BELGIUM. INSPECTION ACTIVITIES.

Title of the inspection activities: **Local (regional) inspection campaign: "Respirable Crystalline Silica dust exposure of stone workers"**

Duration of the inspection activities: **25/06/2020-22/03/2023**

Aim of the inspection activities: **To perform a baseline measurement of compliance in this sector with regards to the protection of workers against the risks of respirable crystalline silica and to spur industry into action.**

Scope of the inspection activities: **A local inspection and measurement campaign in the sector of stone workers, specifically those working with artificial stone (engineered stone).**

Sector covered by inspections: **Stone workers (NACE 23.70 cutting, shaping and finishing of stone).**

The number of establishments inspected in the framework of the activities: **37 establishments inspected, measurements in 7 establishments (of which 5 were visited in inspection campaign).**

The number of labour inspectors involved in implementing the inspection activities: **23 labour inspectors.**

The number of persons involved in supervising the implementation of the inspection activities (including development of inspection documents and summarizing results of inspections): **4 persons.**

Short summary of the outcome of the inspection activities: **A general observation was that no workstations were found where only (or mainly) artificial stone was processed. However, results of the inspection campaign clearly show that exposure to respirable crystalline silica remains an important occupational health risk. Nearly all visited workplaces showed major deficiencies in the protection of workers against exposure to respirable crystalline dust. Several employers were found to exceed the occupational exposure limit for respirable dust (not specified) or respirable crystalline silica. It appears that the workpost "final processing", where workers use manual tools and often do not use sufficient collective protection, is of particular importance.**

This campaign shows that far too few preventive measures are being taken in this sector. There is a general need for raising awareness and information for employers to minimise exposure to as low as technically possible. Based on results local campaign, a follow-up national campaign in 2024 was deemed necessary. This national inspection campaign has since been completed; results are being processed at the moment of writing.

No.	question	yes/no	comment
**Inspection activity**		
**A. Selecting priority areas for inspection**		
1.	What sources of information did you use in selecting the priority area for inspection?		☒ **reports and scientific papers on actions undertaken in other countries (please specify)** **Multiple scientific papers regarding outbreaks of silicosis in workers who work with artificial stone worldwide, including in Belgium.**
2.	What was the main reason for selecting the inspection priority area?		☒ others (please specify) **Concerns regarding the occupational health of workers in this sector, following international scientific reports on outbreaks of silicosis. The extent and manner in which artificial stone is used in Belgium, and the extent to which workers are protected from exposure to respirable crystalline silica during the processing of these materials, was unknown.**
3.	What was defined as priority area?		☒ a particular sector(s) of economy ☒ a particular hazard(s)
4.	What was the predominant aim of workplace inspections?		☒ **to examine the problem** ☒ **to enforce compliance with the law in the inspected entities**
5.	How did you determine the number of entities to be inspected?		☒ other criteria (please specify) **In this local campaign (in the province of West Flanders), all employers within this sector who could be suspected of working with artificial stone were visited. For a limited expansion of this local campaign to the province of East Flanders, a further sub-selection was made for employers in this**

			province, based on the number of employees.
6.	What was taken into consideration when determining the number of inspections to be carried out by individual field offices (regions):		☒ **the number of inspectors carrying out inspection tasks in a given region;**
7.	Were IT tools used to identify the priority area in the described inspection campaign?	**no**	
8.	Were IT tools used to identify the target group of inspected entities in the described inspection campaign?	**yes**	- a brief description of IT tools **"Mercator PP", an in-house IT-tool, was used to consult an existing database maintained by the Nation Social Security Office and generate a list of enterprises with an address and a NACE code within the scope of this campaign.** - what data was analysed to determine the target group of inspected entities? **See above: address and NACE code.**
B. Determining the time span of inspection activities			
9.	How was the breakdown of inspections planned? Were the inspections carried out:		
a)	evenly throughout the whole period of the planned activities	**Yes**	
b)	as a series of intensified inspections in predetermined short periods of time	**N/A**	
c)	other way (how?)	**N/A**	
10.	What was the average duration of a workplace visit conducted in the framework of the programme implementation (the time it took to complete inspection activities at an individual establishment)?		☒ **within one day, between 2 and 4 hours;**

11.	What was the average duration of the activities carried out in the office of the labour inspectorate (excluding the penal and administrative sanctions)?		☒ **within one day, between 2 and 4 hours;**

C. Selecting establishments for inspection.

12.	What criteria were used when selecting establishments for inspection?		☒ **overall number of workers** ☒ **workplace location and sectoral criteria combined (e.g. bakeries in a particular area)** ☒ **others** **Internet: websites of enterprises, detailing products offered. Only enterprises that could be suspected to process artificial stone were selected for a visit.**
13.	What sources of information were used when selecting establishments for inspection?		☒ **databases of other regulatory institutions (which ones?)** **Databases of regulatory agencies regarding social security.** ☒ **databases of institutions registering economic activity** ☒ **internet search engines**
14.	Were IT tools used to select specific inspected entities in the described inspection campaign?		- a brief description of IT tools **Within the target group of employers (based on address and NACE code), an internet search engine was used to identify employer who were suspected to process composite stone materials.** **Upon expanding the local campaign to a neighbouring directorate, an IT-tool was used to consult a social security database which contains information on the number of active employees.** - what data was analysed to select specific inspected entities?

