

**REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**  
**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL POLICY**

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**STRATEGY**  
**ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK (SHW)**

2008 - 2012

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Strategy on Safety and Health at Work is a document by which the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria sets its vision in the field of Occupational Safety and Health. The aim is to outline the commitments and guide the efforts of state authorities, employer's organizations, worker's organizations, as well as nongovernmental organizations, among others, towards ensuring wellbeing at work while taking into account the changes at work and the emergence of new occupational hazards. The achievement of this goal is regarded as an integral part of achieving the general goal of the country's economic development, more specifically promoting the wellbeing and quality of life of all social groups in society.

The strategy takes into account and develops the priorities of the Guidelines on Development of Activities on Safety and Health at Work for the period up to 2006, adopted by Council of Ministers' Decision No. 34 of August 29, 2002, and follows the new guidelines of development of European Union policy outlined by the European Commission in the Community Strategy 2007-2012 on Health and Safety at Work. It is also aligned with the recommendations of the International Labour Organization for promoting safety and health at work with the objective of reducing accidents at work and occupational diseases.

The Strategy on SHW is aligned with the main statutory documents in the field of labour, education and vocational training: Labour Code, Social Insurance Code, Employment Promotion Act, Public Education Act, Vocational Education and Training Act, Bulgarian National Development Plan 2007-2013 and the Operational Programme Human Resources Development, among others.

The strategy includes and develops further the positive practices of SHW policy in the period of transition to a market economy, it sets out goals, priorities and actions which will be implemented in compliance with and at implementation of the macroeconomic framework set down in the National Development Plan.

The SHW Strategy determines the way to achieve the goals of the Lisbon Strategy, placing safety and health at work at the basis of quality of work. This means that acknowledging the fundamental contribution of occupational safety and health (OSH) to achieve good quality and productivity we shall promote economic growth and employment. The strategy is in compliance with the main priorities to reduce unemployment in Bulgaria and provide employment for the broadest circle of able-bodied citizens possible, encouraging the creation of such a working environment that allows workers to play a full-blooded role in working life until they reach old age. It is aimed to provide such working conditions at which work stimulates the health and wellbeing of the people, gives the opportunity to retain jobs and ensures personal satisfaction from the work done.

The strategy covers the 2008-2012 period, with implementation being a constant process which will be followed by a system for monitoring and measuring the degree to which the goals set are achieved.

This strategy will serve as a basis at the annual development of a National Programme on Safety and Health at Work and the drafting of projects for funding from the European Union Structural Funds and other international organizations and donors.

The Strategy on SHW provides an advanced vision in respect to future amendments to legislation and changes in the practice of state authorities and other organizations. It is a document which consolidates the different dimensions and actions, and contributes to their identical direction and synergism to fulfill the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria stemming from its membership in the European Union and in view of achieving the goals set down in Lisbon and in the Community Strategy for Health and Safety at Work 2007-2012. In

this way this document will play a leading role in the alignment of the individual documents, including legislation and programme ones in this field.

## I. STATUS AND TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKING CONDITIONS

### 1. Macroeconomic development

In the last few years Bulgaria has been the scene of progress on the way to long-term stability and sustainable economic growth. The Bulgarian economy continues to develop dynamically. GDP growth rate reached an average of some 4 % in the last ten years, increasing to over 6 % annually after 2004. In 2007 the growth rate stood at 6.2%. Per capita GDP respectively reached 37.1 % of EU average in 2006 but remains one of the lowest in EU. Over 68% of GDP is generated by the private sector.

The main contribution to the growth of gross value added (GVA) was made by the largest economic sector – **services** – which provides more than 70% of gross value added growth. Growth in the sector is mainly due to the increase in trade and less to increasing financial mediation. The most dynamically developing branch in the sector of services is that of *telecommunications*. Nearly all other services (with the exception of transport) show sustainable, albeit low growth rates.

