



Application of the European Multi-Sectoral Social Dialogue Agreement on Workers' Health Protection through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silica and Products Containing It

Executive Summary
July 2008

On 25 April 2006, the Employer and Employee representatives of 14 industry sectors signed a European Multi-Sectoral Social Dialogue Agreement on Workers' Health Protection through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silica and Products Containing it and formed NEPSI, the "European Network on Silica" NEPSI includes the NEPSI Council to follow-up the application and deal with interpretation issues and a NEPSI Secretariat to assist the Council and assure relations with public institutions, the press or the general public on its behalf.

The Agreement entered into effect on 25 October 2006, after having been translated into 20 official EU languages. It remains open for signature at any time by other industry sectors.

In 2007, the NEPSI Council collected and compiled qualitative information on the preliminary status of application of the Agreement within the signatory sectors. This information was reported in its 2007 Summary Report circulated in July to EU and National authorities responsible for Health and Safety and in a publicly available Executive Summary¹. Although it covered a period of only six months after the entry into effect of the Agreement, such a collection of information at national level was deemed a useful contribution to maintaining the proactive efforts already achieved towards full application of the Agreement.

The purpose of this 2008 report is to provide the results of the first quantitative reporting exercise on the application of the Agreement. In compliance with the Agreement's provisions on Reporting, each of the signatory sector European associations provided the NEPSI Council with a consolidated version of quantitative data on the application of the Agreement previously collected at site level.

1. Organisation of reporting

Article 7 of the Agreement requires information to be collected at site level and consolidated at EU sector level before being communicated to the NEPSI Council once every two years, and for the first time in 2008. According to the Agreement, the consolidated EU Sector reports must form the basis of a Summary Report on the application of the Agreement to be addressed to the EC, the Member States and the authorities responsible for health and safety. An Executive Summary may be made available to the public.

For this purpose, a reporting format was developed and included in the Agreement as Annex 3.

Originally, this format was meant to be filled in by each of the sites under the scope of the Agreement then consolidated successively at Company, National Association and EU Sector levels before being communicated to the NEPSI Council for a global assessment of the

¹ www.nepsi.eu

performances and improvement in the application of the Agreement, to be reported in its biennial Summary Report.

At its second meeting in June 2007, the NEPSI Council approved the creation of an **online reporting system** to facilitate the filling-in and consolidation of the reporting format as it was developed in Annex 3. This approach was adopted in order to allow a greater harmonisation of the reporting procedure, improve the data collection, providing therefore coherent results. Reporting through an online system also contributed to minimising the consolidation workload for sectors totalling thousands of sites and ensuring that the same instructions and guidance on reporting are provided to all, from the signatories at European level to each site applying the Agreement.

The NEPSI online reporting system was available for use by mid-February 2008 in 22 languages (including Romanian and Bulgarian), and was open for site reporting until 16 May 2008.

2. Voluntary reporting

In compliance notably with Article 7(1) of the Agreement² and in order to support the growing implementation of the Agreement beyond its scope, each sector was invited to use the system to collect data on the application of the Agreement on sites which are not under its scope, i.e. fulfilling one or more of these criteria:

- Not situated in the EU-27 (this year, contributions were limited to Turkey, Norway, Switzerland and Croatia.).
- The workers are not directly or indirectly represented by one of the signatory European trade union federations.
- The company is not directly or indirectly a member of one of the signatory European industry associations,

In most cases, data provided “voluntarily” was consolidated in distinct sector reports entitled: EU/Non-EU Voluntary Report.

