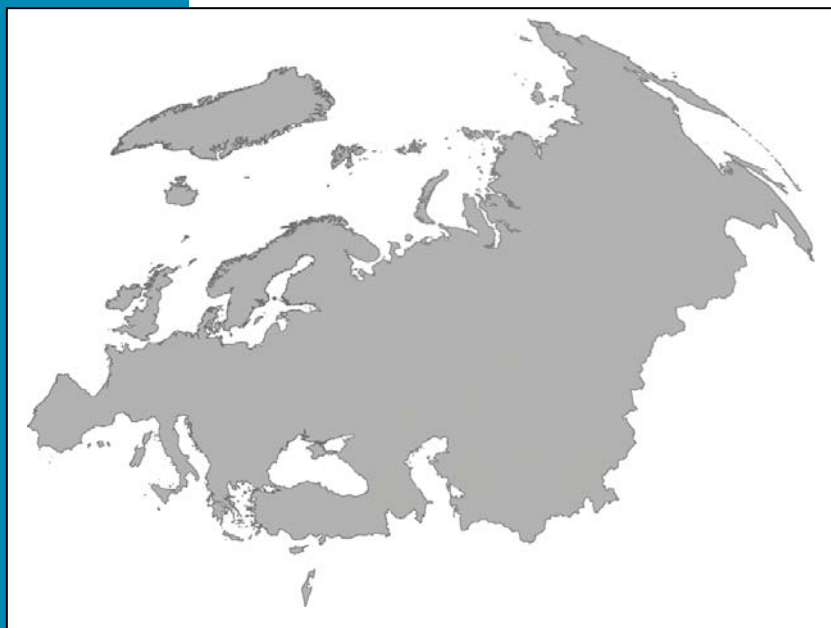




EUROPE



**Situation analysis and
recommendations for
occupational health systems
in the South East Europe**

**Report of the Fifth Meeting of
the South-Eastern European
Network on Workers' Health**

**Podgorica, Republic of Montenegro
1 December 2009**



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ABSTRACT

The Fifth meeting of the South-eastern European (SEE) Network on Workers' Health was held in Podgorica, Republic of Montenegro, on 1 December 2009. The SEE Network members reviewed the draft report in SEE Area including national profiles, situation analysis and recommendations for occupational health systems. Future projects of SEE Network on capacity building in the area of basic occupational health services (BOHS) were discussed.

Keywords

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
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Acknowledgement

This meeting was supported by the Biennial Collaborative Agreement between WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Montenegro. Particular thanks are extended to Dr Jovanka Karadzinska-Bislimovska and Dr Jorma Rantanen for co-chairing the meeting, and to Dr Buhara Önal for preparing this report as rapporteur. The following interns of WHO/Europe Bonn office contributed to the preparation and reporting of the meeting: Ms Anu Anele and Ms Zheng Zheng.

Abbreviations

BCA	Biennial Collaborative Agreement
BOHS	Basic Occupational Health Services
BSN	Baltic Sea Network
NDPHS	Northern Dimension Partnership for Public Health and Social Well-being
GPA	Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health 2008-2017
NIVA	Nordiska Institutionen för Vidareutbildning inom Arbetsmiljöområdet (Nordic Institute for Advanced Training in Occupational Health)
OHS	Occupational Health Services
SEE	South East Europe
UNMIK	Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO CCs	World Health Organization Collaboration Centres

Executive summary

1. The fifth meeting of the SEE Network on Workers' Health was held in Podgorica on 1 December 2009, with the participation of representatives of 9 SEE countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey.
2. The SEE Network members discussed the draft mission report in SEE Area, prepared by Professor Jorma Rantanen, which includes national profiles, situation analysis and recommendations for health systems addressing occupational risks in Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. Common recommendations for the strengthening of occupational health systems in the SEE countries were formulated as following:
 - Prioritize workers' health at policy-making level, develop legal basis for the occupational health System development, and provide sustainable financing;
 - Establish/strengthen the national occupational health institutes as centres of excellencies, support the capacity building by increasing trained human resources, and develop joint training programmes through the SEE Network;
 - Promote the public health approach to occupational health through stronger collaboration between health and labour sectors, adopt the modern approach demonstrating benefits of prevention at workplace;
 - Implement BOHS concept for vulnerable groups, and improve the registration and notification of Occupational Diseases and Accidents;
 - Stimulate the national, SEE, and European partnership with WHO and EU programmes;
3. Network members provided comments at the meeting, and agreed to contribute to the revision of the SEE report for the publication in 2010. The meeting made recommendations on the future priorities of the SEE Network in the capacity building in the area of basic occupational health services (BOHS) as a priority in the implementation of WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health the SEE sub-region.