**Industry** continues to increase its growth rate, which in 2007 reached 14% on an annual basis (in comparison, growth in 2005 stood at 7.3%). The main factors for this growth are the higher international prices of metals and the continuing development of construction in the country. The two branches in the industrial sector that show constant growth are *construction and the generation and distribution of electric power, gas and water*. Construction is one of the fastest developing sectors of the economy, value added growth in the last four years exceeding 10%, and reaching 16.9% in 2007. Processing industry enterprises did not manage to restore themselves quickly after the crisis of 1996 and continued their irregular development over subsequent years. The main reasons for that are their continuing restructuring and the series of external to the Bulgarian economy shocks in 1999. After 2000, however, processing industry marked high rates of GVA growth and is already among the sectors with the greatest contribution to the growth of the economy.

In the period under discussion, the change of value added in the **agriculture and forestry** sector was negative, mainly due to higher costs and not to a decline of total output. One should bear in mind that the erratic development of agriculture is due to the still undeveloped market of land in Bulgaria, as well as to the very low levels of investment. Commercial banks extend limited credits to agricultural high risk projects and entrepreneurial culture in the branch is still low.

The growth rate of labour incomes slowed down in 2006 as compared to 2005. **The average wage**<sup>1</sup> increased 9.5% in nominal and 2% in real terms on an annual basis. At the same time, **labour productivity**<sup>2</sup> rose by 3.5%<sup>3</sup> and outpaced the real wage increase. As a result, unit labour costs<sup>4</sup> continued decreasing in real terms, which may be considered as a factor for improvement of the competitiveness of the country.

Unlike 2006, the growth of incomes and labour productivity in the total economy accelerated in the first half of 2007. The average wage surged by 17.4% in nominal and by 11.9% in real terms compared to the same period of 2006. Like in the previous several years, the private sector contributed the most.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Agency for Economic Analyses and Forecasts, Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2007 – 2010), November 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2007 – 2010), the indicator was calculated as a ratio between GVA at constant prices and the number of employed from the national accounts statistics.

<sup>3</sup> Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2007 – 2010), the indicator includes imputed rent on self-occupied dwellings. The value amounts to 4.7% if the imputed rent is excluded.

<sup>4</sup> Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2007 – 2010). Eurostat methodology.

In 2007 **inflation** exceeded the values registered in recent years. Average annual inflation for 2007 stood at 8.4%. The accelerated price growth was due to unfavourable climatic conditions in the country, as well as to the high international prices of foods and energy resources. Increased prices of non-energy non-food goods and services were due to the increased solvent demand of households, funded by both the higher real income of the population and the improved access to credit resources. Price dynamics was also probably influenced by this country's accession to the EU where price levels are higher.

Favourable **business conjuncture** is a key factor for achieving growth and opening new jobs in the economy. The maintenance of sustainable growth should continue to be a priority in the future. This also presupposes future development in the direction of improving business conjuncture.

The growth of **investments** will continue to be related directly to general macroeconomic development and the opening of new jobs. In recent years there has been a gradual increase of the interest of foreign investors in the Bulgarian economy, which also influences the state of working conditions.

## 2. Demographic trends

Recent years have witnessed the formation of a permanent trend of declining numbers of the country's population. As a result of social and economic changes in living conditions there are essential changes in the demographic conduct of the population, which resulted in a negative growth rate.

The main problems in the demographic development of the country are **reduction of the population** and deterioration of its age structure. At the end of 2007 Bulgaria's constant population stood at 7,640,240<sup>5</sup>, having declined by about 1.0 million in the last 16 years. According to Eurostat forecasts, by 2015 the population is expected to reach some 7,130,000, or to decline by some 545,000. The negative natural growth rate and external migration are factors for this reduction.

In 2000 – 2007 the number of **able-bodied population**<sup>6</sup> (aged 15-64) dropped by 347,800. In just the last two years the population in this age bracket declined by 0.6 % or 34,393. This trend will exacerbate in the future, as forecasts of Eurostat see a reduction of the population from this age bracket by about an annual average of 1 %. This in turn will lead to a reduction of its share in the total number of the population in the country to 67.5 % in 2015. At the same time, the share of people above 65 will increase from 17.3 % in 2006 to 19.6% in 2015. These negative trends will lead to a deterioration of the factor of age dependence and, providing they deepen, they could lead to a considerable pressure on the social security system in the future.

The trends of reduction of the population observed in recent years condition the need of continuing the policy to increase the economic activity of the population, which in turn will provide the necessary workforce for the development of the economy.

