

Involvement of stakeholders during the HEAT-SHIELD project development in Slovenia

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Global warming causes more extreme weather, and climate change will exacerbate the negative effects of heat stress on individuals. Climate projections for Slovenia show that at the end of the century, in the case of a moderately optimistic scenario of greenhouse gas emissions, we will have on average at least one heat wave per year, which is comparable to or worse than the heat wave we had in the summer of 2003 (Bertalanič et al., 2018). According to ILO (International Labor Organization) projections, more than 2 % of working hours per year are expected to be lost globally by 2030, either because of poor working conditions or slower work with increased heat load (Kjellstrom et al., 2019). In Europe, workers in agriculture, construction, transport, industry and tourism are the most exposed to heat and represent about 50 % of the workforce. Increasing heat points to the need to be prepared for the excessive heat load of people in general, and especially for workers in more exposed workplaces.

The HEAT-SHIELD project brings together scientists from various research institutions with knowledge of climatology, physiology, medicine and experts in public health, environmental policy, and occupational safety. During the project, the WBGT (Wet Bulb Globe Temperature) indicator was selected as an appropriate indicator of heat load. In order to keep employers, consultants and workers in Europe aware of the increased heat load and the negative effects of heat stress on health and productivity, a platform was created (Morabito et al., 2019) within the Heat-Shield project (<https://heatshield.zonalab.it>) with heat stress forecast and personal alerts and tips. Timely preparedness for heat stress greatly enhances our potential for mitigation, so we encourage businesses and individuals to come up with an action plan for the heat, register on the platform, and follow up on forecasts and alerts. The response of employers and occupational safety and health organizations to global warming should include adaptation policies and measures to protect workers.

We will present how we have continued from the first analysis of the workers' situation in Slovenia through two symposia for various stakeholders like employers, environmental agency, national institute for public health, trade unions representatives, ministries, etc. trying to get the topic the attention it deserves and to put some solutions to practice.

References:

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