Introduction

The WHO Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health (GPA) was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2007. It addresses different aspects of workers' health, including primary prevention of occupational risks, protection and promotions of health at work, addressing work-related social determinants of health, and improving the performance of health systems. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is providing supports to the Member States for the implementation of the Global Plan of Action on Workers' Health in the Region.

The SEE Network was first established at the international workshop on "Strengthening the Health System to address Occupational Health Risks in the South Eastern Europe" in Skopje, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in December 2006. Experts from 8 countries and UNMIK Kosovo in the South Eastern Europe, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia were the founding members. Turkey joined the Network at the second meeting in Dubrovnik, 2007. Since its conception in 2006, the SEE Network had meetings with the support of WHO Regional Office for Europe in Dubrovnik, Groznjan and Skopje, addressing various topics ranging from situation analysis to the protection of vulnerable groups.

The Ministry of Health of Montenegro and WHO Regional Office for Europe agreed on Biennial Collaborative Agreement (BCA) for 2008-2009 on the development of national strategy on occupational health based on the GPA. In this context, the national strategy was developed by the national experts and stakeholders with the technical support of international experts and the WHO Regional Office for Europe in 2009. A national workshop finalize the developmental process was organized in Podgorica, 30 November – 1 December, 2009. The outcome of the workshop is summarized in Annex 1.

The members of the SEE Network were invited for their contributions to the workshop. The fifth meeting of the SEE Network on Workers' Health was held back-to-back to the national workshop in Podgorica on 1 December 2009, with the participation of SEE Network members from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey.

Purpose of the meeting

The meeting aimed to review the progress in the implementation of common tasks, especially in the area of GPA Objective 1 (national profiles and policy) and GPA Objective 3 (capacity building in occupational health services) in the South East European countries.

Opening

Professor Jovanka Karadzinska Bislimovska, Coordinator of the SEE Network on Workers' Health and Professor Jorma Rantanen, WHO consultant and former President of the International Commission on Occupational Health were elected co-chairs of the Meeting, and Dr Buhara Önal from ISGUM of Turkey, was elected rapporteur.

Chairperson, Professor Bislimovska, opened the meeting and thanked the Network members for their significant contribution to the previous day's national workshop on the National Strategy for Health and Safety at Work of Montenegro. On behalf of the Network, she also thanked WHO Regional Office for Europe for the strong support for the Network's activities at national and international levels. Dr Rokho Kim, Occupational Health at the European Centre for Environment and Health, WHO Regional Office for Europe, appreciated the Network activities which raised the awareness of the policy-makers in the SEE sub-region on occupational health issues.

History and status of SEE Network on Workers' Health

The history of the SEE Network on Workers Health was summarized by the coordinator.

- The SEE Network on Workers Health was founded by the occupational health experts and national focal points from eight SEE countries at the BCA workshop in Skopje organized by the Institute of occupational health, Skopje, 18-19 December 2006.
- The Second Meeting of the Network was held within the 4th Croatian Congress of Occupational Health and the 14th International Conference on Occupational Health Services, on 9 November, 2007, in Dubrovnik with participation of the experts from 6 countries in the SEE. Turkey was welcomed to the Network. The Meeting was organized by the Department of Occupational Health and Medical Ecology, Andrija Stampar School of Public Health, Medical Faculty, Zagreb, Croatia.
- The Third Meeting of the Network was held in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, May 2008, focusing on health care workers, then continued at the BCA workshop on Strengthening Occupational Health System in Groznjan, Croatia, June 2008.
- The Fourth Meeting of the Network was held at the BCA Workshop on Occupational Health Services for Vulnerable Workers in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, on November 24–25, 2008 with the participation of all SEE Network members.