			Data found on the internet using a search engine: websites of employers detailing which types of products they offer to customers. ……………………………………………………………………
D. Provision of staff for carrying out inspections			
15.	What group of inspectors was involved in the inspection activities?		☒ other **A selection of inspectors who followed a specific training for this campaign.**
16.	How were inspectors prepared for the inspection activities (additional training)?		☒ **additional training was provided by the same person (the same team) for all labour inspectors involved in the campaign.**
17.	Were IT tools used to prepare labour inspectors to carry out activities within the described inspection campaign?	**yes**	- a brief description of IT tools **PowerPoint-presentation for training.** - what scope of knowledge and/or skills did labour inspectors acquire using the indicated IT tools? **Specific training for this campaign, regarding the risks of exposure to respirable crystalline silica, applicable legislation, the use of the checklist for this campaign and the registration of results.**
18.	What materials were at the inspectors' disposal during the activities?		☒ **the rationale of the inspection activities;** ☒ **description of the inspection activities' objectives;** ☒ **description of the ways in which to implement the activities (tasks to be completed);** ☒ **checklists;** ☒ **information about the rules of programme evaluation;**

			☒ description of the reporting requirements; ☒ specialist, issue-related materials (applied technologies, machinery, equipment and tools, existing hazards and legal provisions); ☒ materials from ILO, SLIC or other countries (please specify); SLIC Guidance for National Labour Inspectors on addressing risks from worker exposure to respirable crystalline silica on construction sites.

19.	Did labour inspectors use IT tools when carrying out activities within the described inspection campaign?	Yes	- IT tools were used :
			    ☒ for labour inspector's preparation for an inspection at a specific inspected entity
			    ☒ when summarizing and documenting the results of the inspection in a specific inspected entity
			- how did they support the labour inspector in:
			    - preparation for an inspection?
			An IT tool ("Quaestor") allows the inspector to consult the employer's history within the inspectorate, as well as any addresses of the employer and any contact details of persons associated with the enterprise.
			    - performing inspection activities?
			IT-tools were not typically used during inspection visits.
			    - summarizing and documenting the results of the inspection?
			After an inspection visit, the observations that were made can be recorded in the same tool ("Quaestor"). This tool provides

			an extensive set of standard observations with reference to applicable legislation, but inspectors can also register new observations themselves. After the observations have been registered, the tool provides the possibility of generating a standardised report.
E. Involvement of other regulators, institutions, authorities for labour protection and social partners in the implementation process.			
20.	Can other regulators, institutions, authorities for labour protection and social partners submit their proposals of inspection topics to the inspectorate's plan of work?	**Yes**	Which regulators, institutions and authorities for labour protection can submit their proposals? **(In)formal proposals are always possible, though this happens sporadically, not structurally.**
21.	Was the inspection activity the result of a proposal submitted by another regulator, institution, authority for labour protection or social partner?	**No**	
22.	Was there any cooperation between the labour inspectorate and another regulator, institution, authority for labour protection or social partner?	**No**	
23.	At which stage was the cooperation with another regulator, institution, authority for labour protection or social partner initiated?		☒ others (please specify). **N/A**
24.	What did the cooperation with another regulator, institution, authority for labour protection or social partner involve?		☒ others – please specify: **N/A.**
25.	Are there any legal requirements obliging other regulators, institutions, authorities or social partners to make	**Yes**	Institutions and the type of accessible data / information:

	their data accessible to the labour inspectorate for inspection needs?		**All governmental services and all public services that depend on them are legally required to provide the social inspectors, at their request, any information the latter may deem useful for monitoring compliance with the legislation with which they are entrusted.**
26.	Does the labour inspectorate have direct online access to information and data collected by other bodies, institutions and authorities?	**Yes**	Institutions and the type of accessible data / information: **Certain databases maintained by other social security services can be accessed directly, for example databases where information can be found on active personnel for a specific employer.**
27.	What information obtained in the above manner was used for implementing the inspection campaign?		Cooperating institutions and the type of data / information used in the described inspection campaign: **Information on the NACE-code, address, and number of employees of employers was obtained through a database maintained by the National Social Security Office.**
F. Supporting inspection activities with training provided for employers or workers (combining inspection and educational activities)			
28.	Were establishments covered by inspections provided with information or training **prior to the commencement of the inspection task**?	**no**	
29.	Is the effectiveness of prior information or training activities taken into account when evaluating the results of the inspections?	**N/A**	

