

COMMUNICATION BY EVENT - THE EFFICIENCY OF SEMINARIES AS A WAY TO INFORM AND TO TRAIN

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ABSTRACT: *Starting from the idea that nowadays the companies use the promotion and communication by event more and more because of the advantages it entails, this paper uses the marketing quantitative research as a tool and it's scope is to present the opinions and the attitudes of the people that participated to seminars within a project supported by European funds, regarding their efficiency as a tool for information and training.*

KEY WORDS: *communication by event; seminars; marketing research; focus group.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *C38, M31, M37*

1. CONCEPTUAL ASPECTS REGARDING THE COMMUNICATION BY EVENT

Nowadays, the companies are more and more preoccupied to find the most efficient tools of communication with the consumer segment but, at the same time, very different from the usual ones, as well as for product/service promotions or promotions of ideas and behaviors in certain situations. The classical communication tools seem to be superseded and the public is immune and, at the same time, bored, fed up with them.

Even far away in the past, business men and politicians understood the fact that the mass effect stimulated impulsive acquisition or acceptance of ideas, so that in the present day, by transforming the events in marketing tools, these can become efficient ways to attract attention - in other words communication channels used to send out the messages. (Popes, 2003)

Both the German and the Nord-American marketing schools have studied this topic, after the communication by event proved to be efficient, but still the definitions are not homogeneous (Roșca, 2011). This is, on one hand, because that communication

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by event within the promotional mix was realized not long ago (Bruhn, 1997), and on the other hand, because the event can be very different as type (sports, cultural, social, political events and so on) (Graham et al., 1995).

At the same time, in the specialized literature one can find diverging opinions regarding the inclusion of communication by event within the classical communication instruments. Thus, there are specialists (Kotler, 2010) that include communication by event within the specific sale promotion tools, defining it as a way for companies to promote their brand, by sustaining their own events or by participating at external events.

Other authors (Balaure & Popescu) include communication by event within the public relations, saying that these can help the organization to reach the following objectives:

- increasing or consolidating notoriety;
- the proper information of the target groups regarding the product, the brand or the organization;
- detriting of products with lost identities, that get confused with similar ones;
- creating a favorable image, by reaching the public liking towards a brand or an organization;
- the launch, in an original manner, of new products;
- motivating the staff of the organization and the sales brigade (Popescu, 2004).

Because of the importance it gets in the last time, motivated by it's efficiency on such a competitive market, a new tendency appears: to study this promotion technique as a standalone tool.

The main advantage of communication by event is that the messages the company wants to send, regarding products, other activities or even behaviors that the company wants to promote, reach precisely the target, assuming that at this events are invited exactly the target people (the market is segmented before the event, according to the relevant criteria for the message that will be sent). At the same time we can underline the flexibility of this tool regarding the objectives to be reached, as mentioned before, as well as the organization possibilities (sports events, demonstrations, conferences, seminaries, fairs, exhibitions and so on). One further advantage is that it can successfully add up to other promotional activities that the company sustains within an integrated marketing communication, activities that, most of the times, can be found within the classical ones (advertising, sale promotions etc.). (De Pelsmacker, et al.)

To these one can add up also the repercussions of the fact that this type of communication has the advantage of interactivity, of the direct contact with the public and so, the company can obtain vital information regarding it's endeavors, both by observing the impact of the sent message, as well as by getting relevant information regarding the marketing activities, but also the offer of the company (Popescu, 2003).

Amongst the typical actions of the communication by event one can find realization of seminaries and workshops, both at the headquarters of the company and in neutral location, where they can present products, present the public the many activities of the company or inform the public regarding some topics of interest.

Considering the theoretical aspects regarding the importance and, most of all, the efficiency of seminars as a channel to send out information, this paper has the scope to present the opinions and attitudes of the participants to the seminars sustained within a project financed with European Funds (The European Social Fund by the means of POSDRU 2007-2013), regarding their efficiency as information and training tools.

The main objective of this project is to create a mutual network to increase the level of protection of health and security at the workplace in the metal-working industry, by the means of implementing a mutual system of risk prevention and management at the workplace, and the people that implement it considered that with the help of 10 seminars they will obtain the wanted awareness from the beneficiary, respectively that they will become aware of the importance of the measures to prevent and manage the risks at the workplace (<http://www.aeronavsecur.ro/index.htm>).

2. OPINIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE PARTICIPANT TO THE SEMINARIES REGARDING THE SECURITY AND THE HEALTH AT THE WORKPLACE WITHIN A PROJECT FINANCED BY THE EU, REGARDING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE SEMINAR AS A INFORMATION AND TRAINING TOOL

2.1. Context of the research

According to a CE report, worldwide 250 million accidents take place every year, the equivalent of an average of 685000 accidents/day, 475/minute or 8/second. The consequences are dramatic: ca. 3000 deaths/day, e.g. 2 deaths/minute.

The classical information and training methods in the field of the safety and health at the workplace (SSM) are getting less and less efficient because of the saturation amongst the employees, but also the specialists responsible for training in the field of SSM, and one tries continuously to find new information, training and motivation methods for the employers and the employees, in order to ensure and to observe the standards in this field.

In this context and keeping in mind the one of the priorities of the European Social Fund, the main instrument that the European Union uses to finance the strategic objectives of the occupational policy, is “Increasing the adaptability of the workers and the enterprises”, starting from December 2010 in our country is implemented the strategic project “*The network for the protection of the health and the security at the workplace in the metal-working industry - AERONAVSECUR*” financed by the ESF thru POS DRU.

Thru this project one tries to identify the actions that could be taken in order to reduce the economical and social costs generated by the risks that the workers take at the workplace, one searches and tests new training methods in the field of SSM. Amongst the new and tested methods one can find the seminars or the workshop. More exactly, for the employees of the companies in the field of machinery construction and metal-working industries in Romania there were organized 10 seminars, each for a period of three days. The employees had the chance to

participate to various training methods in the field of SSM, as following: presentations, practical demonstrations, viewing motivational videos, games, contests, discussion groups etc. At the end of each of these seminars, the participants were asked to answer a series of questions with the help of a questionnaire that was the basis of the following study.

2.2. The general hypothesis of the study

The workers in the metal-working industry that participated in the seminars appreciate as favorable such a participation and think that these contribute significantly to an increase of the level of training in the field of SSM.

The participants consider that a training done this way will have a real impact on changing the behavior in the field of safety and health at the workplace.

The workers from the metal-working industry that participated in the seminars consider that, with the knowledge they acquired and the behavioral change, they will contribute to reducing the number of accidents at the work place.

The participants will want to make changes at their own workplace after they participated in this program.

2.3. Study objectives

The objectives were set by following the theoretical methodology, that entails dividing the process of setting up the study objectives in the three essential stages of it: setting the basic aspects regarding the management and the marketing, formulation of the researcher's questions and setting up the study objectives (Lefter, 2004); bellow you can find a presentation of the study objectives, as they appeared as a result of this specific process:

- determination of the degree in which the participants consider that the information and training by participating at seminars has a real impact on changing the behaviors in the field of the health and safety at the workplace;
- determining the degree in which the participant appreciated the following aspects of the seminar: the usefulness of the training that they received; the information of the received information; the professional endeavor of the lecturers; the efficiency of the knowledge exchange with their colleagues within the seminar; the real impact on the safety at the workplace; the dissemination potential in the working environment for the knowledge received; the level of applicability of this knowledge in practice;
- determining the opinions of the subjects regarding the real impact that the participation to this kind of seminars has on diminishing the number of work related accidents;
- identification by the participants, after they took part in the training program within the seminar, of the level of competency, aptitudes, qualifications that give them a greater ability to prevent the risks at the workplace, to be aware of their own responsibility for the health at the workplace, identification of the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace, to manage the risks in order to

ensure a safer working environment, to inform regarding the European standards in this field;

- determining the way in which the participants want to be trained in the future, by participating in seminars or workshops ;
- identifying of other ways to inform and to train in the field of SSM, appreciated by the respondents;
- identifying of the most appreciated training methods used within this seminar;
- determining the way in which the participants intend to make changes at their own workplace after they participated in this program.

2.4. The research methodology

The marketing research is total; this assumes the investigation of all the members, information vectors of the basic population. Within this research, that means the participants to the seminars „Prevention and management of the risks at the workplace” sustained within the project “The network for the protection of the health and the safety at the workplace in the metal-working industry – AERONAVSECUR” financed by the EFS thru POS DRU. The research method used was the face to face interview, and the preliminary data were obtained on the basis of a questionnaire, by direct interviewing. The data collection took place between February and June 2012, by interviewing all 250 participants at the seminars that took place within the mentioned project.

