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*Committee on Employment and Social Affairs*

30.3.2007

## **NOTICE TO MEMBERS 3/2007**

**Subject: Delegation to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work - Bilbao, 22 and 23 March 2007**

### **Summary report**

On 22-23 March, a delegation of three Members, Mrs Françoise Castex (PSE), Mr Csaba Óry (PPE-DE), and Mr Jiří Maštálka (GUE/NGL), visited the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (Bilbao - Spain) on behalf of the EP's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

### Thursday 22 March

The visit began with the participation at the closing ceremony of the European Week for Safety and Health at Work 2006, held at the Euskalduna Conference Centre.

The European Week for Safety and Health at Work is an annual information campaign designed to raise awareness and promote activities to make Europe a safe and healthy place to work. It is coordinated by the European Agency and was run in the Member States, as well as EFTA and candidate countries. The European Week 2006 was dedicated to the safety and health of young people under the slogan 'Safe Start'.

Eight organisations from across Europe received good practice awards for improving health and safety for young workers at the closing ceremony. The MEPs of the EMPL delegation were invited to the tribune to give awards to some of the award-winners. Mrs Castex made a speech on behalf of the EMPL Committee.

- Mrs Castex thanked the Agency, and in particular its Director, for inviting the EMPL committee to take part in this event and congratulated the Agency for the success of the European Week.
- She referred to the close links between the Agency and the EMPL committee as demonstrated by the presence of the Agency's Director at the EMPL meeting last January to outline the Agency's degree of implementation of the 2006 programme and its priorities for 2007.
- She emphasized the human, social and economic consequences of the occupational diseases and accidents and stressed that they must not be seen as an unavoidable fatality: they can and must be prevented.
- Finally, Mrs Castex announced the intention of the EMPL committee to prepare a report on the Commission's Communication on a Community strategy on health and safety at work 2007-2012. She stated that the findings of, and the information provided for by, the Agency will be duly taken into account when preparing the report.

After the award-giving ceremony, the Agency's Director, Mr Takala, thanked the participants for their presence at the closing event and announced the launching of the European Week 2007 on musculoskeletal disorders. The European Week 2006 ended with a reception hosted by the Agency.

The presence of MEPs at this event was highly appreciated as it was seen as a commitment of the European Parliament to the problems arising from occupational accidents and diseases.

### Friday 23 March

The second half day of the visit began with a presentation by Mr Andrew Smith, Head of the Agency's Communication and Promotion Unit. He explained the organisational structure of the Agency, its basic aims and key areas of activity, and some of the mayor changes in the world of work which have an effect on health and safety at work. Then, Mrs Elke Scheneider introduced the MEPs to the Agency's Risk Observatory. It provides up to date information on the trends and underlying factors and of the risk factors, on new and emerging occupational risks and their prevention, as well as giving a long term perspective through the expert forecasts and bringing together links to other useful sources of information.

Later, Members made a walking tour of the Agency with Mrs Brenda O'Brien, Brussels Liaison Officer. MEPs could see how work is done and could talk to the Agency's staff.

Next, Mr Jesper Bejer made an introduction to the Agency's work programme for 2007 based on musculoskeletal disorders, and explained the key campaign issues and its projects. Mr Bruno Théibaud presented the Healthy Workplace Initiative, aimed at providing employers and employees with easy access to quality information on how to make their workplace safer, healthier and more productive. He presented the objectives of this Initiative, the 2006 results and the way the 2007 campaign will be organised.

The Agency's Director, Mr Takala, made the concluding remarks, accompanied by project managers from the Occupational Safety and Health Centre and the Network Secretariat to elaborate on their projects in a discussion forum.

During the different presentations, the MEPs asked questions, which gave rise to a rich exchange of views.

The visit to the Agency was particularly useful as it coincided with the presentation by the Commission of its Communication on a Community strategy on health and safety at work 2007-2012, which will be the subject of an EMPL report. The Agency briefed the MEPs on the main characteristics of the new strategy and declared its willingness to assist the rapporteur in preparing his/her report.

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
FOR INTERNAL POLICIES