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Anna Hintz

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Effective prevention as one of the priorities in Polish labour inspection's activity – experiences and prospects for the future.

SPEAKER:

Anna Hintz

FUNCTION:

Chief Labour Inspector

ABSTRACT:

Polish National Labour Inspectorate is facing challenges which result from the necessity to align its forms of activity to standards binding for EU Member States and to harmonize labour law provisions of the national legislation with those laid out in Community law. In the age of new technologies, changing forms of employment and work organization, prevention has become an effective instrument for protection of human health and an essential part of labour protection system. National Labour Inspectorate has introduced major changes both into its corporate structure and forms of activity. In April 2004 new corporate units were appointed: Prevention Department at the Chief Labour Inspectorate and sections for prevention in all 16 district labour inspectorates. Undertaking preventative actions to an ever greater extent has been given a priority status in National Labour Inspectorate's work.

The most important long-term objective for labour inspection in Poland consists in exerting effective influence upon the employers' and employees' education in the field of safety and health protection, and in changing the prevailing and not always positive attitude towards the feasibility of achieving sustainable improvement in that regard. Our undertakings are most often addressed to small and medium-sized enterprises which receive comprehensive assistance in the form of advice, training and informational materials containing practical technological and organizational solutions which help ensure the required level of work safety. Majority of these materials are currently available on the National Labour Inspectorate's website at www.pip.gov.pl.

This year within the framework of national campaign "Work Safety in Construction 2005" National Labour Inspectorate is implementing a programme of prevention for small and medium-sized construction companies. The campaign's objectives are aligned to SLIC proposals and aim to improve safety standards in the construction sector. Financial resources provided by EU have enabled us to broaden the scope of information campaign, direct more funds to publishing instructional materials and organizing training for employers and investors. Experience gained during the project's implementation will be shared with labour inspections from EU and Candidate States in the form of a report.

In 2005 National Labour Inspectorate has established a close cooperation with Brandenburg's authorities for supervision of working conditions with regard to enforcement of Community law. The main aim of this cooperation is to improve safety and protection of workers' health on construction sites in the border region. The whole project is being financed by European Union funds. 7 joint visits to large construction sites have been conducted up to date with the participation of labour inspectors from neighbouring inspectorates. Execution of the project has made it possible to become acquainted with methods and forms of activity applied by labour inspection in Brandenburg and with the practice of implementing Community law with regard to planning and managing a safe construction site. Outcome of the project will be used while preparing similar programmes in other border regions of the country.

It is particularly worthy of mention that in 2004 the number of fatal occupational accidents in Poland fell to the lowest on record. We believe that National Labour Inspectorate's activities will contribute to further enhancement of this tendency.