

When prevention is not present (and costs increase...)

(About the need for an alternative prevention approach of occupational accidents and occupational diseases and for an additional preventive role of workers' compensation)

Dr. Wim Eshuis



Research institute
for trade unions

Content

- Case Mrs. Y
 - Failing prevention
 - Alternative prevention approach
 - The preventive role of workers' compensation
 - Challenges for EU trade unions
-

Mrs. Y (1)

- Mrs. Y (1947)
 - production assistant, since 1985
 - heavy and repetitive work: 30 transactions per minute
 - from 1994 increasing RSI complaints
 - 1994-2002: periods of sickness and RTW
 - In 2002 permanently disabled
 - 2008: receives workers compensation
-

Mrs. Y (2)

No prevention:

- Employer is the cause of the Occupational disease (OD); makes no improvements
 - Occupational physicians fail (diagnosis) and don't intervene
 - Labour relations are not harmonious
 - No consensus between stakeholders about OD
 - Labour inspection absent
-

Failing prevention in EU

- EU prevention policy is based on two principles:
 - Protection of the worker by the employer
 - Selfregulation

 - The existing EU prevention policy is not adequate in all situations
 - Contradictions between stakeholders
 - Lack of expertise
 - Lack of power of workers
 - When the employer is the 'offender'
 - No independent role of OHS experts
-

Alternative prevention approach: more internal and external interventions:

- ❑ Openness and transparency of OHS risks, OA, OD (and preventive measures)
 - Public risk assessments and public reports of OD/OA

 - ❑ More control of stakeholders (internal and external) on OHS prevention:
 - Right of research to minimum of 10% of the workers
 - Independent position OHS experts
 - Enlargement of labour inspection
 - Preventive role of workers' compensation
-

Preventive role of workers compensation (1)

- Prevention before occupational diseases and occupational accidents occur
 - Preventive measures after the genesis of the OA or OD

 - Four instruments:
 - ❑ Financial instruments
 - ❑ Expertise
 - ❑ Communication
 - ❑ External Intervention
-

Preventive role of workers compensation (2)

■ What is (not) effective?

□ Not effective is:

- Financial incentives (Financial incentives are only effective in combination with deployment of expertise)

□ Effective is:

- Stimulate or enforce preventive measures after an accident or disease
 - Public inquiries in organizations:
 - Involvement of all stakeholders (a.o. workers, affected -!-workers)
 - Internal and external control on preventive measurements
-

Challenges for EU trade unions

1. Advocate a new prevention approach
 2. Develop the preventive role of workers compensation
 3. Start experiments and good practices?
-