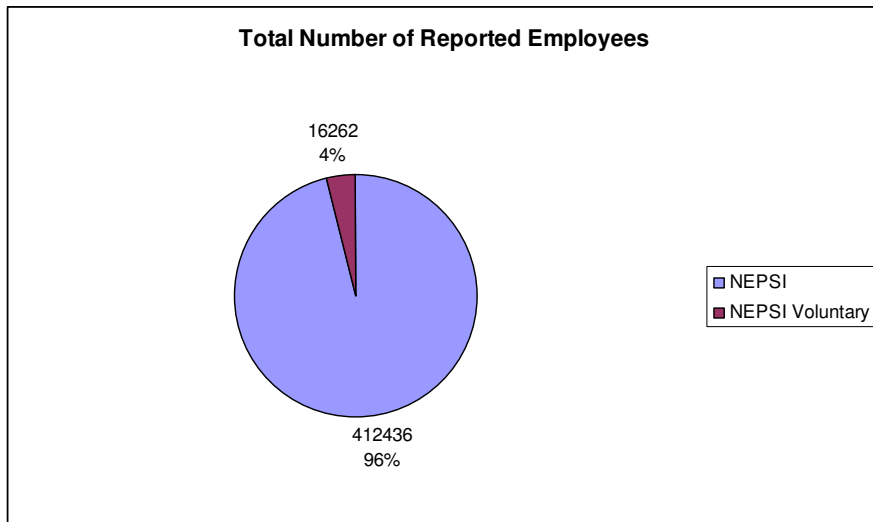
3. Results

- **The total number of sites for which complete data was provided is 4.707. Among these, 121 provided data as EU/Non-EU Voluntary reporting**

It must be noted however that for each sector and for reasons particular to each sector, not necessarily all sites under the scope of the Agreement were invited to report. Many sectors indicated that they are in the process of a more accurate assessment of the number of member companies and sites they represent so as to provide a clear indication of the proportion of Members still to be covered.

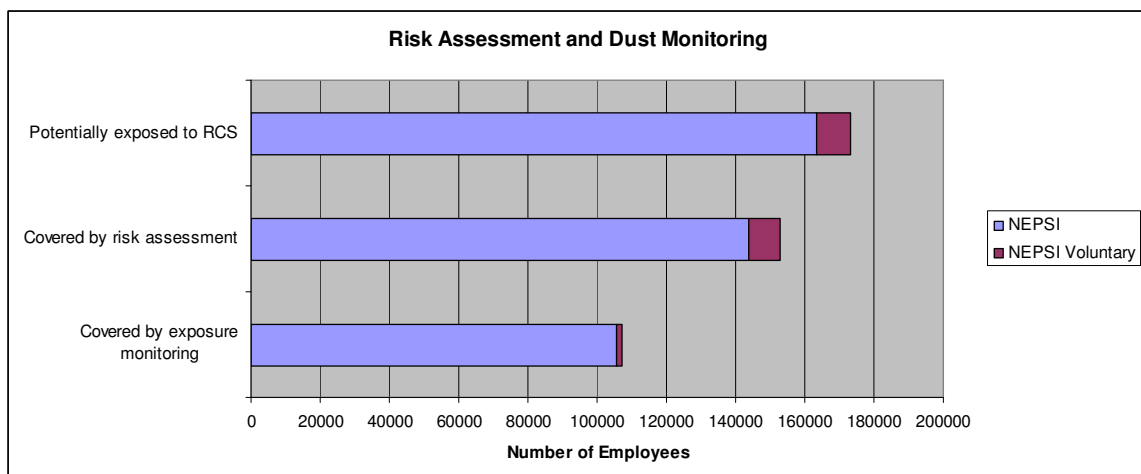
² *“The Employers and Employees with the support of the Workers representatives shall jointly and continuously strive to respect the Good Practices, and to improve their application”*

- The total number of Employees reported is 428.698. Among these, 16.262 were reported as EU/Non-EU Voluntary reporting



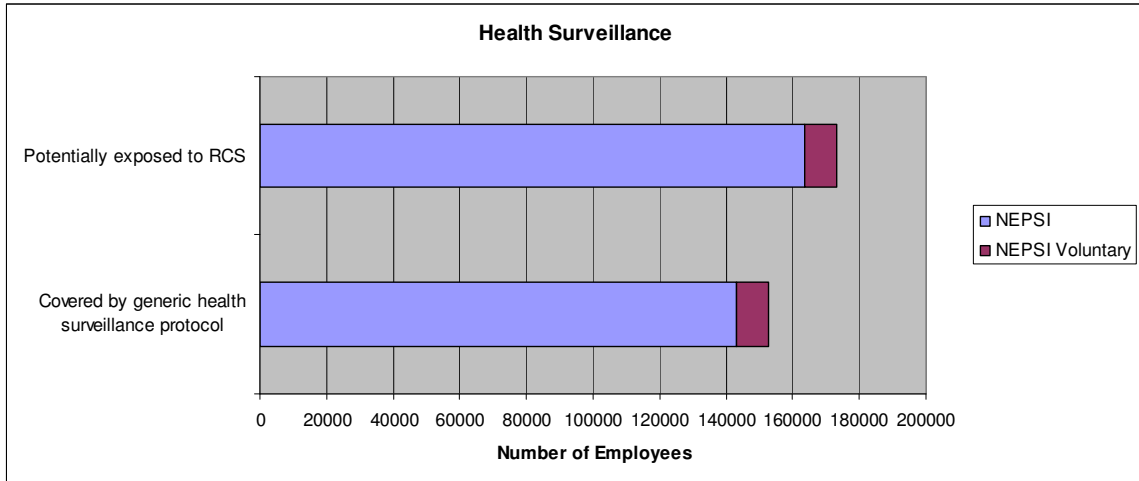
- The total number of reported employees estimated to be potentially exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica is 173.239 (40.4%)