2.5. Study limits

This study has a series of limitations - generated especially by the studied population, because this was limited only to the participants at the ten seminars that were sustained within the said project. Extension of the studied population to all the employees in the metal-working industry is not possible, as well as the extrapolation of the results to all the employees in this industry, because the participants to these seminars were not accidentally selected. Also, in the brief report of this research, presented in this paper, testing of statistical hypothesis was not considered. The authors consider still that one can objectively appreciate the efficiency of the seminar/workshop as an information and training method, subject of evaluation within this research, especially since one considered interviewing all the population studied, which is over 250 individuals. Setting aside the limitations of this study, one can state that the information obtained was particularly interesting and useful as a basis for a strategy to reduce the economical and social costs of accepting some high risks at the workplace.

2.6. Data analysis and interpretation

Every question was analyzed within the research process, but within this report we will present only the results for the most relevant questions. Data processing was made by the means of the SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

One of the first questions was to measure the level of appreciation for a series of characteristics of the training program, for example the level of practical applicability of the obtained knowledge, the volume of the information received, the usefulness of the training within the seminar, the efficiency of the knowledge exchange with their colleagues within the seminar, the real impact on the safety at the workplace, the dissemination potential in the working environment for the knowledge received within this training program. In order to catch this aspect we used a semantic scale with five steps, where 1 means „Very low” and 5 means „Very high”. (The scale assumed the existence of the same distance, the same interval between two levels.) The average score obtained as a whole by the training program, considering the criteria presented above, was 4.48, which indicates a good towards a very good appreciation. The criteria considered and presented above contributed at obtaining this overview, as illustrated by the following diagram. One can observe that the best score was 4.67 regarding the criterion “The usefulness of the training received within the seminar”.

Overall, the appreciation level of the training program by the participants, considering the criteria presented above, was 4.48.

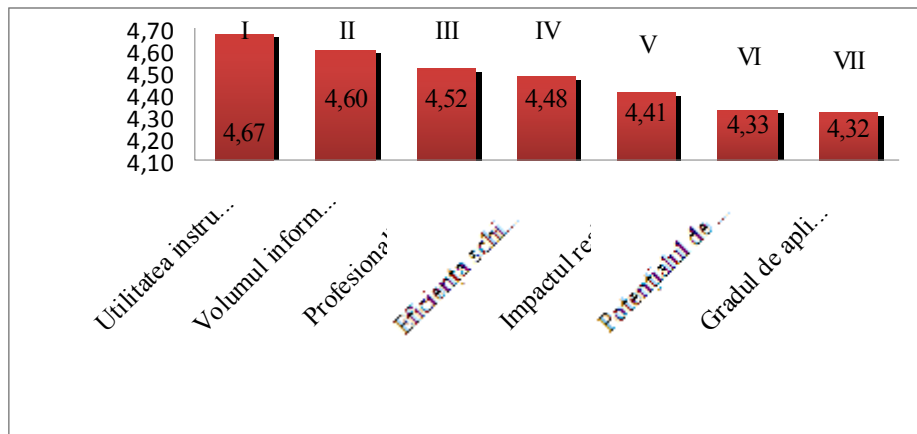


Figure 1. The appreciation of the main characteristics of the training program within the seminar

The best score was obtained by the criterion „The usefulness of the received training”, with an average score of 4.67 points, followed by „The volume of information received”, with 4.60 points, „The professional endeavor of the lecturers”, with 4.52 points, „The efficiency of the knowledge exchange with their colleagues within the seminar”, with 4.48 points, „The real impact on the safety at the workplace”, with 4.33 points, „The dissemination potential in the working environment for the knowledge received”, with 4.33 points, and the last place was obtained by „The level of practical applicability of the obtained knowledge”, with 4.32 points.

One other aspect that was studied is the opinion of the participants regarding the importance of participating to such activities, in order to reduce the number of accidents at the workplace in the metal-working industry. With this question, the

researcher wanted to find out if the opinion of the participants to this type of training has obvious effects that can be quantified by the reduction of the number of accidents at the workplace. This aspect was measured using the Likert scale, during which the participants were asked to express agreement or disagreement regarding the following statement: „The participation to information seminars in the field of risk prevention and management at the workplace leads to the reduction of the number of work related accidents”

