

**Ministry of Labour and Social
Affairs**

**National Policy
on Occupational Safety and Health
in the Czech Republic**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I. Importance of occupational safety and health (OSH)

II. Assessment of the permanent status and development trends in OSH in the Czech Republic

1. Strengths of the Czech system of OSH
2. Weaknesses of the Czech system of OSH

III. Strategic goals and tools of the National Policy on OSH

1. Strategic goals of the National Policy on OSH
2. Tools for implementing and promoting the National Policy on OSH
 - 2.1 Legal sphere
 - 2.2 Economic tools supporting OSH
 - 2.3 Institutional tools for promoting and enforcement of the rules
 - 2.4 Information and cultural tools

IV. Fundamental priorities and goals of the National Policy on OSH

1. Risk prevention
 - 1.1 Risk identification, assessment and management
 - 1.2 Occupational health services
 - 1.3 Multidisciplinary services in risk prevention
2. Protection of specific groups
 - 2.1 Hazardous work
 - 2.2 Children, pupils, students and juvenile workers
 - 2.3 Employees of higher age categories
 - 2.4 Handicapped persons
 - 2.5 Agency employees and foreign workers
3. Alleviating or eliminating the consequences of health damage at work
4. Training and education
 - 4.1 Training and education of children, pupils and students
 - 4.2 Education in the area of OSH - of employees and self-employed persons
 - 4.3 Education of specialists in OSH
5. Research and development
6. Information and counselling
 - 6.1 Complex information services
 - 6.2 Providing information and counselling to small and medium sized enterprises
7. Education and promotion
8. Activity of the supervisory state administration bodies
 - 8.1 Cooperation of supervisory authorities
 - 8.2 Labour inspection bodies
 - 8.3 Bodies of health protection at work
9. Cooperation of authorities, institutions, social partners and professional public (The occupational safety and health community)
 - 9.1 Cooperation on a national level
 - 9.2 Cooperation on a regional level
 - 9.3 Cooperation on a corporate level

10. Foreign and international cooperation

V. Financing the OSH system

VI. Monitoring the Implementation of the National Policy on OSH and its updating

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

Despite the long-term decrease in work injuries and preventive measures in the working conditions in the Czech Republic there were 77,233 cases of work injuries, which represented 3.6 million calendar days of sick leave. Such fields as agriculture and forestry and the manufacturing industry, which have a long-term trend of a high number of work injuries in 100 employees, had a significant share in the work injuries. Each work injury represented an average sick leave of 47 days. Work injuries resulting in death still had a big share in 2007 – according to a statistical enquiry 188 people died as a result of a work injury. 1,291 professional illnesses were reported in the same year. Such a development influences high losses in production with a consequent impact on the economy as well as other social losses, which previous year represented approximately 29 billion CZK in work injuries and 3 billion CZK in occupational diseases in the Czech Republic. Being aware of the high costs, irreplaceable loss of lives and health damaged by work injuries, professional illnesses and other workplace health hazards and their unfavourable impact on the population, which apart from the human aspect represent considerable material losses too, the National Policy on Occupational Safety and Health (to be referred to as National Policy on OSH) is being adopted as a set of system measures in order to improve the current situation.

The National Policy on OSH expresses the top executive state bodies will to ensure decent conditions for maintaining maximum work capacity of the labour force within the sustainable economic and social development so that the highest overall economic efficiency is kept within the inner as well as external environment while observing the institutional law of satisfactory work conditions as regulated by Article No. 28 of the Human Rights Charter. These facts ensue from the international trends, which emphasize a responsible attitude toward the creation of a safe and healthy work environment.

With its outcomes, principles and priorities the strategic document follows the positive steps undertaken so far as part of the preceding National Policy on OSH and which were adopted by government Decision No. 475 of May 19, 2003. The new framework strategy in the area of occupational safety and health protection reflects significant system changes and the developments within a society in a local and international context. The new facts are being reflected in new opinions on the creation of legal rules and in the supervision and educational work with the EU strategic goals. Emphasis is being laid on the enforcement of the European Union global concept, which includes “Improving quality and productivity at work: Community strategy 2007 – 2012 on OSH” (to be referred to as Community strategy on OSH).

With this document the Czech Republic meets the communication of the EU Council of June 25, 2007 on the new community strategy on OSH, which calls on the member states to develop and carry out national strategies on occupational safety and health at work in cooperation with social partners in the interest of further decreasing the number of work injuries and occupational diseases, particularly in those fields which have an above average of these.

The individual priorities of the National Policy on OSH, which ensue from the proposals of ministries, state administration bodies and social partners, are the result of a mutual agreement of all parties involved. The future directions, which are determined by the priorities, are the starting parameters for the use of regulatory tools

by the state, for the new topics for research and development, supporting and working projects for the period 2007 – 2012 assigned from local as well as European financial sources.

I. Importance of OSH

Support to OSH, protection of employees and other persons, who are self-employed, as well as those who may be adversely affected and environmental protection from unfavourable impact of occupational activity are part and parcel of the country's social policy. The public interest of the State focuses on providing accident prevention in particular, on preventing occupational diseases and other work-related diseases and on the creation of the highest efficiency of the economy and high culture of entrepreneurship. The economic interest of the State is particularly involved – whether it relates to cutting considerable economic losses in connection with sick leave and other related curative costs or to the creation of such a market environment, which will enable the exclusion of any preferential treatment of entrepreneurial entities based on decreasing the set social standards or worsening work conditions and the state of OSH.

