to the internet. Our contact in Latvia was Agnese Puntuza an English-speaking student of sociology engaged in the construction workers union of Latvia.

The experience of making the EWHN steering group responsible for the conference planning was so successful that it became the model of planning for the future conferences. The conference content is found on [www.ewhn-riga.org](http://www.ewhn-riga.org).

During the Riga conference, we collaborated closely with the Danish General Workers Union, who had a conference in Latvia at the same time and all the Baltic delegates in this Trade union conference were invited to stay two days longer in order to participate in the EWHN conference.

The workshop topics were: Construction Sector, Behaviour Based Safety Programmes, Work Environment, Recruiting Activists, Stress, Export of Dangerous Work, Control of Chemical Hazards in Small and Medium- sized Enterprises, Deregulation, Ethnic and Sexual Diversity in the Labour Market, Dust, Work Environment Authorities, Health Promotion in the Workplace.

## **Steering Committee Meetings between conferences**

Milan in March 2007, Bologna in October 2007, Copenhagen in March 2008.

## **2008, Bologna, Italy 11th EWHN conference**

This conference was arranged by Graziano Frigeri, Andrea Spisni and Angela Piccininno among others. There were app. 150 delegates.

The workshop topics included: Role of Safety Representatives, Tasks and Limits in the European Regulation, Behaviour Based Safety, Minor and Major Occupational Accidents, Work-place Health Promotion, Nanotechnology, Women over 45, Migrant Workers, Memory Impairment Syndrome, Modern Production and Management Strategy, Occupational Cancer, Health and Safety in a Civil Rights Perspective, Abnormal Working Hours. Each workshop had two facilitators from two different countries.

At the closing plenary a statement concerning social dumping was accepted. After this conference an EWHN delegation was received in Rome at Quirinal Palace to inform President Napolitano about conference results and about EWHN objectives and projects.

## **Steering Committee Meetings between conferences**

Manchester in March 2009, Amsterdam in October 2009, Stavanger in March 2010. During these meetings, further discussion of making EWHN into an NGO took place. The basic objective being to establish the EWHN as an NGO in order to enhance its status with a view to being in a position to bid for funding to support activities including Conferences.

## **2010, Leeds, England 12th EWHN conference**

The conference had 120 delegates. For this conference, it was decided for the first time to invite a panel of international guests in order to develop a closer collaboration with organisations similar to EWHN in other parts of the world. So, the delegate fee was heightened a bit and we invited guests from Asia (Anroev, Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims), South Africa, India (AMRC, Asian Monitoring and Research Centre), Korea and Mexico. Each led a workshop session and presented in plenary session.

The workshop topics were: Migrant Workers, Sickness Absence Control and Rehabilitation, Construction Sector, Management Systems, Green Jobs, Bullying, Cancer, Uncertain Chemicals and the Precautionary Principle, Occupational Health and Safety – A Recruitment Tool for Activists, International Solidarity.

## **Steering Committee Meetings between conferences**

Turin in March 2012, Copenhagen in October 2012, Glasgow in March 2013.

## **Cancer Seminar at Turin meeting**

It was decided to add to the SGM in Turin a one-day seminar on Occupational Cancers. This was an idea of Simon Pickvance's and it was sadly the last such EWHN event he was able to attend, before his untimely death in 2012.

## **Seminar on Mental Health in the Workplace at Copenhagen meeting**

During this SGM we had a one-day seminar on Work-Related Stress.

## **EWHN as a NGO**

During the Turin meeting, we prepared the formal legal adoption of papers establishing EWHN as an NGO, based in Italy.

## **Memorial**

Simon Pickvance, one of the founders of EWHN and of the Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service and editor of the international news magazine WHIN died in November 2012 of mesothelioma. This disease was caused by asbestos fibres which he inhaled in his youth during a short period as a construction worker. His funeral was held in Sheffield and members of EWHN attended the memorial service.

## **2013, Bologna, Italy 13th EWHN conference**

This was our second conference at Green Park Bologna, made by the same trio who gave us the two prior Italian conferences: Graziano Frigeri, Andrea Spisni and Angela Piccininno amongst others. We succeeded again to invite participants from other parts of the world: Macedonia, Asia (Anroev), China, India (AMRC). The conference had 117 delegates.

The workshop items were: Cancer, Assessing Stress Risks, Human Resource Management, Migrant Workers, Transfer of Risks, Safety Representatives,



Simon Pickvance 1999

Roles Tasks and Limitations, Working Hours Work-Life Balance, Sickness Absence Management/Rehabilitation. The conference ended with the adoption of a statement concerning transfer of risks.

The two excellent keynote speaks were made by Raffele Guariniello and Laurent Vogel, ETUI.