In 2009, the Network provided necessary supports for the successful mission of Dr Jorma Rantanen, WHO consultant, to the SEE countries for the assessment of occupational health situations and the formulations of common recommendations. At the Second Meeting of the National Focal Points on Workers' Health in Struga, September 2009, the SEE Network

members agreed to join the SEE Health Network in due course. As compared to the situation in 2006 when the Network was first launched, there have been significant improvements in the visibility and awareness of occupational health in the governments of SEE countries.

WHO activities for the implementation of GPA in SEE

The WHO Regional Office for Europe provided technical and policy supports to the SEE countries through BCA mechanism as a priority, recognizing their needs and human resources capable of making real progress in occupational health policies. In 2008-2009, WHO and national counterparts implemented various BCA activities for the implementation of GPA in Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey the country. As examples of achievement, national action plan was developed in Croatia by a new WHO CC, national strategy was developed in Montenegro, a study on vulnerable groups were performed in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the principles of basic occupational health services (BOHS) were introduced to Albania, Serbia and Turkey. The Network provided an excellent opportunity for collective and coordinated implementation of BCA activities sharing information and experiences.

WHO Regional Office for Europe explained the priority actions according to the Global Action Plan on Workers health 2008-2017. The workplan of 2010-2011 will focus on regional implementation of the GPA and WHO will support the SEE countries with BCA focused on specific needs of the country.

- Albania: Capacity building by training the trainers of occupational health services
- Croatia: Implementation of National Action Plan
- Montenegro: Implementation of National Strategy on occupational health
- Macedonia: Further development of occupational health System and BOHS Concept
- Serbia: Development of national strategy on occupational health S
- Turkey: Integration of occupational health into PHC.

In addition to the BCA activities, WHO Regional Office for Europe plan to implement the following inter-country workplan for 2010-2011.

- Regional and sub-regional activities:
 - In collaboration with the networks of WHO CCs, National Focal Points, Northern Dimension Partnership for Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), Baltic Sea Network (BSN) and SEE.
- Publications:
 - Report on situation analysis and occupational health conditions in the SEE countries (2010)
 - Report on capacity building of BOHS in SEE (2011)
- Project: BOHS capacity building in SEE

The formula for successful implementation in a country can be summarized:

- the initiative of national experts supported by key stakeholders;
- the support of Ministries, both health and labour;
- the support of WHO, both technical unit and country office; and
- the coordination by the Network.

WHO Report on Occupational Health in SEE

Professor Jorma Rantanen presented the draft report on the situations in Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the United Nations Administered Province of Kosovo based on his mission in the period of 23 June – 4 July 2009.

The strengths, weakness, and challenges are similar in these countries in terms of human resources, information systems, notification and registration of Occupational Diseases, genuine networking, inter-collaboration, WHO BCA activities and EU accession mechanisms. Common recommendations for the strengthening of occupational health systems in the SEE countries were formulated as following:

- Prioritize workers' health at policy-making level, develop legal basis for the occupational health System development, and provide sustainable financing;
- Establish/strengthen the national occupational health institutes as centres of excellencies, support the capacity building by increasing trained human resources, and develop joint training programmes through the SEE Network;
- Promote the public health approach to occupational health through stronger collaboration between health and labour sectors, adopt the modern approach demonstrating benefits of prevention at workplace;
- Implement BOHS concept for vulnerable groups, and improve the registration and notification of Occupational Diseases and Accidents;
- Stimulate the national, SEE, and European partnership with WHO and EU programmes;

The Network members confirmed their support for the joint activities in SEE region and emphasize on the importance of further development of OH&S at national level. System approach with primary prevention, and capacity building should be the basis for the continuous improvement of OH&S policy and services. Positioning of occupational health in the national political agenda must be the key point in this process. BOHS approach to fill the gap and BOHS coverage for vulnerable workers and underserved population through public health approach oriented to preventive intervention was stressed as a good strategy to provide occupational health to all workers. Quality control and assurance of occupational health S, implementation of the professional rehabilitation and work ability assessment as well as the development of occupational health information system were discussed as an important issue in the practice.

