



Occupational health and safety standards in Slovenia in view of the accession to the EU

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Following Slovenian declaration of independence from the former Yugoslavia in June 1991, the country relations with the EU have developed at a good pace:

- Co-operation Agreement was in force by September 1993,
- EU membership negotiations began in March 1998 and finally,
- in May 2004 Slovenia became member of EU.

By joining the European Union, Slovenia is responding to the challenges facing independent countries in a globalized world. Slovenia has been harmonizing its legislation with EU legislation in order to create conditions for a democratic society and a social market economy.

Despite its population of only 2 million, Slovenia has made considerable efforts to implement the OSH-related parts of the *acquis communautaire*. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has recently commended the Slovenian government for its success in setting up a tripartite national information network to promote safer and healthier working conditions.

Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Mr. Hans-Horst Konkolewsky recently visited Slovenia and said *"Slovenia has already transposed the EU's comprehensive safety and health directives into national legislation. The main challenge now is to ensure that these legal standards are converted into real improvements in working conditions. The Agency is looking forward to support this process and in partnership with its Slovenian network partners to develop safe, healthy and productive workplaces across an enlarged Europe"*.

In the area of **health and safety at work**, Slovenia has largely completed alignment with the *acquis*. The Slovenian Occupational Health and Safety Act (transposition of Framework Directive 89/391/EEC) sets out the rights and duties of all parties in the workplace. Its main purpose is to protect workers against health and safety hazards on the job.

Slovenia obtained transitional periods regarding the Directives on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to noise, chemical, and biological agents at work, which remain to be transposed until 31 December 2005. As regards the Framework Directive, some amendments are needed to the Slovenian legislation with regard to the scope as well as first aid, fire-fighting and evacuation.

Market surveillance and product safety standards

The Ministry of Economy is the competent national body for market surveillance. The adoption of new regulations related to Slovenian accession to the EU gave the Market Inspectorate numerous new competences in the field of the free movement of goods, especially in relation to directives arising from EU accession on areas such as general product safety, low voltage apparatus, electromagnetic compatibility, machine safety, personal protective equipment, gas appliances, simple pressure vessels, construction products, etc.