

Why the state, the Labour Inspectorate, looks so closely at occupational medical practice?

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BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR
ARBEIT, SOZIALES UND
KONSUMENTENSCHUTZ

Maschinen

Chemikalien

Strahlung

Lärm

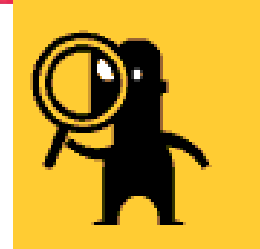
Erschütterungen

Raumklima

Verkehr

Psychische Belastungen

Why the Labour Inspectorate looks so closely at occupational medical practice?



- **First of all**, because it is our job to do so, it is our legal obligation
- **Secondly**, because of lack of resources the LI needs preventive experts in the enterprises to deal with new risks and new challenges such as psychosocial disorders, new hazardous substances, aging workforce
- **Thirdly**, because improving the quality of the activities of preventive experts is a main target of the **Austrian Occupational Safety and Health Strategy, 2007 – 2012**

Austrian Occupational Safety and Health Strategy , 2007 - 2012

Main objectives

- Risk assessment and hazard awareness
- Accident prevention
- Prevention of work-related and occupational diseases with a main focus on musculoskeletal, mental and skin diseases
- Instruction and advanced training and information concerning occupational safety and health, **improving the quality of activities of prevention experts**
- Raising awareness of occupational safety and health.

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Health and Safety at Work Act, 1995

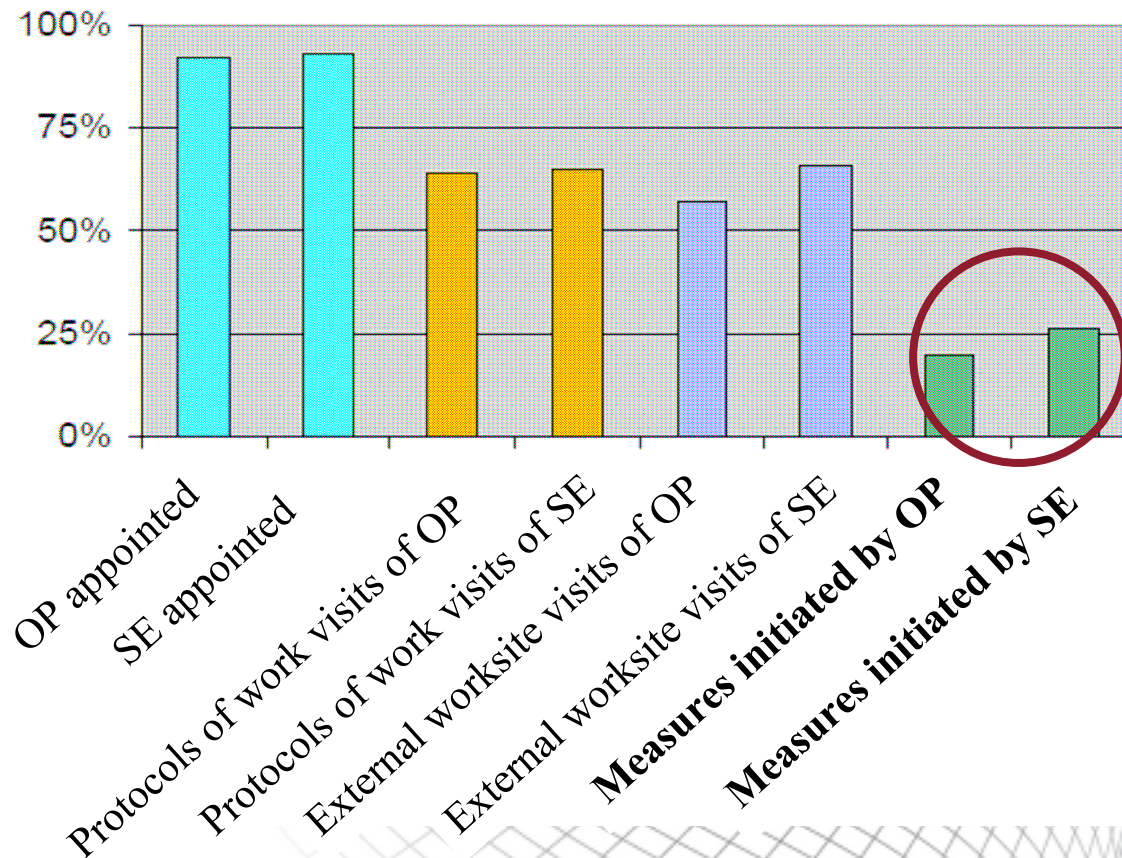
- Defines
 - The duties and tasks of the employer and gives the employer all information needed for a human-oriented work organisation
 - The employer has to consult preventive experts **whenever necessary**