These unfavourable trends have and will continue to have a negative influence on the absolute number and structure of the workforce in Bulgaria. The negative development of reproduction of labour potential in the country finds expression in both the increasing outflow, i.e. persons acquiring the right to retire because they have reached the age, and the increasingly declining inflow of young generations.

The decline of labour resources has varied consequences for the development of safety and health at work. The need of more active use of the population in the able-bodied age bracket, including by providing occupational safety and health, increases with the growth of the social

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<sup>5</sup> Source: NSI.

<sup>6</sup> Source: NSI (Labour Force Survey)

burden for upkeep of the population at retirement age and the limited demographic opportunities for reproduction of the workforce.

*The ageing of the workforce and limited demographic opportunities for its renewal, the dynamic changes in the requirements to occupational qualification skills of workers and employees pose the problem of increasing the efforts and undertaking additional measures to provide safety and health for the young employed and for those aged between 55 and 64.*

In 2008 - 2013<sup>7</sup> 80% of the persons at employable age in Bulgaria will be “old” participants on the labour market. Average annual renovation will amount to 2.3% or approximately 130,000 people at an annual average will become part of the workforce, with the necessary knowledge in the field of modern information and industrial technologies. The remaining prevalent number of the economically active individuals will have to require renewal and upgrading of qualification in compliance with the requirements of the respective type of job and occupation, so that they could work in accordance with safety and health at work requirements.

The following peculiarities are observed in the structure of the workforce (age 15-64):

- **Structure by gender.** The relative share of men in the total workforce is higher than that of women.

- **Structure by age.** In terms of age structure of the workforce, the highest relative share is that of people aged 35-44 - 27.3%; followed by the group of 45-54 - 27.0% and the group of 25-34 – 25.8%. The relative share of youths aged 15 to 24 in 2002 stood at 10.1%, and the share of the eldest age group 55-64 was 9.1%.

- **Structure by planning regions:** There are considerable differences between the individual planning regions which result from the impact of demographic and economic factors. The share of workforce is highest in the Southwestern Region and lowest in the Northwestern Region.

### **3. Workforce educational and professional qualification structure**

People with secondary education are a prevalent part of the workforce (including specialized secondary, vocational, high school) – 55.7%. A 23.4% share of the total number of workforce are people with higher education (including specialists, bachelors, masters and doctors); 20.9% have primary or lower education. In recent years there has been some improvement of the educational structure of the workforce, with an increasing share of people with higher education, but there is a decline of the share of all other educational levels.

*Higher qualification and education are conditions for better adaptability to the requirements of the labour market on the one hand, as well as a condition for the realization of healthy and safe work – on the other.*

At the moment, the level of vocational qualification of the workforce does not meet market requirements. There is a deficit in training for contemporary basic and key skills. There is a shortage of appropriate qualification for new occupations, above all in the field of high-tech and new technologies in industry and services, modern technologies in agriculture, management and marketing.

At this stage, the practical training of students in the educational system takes place mainly in school workshops and laboratories in the vocational schools and vocational high

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<sup>7</sup> According to experts and forecast results, this trend will also be preserved over the next ten years.

schools, or eels in specially furnished workplaces in enterprises. The outdated equipment for practical training at schools and the lack of resources for investment in practical training equipment limit and hinder the introduction of training in new occupations, as well as the opportunity of the educational system to react flexibly to the changes and demand on the labour market.

Regardless of the fact that recent years have witnessed the opening of special programmes and master degree courses in safety and health at work in the higher educational system there is a glaring need of specialists in this field.

The expanding network of private schools and universities improves the opportunities for flexible reaction of the educational system to the needs and requirements of employers, including in the field of safety and health at work.

Vocational education and training still is not aligned with the new needs of the labour market. There is a discrepancy between the vocations studied and the professional qualification structure of graduates and the real requirements of the labour market<sup>8</sup>. The list of occupations for vocational training still does not include the occupation (position) of “specialist in safety and health at work”.

#### 4. Working conditions<sup>9</sup>

##### 4.1. General characteristics

The largest part of the workforce is employed in different sectors of industry (29%), followed by employment in trade – 14% and agriculture (13%). There is a stable group of employed in the sphere of transport and communications (7% of all employed) and in construction – 6%. There is a firm trend of an increasing relative share of employed in the sphere of services - 5% is the share of people employed in the hotelier and restaurateur field, 2% provide community services, and 16% are engaged in other types of services. A mere 1% of the workforce is engaged in the sphere of financial mediation and another 3% are involved in real estate operations.

