

Publishable summary report



ROWER was an EC funded (FP-7 HEALTH 2007-A) Coordination and Support Action aiming to enhance research on the economic aspect of Occupational Health and Safety.

As work is an economic activity, all issues related to such an activity, like occupational accidents and diseases, cannot be effectively dealt with unless this perspective is adequately examined. Workers find themselves in labour for economic motives and to a large extent these motives define their behaviour (and OHS-related behaviour too) in it. Enterprises as economic entities can only perceive economic motives and, therefore, their behaviour in all issues (OHS included) can only be economically driven. Therefore, the economic aspect of OHS, although it is not the only important aspect, cannot be less than significant. However, despite its large historical tradition that goes centuries ago, it is not sufficiently developed as a research topic.



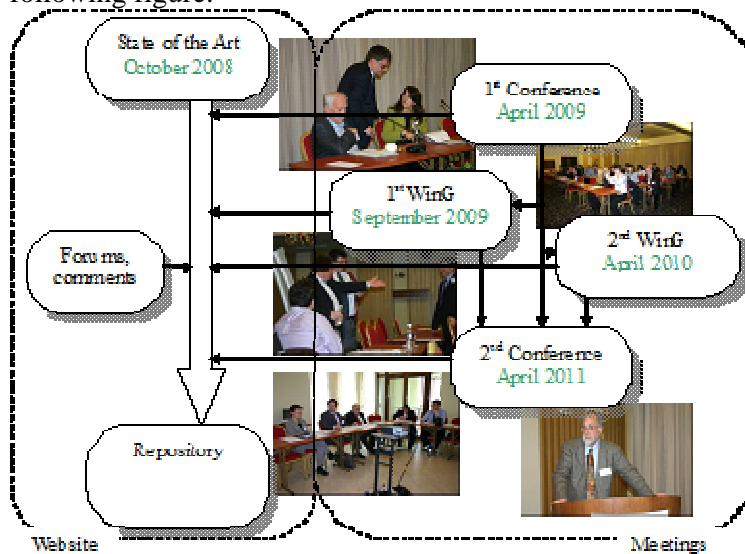
The aim of ROWER project was to help enhancing research in this topic through a Coordination and Support Action that brought together the leading OHS Economists and encouraged contributions. The existing knowledge was gathered through literature reviews, meetings and conferences and was made available to the community through a dynamic on-line repository that addresses all relevant OHS Economics issues and allows for discussion and communication of principles, case studies and research.

To meet this aim, certain requirements (objectives) were set to ensure the proper conditions for effective work:

- International level of research, by attracting experts individual participation so as to contribute to ROWER Working Group (WinG) meetings and Conferences.
- Multidisciplinary approach, by the participation of institutions that combine all scientific disciplines involved in OHS.
- Dissemination and openness to the research society and the social context in general, by providing openness of its activities to the relevant research community.
- Speeding up and facilitation of research activity in OHS Economics, by providing an “incubation cell” that will boost research development.
- Continuation of research, by attracting new researchers to enter to this research topic.

The core of the project was a handbook on OHS Economics that was developed throughout its course. In the beginning of the project, a State-of-the-Art report was developed based on literature review of the existing research. A number of meetings and conferences followed, attracting contributions of participating OHS Economics experts. These contributions, along with research published elsewhere, were gathered

and included in the final handbook. The main steps of this effort are presented in the following figure.



This handbook, called Repository, was developed in a wiki-like interactive form and it is available in project's website www.rower-eu.eu. Its html form, allows visitors to read every paragraph of the report and add a comment that would be visible for all other visitors. This allowed for a structured and exploitable debate on OHS Economics issues that was then transferred to paper. It was also printed in CDs and was distributed in the participating organisations.

The repository was designed as a dynamic handbook, in order to help new researchers and it includes the following chapters – issues:

1. Introduction to the Economics of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)
2. OHS Microeconomics
3. OHS Macroeconomics
4. Recent issues on OHS Economics



The first meeting planned was the 1st ROWER Conference on Occupational Health and Safety Economics in Izmir, Turkey (23-25 April 2008), covering the following topics:

- Society level (impact of changes in labour force structure, impact of new trends in economy, measuring economic impact of occupational accidents and diseases in national level, economic impact of regulation, cost internalisation).
- Enterprise level (measuring economic impact of occupational accidents and diseases, the case of small and medium enterprises and contracting, economic motives and leverage, cost externalities, quality of work and productivity – international competition).

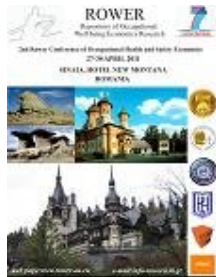
The 1st Working Group (WinG) on OHS Microeconomics, took place in Amsterdam, The Netherlands at September 2009 in collaboration with ECOSH project. It included contributions to more detailed OHS Microeconomic issues, such as cost-effectiveness



vs. cost-benefit analysis, societal vs. company perspective, the case of small and medium enterprises and contracting, economic motives and individual behaviour, cost internalisation, measurement of costs of accidents at the enterprise level, measuring and valuing productivity costs, absenteeism vs. presenteeism, long-term prevention outcomes

(preventing DM2, cancer, CVD), relevance for companies, implementation of results

The 2nd WinG that took place in Sadanski, Bulgaria at April 2010 focused on certain topics of OHS Macroeconomics (impact of changes in labour force structure, impact of changes in economy, measuring economic impact of occupational accidents and diseases in national level, impact of regulation cost externalities).



Finally the 2nd Conference in Sinaia, Romania at April 2011, examined the interaction of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics of OHS with respect to policy development. Certain (existing or not) policies will were analysed and presented. Specific parameters of policy development (legislation, insurance, economic motives, etc.) were systematically discussed in all proposed suggestions for policy development. Additionally, certain factors representing recent changes

The main conclusion of ROWER project was that although the economic aspect is one (usually not the main) parameter in OHS research, there is room for independent research on OHS Economics. The most promising aspects of such research are:

- The development of a microeconomic model for economic motives for occupational risk in order to identify certain affecting variables (e.g. wage, unemployment risk, etc.) and its extension to the macro level with appropriate modification of these variables (e.g. wages level, unemployment rate, etc.) for econometric studies is a very interesting direction, although data registration problems are still an important problem.
- The examination of all important aspects in an economic incentives scheme (subsidies, insurance scheme, etc.) taking into account constraints and particularities of different countries in the European Union, common legislation, competition issues and socio-economic or political trends. This research is already taking place under the label of incentives for OHS by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.