The creation of favourable working conditions and adapting work and working conditions to the needs of employees (men, women, juvenile workers or older employees and handicapped persons) is the manifestation of high entrepreneurial culture. The implementation of favourable working conditions increases the work motivation of all employees and is a means of a higher work efficiency. It also contributes to the improvement of the quality of life, sustainability of employee skills, well-being at work, social and legal protection of workers and legal protection of other workers present in the workplace with the agreement of employers, or persons who contribute to the working process by providing OSH services, or persons who may be influenced by the working process. The OSH strategy seeks the reduction of all negative aspects connected with work, including stress, bullying, harassment, unequal treatment and discrimination in the workplace, child labour, etc. The intention is to meet the term "health" defined by the World Health Organisation as the state of physical, mental and social well-being of men and women.

II. Assessment of the permanent status and development trends in OSH in the Czech Republic

On May 19, 2003 the Government of the Czech Republic adopted the National Policy on OSH in Decision No. 475. In accordance with this the Government approved Decision No. 858 of September 3, 2003, which established the OSH Council (to be referred to as the Government Council) of the Czech Government, which became the permanent advisory body of the Czech Government in the area of occupational safety and health protection at work. As a part of its duties the Government Council developed the individual tasks of the National policy on OSH, which gradually became part of the OSH National Action Programme for the period 2004 – 2006 and the OSH National Action Programme for the year 2007 and it has been continuously assessing their fulfilment.

In order for the new directions of the strategy to be established the identification of the current state, i.e. the overall level of OSH reached in comparison with the year 2003, which was the starting year for the strategic planning of joint activities within the OSH. This level is also the starting point for the planning of the state required in the future. When setting the new priorities it is necessary to ensue from the knowledge of the current state, the development trends and the identification of persisting deficiencies.

The analysis of the fulfilment of the tasks set by the OSH National Action Plans drafted and discussed by the OSH Government Council is the starting material for the assessment of the current state. Apart from its own active involvement in the positive changes in the area of occupational safety and health through the action programmes the current development in this sphere of public interest has been influenced by the new socio-economic conditions and interaction with scientific progress and new technical knowledge. Fast development in automation, technology and changes in the structure of the national economy have been reflected particularly in the gradual decrease of the values of the basic indicators of workplace injuries as well as in the decrease of absolute as well as relative occurrence of occupational diseases, operating injuries and accidents.

On the other hand, however, demands on the work pace and the quality of work have been increasing. The former physical work intensity has been fast replaced by a high mental intensity caused by increasing stress. With regards to the increased retirement age, the age structure of the labour force has been changing along with the character of work. The rate of uncertainty of employment has been going up as a result of the speed and mutual interconnection of the movements of capital. New changes in the organisation of work have been introduced in connection with the transition from the traditional, relatively closed, firm systems of work and with a rigid organisational hierarchy toward more open, flexible, decentralized network systems with innovative and more open processes. The shift from the manufacturing sphere to services is clear. On one hand the importance of small and medium sized enterprises has been increasing, on the other hand companies have been merging. The ability to adapt to the changing conditions and quickly react to the new changes has been required more and more by the labour market. In the Czech Republic the importance of the permanent employment relationship has been subsiding (decreasing) and the variety and individual character of this relationship is being pushed forward. This state is being reflected in the persisting considerable occurrence of health damages at work, in places where safety is dependent on the organisation of work and safe behaviour of employees and employers in particular.

At the same time the Czech Republic is influenced by the gradual ageing of its population, migration of the work force, the necessity of a multiple requalification of employees in the course of their productive age, continual partitioning and changing of the structure of the national economy, by the activity of multi-national companies and market chains, which also has an impact on the OSH.

1 Strengths of the OSH system

The basic legal OSH framework has been established in the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic has fulfilled its obligation ensuing from its EU membership and it has ensured the transposition of the Framework Directive No. 89/391/EEC of June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work and the system of individual partial directives on specific risks and aspects of work the employees have to face at work. With their introduction in the Czech legal system a single framework of harmonized minimal safety and health

requirements for the protection of workers at work was established supporting the European economic competition and excluding any preferential treatment of entrepreneurial subjects by decreasing the established social standards or by worsening working conditions and the OSH.

In order to ensure the national system of OSH a functional institutional structure has been created to enable further development in this sphere in legislation, supervision, science and research, education and international cooperation. The interconnection of politics and activities of the public and state administration bodies has deepened with the aim to increase the efficiency of measures toward a higher cultivation of occupational safety and health protection at work. The existence of the platform for a social dialogue on the OSH issues represents an important tool for the improvement of the level of OSH both through the OSH Government Council as an advisory body to the Czech Government, and the Council of Economic and Social Agreement.

2 Weaknesses of the OSH system

Despite the progress achieved in the individual areas of fulfilling the new strategic goals, a number of tasks have not been fully completed yet due to objective reasons dependent on reaching a political agreement within the legislative bodies or on expert agreement on the solution. Social partners repeatedly discuss the simplification of legal regulations. Interpretation of the legal requirements is missing as well as examples of solutions, e.g. “the best practice instructions”, particularly required by the users of the legal regulations.

From the viewpoint of the OSH system the need for the introduction of the occupational health services (now the company occupational health care) and of a complex rehabilitation as well as the introduction of economically motivating occupational insurance of employees (Work Injury Insurance) The role of occupational insurance as the source of funding for risk prevention is being missed especially by small and medium-sized enterprises. The situation in the practical implementation of the obligations set upon the employers – the small and medium-sized enterprises by the OSH legal rules – is unsatisfactory too. According to the labour inspection bodies' findings this concerns one third of the subjects inspected. The level of occupational safety and health protection at work of self-employed persons is very low as well, particularly in the area of accident prevention. The poor training and educational process of risk prevention for youth and juvenile workers represents a serious and persisting deficiency.

