

Distr.
GENERAL

CES/SEM.41/17 (Summary)
27 April 2000

ENGLISH and RUSSIAN

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and
COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE ECONOMIC
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN
STATISTICIANS**

**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR
ORGANIZATION**

Joint ECE-Eurostat-ILO Seminar
on Measurement of the Quality of Employment
(Geneva, 3-5 May 2000)

Topic 6

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

Invited paper submitted by the International Labour Office*

SUMMARY

1. Occupational injuries and diseases kill at least 1.3 million workers each year, and probably cause at least 9.6 million years of lost work and cost about 4 per cent of GDP. These figures are estimates; the actual figures are most likely much higher.
2. Information on occupational injuries and diseases is lacking in at least a third of all countries throughout the world. Where it does exist, it is rarely comprehensive, and is subject to a number of limitations. This is principally due to the sources of these data, which are almost exclusively the administrative records of compensation schemes or systems for the notification of occupational injuries and/or diseases to competent authorities, such as labour inspectorates. Many compensation schemes and notification systems cover only paid employees and, where the self-employed are included, this is usually on a voluntary basis. Certain economic activities and sectors are often excluded, particularly

* Paper prepared by Dr. J. Takala, Director of the ILO InFocus Programme on SafeWork and K.Taswell, Project Activity Coordinator (Occupational Safety and Health and Labour Relations) of the ILO Bureau of Statistics.

public administration, the informal sector and agriculture. Minimum thresholds on the duration of absence from work for the purposes of compensation in many countries mean that many occupational injuries fall outside the scope of the statistical system. Added to this is the widely acknowledged underreporting of occupational injuries, so that the current national statistics of occupational generally present only a partial picture.

3. To remedy this situation, the ILO has taken a number of steps in the past few years. In 1994, the Code of Practice on the Recording and Notification of Occupational Accidents and Diseases was adopted by a Meeting of Experts, and approved by the Governing Body. This provides guidance to the competent authorities on the development of systems for recording and notification, and for action by governments, social security institutions and other organizations aimed at the overall prevention of occupational accidents and diseases. In the field of statistics, in 1998 the 16th International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted the Resolution concerning statistics of occupational injuries (resulting from occupational accidents), which furnishes guidelines for concepts and definitions, coverage, classifications, comparative measures and data sources, with a view to generating comprehensive and timely information needed principally for prevention purposes. The ILO's developmental work in this field continues with the establishment and testing of new methodologies for collection basic information on occupational injuries from sources other than notification systems through a joint project of the ILO InFocus Programme on SafeWork and the Bureau of Statistics. A technical manual will be prepared outlining these new methodologies, for use by countries and by the ILO in its training and technical assistance activities.

4. Occupational safety and health policies and laws are crucial for reducing the incidence of occupational injuries and diseases, but their coverage is unsatisfactory in many countries. Estimates have shown that up to half of total employment may not have access to occupational health services; as many as 80 per cent of ILO member States have not ratified the Occupational Health Services Convention (No. 161).

5. Surveys of working conditions, which are being carried out in a growing number of countries, provide useful indicators about the work environment. Factors such as exposure to noise, vibration and dust, or undue physical efforts contribute to the risks of occupational accidents and diseases. It is estimated that 340,000 deaths each year could be caused by occupational exposure to hazardous substances at work.

6. A number of indicators are suggested for determining the quality of employment from the occupational safety and health standpoint, with the aim of providing a basis for a first discussion. The indicators cover different areas mentioned earlier, including policies and laws, occupational health services, infrastructure and manpower, and working conditions.