## **Invitations to EWHN from sister organisations**

Anroev have several times invited a delegate from EWHN to take part in their annual conference. ETUI, European Trade Union Institute, invited a delegate from EWHN to some of their conferences in Brussels.

## **Steering Committee Meetings between conferences**

In November 2013, the steering group tried for the first time to set up a trial video conference. It had some technical problems and is the only conference of this kind so far.

Vienna in March 2014, Hamburg in October 2014, Rotterdam in March 2015, Milan in October 2015.

## **Memorial**

Secretary of Associazione Ambiente e Lavoro, Rino Pavanello died in April 2014. Rino was a chemical sector trade unionist and after the Seveso catastrophe in 1976 he was one of the founders of Ambiente e Lavoro. He participated in several of the EWHN conferences and was a good friend of Graziano Frigeri, secretary of EWHN.

## **The seminar on Occupational health Services during the Hamburg Steering Group Meeting 2014**

The first day of this meeting was dedicated to exchanges of experiences concerning Occupational Health Services in our different countries, especially on the multidisciplinary - or lack of this in the services.

## **2016, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 14th EWHN Conference**

This conference has the website [www.ewhn2016.org](http://www.ewhn2016.org) and was arranged by our Dutch colleges. The number of participants were 76 from 14 different countries. The workshop items were: return to work, vulnerable workers, TTIP, mechanical vibrations and shocks at workplaces & gasses in containers, transfer of risks and global solidarity.

## **Steering Committee Meetings between conferences**

Vienna 2017, Bergamo 2017, Copenhagen 2018.

National Network Contacts:

**Austria**

Email: [ppm.linz@ppm.at](mailto:ppm.linz@ppm.at) (attention Günther Kittel)

**Denmark**

Email: [aaa@aktionsgruppen.dk](mailto:aaa@aktionsgruppen.dk)  
[www.aktionsgruppen.dk](http://www.aktionsgruppen.dk)

**England & Wales**

Email: [info@hazardscampaign.org.uk](mailto:info@hazardscampaign.org.uk)

**Germany**

Email: [buero@arbeitundgesundheit.de](mailto:buero@arbeitundgesundheit.de)

**Italy**

Email: [info@assoprev.it](mailto:info@assoprev.it)

**Netherlands**

Email: [Info@ewhn2016.org](mailto:Info@ewhn2016.org)

**Norway**

Email: [roy@safe.no](mailto:roy@safe.no)

**Scotland**

Email: [kajenkins@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:kajenkins@blueyonder.co.uk)

See website for more information

[www.ewhn2016.org](http://www.ewhn2016.org)

Conference organisation  
Stichting Netwerk,  
Donjonweg 64  
3233 AK Oostvoorne  
Email: [info@ewhn2016.org](mailto:info@ewhn2016.org)

## Rotterdam 27-29 May 2016



### Conference fee

Arrangement A: full board, single room €598

Arrangement B: full board, double room €425

Arrangement C: conference without room  
€310

extra night, single room €140

extra night, shared room € 70

Application form at website  
[www.ewhn2016.org](http://www.ewhn2016.org)



## 14th European Work Hazards Conference.

“Empowerment of workers and experts in Health and Safety at the shopfloor”



27-29 May 2016 in Rotterdam  
the Netherlands

for labour & occupational health and safety  
worker representatives and professionals

**Conference venue**  
Congress centre Engels  
Stationsplein 45, 3013 AK Rotterdam  
**Hotel facilities at**  
Holiday Express Inn  
Weena 121, 3013 CK Rotterdam

Flyer Rotterdam Conference 2016

## **The seminar on Healthy workplaces for all ages was connected to the Bergamo meeting**

During the SCM it was decided that it would not be possible for EWHN to become an NGO in Italy, because this would include an employee engaged by EWHN and there was no money for this.

EWHN became an associate member of the Asian organization for work environment and health: ANROEV. An exchange of delegates during conferences was established.

## **2018, Copenhagen, Denmark, 15th EWHN conference**

The experience was, that the number of delegates in conferences was falling, one reason could be the bad financial situation in European trade unions. For this conference we decided to control the number on Danish delegates so that the Danes would not dominate the workshops and information meetings. Two Danish trade unions provided conference rooms free of charge.

Because of lack of finances, we could not invite international delegates.

The number of delegates were 57 from 8 different countries.

The workplace visit groups were meeting before the visits to prepare the visits.

The workshop items were cancer, consequences of precarious work, psychosocial environment and regulation, how do you know if you work with something dangerous?

## **Steering Committee Meetings between conferences**

Parma 2019

Due to the falling number of delegates at the EWHN conferences we are discussing how to proceed with EWHN. We have a Facebook site which is useful and a closed Facebook site on Precarious work.



EWHN Conference 2018