In Bulgaria, the majority of occupational health was privatized during the transition period. The support of WHO would be critical to maintain the government's role in the national policy on occupational health in Bulgaria. The human resources providing occupational health services in the market are not well trained or experienced.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main problems were the lack of political support for occupational health issues, the lack of continuing medical education for medical doctors specialized in occupational medicine, and the lack of either a national institution or a national strategy in the field of OH&S. WHO support is requested in the development of occupational health infrastructure in the country. For example, the establishment of National Institute of Occupational Health as a reference centre is important in order to strengthen OH&S system in the country.

It was proposed that the Network should provide support to some members of the Network in difficult situations. The Network should put priorities and share available funds for the improvement of the conditions in the member countries. The coordinator of the Network agreed that concrete supports should be provided by the Network to maintain and strengthen the essential capacity in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Bulgaria. The members were invited to make proposals. WHO Regional Office for Europe encouraged that the Network utilize the international funding mechanisms, especially in the EU system, for specific national and sub-regional tasks of the common interest.

The next steps of preparing the SEE reports were agreed as below.

- The final version of SEE Report should be prepared until the next SEE meeting;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are invited to add their sections to the SEE report;
- Comments of the national experts and stakeholders will be incorporated in the preparation of the SEE Report.

Way forward: Collaboration of the SEE Network in the future events

Occupational medicine and occupational hygiene should remain the core knowledge base for modern, preventive occupational health, but the professional capacity was weakened during the transition period in the SEE. There is an urgent need to train the next generation of occupational health professionals. The participants agreed to launch a programme for training and education with the coordination of the Network, similar to the NIVA (Nordiska Institutionen för Vidareutbildning inom Arbetsmiljöområdet; Nordic Institute for Advanced Training in Occupational Health), which is a sub-regional cooperation in education and training of occupational health professionals from Nordic countries. New curricula and training materials have to be developed through this initiative.

Andrija Stampar School of Public Health, Zagreb would be the host institution for training in occupational health with the support of the Network. Professor Jadranka Mustajbegovic agreed to undertake the responsibility of the coordination of the programme tentatively called SEEVA.

A project on establishing an internet-based platform for occupational health capacity building called iBOHS was proposed at the WHO CCs meeting held in Geneva, October, 2009. This project aims at providing the curriculum and learning materials to the countries in need of training the trainers in BOHS. Dr Frank van Dijk of the Coronel Institute, WHO CC, University of Amsterdam, one of the leading proponents, agreed to participate in the capacity building activities of the Network upon the request of WHO. In addition, Ms. Suvi Lehtinen, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, WHO CC, who has a long experience in the occupational health capacity building project in East Africa, will also provide support. These experts in the WHO CCs network will be invited to provide technical support to the implementation of BCA workplan and to the Network activities on occupational health capacity building. Romania and Turkey accepted the invitation of Dr Jovanka Bislimovska to join the BOHS projects in the WHO CC Workplan.

Conclusion and Recommendations

All participants confirmed strong commitment to working together in the field of OH&S in the SEE region through the Network, and contribute to the joint actions in the regional implementation of GPA and the BCA activities of WHO Regional Office for Europe with the cooperation of the SEE countries. They agreed to exchange information and experience of good practice in the sub-region to support the capacity building and development of occupational health services, and strengthening national institutes in the transitional economies.

Considering the need to train the next generation of occupational health professionals, it was decided to launch a sub-regional programme for training and education hosted by the WHO collaborating centre in Croatia with the participation and coordination of the Network. New curricula and training materials will be developed by means of this process. The Network agreed to utilize technical supports from the existing networks of WHO collaborating centres and national focal points in occupational health, and therefore, to participate in the project on an internet-based platform for occupational health capacity building.