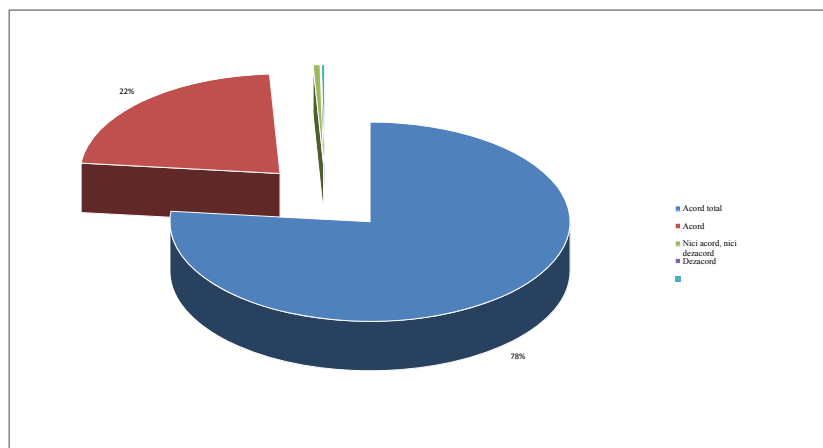


Figure 2. The way in which the respondents agree with the statement that says that the participation to information seminars in the field of risk prevention and management at the workplace leads to the reduction of the number of work related accidents

The frequency distribution indicated a strong concentration of answers on the positive part of the scale, so that 76.8% participants answered this statement with „Total agreement”; 22.5% participants answered with „Agree”, and 0.4% participants answered with „Neither agree nor disagree” and „Total disagreement”.

The medium score obtained is very close to the answer "Very satisfied", with a value of 4752 points.

Using a dichotomy rated scale, one measured the degree in which the participants in this training program determines the awareness regarding the risks at the workplace. A large percentile (99.3%) of the participants in the training program think that participating to such seminars determines the awareness regarding the risks at the workplace. Also 97.4% of the respondents think that participating to such seminars determines the observance of the rules regarding the protection of the health and safety at the workplace.

In order to find out to what degree the respondents think that, after participating in such a training program, they will be able to better identify the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace, the researcher used a semantic scale with five steps. (The scale assumed the existence of the same distance, the same interval between two levels.)

One can note a concentrated distribution in the upper section of the scale, namely around the answer "In a very large degree". 59.8% of the participants in the

training program think that, following this training program, they can identify the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace "In a very high degree", 38.7% of the respondents think that they can identify the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace "In a high degree", and 1.5% of the participants believe that they can identify the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace "Neither in a high nor in a low degree".

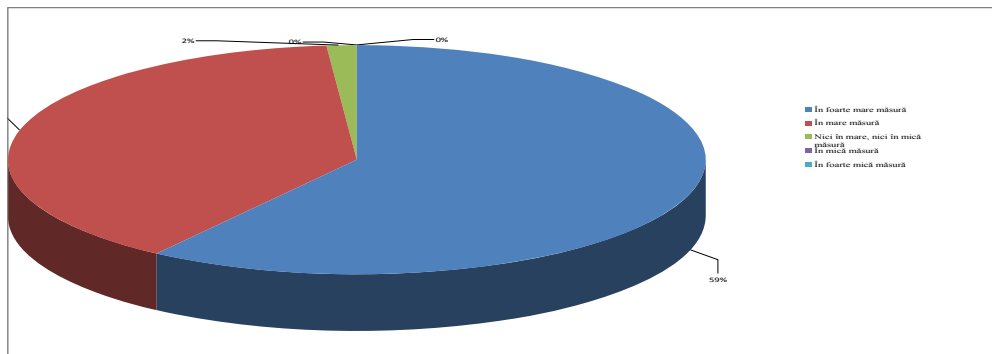


Figure 3. The degree of identification for the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace after the respondents took part in the training program within the seminar

The research has also made clear the fact that, according to the opinion of the participants, the degree of prevention for the risks at the workplace has increased after the participation to this seminar.

