

## Expanding the Zero Accident Vision to the European Context - Interlinking Research and Networking (EZAV)

### Background

The zero accident vision (ZAV) is an important and challenging phenomenon, with a great potential for safety improvement. The basic idea of the ZAV is that all accidents are preventable. It promotes the adoption of a high standard safety culture and a “vision zero” concept in all sectors of working life.

As there are still too many occupational accidents in the EU, the zero accident vision can be an important driver for occupational safety improvements. However, until now, only very few research has been carried out, to identify and mobilize its potential.

### Objectives

The project has two types of goals: **practical networking and research**. The first goal is to **promote the dissemination and implementation of the zero accident vision in companies throughout the Member States, and to create European added value through expanding the experiences of the Finnish Zero Accident Forum throughout the European Union** via a range of associated regional and national company networks. The networking will help companies to exchange knowledge in the field of safety culture and learning, and promotion of the zero accident vision.

Secondly, the project aims to **identify and analyse outstanding practices in accident prevention and safety culture** that are instrumental in realising significant improvements in safety performance. The project will develop evidence of effectiveness of methods and organisational contexts, and identify key success factors for the development of a zero accident culture.

A **wider European research agenda** relevant for the realisation, development, implementation and evidence base of the Zero Accident Vision will be developed.

### Research methods

While the networking is an aim in itself for the company members, it will also form an important basis for research. A case study approach will be used to describe and analyse good practice examples at company level that have adopted the zero accident vision.

Secondly, it will use specific networking activities at national level and expert evaluations from practitioners to formulate evidence-based conclusions. A company survey of committed ZAV members will identify and define the characteristics of a zero accident culture, its impact on safety performance, and how such ZAV can successfully be developed at company level. Finally a Delphi study will enable to develop a European research agenda on the potential of the Zero Accident vision and how this potential can best be realized. That European research agenda can be used to boost research in this area, help to avoid undesirable duplication of research efforts and help to align existing research efforts among the PEROSH members and other relevant research such as universities.

## Scientific relevance

The Zero Accident Vision implies a strategic long-term ambition to realize significant safety improvements. Top management commitment and leadership is a basic characteristic – which is known to be an important success factor for any safety improvement. ZAV is also closely associated with business ethics and corporate social responsibility. The topic has high scientific relevance as little research has been carried out on the above mentioned characteristics of safety strategies, or on evaluation of the success of ZAV strategies. The indications from the Finnish experience are however, quite positive. Generally it can be said that not enough is known with regard to success strategies to improve safety attitudes and safety culture at workplaces. The same is true for successful learning from accident processes. Many ambitions to reduce accidents rates are not realised, and accident investigations do often not lead to prevention of reoccurrence of the same or similar types of accidents. There is still a lack of scientific evidence on how such goals can be realized.

Knowledge of occupational safety is developed through theory-based research, but also through evaluation of practical innovations by companies - regarded as practical experimentation. The project aims to connect such practical experiments and innovations with safety research, in order to contribute to scientific knowledge and to support innovative practices with scientific evaluations.

The development of a European research agenda in this area is relevant for defining dedicated research on ZAV and safety improvement, but also for avoiding duplication of research efforts, and defining dedicated research calls and proposals.

Finally, the project also includes the development and expansion of zero accident vision company networks which form an important infrastructure to facilitate future research efforts in this area.

## Practical/societal relevance

The zero accident vision provides an ethically sustainable basis for accident prevention. There are already a large number of examples of how the zero accident concept has been applied. Many companies and some governments have already adopted zero accident targets.

The practical and societal relevance of this project is very high. There are still too many occupational accidents in the European Union. Data from European Statistics on Accidents at Work (ESAW) for the year 2007 showed that 5580 workers died in a fatal accident, and that 2.9% of workers had an accident at work with more than three days of sickness absence. The European Commission's Community strategy on health and safety at work (2007-2012) is aimed at improving the quality and productivity of working life. The overall objective of the strategy is a 25% reduction in the total incidence rate of accidents at work per 100,000 workers in the EU-27 during the strategy period. A first evaluation of the safety performance of the members of the Finnish Zero Accident Forum demonstrated a 15% reduction of accident rates in three years (2005-2008), while the national accident statistics showed an 4,3 % increase in national overall accident rates.

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