

THE SPANISH STRATEGY ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

2007-2012

The Strategy has been agreed with all the social partners and autonomous regions after an extended process of social dialogue. Together with the Government, these agents are the members of the National Commission for Safety and Health at Work.

The Council of Ministers approved the Spanish Strategy on Safety and Health at Work, presented by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, in its meeting on 29 June 2007. The previous day it had been accepted by the National Commission for Safety and Health at Work. The presentation fulfils the President of the Government's commitment in his investiture speech in April 2004 to develop a plan to reduce the number of accidents at work and occupational illnesses.

To achieve this objective, in February 2005 the Round Table on Social Dialogue for the Prevention of Occupational Risks agreed to promote a Spanish Strategy on Safety and Health at Work. This initiative was supported by the autonomous regions.

Subsequently, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs presented the Action Plan for Improving Safety and Health at Work and Reducing Occupational Accidents, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in April of the same year. It included the document entitled "Towards a Spanish Strategy on Safety and Health at Work".

Since then the Government has introduced a number of measures aimed at achieving the objectives set out in the Strategy, and has continued to maintain dialogue with the social partners and autonomous regions to agree a text. This has been supported by the National Commission for Safety and Health at Work.

The Spanish Strategy on Safety and Health at Work 2007-2012 is the instrument for establishing the general policy framework for the prevention of occupational risks in the short and, above all, medium and long term. Its aim is to give a coherent and rational structure to the occupational safety and health measures developed by all the significant actors in the prevention of occupational risks. Its two major objectives are to reduce the number of accidents at work and occupational illnesses and to steadily improve the levels of safety and health at work.

This is the first time in Spain that a government has presented a strategy of this scope to tackle the problem of accidents at work and occupational illnesses. Its aim is to create an instrument at the national level to address the problem in an integrated, rational and coherent way, in line with the Community Strategy on Safety and Health at Work 2007-2012.

Main features

Its most important features are as follows:

- It is a strategy for all and agreed by all. All the agents involved (Government, autonomous regions, trade unions and employers' associations) have combined their efforts to help reduce the number of accidents at work and occupational illnesses. This has been possible after an intense process of social dialogue resulting in a final consensus.
- It is broad in scope. This is not only because of its five-year duration but because of the enormous number of measures it includes (more than one hundred), which also cover the whole range of fields involved: education, training, research, development and innovation (R&D&I), health, awareness campaigns, measures for enterprises, measures for workers, measures for prevention services and strong

and determined institutional and financial support from the Government to develop risk prevention policies and practices.

- It is for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). They will be able to fulfil their obligations more easily and efficiently in the effort to reduce the number of accidents at work and occupational illnesses.
- It is committed to quality and efficiency in prevention. The aim is to carry out more preventive activities in our enterprises, and these should be of greater quality.
- It ensures that workers and employers, trade unions and employers' organisations become directly involved in the real and effective compliance with the obligations relating to risk prevention.
- The objectives to be achieved can be divided into two main groups: first, those dealing with occupational risk prevention in the enterprise, aimed at employers and workers; and second, those dealing with public policies to tackle accidents at work and occupational illnesses which are aimed at the public administrations.

OBJECTIVES RELATING TO THE PREVENTION OF OCCUPATIONAL RISKS IN ENTERPRISES

Objective 1. Achieve better and more effective compliance with the risk prevention legislation, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises

- The documentation to be completed by SMEs will be simplified, and they will be given government assistance to help organise preventive activities.
- A system of bonuses or reductions in social security contributions will be introduced for enterprises with low rates of accidents and occupational illnesses.
- There will be specific control and monitoring programmes for enterprises and activities with high rates of accidents and occupational illnesses.
- There will also be specific programmes to guarantee the effectiveness of risk prevention among self-employed workers.
- A “*Renove*” trade-in plan to renew obsolete machinery will be introduced in those sectors where the accident figures suggest that machinery should be modernised.

Objective 2. Improve the effectiveness and quality of the prevention system, above all in entities specialised in the field

- Enterprises that have their own prevention resources will benefit from reductions in payments of social security contributions for accidents at work and occupational illnesses, as well as reductions in contributions for contracts of workers engaged in preventive tasks or who are recruited into the preventive services.
- Quality and effectiveness criteria will be determined and required from all external prevention services (provided by specialist entities). A system of evaluation will be set up using quality parameters for all these services.
- The monitoring of workers' health will be increased.

Objective 3. Strengthen the role of the social partners and the involvement of workers and employers in the improvement of safety and health at work

- Sector-based collective negotiation will be used to negotiate the creation of specific sector bodies, made up of employers' and workers' representatives, to develop programmes designed to raise awareness and inform about the occupational risks in the sector. These programmes will be targeted at enterprises with between six and fifty employees without workers' representatives.
- If the above is not concluded, territorial-based collective negotiation will be used to promote similar programmes among employers' and trade union organisations and the autonomous regions.

OBJECTIVES RELATING TO PUBLIC POLICIES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS AT WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESSES

Objective 4. Develop and consolidate the culture of prevention in Spanish society

- Special attention will be paid to psychosocial risks and those associated with mobility, such as occupational accidents on the way to or from work or on work-related trips.
- Instruction in risk prevention will be promoted at all levels of the educational system.
- Ongoing and permanent social awareness campaigns related to this field will be run (with a yearly nationwide campaign).

Objective 5. Improve the systems of information and research in safety and health at work

- Information on accidents at work and occupational illnesses will be presented publicly and periodically, improving the quality of the information and making it comparable with the information released by the European Union.
- R&D&I activities will be focused on identifying the causes of accidents at work and occupational illnesses in order to eliminate them.
- A National Observatory of Working Conditions will be set up, together with a network of public institutes for research into risk prevention.

Objective 6. Promote training in occupational risk prevention

- A National Plan for Training in Occupational Risk Prevention will be drawn up.
- Training in risk prevention will be improved, both in continuing vocational training and at university level.
- Access to training in occupational risk prevention will be made available for self-employed workers.

Objective 7. Bolster the public institutions working in the field of occupational risk prevention

- The National Institute for Safety and Health at Work will be reformed and strengthened to boost its research function, its capacity for technical assistance and its cooperation and coordination with the autonomous regions.

- The staff at the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate will be increased in number and their activities will be extended in the form of planned campaigns and programmes.
- The Foundation for the Prevention of Occupational Risks will be reinforced, particularly in terms of its support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Objective 8. Improve institutional coordination in the prevention of occupational risks

- A technical/joint commission will be created as a body for cooperating and collaborating on public policies and measures relating to risk prevention at all levels of government.
- There will be closer collaboration with the public prosecution service specialised in safety and health at work, the labour authorities of the autonomous regions and the Labour and Social Security Inspectorate to guarantee that the measures in all these fields are implemented in the swiftest and most effective way.