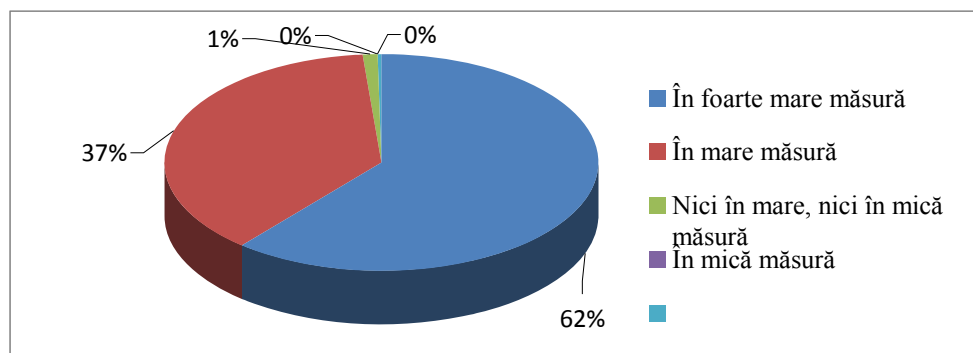


Figure 4. The degree of prevention for the risks at the workplace after the respondents have participated in the training program

Thus, 61.3% of the participants in the training program believe that, following this, they can prevent the risks at the workplace "In a very high degree", 37.3% of the participants believe that, after they've participated in the training program, they can prevent the risks at the workplace "In a very high degree", 1.1% of the participants believe that, after they've participated in the training program, they can prevent the risks at the workplace "Neither in a high nor in a low degree" and 0.4% of the

participants believe that, after they've participated in the training program, they can prevent the risks at the workplace "In a very low degree".

In the same way one has analyzed further aspects, designated to measure the competences, aptitudes, the knowledge obtained by the respondents following their participation in the training program within the seminar, as well as the awareness regarding their own responsibility regarding the health at the workplace, the identification of the dangers that lead to risks at the workplace, risk management in order to ensure a safe working environment, information regarding the provisions of the European standards in this field. After the average score was calculated, we got results between 4.77 and 4.38 according to the hierarchy that is illustrated in figure 5.

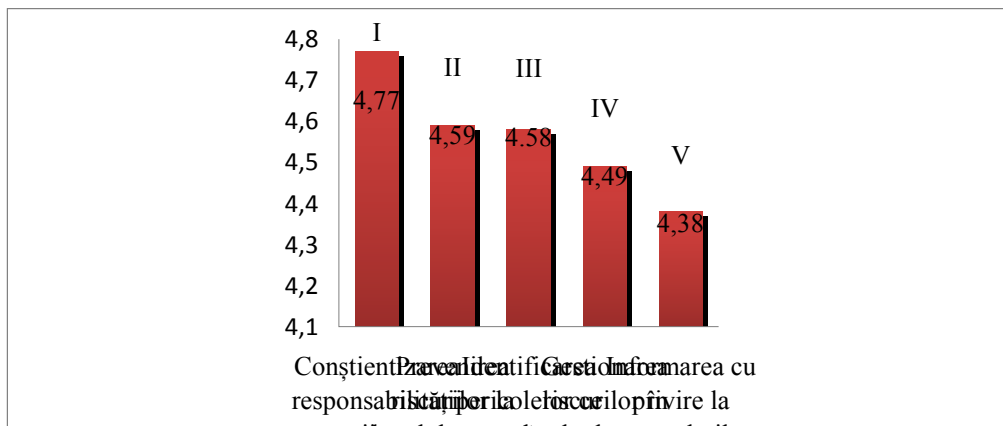


Figure 5. The competences/aptitudes/knowledge obtained by the respondents following their participation in the training program

After, by means of a question, it was established that more than 99% want to be trained also in the future by means of participation in seminars or workshops, one tried to identify other information and training tools, praised by the respondents. Thus, the study revealed that 86% of the participants in the training program prefer to get information by means of television broadcasting, 76,8% of the participants prefer to get information by meeting periodically with competent persons, 62,4% of the participants appreciate trainings at the workplace, 28,8% of the participants prefer to access special web pages in order to get informed, 19,2% would rather receive the information via e-mail, and that 1,5% appreciate information sent by post.

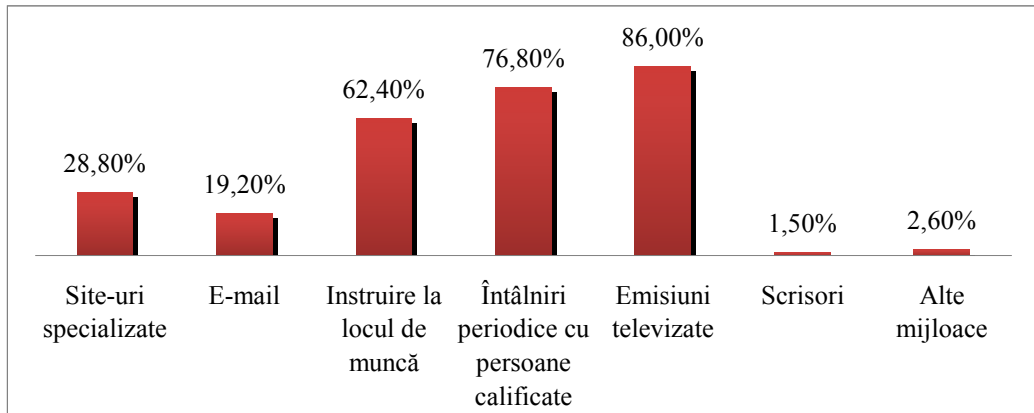


Figure 6. Information channels preferred by the respondents regarding the safety and health at the workplace

