

## **Assessment and improvement of a corporate research information system**

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### **Introduction**

In 2003 the Italian National Institute for Occupational Prevention and Safety (ISPESL) developed a Research Information System in the field of Occupational Safety and Health (RisOSH) through a project in collaboration with the Italian National Research Council (CNR). RisOSH became operational in 2005 and it is now embedded in the Institute webpage dedicated to Research Activities ([www.ispesl.it/ricercheOSH/ext/](http://www.ispesl.it/ricercheOSH/ext/)). Its double-fold interface supplies information on conditions and modalities to participate in project calls, permits the electronic input of research results, and allows users to search for ongoing and finalized projects. It can also constitute an access point for internal users, through a reserved area, to directly contribute to the collection and validation of data within the project lifecycle.

The webpage has shown a very positive trend in terms of access, counting a total of more than 15000 connections per year, with high numbers of users performing searches in the database with the use of descriptors (> 4000/year). This trend is very encouraging because it shows the interest of users in looking for qualitative information; further access data regarding the quantity of pages exploited *browsing* through the results (>22000/year) and for printing the full record (>1200/year), confirm the users' need of an exhaustive information on research projects.

The aim of the present study is the evaluation of the RisOSH system after more than two years of maintenance, in particular regarding the number of projects concluded and the quality of the results obtained. The system was designed and developed describing in detail the project lifecycle based on ISPESL organisation and giving a particular emphasis on the phase of collection of projects results. This is in our opinion the principal intent of a Current Research Information System (CRIS): providing the users not only with information on project aims, rationales and participating organisations, but giving them a comprehensive picture of the achievements of the projects, in terms of project result descriptions, availability of the final project deliverable, as well as product descriptions and publications. In this way the multiple purposes of a research information system can be obtained: diffusion of research results to the scientific community; providing the top-management and/or policy makers with information on scientific field to be granted; building an instrument that is able to improve technological transfer.

Following this line, an assessment was carried out after the development and publication of a new template for the web collection of project results, containing new editing areas that describe, more exhaustively than the previous form, the outcomes of research projects. The paper describes the results of the evaluation analysing on one hand the effectiveness of the new electronic template, and on the other, the quality and quantity of the data gathered through this tool. A further step was put into action, consisting in a plan of contacts within the Institute scientific community, aimed at making researchers more aware of the system use and involving them in providing missing information or in integrating or amending the available data. The assessment resulted in the identification of the system technological and organisational strengths and weaknesses, confirming, even within the limits of a scarce commitment of the Institute as a whole, the important role played by RisOSH in the construction of an ISPESL institutional repository, with its features of transferability and interoperability with other intramural and extramural information systems.

### **1. Objectives and methodology**

The collection of project results has been considered by many authors a real challenge [CRIS2006, EUR2004, JEF2002] for CRISs, as in several cases an initial detailed description of project objectives, work packages and information on the institutions involved does not often match with an adequate reporting of projects results and products. Moreover, deliverables and/or publications produced within the project are rarely available. This causes a loss of information for both researchers and research policy makers, who could take advantage of these results to develop new projects and foster activities in specific promising