- Among the total number of employees³ estimated to be potentially exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica, 152.982 (88%) were covered by Risk Assessment and 107.327 (62%) were covered by exposure monitoring.

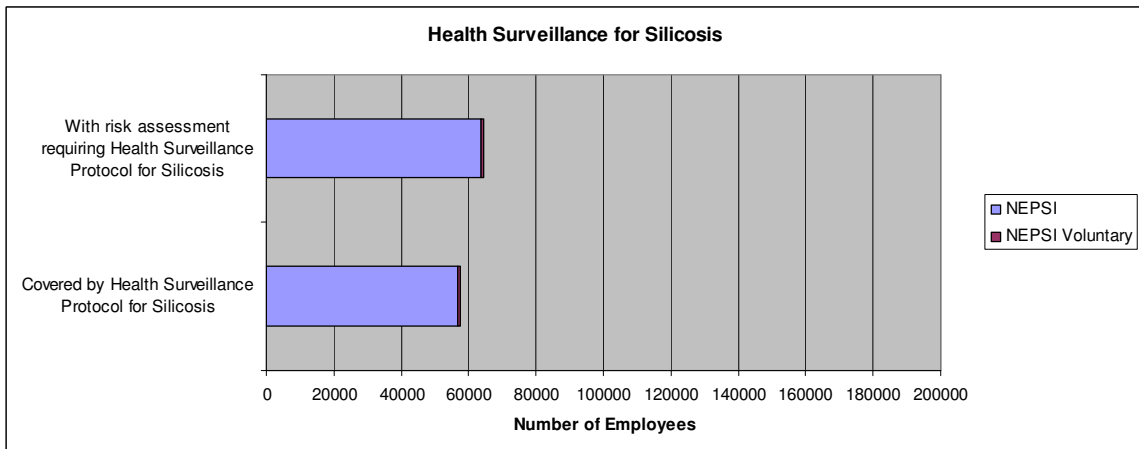


³ i.e. reported non-voluntarily and voluntarily

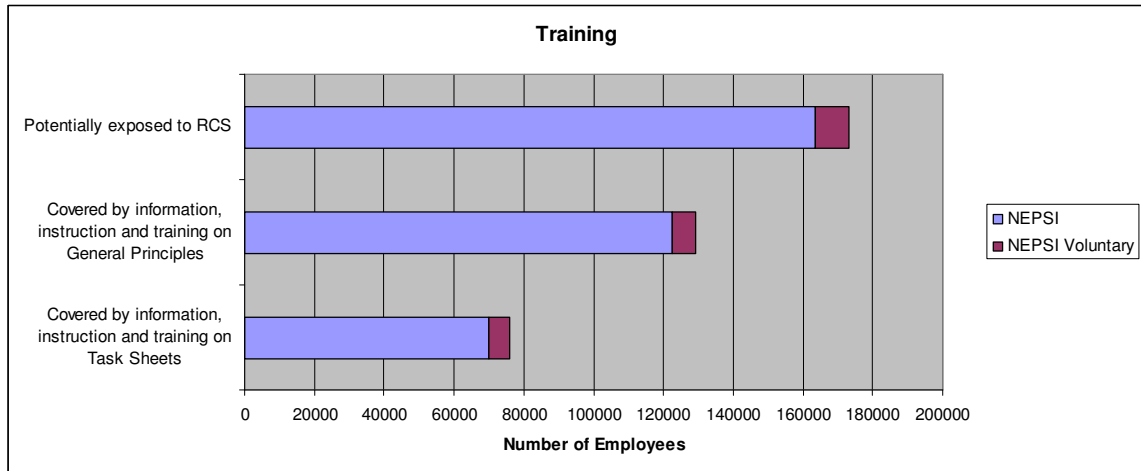
- Among the total number of employees estimated to be potentially exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica, 152,529 (88%) were covered by generic health surveillance.