- Defines the tasks of the preventive experts such as
 - To **help** employer to meet their obligations in term of H&S at work
 - To **advise** employer on measures to improve H&S at work and in the organisation of work
 - To **advise** employees, safety representatives, works council and other staff bodies
 - To **support** employer in the identification and assesment of the risks from health hazards, which requires a systematic approach to the analyses of occupational diseases and work related diseases

Health and Safety at Work Act, 1995

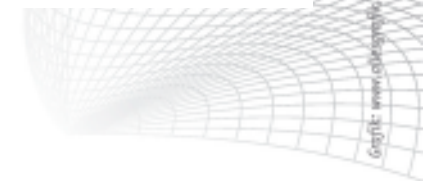
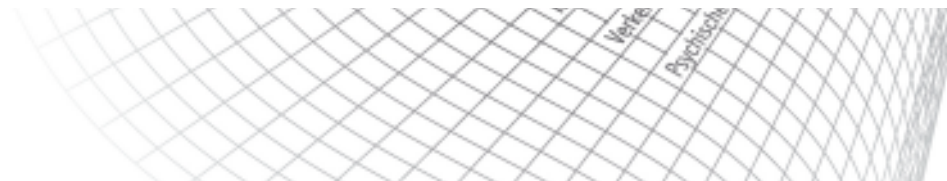
- Furthermore
- Preventive experts have to
 - keep records of their working time and activities performed
 - prepare summarised reports on their activities and proposals to improve working conditions including the effectiveness of their activities
 - ensure mutual co-operation between safety experts, occupational physicians, other experts, works council and staff bodies,
 - visit construction sites and external locations

1. Investigation of the LI in the performance of preventive experts (occupational physicians, safety experts) in 100 cleaning companies (412 external worksites) example



2. Amendment of the regulation on health surveillance, 2008

- Aim: Stress the importance of work history as an integral part of health examination
- Prime focus of medical surveillance on shaping work conditions to **maintain and promote health, work ability and employability**, not permanent health concerns or incapacity
- Ongoing discussion about the new obligation and a lot of resignments of authorization
- reasons: talks with employees needs too much time, worthless, lacking knowledge of employees about their working conditions



Shortcomings in the system



Employer is the director and writes the screenplay



He/she defines the roles of OP and SE and other experts

He/she must assess the health risks, select appropriate measures and evaluate effectiveness of the measures

He/she must establish a procedures for solving problems and decide whom he needs as a problem solver – the OP, the SE or other experts

According to the role of the employer as a director some conditions must be clarified



- ? Does the employer have the ability to identify the problem
- ? Does the employer see the problem, possibly even before it occurs
- ? Does the employer want to solve the problem
- ? Does the employer recognize that the problem is not solved without expertise of the occupational physician
- ? Does the employer know what kind of information the expert need
- ? Does the employer know, which skills to answer his or her questions are required
- ? Does the employer have the knowledge of the performance profiles of potential experts
- ? Does the employer have enough confidence in the performance of the expert

Summarize

- Employer bears a heavy responsibility and must ask for competent assistance, but he/she is the decision-maker and director
- OP should use their core competences to support enterprises in deriving and tuning of prevention goals + develop a common understanding of health
- OP should require more from the employers and should remind them of their responsibility more often
- OP should not reduce company's health objectives to low absenteeism rate but should give differentiated information about preventive potentials
- OP should therefore build up and maintain an occupational epidemiology and should discuss their experiences in public

Occupational Physicians need a lifelong training

- In communicative skills
- In developing implementation strategies
- in problem-solving
- In action-oriented knowledge
- In understanding the different, often complex systems in enterprises

Occupational Medicine means in practice

- High expertise
- High effort in identifying and assessing the situation
- High level of commitment and conviction to employers and employees
- Pro-active work towards healthier working conditions

Thank You for your highly appreciated attention and enjoy the beautiful culture capital LINZ!