30.	Once the **inspection activity is completed**, are representatives of inspected establishments provided with recommendations and proposed corrective measures – in the form of guidance or training – regarding the identified compliance level in establishments operating in the field covered by inspection?	**no**	
G. Monitoring the implementation of inspection activities			
31.	Was the implementation of inspection activities in any way monitored and coordinated?	**yes**	How many people were involved in monitoring and coordination of the inspection activity? **2** What was the function of those persons in relation to labour inspectors who implemented the activity (fellow labour inspectors, immediate supervisors, national coordinator at the labour inspectorate's headquarters)? **Fellow labour inspector and immediate supervisor.**
32.	What was the scope of monitoring and coordinating actions regarding the inspection activity?		☒ **assistance in solving problems: over the phone, via email, formally (official correspondence), other (what?)** ☒ **monitoring the implementation level of the developed quantitative plan** ☒ **monitoring the implementation level of the developed qualitative plan (how?) Evaluation of registered inspections and checklists.**
33.	Were IT tools used to carry out monitoring and coordination activities as part of the described inspection campaign?		- a brief description of IT tools: **No specific tool – the same tool used for documenting inspection activities**

			("Quaestor", see question 19), in combination with e-mail, MS Excel,.. - IT tools were used to: ☒ assist labour inspector in solving problems related to inspection carried out within the inspection campaign (how?) No specific tools, communication via e-mail, MS Teams,… ☒ monitoring the implementation level of the developed quantitative plan ☒ monitoring the implementation level of the developed qualitative plan (how?)
H. Communicating the information about inspection campaign and its results.			
34.	Did you develop any plan to communicate the information about the inspection activities to:		
a)	stakeholders in the sector covered by the inspection activity ?	**Yes**	What information did the communication plan contain? **Results were to be communicated to and discussed with sector federations after the campaign.**
b)	the general public?	**Yes**	What information did the communication plan contain? **A report on the campaign.**
35.	What was the scope of information communicated to:		
a)	stakeholders in the sector covered by the inspection activity ?		**Anonymised results regarding the observation of regulatory violations within the sector.** **An overview of the main problems.**

b)	the general public?		**A report on this local campaign, detailing the scope and execution, the findings in the campaign, as well as the tools (checklist) that were used, was published for the general public on the website of the inspectorate.**
36.	How was the information about the inspection activities communicated to stakeholders and the general public?		**Sector federations: a meeting was arranged, where a presentation was given by the coordinator of the campaign, after which the results and possible actions were discussed.** **General public: a report was published on the website of the inspectorate.**
I. Evaluating the results of the inspection activities. Evaluation methods and tools.			
37.	How were the **results** of inspection campaign evaluated?		
a)	based on a checklist		**For each item on the checklist, the percentage of employers that were found to be non-compliant was determined.**
b)	based on the number of legal measures issued		**The total number of different types of inspection products (for example written warnings, imposed measures or reports to the public prosecutor), produced as a result of this campaign, was determined.**
c)	based on the type of legal measures issued		**See above.**
d)	based on the number of implemented legal measures		**See above.**
e)	based on the type of implemented legal measures		**See above.**
f)	other way		How? **The total number of inspection visits performed was evaluated.**

38.	How was the information about the **effects** of inspection campaign obtained (e.g. about the elimination of irregularities, introduction of higher standards)?		
a)	information provided by the employer	**No**	
b)	information provided by the labour inspector who conducted the next inspection at the workplace	**No**	If so, what form did the information provided by the inspector have? ……………………………………………………………… What is the ratio of information provided by the labour inspector who conducted the next inspection at the workplace to the overall pool of information about the effects of inspections? …………………………………………………………….
c)	other way	**Yes**	How? **A follow-up national campaign was initiated, part of which involves a visit to a selection of employers already visited in the local campaign.**
39.	What performance indicators were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the inspection campaign?		Please list and briefly describe the indicators: **The number of inspection visits performed, and the number of inspection products made.**
40.	Were IT tools used to assess the effectiveness of the inspection campaign?	**Yes**	- a brief description of IT tools: **MS Excel, MS Word, as well as the in-house tool for registering inspection activities ("Quaestor").** - IT tools were used to: ☒ **provide compilations of data on the basis of which the inspection campaign was assessed** ☒ **formulate conclusions resulting from the effects of the conducted inspection campaign (how?)**

			Based on the degree of non-compliance for each item on the checklist, as well as the results of the measurement campaign, several focus points were formulated for this sector.
41.	How were the project **effects** evaluated?		
a)	Was any final summary evaluation of the inspection task (inspection campaign) made?	Yes	The scope of such evaluation **Results, regarding the extent to which the various items on the checklist were found to be in order, the number and type of inspection products, the main problems identified, were presented within the inspectorate with a view to considering whether and what further actions should be taken. This prompted a national follow-up campaign.**
b)	Were partial assessments made during the inspection activity?	No	
c)	Did you prepare a formal document with evaluation of the inspection activity after its completion?	Yes	If so, was the formal evaluation document prepared by the labour inspectorate or an external evaluator? **A formal report on the campaign was prepared by the labour inspectorate.** If so, what aspects of the evaluation were included in the formal document? (Please specify and describe the evaluation shortly). - **The number of inspection visits made.** - **The degree of compliance with each item on the checklist.** - **Results of the measurement campaign.**

			- **A summary of most important findings.** - **The used checklist and supplementary notes for inspectors were added in addendum.** How were the report conclusions disseminated? **Finally, this report was published on the website of the inspectorate fort the general public.**
42.	How was the final document utilized in practice?		**The document was used to motivate for a new inspection campaign on the national level.**