Common recommendations for the strengthening of occupational health systems in the SEE countries were appreciated by the Network as following:

- Prioritize workers' health at policy-making level, develop legal basis for the occupational health System development, and provide sustainable financing;

- Establish/strengthen the national occupational health institutes as centres of excellencies, support the capacity building by increasing trained human resources, and develop joint training programmes through the SEE Network;
- Promote the public health approach to occupational health through stronger collaboration between health and labour sectors, adopt the modern approach demonstrating benefits of prevention at workplace;
- Implement BOHS concept for vulnerable groups, and improve the registration and notification of Occupational Diseases and Accidents;
- Stimulate the national, SEE, and European partnership with WHO and EU programmes;

The Network agreed to provide final written comments to Dr Jorma Rantanen until February 2010, and welcomed WHO proposal to publish the SEE report on workers' health in 2010.

The participants agreed that the Network will meet at the national workshop in Croatia in June 2010, and at the International Congress on Rural Health in Tirana, Albania, in October 2010.

Annex 1 Conclusions of National Workshop for National Strategy Development, Montenegro, 30 November 2009

1. The Draft Strategy for Occupational Health Services provides a good basis for long-term development of Montenegro occupational health system. The adopted systems approach and strong development orientation deserve full support. While appreciating the excellent work by the Strategy Group, a few comments are presented below for further development of the Strategy and the Action Plan.

2. We propose more visionary approach in introducing the Strategy, by presenting objectives and vision on state of the Montenegrin occupational health S, to say, in the year 2015. Why development of occupational health is important for the overall socioeconomic development of the Country? Which are the general objectives for health and safety of workforce, what the expected coverage of services is, how many trained occupational health physicians and nurses should be available, and how the Montenegro occupational health will meet the European standard?

3. It would be appropriate to link the development of occupational health to the general policy and process for the EU accession. This would provide simultaneously a response for occupational health part to the EU Progress Reports and to European Council Human Rights Convention article 3, which calls for organization of occupational health services for all working people.

4. In assessing the developments needs for occupational health services in Montenegro, a population-based approach should be employed. This means analysis of the occupational health situation and needs of whole working population including all working people irrespectively of their mode of employment, sector of economy, or size of enterprise, whether employee or self-employed, high-risk groups with most urgent needs and the uncovered and underserved workers as well as vulnerable groups should be identified and localized. Special address to organize occupational health for these groups should be given. Also a critical analysis of the coverage, content, activities and competences of the existing occupational health in Montenegro should be presented for identification of the development needs in the presently available service.

5. The presented Draft occupational health Action Plan is appropriate taking into consideration for relevant parts the comments presented in these conclusions.

6. Feasibility of BOHS for Montenegrin conditions is assumed good, due particularly to the highly fragmented enterprise structure of enterprises with majority of workplaces in small and micro-enterprises and growing number of self-employed people and service industries.

7. BOHS is not intended to replace the existing occupational health services (where they function well and have relevant content of activities), but to fill the gap in coverage of services in sectors, workplaces and workers which so far are not covered at all by services and to which the existing models have not provided services but left them uncovered in spite of obvious needs of services.

8. Clear statements and commitments for funding system for occupational health are needed. In such commitment not only funding for occupational health of so called organized work life but also the funding of services to small-scale enterprises, micro-enterprises, self-employed and informal sector should be considered. It is likely that these fragmented and scattered sectors can only be covered by public service organized from primary health care units. *On the other hand the research evidence form European Countries shows positive cost/benefit ratio for investments in occupational health.*

9. According to international experience a small Work Environment Fund would serve effectively the development of working conditions, safety, health, work life in general and even productivity of country. Such Fund could be collected from the annual insurance premiums as a minor percentage (0.5-1.0% of the annual premiums) and used for research, training, information and development projects on occupational health.

10. Every country needs a national Centre of Excellence for occupational health. Such Centre most often takes a form of Institute of Occupational Health. The activities of the Institute should cover research, training and education, information, expert services to occupational health and to workplaces as well as policy advisory services for Ministry and other Authorities, including social partners.

11. Training and education of sufficient numbers of occupational health experts is a critical prerequisite for development of the national occupational health system. The training of occupational health physicians and occupational health nurses should be organized according to the new European model. In addition a critical number of occupational hygienists, ergonomists, and psychologists are needed at least in the larger occupational health service units and in the Institute of Occupational Health. When appropriate, regional collaboration in training of these experts is recommended.