The biggest volume of the labour inspection bodies' work is aimed at resolving individual complaints, the number of which has increased several times compared with the preceding periods. In 90% of cases the complaints were related to labour relations and working conditions. Work with the complaints significantly reduces the capacity, which the mentioned labour inspection bodies can devote to their preventive activities.

III. STRATEGIC GOALS AND TOOLS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON OSH

1. Strategic goals of the National policy on OSH

In accordance with strengthening the role and position of occupational safety and health while creating a competitive economy based on knowledge and supporting the sustainable economic growth, employment and social solidarity, the main goals of the National Policy on OSH for the period to come are the following:

- Prevent social and economic losses caused by occupational injuries and occupational diseases,
- Meet the employees' right to satisfactory working conditions and work culture and contribute to an increase in the skills of every employee and prevent an early exit from the labour market,
- Strengthen the competitive advantage and productivity and increase economic efficiency by improving working conditions and employers' and employees' motivation to support economic growth and employment.

In promoting the main goals of the national policy on OSH and harmonizing them with the directions of further European strategy development in this field and in implementing the Global Action Plan on Occupational Safety of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the State will focus its attention on:

- Increasing preventive supervision over health, particularly making prevention within the company occupational health care more effective,
- Coming to terms with social and demographic changes related to the ageing of society and to the increasing productive age,
- New employment trends, particularly as far as self-employed persons are concerned or on the work of personnel agencies and on migration,
- Measures aimed at rehabilitation and return of workers excluded from the labour market due to work accident, occupational disease or other handicap,
- Better compliance of obligations ensuing from legal rules with the help of supervisory and inspection bodies,
- Solidarity of the National Policy on OSH with other national policies in relation to OSH, education, public health, employment and competitiveness with the aim to decrease social losses due to health damage at work,
- Including the safety topics and health protection at work into educational and training materials in schools and other educational facilities,
- Integration of OSH issues into the corporate system of management, particularly in small and medium-sized companies through motivation, technical assistance, economic incentives and using the role of employee representatives,
- Support for the research of effective preventive tools and measures,
- Support for mental health in the workplace, particularly to the prevention of stress and violence.

2. Tools toward implementing and promoting the National Policy on OSH

2.1 Legal sphere

The Constitution of the Czech Republic represents the basic legal framework of OSH along with the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, which regulates the right to satisfactory working conditions for all employees, the EU legal regulations, ratified international accords binding for the Czech Republic and national Czech legal regulations.

Apart from the EU regulations, the international OSH standards are regulated by the International Labour Organisation conventions and by the World Health Organisation documents.

Despite the different approaches toward the solution to the OSH issues, the EU documents and the documents of international organisations (ILO, WHO) have common elements:

- They include demands for the elements of the individual countries' national policy in OSH and solution tools,
- They ensue from the employers' responsibility for the level of OSH in improving employee's health,
- They emphasize the importance of prevention, particularly primary prevention and the gradual reduction of risks by adopting concrete measures,
- They emphasize the significance of informing and training employees in order to increase the level of their ability to identify and reduce risks,
- They recommend higher and active involvement of workers or their representatives and employers in the improvement of the working environment with the focus on the development of services within OSH,
- They promote relevant training and education of workers,
- They require that the health conditions of workers be assessed for the performance of specific functions.

The national legal regulation of OSH is in line with the fundamental principles and standards included in the ILO Conventions, EU directives and WHO documents. Part of the legal regulation of OSH is the principle of purposeful division of this topic into generally binding regulations and technical standards. The system of referring to standards (standards values) in legal regulations has proven advantageous and efficient and is one of the important elements of the so called EU "new approach" toward technical harmonization. The valid legal regulation of OSH in the Czech Republic has been included in more than 80 legal documents, particularly in:

- Labour Code,
- Law on Guaranteeing Further Conditions for Occupational Safety and Health,
- Law on the Protection of Public Health,
- Law on the Care for People's Health,
- Law on the Labour Inspection,
- Law on the Technical Requirements of Products,
- Law on the General Safety of Products,
- Law on the Prevention of Serious Accidents (SEVESO Directive).

2.2 Economic tools supporting OSH

In line with the priorities of the EU strategy and the goals of the National Policy on OSH it is necessary to ensure the relevant sources and means for economic incentives for the improvement of the OSH level, particularly on the company level, means for the support of activities and entities in the area of prevention and rehabilitation. The existing economic tools in the Czech Republic are insufficient in motivating employers to increase the level of occupational safety and health protection at work.

The goal is for the state, through casualty insurance, and for commercial insurance companies and other organisations to start using the economic tools and economic incentives in OSH, which would motivate the employers to improve the OSH level in small and medium-sized enterprises in particular.

The system of occupational injury insurance represents an important economically motivating tool supporting the OSH, which however has not yet been completely introduced in the Czech Republic. Apart from the motivating measures toward employers (bonus/malus) this tool enables the creation of financial sources for the national activities in OSH as well as the rehabilitation of persons who have suffered health damage at work. It is one of the OSH pillars and contributes to significant improvement in the quality of prevention in small and micro enterprises and to their bigger involvement and cooperation in advancing OSH in the workplace.

