UNIA

BWI international conference on asbestos, Vienna 6–7 May 2014

„ After the ban of asbestos : Experiences of trade unions – Examples of different countries: Switzerland“

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Initial position

- Asbestos has been banned since 1990, but is still found in most buildings that were built before 1990. However, it is not registered where!
- The population is widely aware of the asbestos problem, but usually lacks specific / in-depth knowledge!
- Special insurance benefits guaranteed in the case of an occupational disease, but not in case of diseases due to exposure outside the work-environement as well as statue of limitations for compensation claims against polluters!

Fields of activity

- 1. Information, sensitization
- 2. Prevention against current, active and passive exposure
- 3. Support for victims of asbestos
- 4. Asbestos and other hazardous substances at the workplace
- 5. Global ban of asbestos

Field of activity „Information, sensitization“

FACH Forum Asbest Schweiz
Forum Amiante Suisse
Forum Amianto Svizzera

- Regular joint activities of all government agencies and social partners involved: targeted information campaigns, publications,…

- Public relations activities, such as Unia with Suva support (Lugano 2010; Neuchâtel 2012)

Field of activity „information, sensitization“

- Virtual asbestos house (Suva)

- Digital tools to create asbestos inventory of own house (Suva)

Field of activity „ Prevention against current, active and passive exposure“

- Occurence of asbestos : Obligation to investigate as a condition for a builiding permit – cantonal (regional) laws

24 heures

Plus question d’échapper au diagnostic amiante

Dès le 1er mars, tout bâtiment construit ou rénové avant 1991

devra faire l’objet d’un dépistage avant d’être transformé

Field of activity „ Prevention against current, active and passive exposure“

- Branch and trade specific documents and materials – „traffic light system“

- Prevention of asbestos related deseases : Priority in the prophylaxis of occupational deseases 2010 – 20

Field of activity „ Support for victims of asbestos“

- Special insurance benefits are guaranteed (without limitation) for recognized asbestos-related occupational illnesses.
- However, there are no benefits if occupational illnesses are not recognized or illnesses happen outside the work-environment.
- Claims against polluters expire 10 years after exposure.
- Success thanks to the commitment of asbestos victims support groups:

Tages-Anzeiger

Ansprüche von Schweizer Asbestopfern auf Schadenersatz und Wiedergutmachung gelten bis heute als verjährt. Der Menschenrechtsgerichtshof (Strassburg) beurteilt diese Praxis als rechtswidrig. (11.3.2014)

Field of activity „Asbestos and other hazardous substances at the workplace

- Quartz dust
- Wood dust
- Nano-Objects
- etc.

- **The asbestos tragedy has hardly increased awareness– Tendency: Dismanteling of legal framework !**

Field of activity „Global ban of asbestos“

- Awareness has increased over illegal import of materials containing asbestos (eg brakes, thermos flasks)! - Yet little known: a tendency to loosen import ban
- First guidelines for the protection of employees of domestic companies that operate in countries with no ban on asbestos!

  …

- Otherwise, only modest response to the issue !

Fields of activity – current state : Estimation

Information / sensitization >
Keep standards

Prevention against actual exposure >
Good foundation for a comprehensive implimentation

Support for victims of asbestos >
Change limitation of claims against third parties

Asbestos – other hazardous substances >
Show parallels systematically

Global ban of asbestos >
expand involvement – international cooperation

Final remark

- **From the asbestos problem to the asbestos opportunity !**

Thank you !

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