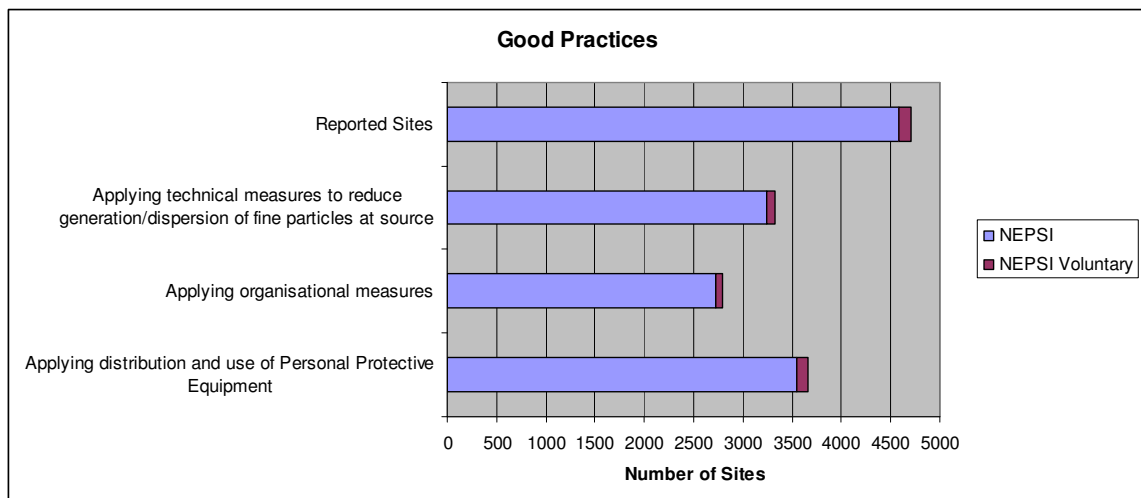
- Among the total number of employees estimated to be potentially exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica, 64,656 (37%) were assessed as requiring Health Surveillance for Silicosis. Among the latter, 57,589 (89%) were effectively covered by Health Surveillance for Silicosis.



- Among the total number of employees estimated to be potentially exposed to Respirable Crystalline Silica, 129,263 (74%) received information, instruction and training on General Principles of prevention and 75,917 (44%) were covered by information, instruction and training on the Task Sheets included in the Good Practice Guide (Annex I of the Agreement).



- Among the total number of sites for which reporting has been completed, 3,331 (70%) apply technical measures to reduce the generation / dispersion of fine particles at source, 2,790 (59%) apply organisational measures and Personal Protective Equipment is distributed and used on 3,658 (78%) of them.



4. NEPSI Council Conclusion

At its meeting on 17 June 2008, the NEPSI Council expressed its satisfaction as to the evident success of this first quantitative report, completed in a tight timeframe of 20 months only⁴. In recognition of the considerable efforts entailed, special appreciation was recorded for the industries and companies involved.

The NEPSI Council acknowledges that, due to this tight timeframe in particular, the information provided could not always demonstrate improvement in the application of the Agreement at national level through the procedures and practices specific to management and labour and the Member States. From the many industry presentations made to the NEPSI Council on 17 June 2008, however, there could be no doubt that the Agreement had promoted – and continues to promote – significant progress towards meeting the aims of the Agreement.”

At the Employees representatives’ request, the Employers will strive to find a solution aiming at providing them, before the next NEPSI Council meeting to be held on Wednesday 17 June 2009, with reporting information by country and sector, in a way which on one hand respects confidentiality requirements and on the other hand is acceptable to all Signatories.*

**Addendum 17.06.2009: “To assist the process, the Employers provided the additional information requested by the Employees. Therefore the Summary Report 2008 was endorsed on the occasion of the Council meeting on 17 June 2009”.*

⁴ The Agreement entered into effect on 25 October 2006.