



Occupational Health & Safety Authority

## Media Release

# 'Safe Start' OHS Campaign to focus on Young Workers

## OHS Awards Launched

20.06.06

Across Europe, 18 to 24-year-olds are at least 50% more likely to be injured in the workplace than more experienced workers. Behind the statistics are harrowing stories, of young people having to live with the consequences of accidents and damaged health for the rest of their lives, or dying when they had so much of their lives ahead of them.

With the theme 'Safe Start', the 2006 European Week for Safety and Health at Work was launched today in Malta as part of a pan-European campaign to raise awareness about the risks that young workers face at work. The campaign will run until the end of the year but will culminate in the organisation of the European Week between 23 and 27 October 2006

Employers need to do more to protect young workers, and young people need to be more aware of health and safety issues when they enter the world of work.

**Dr Mark Gauci**, the Chief Executive Officer of the Occupational Health and Safety Authority said that young workers are a high risk group.

"It has been proven that young workers, and especially first-time workers, are at a higher risk of sustaining an occupational injury, fatality or ill-health than any other sector of workers. There are various factors which attribute to this. These include inexperience, lack of adequate information and on-the-job training and some extent of immaturity. Moreover, young workers also tend to shy away from posing

questions and raising concerns at the workplace for fear of rejection, being fired or given a warning as well as having problems with their peers. It is of fundamental importance that employers, supervisors and the young persons themselves are aware of their occupational health and safety rights and obligations," Dr Gauci said.

"The OSHA is aware of the importance of instilling a preventive culture from a young age and has an on-going campaign with primary school children. However, we are aware that those young persons who are about to embark on their first job need to know more. That is why this campaign aims to reach them early, prior to their first employment, so they would start their first day at work with at least enough awareness to pay due attention to occupational health and safety at the workplace," Dr Gauci continued.

"The OSHA is working in close collaboration with various entities and social partners to ensure that the message gets across as wide an audience as possible. I would like to invite young workers, their parents, youth organisations, schools and colleges, employers, supervisors, self-employed and all others who might deal with young people to get involved in this campaign" Dr Gauci concluded.

Putting their weight behind the campaign were the Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Announcing the European launch, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities **Vladimír Špidla** said that young workers' safety wasn't just a matter for young people themselves.

"Our message is that we all share responsibility for protecting young people at work. Employers have a duty of care and are legally responsible for the health and safety of their workers, and EU law recognises that young people need special protection. But this is also an issue for parents, for health and safety professionals, and for the education community. And ultimately, it's an issue for policymakers. We all have to work together, to make sure that young people have a safe and healthy start to their working lives," Mr Spidla said.

"With the world of work changing so quickly, this deep-rooted 'health and safety thinking' will help young people deal with whatever risks they may face throughout their working lives. It should be part and parcel of the school and college curriculum. We also want our engineers, designers, architects, medical students and business managers of tomorrow to be risk-aware and well-informed about OSH in their professional roles. Instilling these values in young people at an early age will help to promote a prevention culture in workplaces," **Hans-Horst Konkolewsky**, the Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work said.

Safe Start features a wide range of engaging quizzes, interactive learning materials and events, including good practice awards and a competition to find the European Young Film Maker of the Year on a health and safety theme. Further information about the campaign is available online at <http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/>

## **OHS Good Practice Awards 2006**

The Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA) in Malta also launched the fifth OHS Good Practice Awards scheme and Dr Gauci invited all interested parties to submit their nominations. In line with the European theme, one of the Awards' categories this year will focus on young workers. As in previous years, there are also two more categories aimed at safety management systems and SME's. The closing date is **15 September 2006**. Application forms are available from OHSA.

The awards aim to demonstrate, by example, to all employers and workers the benefits of following good safety and health practices to safeguard the occupational health and safety of young workers at work.

The nominations will be adjudicated by a panel of independent judges and the winners will be announced in a ceremony held by the Occupational Health and Safety Authority. The awards will provide those selected with national recognition for their role in improving working conditions in Malta. In addition the winner in the Young Workers Initiative will then participate at a European level together with the winners from the other EU member states. The award ceremony will be held in Bilbao (Spain).

"We would like all safety and health institutions and organisations, trade unions, companies, managers, employees and safety representatives, amongst others, to organise their own events up until and particularly during the European Week for Safety and Health at Work in October. I also encourage all interested parties to submit their nominations for the OHS Awards," Dr Gauci concluded.

*Further information about the campaign and application forms for the Good Practice Awards can be obtained by phoning 21 247677/8 or sending an email to [ohsa.communications@gov.mt](mailto:ohsa.communications@gov.mt)*