2.3 Institutional tools toward the rules

Promotion and enforcement rules are ensured by the system of inspection and supervisory bodies based on a long-standing tradition. The bodies are as follows:

- State Labour Inspection Office and regional inspectorates (Act No. 251/2005 Coll., on labour inspection as amended),
- Public Health Protection Bodies (Act No. 258/2000 Coll. On the protection of public health as amended),
- Czech Mining Authority and regional mining authorities (Act No. 61/1988 Coll., on mining, explosives and the state mining administration as amended),
- State Office of Nuclear Safety (Act No. 18/1997 Coll., on the peaceful use of nuclear energy and ionizing radiation as amended),
- State Fire Supervisory Bodies (Act No. 133/1985 Coll., on fire protection as amended).

Work of Labour inspection bodies blend with the work of other supervisory authorities both in the area of safety and health protection of members of security and armed forces as well as in the area of the safety of technical equipment with a higher rate of endangering life and health and prevention of industrial accidents. Apart from the administrative bodies, trade unions are active in the field of OSH with the right to perform inspections on the state of occupational safety and health with individual employers under § 322 of the Labour Code. Mutual interdepartmental agreements on the supervisory bodies' cooperation and on harmonizing the steps toward implementing the common principles of labour inspection are among the means supporting the development of coordination of activities by supervisory and inspection bodies (document of the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee/SLIC).

2.4 Information and cultural tools

Access to information and counselling services is ensured both through the European network of OSH information centres (known as Focal points) and its supra-national interface, the national professional OSH portal with complex information services, and through the individual specialized information websites of the individual departments. The OSH website serves the companies in particular. It allows for the exchange of experience between OSH experts, and is an integrating information source in OSH for the professional public as well as employers in small and medium-sized enterprises.

The European network of information centres supervised by the European Agency for OSH offers through its national interface a wide variety of communication tools such as promotional materials for employers and employees (both printed and on-line), it also organises European campaigns focusing on the increasing of the OSH level and holds a European contest in the best company projects on risk prevention. Part of the national campaigns is the creation of a space for employers' active involvement in the Best Practice competitions.

Part of the cultural tools are the national activities such as the projects "Health Supporting Company", "Safe Company" and "Golden Gnome", which focus on the provision of a safe working environment and working conditions which do not endanger health and on the support of employers' activities leading to the improved health condition of employees and to the acknowledgement of the importance of company catering for a healthy diet in the workplace.

IV. FUNDAMENTAL PRIORITIES AND GOALS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON OSH

1. Risk prevention

Priority No. 1

Preventing social and economic losses caused by health damage at work and by property damage by consistent implementation of preventive measures in the area of safety at work.

Maximum involvement of all the parties in the working process constitutes the basic prerequisite for an effective prevention. The regulatory and executive role of the state is determining as well as the motivation and economic stimulation of employers, self-employed persons and employees. The quality of staffing in the individual OSH areas is also an important prerequisite, along with the necessary financial sources for the support of preventive measures. Practical implementation of findings from research and development in the area of ergonomics, stress and violence prevention and of new technologies represents an important asset too.

1.1 Risk identification, assessment and management

Identification, assessment and consistent management system of existing and emerging risks is the basic tool of prevention in the area of OSH. It is particularly necessary that employers, self-employed persons and employees be motivated through economic incentives. The integration of OSH into the company system of

management, mainly in small and medium-sized enterprises, is paramount. The role of employee´ representatives in solving the OSH issues in the workplace, technical assistance and providing all the parties involved with access to information, professional counselling and education is also important.

Goal 1.1

Improving the level of work risk prevention through timely and proper identification, assessment and management:

- Motivating employers and employees in the form of economic incentives and particularly by using preventive tools in the system of occupational injury insurance,
- Providing technical assistance mainly to small and medium-sized enterprises (through the accessibility of technical standards, OSH manuals and best practice instructions),
- Making information, professional counselling and education available to employers, employees and other OSH entities.

1.2 Occupational health services

Occupational health services (known as company occupational health care at the moment) deal with the influence of work, working environment and working conditions on employee health. They also focus on prevention, diagnostics, treatment and assessment aspects of diseases caused or aggravated by work, and they supervise acceptable working conditions from a health perspective. An occupational physician is a specialist in the OSH field, whose professional qualifications ensue from his clinical practice as well as from the work risk assessment. The occupational physician assesses the employee work competence in relation to health condition, shares in the risk assessment, provides preventive services, consultations and advice.

The requirement to introduce supervision over workers´ health corresponding with the health and safety risks is set by the Framework Directive No. 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and protection at work. The scope of occupational health services is governed by the ILO international Convention No. 161 ratified by the Czech Republic and issued by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the form of Decree No. 145/1988 Coll. The occupational health service contributes to keeping, possibly improving, employee health competence with an emphasis on health support. The fulfilment of these goals supports the stabilization of the health condition of employees and the cuts of the costs necessary for the treatment of unnecessary health damage at work. Coverage of the working population with functioning occupational health services within the Czech Republic represents only 30 – 40% of all employees. The scope and the quality of the service provided represent a weak point.

Goal 1.2

Securing quality occupational health services. In order to do so:

- Complete and implement legal regulations defining the services as fast as possible, improve the coverage of occupational health services,
- Provide a sufficient number of professionally qualified providers and introduce quality control of the service rendered,

- Solve the system of payment for the occupational health services with the aim of removing the model of payment from public health insurance,
- Solve the payment for preventive health services of pupils and students in the preparation for their profession.

