

## Spain

# The Spanish Society of Occupational Health in Public Administration (SESLAP): Networking Health in the Public Sector

### **The association of occupational health experts**

This model belongs neither to a particular institution nor to a type of public administration. It consists of an association of occupational health experts from the public sector, based on a statute dating back to 1993, and this responds to the needs of these experts by exchanging information and expertise as well as by promoting and facilitating the assessment and training of all members.

### **Background**

Before the Framework Directive 89/391/CEE became a part of Spanish legislation according to Law 31/1995 pertaining to occupational risks prevention, the juridical framework for occupational health services was basically the regulation of 1959 for In-Company Medical Services, which developed the ILO Recommendation n° 112 of the same year establishing implantation and functions of Occupational Health Services at the workplace.

Nevertheless, this regulation was not mandatory for public administration, as public bodies were not really viewed as companies. The obvious and unavoidable consequence of this exclusion was that a lot of workers developing their professional activity in the public sector were not covered by the occupational health and safety regulations.

However, some public administrations had company doctors and other mainly health professionals on their staff, who, under different labels and among other tasks, were in charge of workers' health

matters, taking into account the peculiarities of this field.

### **Continuous training**

With a great personal effort, these highly motivated professionals began to organise working meetings for dealing with occupational health matters in the field of public administration fifteen years ago. These meetings took place with the support of some institutions in cities such as Córdoba, Valencia, Sevilla, Málaga, Alicante, Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Valladolid and served as meeting points for sharing problems and worries, as a means of providing continuous training and as a prompting factor for occupational health in public sector. Moreover, they constituted the seed of the present association.

The idea of creating a scientific society to agglutinate the different professionals developing tasks in occupational health and safety and health promotion in the field of Public Administration was born in these periodical meetings. With these premises and history, the "Sociedad Española de Salud Laboral en la Administración Pública (SESLAP)" was born at the end of 1993.

### **Aims of SESLAP**

The main aims of SESLAP are to promote, praise and dignify occupational health, especially in the public sector, to assess all members in OHS and HP-related topics – from technical to deontological ones – to exchange information and expertise and to disseminate them; all with the intention of doing a service to humankind.

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This association is widespread in all Spanish territory and is managed by a Board consisting of the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary, the Treasurer and a County member for each autonomous community. Its members should be occupational health experts developing their activities in the field of public administration.

### **The Spanish occupational health panorama**

From its foundation the society has given continuity to the encounters it has inherited and has organised national conferences more or less annually that are acquiring an increasing interest and relevance within the Spanish occupational health panorama. Conferences have been held in Madrid, El Puerto de Santa María, San Sebastián, La Coruña and Bilbao y Zaragoza. At the moment SESLAP is organising the XIII Congress of Occupational Health in Public Administration in collaboration with the “Consejería de Presidencia de la Junta de Extremadura”. Topics discussed at these conferences included the traditional subject areas, both for OSH (i.e. emergency planning, injuries and risk evaluation) and for health promotion (i.e. healthy lifestyles and vaccinations), but also emergent topics or new challenges, such as stress, violence at work or voice disturbance, for example.

The current Spanish OSH legislation, the aforementioned occupational risk prevention law from 1995, includes a deep and far-reaching change in the

conception of worker’s rights in the field of OSH, namely its universality. Thus, in its third article the scope of application is extended to public employees, and in its fourteenth article the OSH protection is configured as a worker’s right and employer’s and public administration’s duty with regard to the personnel at their service.

Guaranteed best working conditions This could not be done differently, as it was a question of giving an appropriate framework to guarantee the development of work under the best working conditions and to prevent work-related injury or disease. This guarantee should on no account be conditioned to the type of contractual relationship between the employee and the employer. On the other hand, from the point of view of experts in charge of identifying occupational risks and planning and implementing preventive measures, public administration are simply big “companies” which provide public services; as such they are collectives of quantitatively great importance for occupational health. Moreover, the various occupational activities that take place in public administrations make them a genuine compendium of occupational risks, namely physical, chemical, biological and psychosocial risks etc. that also highlight the qualitative importance of public service in the prevention panorama.

### **Interesting contributions**

This qualitative and quantitative importance of the public sector in the occupational field, the peculiarities of different administrations, the lack of health and safety programmes at work in recent times and the need to introduce efficient management for these occupational health strategies in the context of new human resource management strategies make an association such as the SESLAP useful and necessary today. Its deep knowledge of the current reality of the public sector and its permanent devotion to it allow it to make interesting contributions to people in this wide and diverse occupational sector.

### **Final appraisal**

The society currently has around three hundred members distributed all over the country. It holds a national conference every year, which is attended by around 300 members on average and which serves as a meeting point for main stakeholders in occupational health in the sector. It edits a biannual scientific journal with a circulation of 500 copies that is distributed among its members and to different institutions. Finally, this association facilitates and promotes the prize awarded annually by the prestigious “Fundación Mapfre Medicina” for the best research on occupational risk prevention in public administration. As an example, the last prizes were awarded for the following research:

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Year	Title	Authors
1999	Evaluation of socio-economic factors for occupational stress in a group of high occupational risk (National Police Body)	Sánchez Milla J Sanz Bou M A Apellániz A
2000	Design of an informative decalogue about ergonomics in office work	Mateos Rodríguez J
2001	Study of psychosocial factors in an administrative department preparing quotation dossiers from the Dirección Provincial of INSS in Guipúzcoa	Gomollón García A

Another communication tool of SESLAP is an Internet website ([www.seslap.com/](http://www.seslap.com/)), which was visited last year 30,000 times and which has received 500 enquiries. The society's webmaster (the current secretary) maintains and updates the website daily and its content is structured according to the following headings:

- ¿What is SESLAP?
- Continuous training
- Continuous information
- Public employment offer
- Contact us
- Courses and conferences
- Publications and bibliography
- Interesting links