In order to find out how did the participants appreciate the training methods used within the seminar, one used a derivative interval scale of the semantic differential, which assumes the existence of the same distance, of the same interval between two levels. Thus, one measured: the efficiency of the theoretical exposés within the training program, of the plenary open discussions, demonstrations, workgroups, games and contests included in the training program.

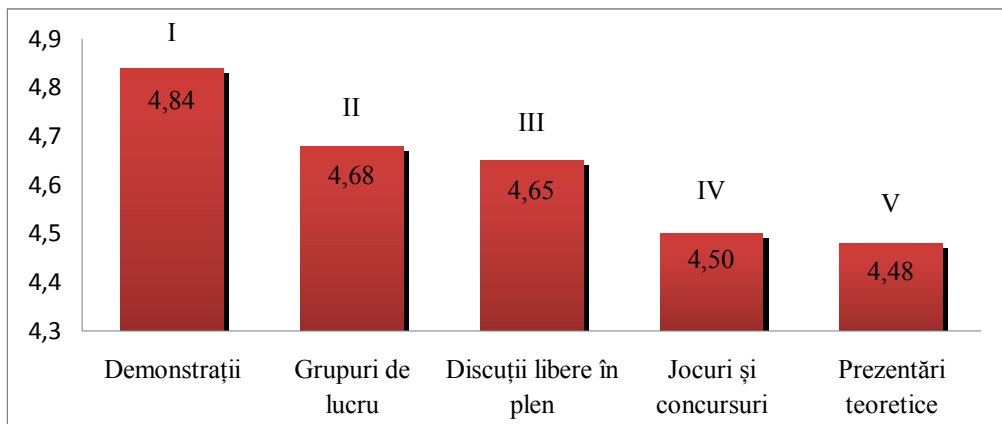


Figure 7. The degree of appreciation of the training techniques used in the seminar

After the average score was calculated, one obtained the following hierarchy regarding the degree of appreciation associated with the training techniques used in the program: Place 1 “Demonstrations”, with an average score of 4.84 points, Place 2 „Workgroups” with an average score of 4.68 points, Place 3 „Plenary open discussions” with an average score of 4.65 points, Place 4 „Games and contests” with

an average score of 4.50 points, Place 5 „Theoretical exposés” with an average score of 4.48 points.

By means of an open question, the participants were asked to suggest activities, measures, actions to be implemented so that the number of work related accidents would diminish. The most frequent answers were: participation in experience exchange activities, regular meetings with competent persons, implication of the company leadership in information and training processes for employees regarding safety at the workplace, theoretical and practical activities within the company where they work, mandatory and regular training at the workplace (fire simulations - accidents - first aid procedures), practical examples, demonstrations (videos), presentation of informational material such as videos and printed material, for instance lectures, seminars in order to inform and create awareness for the workers regarding the potential dangers associated with their activity.

3. CONCLUSIONS

We can conclude that, although the participants appreciate as favorable all the characteristics of the seminar seen as a training program (the degree of practical applicability of the gained knowledge, the volume of received information, the usefulness of the training within the seminar, the efficiency of the knowledge exchange with their colleagues within the seminar, the real impact on the safety at the workplace, the dissemination potential in the working environment for the knowledge received within this training program) there is a slight difference between the way in which one appreciates the volume or the usefulness of the training and the dissemination potential and the degree of applicability in practice of the information obtained in this way. And, from the point of view of the organizer of this program, these highly praised aspects, that received just a lower score, are the most important and they could contribute decisively to lowering the economical and social costs of ignoring the risks related to the workplace. Therefore, in the future, the programs should be adapted so that they can have a higher degree of applicability in praxis.

We also state the fact that the seminar as an information and training tool is highly praised by the participants and within its structure the demonstration seems to be the most appreciated training method.

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