1.3 Multidisciplinary services in risk prevention

The goal of multidisciplinary services in risk prevention is to ensure services covering the variety of professional activities – provided both by persons qualified in risk prevention and occupational physicians and by other specialized experts such as e.g. ergonomists. With the development of knowledge regarding the influence of working environment, working conditions and new technologies on the safety and health of workers at work new areas of specific risks have been uncovered.

Goal 1.3

Ensure the provision of quality multidisciplinary services in risk prevention by:

- Setting national standards for physical entities qualifications,
- Continuous checks on the level and quality of accreditation and certification within the OSH,
- Introduction of the system of evaluation of the quality of provided services.

2. Protection of specific groups

Priority No. 2

Devote increased attention to specific groups of people, who are exposed to the risks connected with work performance and preparation, to the youngsters, handicapped persons, employees belonging to a higher age category, agency employees and foreign workers.

2.1 Hazardous work

Currently more than 439,000 persons, out of which 30% are women, carry out hazardous work as defined by § 39, Art. 1 of Act No. 258/2000 Coll. on the protection of public health as amended. About 21,000 workers carry out highly hazardous work belonging to category four of the work categorisation; the high risk is caused by their exposure to fibrogenic dust and/or vibrations. The risks in other categories are caused by the exposure to extreme noise (almost 262,000 workers), MSD (some 70,000 workers) and vibrations (more than 7,000 workers).

The gravity of the inclusion of working in hazardous conditions, based on its impact on health, does not correspond with the occurrence of reported occupational diseases, which is given by the character of the relevant factor and also by the level of health protection of persons exposed to the risks. The discrepancy between the high number of persons exposed to noise and the negligible number of persons with impaired hearing reported as an occupational disease may serve as an example, and can be explained by quite a high efficiency of preventive and protective measures including medical checks of workers. On the other hand, the extreme burden on arm muscles still causes problems as it quite often escapes the attention of occupational physicians as well as employers.

Goal 2.1

Reducing hazardous work and the number of workers performing it.

The goal ensues from the obligation set by law under which the employer is obliged to watch and assess the decisive factors and health risks at work and implement measures toward reducing or minimizing the risks and create preconditions for the transfer of work included into hazardous occupations to lower category.

The goal is to focus preventive checks on hazardous works that are the most frequent cause of occupational diseases.

2.2 Children, pupils, students and juvenile workers

In order to ensure the safety and health protection of children, pupils and students at schools and other educational facilities in theoretical and practical education, it is necessary to complete the legal regulations which set detailed preconditions for the protection of public interest in this area and to carry out prevention targeted on this specific group of persons, which relies on consistent adherence to legal regulations and on the verification of the fulfilment of all the tasks for preventing all dangerous events.

In the interest of protecting the health of the new working generation it is necessary to carry out a professional medical assessment of the health condition of pupils and students preparing for their future profession with respect to the possible work risks of their future occupation.

During the practical training of pupils and students for the performance of their future occupation consistent observation of legal rules in the area of OSH must be ensured as well as the continuous checks of the health condition of pupils and students including the verification of the fulfilment of all preventive measures in health protection at work.

Close cooperation of all the parties involved (family, school, employers and physicians aware of the specific working conditions in the relevant workplace and the demands on the work the pupils or students after finishing their studies including their health condition) is necessary.

Goal 2.2

Provide preventive medical care for pupils and students preparing for their occupation and ensure safety and health protection in theoretical and practical training as well as protection of juvenile workers. It will focus on:

- Drafting legal regulations for the preventive medical care for pupils and students during the practical training for their future occupation,
- Defining detailed obligations of schools and educational facilities in the area of safety and health in the legal regulations,
- Unifying the requirements on the registry and documentation of injuries of children, pupils and students, reporting them and submitting injury reports regardless of the type of school or educational facility.

2.3 Employees in higher age categories

In connection with the demographic development related to the increasing productive as well as retirement age it is necessary to devote more care to ensuring optimal working conditions for employees in higher age categories. When defining working conditions it is necessary to use elementary ergonomic approaches and enable safe and quality working performance of these employees.

Goal 2.3

Within human resource development it is necessary to implement measures toward increasing the working life and supporting employment of persons in higher age categories, particularly:

- Through preventive health protection of employees at work throughout their productive life,
- Through the implementation of important ergonomic principles when designing workplaces, in organisation of work and in adapting workplaces to the individual needs of older employees,
- By motivating employers to create suitable jobs and working conditions for older people,
- By creating conditions (e.g. support to the establishment of agencies offering experts to companies as advisers) for an effective use of high professional knowledge and experience of people in higher age categories in industry and services.

2.4 Handicapped persons

In line with the national plan of support and integration, measures should be carried out in order to create optimal conditions for incorporating handicapped persons in the working process and provide counselling, requalification, create socially useful jobs and to support sheltered employment and design workplaces for persons with all different handicaps. To meet this goal it is necessary to strongly motivate employers as well as employees.

Goal 2.4

Motivate employers to create jobs, suitable working conditions and design of the workplace in such a way so that the handicapped may be incorporated and equally treated in the labour market:

- Through economic incentives within legal regulations,
- By financial support offered by the European Social Fund in this sphere.

2.5 Agency employees and foreign workers

Employment through agencies and employment of foreign workers is increasingly important in the Czech Republic. From the viewpoint of temporary employment, preparation for work, as well as relevant health ability with regards to the work risks are often underestimated. Statistically, there has been a double occurrence of injuries in the first months of the beginning of employment in this specific group of workers as compared to other employees. Equal working conditions of agency employees and permanent staff continue to be a problem.