12. Assessment of orientation and competence of the existing occupational health and occupational medicine resources available in Montenegro should be done. While the competence and experience in traditional occupational medicine is appreciated, it is the impression of the international experts that the curative, health examination- and individual worker-orientation is dominant in the present practice with lower priority to the work environment orientation and primarily preventive approach. The existing expert resources should be provided with upgrading training in the preventive occupational health service and in the multi-professional approach in occupational health. Such training should also include elements on BOHS approach and BOHS practices. The WHO Regional Office for Europe Office could provide technical support for organization of such training under the leadership of the WHO Montenegro Office and the Ministry of Health and in collaboration with the Association of Occupational Medicine.

Note: This conclusion was summarized by Dr Jorma Rantanen

Annex 2 Programme

09:00-09:30 **Introduction to the SEE Network Meeting**

Election of chairperson and rapporteur and adoption of agenda

History and status of SEE Network on Workers' Health

Jovanka Bislimovska, Institute of Occupational Health, Skopje

WHO activities for the regional implementation of GPA in SEE

Rokho Kim, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

09:30-10:30 **Special mission report on occupational health systems in South East Europe**

Jorma Rantanen, WHO consultant (former president of ICOH)

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00- 12:30 **Preparing the WHO Report on Occupational Health in SEE**

All members of SEE Network on Workers' Health

12:30-13:30 Lunch

13:30- 14:30 **Project proposals for funding in 2010-2011**

Capacity building of BOHS in SEE (e.g., BIVA, iBOHS, GPA3.2)

Jorma Rantanen, WHO consultant (former president of ICOH)

Harmonized implementation of BCA activities in SEE

Rokho Kim, WHO European Centre for Environment and Health

14:30- 15:00 **Way forward: Collaboration of the SEE Network in the future events**

- Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, Parma, March 2010
- International Conference on National Profiles, Helsinki, September 2010
- Seventh Network Meeting of WHO CCs, October 2010
- Third National Focal Points meeting, October 2010
- Sixth Meeting of SEE Network for Workers' Health, November 2010
- Strategy Conference, Dresden, January 2011
- International Conference on BOHS, Espoo, May 2011

15:00 **Closure of the meeting**

Annex 3 Programme List of participants

Dr Luzati Arben
Public health Institute, Tirana, Albania

Dr Hajdar Luka
Public Health Institute, Tirana, Albania

Professor Nurka Pranjić
Department of Ecology and Occupational Health, Medical Faculty, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Professor Emilia Ivanovich
WHO Collaborating Center for Occupational Health, National Center for Public Health Protection, Bulgaria

Professor Jadranka Mustajbegović
University of Zagreb, School of Medicine, Zagreb, Croatia

Professor Jorma H. Rantanen
International Commission on Occupational Health, Helsinki, Finland

Dr Mensud Grbović
Primary Health Care Centre Podgorica, Podgorica, Montenegro

Dr Ljiljana Kezunović
University of Montenegro, Podgorica, Montenegro

Dr Liliana Rapas
Occupational Health Office, Authority of Public Health M.B., Bucharest, Romania

Professor Aleksandar Milovanović
Institute for occupational health, School of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia

Professor Petar Bulat
University of Belgrade, Serbian Institute of Occupational Health, Belgrade, Serbia

Professor Jovanka Bislimovska
Institute of Occupational Health Skopje, WHO Collaborating Center, Skopje, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Dr Roza Naumoska
Macedonian Society of Occupational Health, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Dr Buhara Önal
OH&S Institute, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ankara, Turkey

Dr Nilufer Özbek
Ministry of Health, Ankara, Turkey

World Health Organization

Regional Office for Europe

Ms Mina Brajovic

Dr Rokho Kim

Dr Darja Radonjic

Ms Deepika Sachdeva

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SITUATION ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS IN THE SOUTH EAST EUROPE REPORT OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF THE SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPEAN NETWORK ON WORKERS' HEALTH

PODGORICA, REPUBLIC OF MONTENEGRO

1 DECEMBER 2009

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