



ONLINE INTERACTIVE RISK ASSESSMENT (OiRA) TOOL FOR THE CLEANING INDUSTRY JOINTLY VALIDATED BY THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS ON 6 JUNE 2014

During the last European social dialogue Committee meeting on 6 June 2014, the EFCI and UNI Europa have successfully validated the European OiRA tool for the cleaning industry. It will now be up to the national social partners of our sector to develop their own national risk assessment tools, based on the general frame provided for by the European OiRA tool.

Background

Following the decision taken at the EFCI Board meeting on 24 May 2013 and subsequent discussions between the EFCI and UNI Europa Secretariats, the European social partners launched a joint project to develop an OiRA tool for the cleaning industry during the social dialogue meeting of 19th June 2013. The main goal of the tool is to establish a better health & safety culture among SME's by elaborating a practical tool that assists them in preventing health & safety risks at the workplace.

From the EFCI, five member associations participated in the European project (Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Spain). During the last 12 months, the OiRA tool was jointly elaborated by the social partners in collaboration with the Belgian and German research institutes Prevent and Kooperationsstelle Hamburg IFE GmbH (KOOP). These two research institutes collaborate with the European Agency for Safety & Health at Work (OSHA) that is committed to promoting a culture of risk prevention in Europe. Four joint working group meetings took place between October 2013 and April 2014. All the costs engaged in the project were covered by the European agency OSHA.

Main features of the European OiRA tool for the cleaning industry

The key challenge in elaborating this European OiRA tool was to find a right balance between being complete (by comprising the main risks and measures based on EU legislation) and creating a relevant user-friendly tool (through the selection of the most important issues and measures).

The OiRA tool is therefore a digital instrument which is practical and easy to use for SME's, aiming to create or spread a health & safety culture in cleaning companies. It offers a full risk assessment in the cleaning sector and offers adequate proven control and prevention measures. It can be easily carried out for diverse workplaces and can involve the employer, team leader, cleaner and client.

Based on European health & safety directives, this voluntary tool is free of charge, available in English language and useable on tablets and smartphones. The OiRA server is based in Germany and only OSHA has access to the confidential data that will only be used to check the functioning of the tool.

The tool is focused on health & safety risks related to office and window cleaning, as these two market segments constitute the main activities of cleaning companies. During the project, it has been however jointly decided not deal with window cleaning at height, as health & safety legislation on this specific activity differs in each country.

The tool contains one general module concerning health & safety management and five sub-modules that address occupational risks in the following areas: work environment, work equipment, window cleaning, work execution & organisation and fire prevention & emergency procedures. It includes 38 risk statements covering the main risks and adequate measures or solutions to be taken.

Users of the tool are asked to follow a procedure divided into 5 stages: **preparation, identification, evaluation, action plan and report**. It is not necessary to deal with all the risks described in the tool and each user can therefore select what is applicable to his specific situation and focus on the most current risks met by cleaners within his company or entity. Based on a report generated by the system, the tool ensures that cleaning companies can elaborate an action plan in order to reduce their health & safety risks at work. The report can be downloaded, printed for documentation, repeated and adapted easily.

In order to have a concrete idea about the functioning of the tool, all EFCI members are invited to visit the website of our European OiRA tool through the following link where each user is asked to provide a correct email address and a password: <https://client.oiraproject.eu/eu/eu-cleaning/eu-cleaning/>.

Next steps

Following its validation at EU level, the European OiRA tool is now left at the disposal of all EFCI members. In the coming months, member associations and their related trade unions should evaluate whether they see an interest in developing their own national risk assessment tools, by using the general frame provided for by the European tool. Each national OiRA tool will then have to be adapted to specific needs and health & safety legislation in the concerned country.

The European agency OSHA has officially confirmed its offer to provide a financial support for a maximal amount of 7.000 Euros per national OiRA tool. This budget could be used for the translation costs into the appropriate language or for the needed adaptation made by national experts concerning the specific national legislation.

In case an EFCI member and its affiliated trade unions would like to elaborate their own national OiRA tool, please inform the Secretariat in order to liaise with the European agency OSHA.

At present, the Secretariat is pleased to inform that the Belgian member association ABSU-UGBN took the decision to elaborate a Belgian OiRA tool, which is based on the existing European one. Furthermore, the Slovenian member association OZS has been approached by the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family and Social affairs and decided as well to elaborate a Slovenian OiRA tool for the cleaning industry.

Finally, the French and the Spanish member associations are currently having internal discussions as well as with their respective trade unions and a decision is expected to be taken in autumn of this year.

The Secretariat would like to however underline that the elaboration of further national OiRA tools would not only benefit to our industry in terms of establishing a health & safety culture but as well raise the profile of the EFCI and its member associations towards OSHA and other relevant European and national Institutions and stakeholders.

For a general overview on OSHA's commitment regarding the different OiRA tools existing, please visit the following two links available in all EU languages: <http://www.oiraproject.eu/> and <https://osha.europa.eu/en/topics/oira>.

Members will find herewith the two presentations made by representatives from the German research institute KOOP and from OSHA at the last European social dialogue Committee meeting of 6th June 2014 (both only available in English language). For any further information or explanation, you are kindly invited to contact the Secretariat.

Rémi Loison
Advisor