Goal 2.5

For the safe and health-friendly work performance of employment agency and foreign workers:

- Assessment of health ability with regards to health risks of performed work and the medical and work history should be ensured,
- The persons concerned should be acquainted with legal and other OSH rules as well as with the risks related to the work they perform,
- Information on OSH should be provided in the language the persons concerned understand.

3. Alleviating or eliminating consequences of health damage at work

Priority No. 3

Through complex rehabilitation ensure timely incorporation of persons back to work and social life following their occupational injury or disease.

In order to decrease social and economic consequences of health damage at work it is necessary to ensure targeted, timely and complex rehabilitation of affected persons in the curative, social and working areas.

In order to fulfil this goal it is necessary to carry out the measures ensuing from the Employment Act and the Act on Social Services and draft a new legal regulation on rehabilitation of and implement the tools of rehabilitation within the occupational injury insurance system similarly to other developed countries and as defined by the Community Strategy on OSH.

Goal 3

Devote increased attention to the rehabilitation of persons after their work injury or occupational disease:

- Provide persons concerned with timely counselling and a motivation to return to the work,
- In order to alleviate the consequences of health damage caused by a work injury or an occupational disease it is necessary to use the means of targeted social and economic support to the affected persons and their families,
- Use the system occupational injury insurance for improving the quality of after-injury rehabilitation and for providing the necessary financial means to this sphere.

4. Training and education

Apart from introducing the findings and conclusions of research into the OSH system and policy it is important to work out and test the factual contents of education and training within OSH – to work out methods of incorporating education and training in OSH into the system of lifelong education, propose suitable tools and means of support to the training and education on risk prevention and OSH at all levels of the educational and training system. OSH training and education is the tool for a systematic creation and development of professional knowledge, abilities and skills and for forming the necessary conduct and approaches of employers, employees and self-employed persons toward the goals in the area of OSH including the workplace and safety of technical equipment and toward optimizing working conditions.

4.1 Education and training of children, pupils and students

Elementary schools play an important role in the OSH education as the habits of risk prevention can be acquired in childhood. Becoming aware of the importance of health protection and injury prevention principles are part of elementary education.

Goal 4.1

Incorporate the OSH basics into the education of children, pupils and students in schools and other school facilities in a way and form corresponding to the age and orientation of the school using the existing results of research.

4.2 Education in OSH – of employees and self-employed persons:

The goal of the education of employees in the OSH issues set upon the employer by the Labour Code represents acquiring information on the risks at work and on measures eliminating or reducing them to an acceptable level. The employees also acquire the right habits in order to ensure safe work which does not threaten life. The OSH education of self-employed persons represents a specific area. It is reflected in their insufficient knowledge of risk assessment, which may result in a higher number of serious work injuries, where work with a higher rate of endangering life and health is carried out.

Goal 4.2

Within the duties in OSH training focus shall be laid on:

- The quality of contents of education with an emphasis on occupational hazards and their prevention under concrete conditions,
- Increasing the quality of knowledge of OSH with self-employed persons.

4.3 Education of OSH specialists

A good quality performance of persons professionally competent in risk prevention including multidisciplinary services requires life-long education in the particular field of work.

Goal 4.3

Ensure a quality level of education of experts for practice:

- Continue setting the basic requirements for professional knowledge and skills of OSH specialists including occupational health services,
- Support the cooperation of employees, trade unions and OSH specialists with the goal to work out qualification and assessment standards with requirements for the contents a means of education for beginners,
- Set the basis for life-long education in OSH and occupational health services.

5. Research and development

Priority No. 5

Focus the research in the field of OSH on the prevention of existing, new and potential risks, introduce the findings of research and development into practice and ensure the necessary financial sources for this area.

In accordance with the Community Strategy it is necessary to devote attention to research and development particularly in the area of preventing psycho-social risks, musculoskeletal diseases, occurrence of dangerous chemical substances including substances with a negative impact on reproduction, risks related to nanotechnologies, focus on the new forms of organisation of labour, imperfections in OSH management on a company level, on the issue of the incorporation of persons in the labour market following their work injury or occupational diseases and the aspects of equality between men and women. Particular attention shall be devoted to the solution of social and demographic changes (ageing of society and the increased active age).

To fulfil the Community Strategy in this area the Government Council for OSH approved the Priorities of OSH research and development in December 2007 for the period of 2008 – 2010 necessary financial sources have to be created for the priorities to be fulfilled and implemented in practice.

Goal 5

Ensure research and development in the area of OSH in compliance with the changes in the labour market, the occurrence of existing, new and potential risks and demographic development and

- Create corresponding conditions for the implementation of the Priorities of OSH research and development in 2008 – 2010, including the application of their results into practice,
- Seek the necessary financial sources from the European Social Fund and other Community funds,
- Use the possibility of financing the research and development from the system

- of employee insurance,
- Create a transparent environment with a larger involvement of the entrepreneurial sphere when assigning and co-financing projects as well as introducing the successful research results in practice.

6. Information and counselling

Priority No. 6

Provide easy access to quality information and counselling to all the parties involved in the area of OSH.

6.1 Complex information services

Support the information system within the whole scale of OSH including information from occupational safety and health, prevention of serious accidents, fire protection and protection of the environment, which is accessible to all parties involved and enables efficient use of information for improving the state of OSH and environment with a special focus on the individual target groups.

Goal 6.1

Make the complex information system accessible from a distance. The system includes:

- Up-to-date legal and technical information on OSH,
- Information on Community and national OSH strategies,
- Information of the results of research and development and new publications on OSH,
- Information on educational and training OSH projects.

6.2 Providing information and counselling for small and medium-sized enterprises

Effective use of information tools among employers in particular serves to increase awareness of OSH and to create and keep a positive approach to employers, self-employed persons as well as employees. Knowledge of the best practice in OSH is spread through information and counselling activities as well as procedures leading to optimizing working conditions and health of workers, which does not endanger work performance.

Goal 6.2

Specifically focus on small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed persons as part of rendering information services and create a knowledge base for them in order to prevent risks including:

- Methodology of risk assessment in selected fields of economic activities,
- Best practice instructions, educational materials and counselling,
- Assignment and information on EU funded projects.

7. Education and promotion

Priority No. 7

Develop and support the system of education and promotion to improve the general awareness and overall level of occupational safety and health at all levels.

European and national information campaigns represent a significant means of achieving positive changes in prevention. Their goal is to exchange experience in specific areas of work risks as well as in best practice instructions, in identifying the risks and eliminating or reducing their influence on the health and safety of employees.

Goal 7.1

Introduce national as well as regional campaigns for the prevention of work injuries, occupational diseases with regards to the prevention of new risks and improvement of working conditions and increasing the awareness of possible risks and promoting conditions for the work well-being of employees, men and women, possibly older employees.

Traditional programmes are being used initiating the introduction of OSH management system at companies and the management of health care of employees in companies. These are preventive programmes, in particular, which are successfully implemented thanks to the labour inspection offices, bodies for the protection of public health and bodies of the mining authority.

Goal 7.2

Support the introduction of the system of management of OSH in enterprises with the use of the current methods, e.g. the programme “Safe Enterprise”, “Health Supporting Enterprise”, “Golden Gnome”, which with their requirements focus particularly on prevention and support a closer tie with programmes strengthening the social responsibility of workers.

8. Work of the supervisory state administration bodies

Priority No. 8

Strengthen and rationalize the work of state supervisory bodies through qualified experts, integration of approaches and simplification of processes in all areas related to employees' protection at work.

8.1. Cooperation of state administration bodies

The main goal of supervisory work in the area of OSH lies in the introduction, promotion and enforcement of the fulfilment of duties and in the creation of an environment with safe working conditions for all. The work will not endanger all the parties involved but will ensure equal opportunities and reduce different forms of discrimination of employees and their representatives. If these supervisory bodies are to actively influence the change of entrepreneurial culture and the culture of work,

information and advisory work as well as work focusing on influencing the approaches of employers, employees and their representatives toward fulfilling their duties is to be part of their activity.

Planned national preventive controls prepared on the basis of analysis of objective information or to enforce new OSH regulations are the basis for the supervisory work of the inspection and supervisory bodies. The planned preventive controls influence the behaviour of supervised entities and give a picture of the state and development of OSH in the given field of economic activity or on the risk prevention in performing the work.

Goal 8.1

Promote higher cooperation of control activities carried out by the administrative bodies active in OSH to help the new direction of the national policy on OSH, their mutual interconnection in supervisory programmes and focus on the continuous education of inspectors and supervisory bodies and on the exchange of experience including international experience.

8.2 Labour inspection bodies

It is the priority of inspection work to co-influence within its control and preventive activity the reduction of the number of work injuries, especially serious ones. Prevention is an effective way of reducing the costs on setting the consequences of accidents right. Such a course of action gives preference to proactive (preventive) inspection work as opposed to retroactive. With regards to the quantity and structure of controlled persons (inspected entity), its higher coverage requires rationalization and efficiency of inspection work.

Goal 8.2

Co-share in the reduction of the number of work injuries through a more effective and efficient inspection work.

8.3. Bodies of health protection at work

One of the Community Strategies on OSH, which is being reflected by national priorities of the bodies of public health protection in the area of health protection at work, is the reduction of occupational diseases. Recently, the occurrence of industrial poisoning and pneumoconiosis has been decreasing, on the other hand diseases caused by physical overburden, work in a forced position, repeated movements or repeated long-term burden on small muscle groups and allergies are on the rise.

Goal 8.3

With its control work co-influence the prevention of damaging workers' health by work, influence the improvement of their health condition, support healthy life style, improvement or sustainment of health capability to work and long term preservation of the ability to work.

9. Cooperation of bodies, institutions, social partners and professional public

Priority No. 9

Cooperation between the relevant state administration and self-administration bodies, social partners and professional institutions as one of the elementary of prevention and fulfilment of legal regulations in OSH.

The cooperation must be carried out in accordance with international and national rules and at all levels – the company level, regional and national level through a social dialogue and involvement of social partners in the solution of OSH issues and through discussing the intentions and proposals for legal regulation. It is also important to support the bipartite cooperation on a company level when drafting internal corporate directives, risk prevention and control work of the employer and during collective bargaining.

9.1 Cooperation on a national level

The cooperation is carried out particularly in the advisory body of the Government of the Czech Republic, the OSH Government Council and its individual permanent committees and through the dialogue in the tripartite advisory body - the OSH Working Group at the Council of the Economic and Social Agreement.

Goal 9.1

Cooperation of State, social partners and professional institutions active in OSH on a national level in the following areas:

- In the creation and discussion of legal regulations concerning OSH and other important national documents, particularly the National Policy on OSH and its National Action Programme for the relevant calendar period,
- In discussing the plans for inspection and supervisory bodies in OSH, assessment of their efficiency and quality,
- In the preparation and implementation of national campaigns and in effective promotion and exaction of regulations and preventive measures in practice,
- When setting the priorities of research in the area of OSH, in the creation of preventive and protective services, in education and training and in creating the national information system,
- When identifying methods to determine costs and assets of OSH and in the creation of the system of occupational injury insurance to motivate employers and their employees to be more active in risk prevention.

9.2 Cooperation on a regional level

Dialogue on a regional level with the aim of reaching broad regional support with the implementation of the National Policy on OSH and its strategic interests being an important part of cooperation between state administration bodies and social partners and professional institutions (vocational Institutions) active in OSH. The main goal of the cooperation is to support the increasing entrepreneurial culture and prevention in the regions including the negative trends and reducing their impact.

Goal 9.2

Carry out cooperation on a regional level by establishing regional tripartite OSH Councils with an equal representation of state and public administration bodies and representative involvement of employers and employees with respect to the most important economic branches in the region. The cooperation shall be carried out in the following areas:

- In the creation, promotion and evaluation National Policy on OSH and its interconnection with the conditions, needs and specifics of the regions,
- In assessing the set indicators of the state of OSH and adopting measure for their improvement,
- In discussing plans for the inspection work and other administration bodies in the region, evaluation of the efficiency and quality,
- In the preparation and implementation of regional information campaigns with examples of best practice and in effective promotion of regulations and preventive measures in practice,
- In using financial means from the EU funds and the prevention funds from the system of employee for increasing the level of workplaces and education and in making the activity of inspection regional bodies more effective when coordinating, planning and evaluating the regional labour programmes, their contents and focus,
- In evaluating the activities of non-governmental entities focusing on the OSH and using state and regional subsidies.

9.3 Cooperation on a company level

Cooperation between the employer and employees or their representatives in the workplace is the basic element for implementing the legal regulations ensuing from the Framework Directive 83/391/EEC and for the whole system of prevention and identification of risks. The right of employees and their representatives to take part in solving the OSH issues and employer's duty to provide information to employees as defined by the Labour Code plays an important role. On the company level it is also necessary to support cooperation between big companies, which represent the OSH culture, and their subcontractors – the small and medium-sized companies.

Goal 9.3

Implement a form of effective cooperation between employers, employees and their representatives on a company level:

- Make more use of employee opinion in the process of risk prevention,
- Incorporate into collective agreements the goal of improving working conditions and working environment,
- For the implementation of legal and other OSH regulations in practice make use of consultation with the workers' representatives.
- In performing the control by the labour inspection bodies lead a dialogue with employees and their representatives on the implementation of instructions and regulations toward ensuring OSH in practice.

10. Foreign and international cooperation

Priority No. 10

Actively cooperate with the EU institutions, International Labour Organisation and the World Health Organisation in OSH.

The activities of the national system of OHS have to continue the work, which is being carried out as part of the European Union and the international organisations, the ILO and WHO in particular.

It will be necessary to strengthen the cooperation on national and international levels within the measures recommended by the European Commission and use the funds provided by the EU in the area of OSH. Cooperation with the European Agency of OSH in Bilbao will be developed as well as that with the Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dublin and within the European Network for the support of health at work.

Goal 10

Support to the cooperation and the use of well tested models and approaches toward solving the OSH:

- To the newly adopted documents of international organisations, of which the Czech Republic is a member, create personnel and economic conditions for ensuring the participation of experts in these international organisations and in important international meetings, projects and activities,
- To the activities of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work protection in Bilbao and its European network of information centres (Focal Points),
- Cooperation in harmonizing the statistics and information exchange in the area of OSH and active involvement in the work of the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee.

V. FINANCING THE OSH SYSTEM

The national system of OSH, which includes institutional and implementation provisions of OSH in the Czech Republic, is financed from the state budget. With regards to meeting the call by the Community Strategy in OSH to reduce significantly the number of accidents, other financial means will have to be secured for preventive work. It is necessary to create conditions for the introduction of an economically motivating tool and source of work risk prevention based on financial means from the system of occupational injury insurance.

Apart from the private sources of small and medium-sized companies the European programmes financing is also an important source of means supporting preventive activities in the area of OSH.

VI. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OSH AND ITS UPDATING

Strategic goals and priorities of the National Policy on OSH will be transferred through the National Action Programme of OSH into specific time limited tasks. The national action programmes, drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in cooperation with other ministries and central administration authorities, as well as with social partners represented in the Government Council for the Safety and Health protection at Work was adopted by the Government Council for Safety and Health at Work. The implementation of the goals of the National Policy on OSH and the fulfilment of its priorities through short-term national programmes will be monitored and assessed once a year by the Government Council for Safety and Health at Work. It is being proposed that the report on the fulfilment of the National Policy on OSH be part of the Annual Report on the work of the Government Council for Safety and Health at Work submitted to the Government every year.

If the further development of the national system of OSH or the reached agreement with new or EU strategies calls for the updating of the National Action Programme of OSH, its partial changes discussed by the Government Council for OSH may be carried out by issuing supplementing priorities and goals adopted by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, who is the Chairman of the Government Council for Safety and Health Protection at Work.

CONCLUSION

Further economic development will depend to a large extent on economic potential, of which the labour force is a significant part. Therefore, education and increasing professional qualification has become one of the priorities along with the issue of safe working environment and working conditions, which do not threaten health. At the same time the goal to keep the maximum capacity of labour force and create a motivating tool for a higher efficiency is being observed. It is necessary to understand the submitted material as an open document, which ensues from the goals and analysis of the current state of affairs, from the minimal standards included in the EU legislation and the documents of other international organisations (International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation), which will be updated and revised. The National Action Programme with set up and specific tasks will follow.