Branch	Employment (%)
Ferrous metallurgy	1.3
Non-ferrous metallurgy	3.2
Chemical industry	4.6
Electric engineering	7.4
Industry	13.7

<sup>8</sup> At the same time the problem also lies in the weak demand for qualified workforce because of the limited opportunities of SMEs to offer conditions for development and career growth, their unstable positions, low investment activity, constant bad expectations, which do not allow an outline of real needs of staff. According to the annual surveys of the labour market made by the National Employment Agency, the last 4-5 years have seen demand for mainly qualified specialists in small towns with the following occupations: doctors, pharmacists, dentists, accountants and insurers.

<sup>9</sup> Source: General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency – Annual reports of the General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency, Survey of Living and Working Conditions in Bulgaria (2005). The indicators are calculated according to the methodology of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound). According to experts and forecast results, the quoted trends have been preserved over recent years.

Textile and knitwear	10.5
Communications	4.0
Transport	5.1
Glass and china	3.2
Construction	6.4
Electricity generation And distribution	4.0
Wood processing	4.6
Healthcare and pharmacy	5.9
Agriculture	10.3
Services	9.7
Hotels and catering	6.1

Employment of *women* has a specific profile and shows a trend of feminization of some branches. The largest presence of women is registered in health care (27.8%), textile and knitwear industry (20.1%), 20% work in the field of services, 16% work in different branches of light industry (mainly in food and drink industry). The share of women is not inconsiderable in transport (6.5%) and construction (5.9%).

Employment of *men* is concentrated in is concentrated in construction (25.2%) and transport (22.3%). These are followed by industrial branches with 11.9% employed, wood processing – 5.9%, electric power generation and distribution - 5.4.%, chemical industry - 4.5%, health care - 4.5%, non-ferrous metallurgy - 4%.

There are low *attitudes for self-employment* – only 4.2% are self-employed without staff, 3.6% are self-employed with staff, 13.8% work in micro-enterprises of 2 to 4 staff and 10.9% - in enterprises with a staff of 5 to 9, or a total of 42.5% are self-employed or employed in micro-enterprises.

A total of 6% of the employed have less than a year *employment experience* in their occupation and the largest duration of employment in a specific occupation ranges between 2 and 5 years (33.9% of employed). The branches with the most employed with less than one year experience are construction (28%), food and drink industry (18%), textile industry (14%) and transport (12%). The longest employment experience (from 21 to 30 years) is registered with people employed in: health care and pharmacy (33.4%), communications (26.7%), chemical industry (23.5%). The largest number of employed with experience from 2 to 5 years is found among those working in the textile and knitwear industry (52.7%), as well as in the glass and china industry (50.0%).

There is a trend for employed to work above all under permanent employment contracts – 81%. Fixed-term contracts account for some 10% of employed. The share of people working under fixed-term contracts is highest (27.2%) among employed with experience of less than one year. There is a correlation between the length of experience and the type of *employment relations*, with people of mainly longer experience working under permanent employment contracts. This is a condition for generating stress caused by the lack of security on the job for young employed.

*Additional employment* is still weakly registered. A mere 3.8% of the individual have another paid job in addition to their basic one. Among these there is a prevalence of people with temporary jobs or seasonal jobs.

*The average age* of employed in Bulgaria stands at 42. This is an indicator for a good potential of labour resource and shows that regardless of the trend of ageing of the population the age characteristics of the workforce are close to the optimum standard.

<b>Distribution of employed by age</b>	
<b>Age bracket</b>	<b>Share in %</b>
From 18 to 25	10.1
From 26 to 35	25.8
From 36 to 45	27.3
From 46 to 55	27.0
Over 56	9.1

Several branches are characterized by ageing of the workforce. In the chemical industry 47.1% of the employed are aged between 46 and 55. This is followed by: non-ferrous metallurgy – 41.7% aged between 36 and 45 and 16.7% aged between 46 and 55; ferrous metallurgy - 60% aged between 36 and 45 and 20% aged between 46 and 55; electricity generation - 55% of the employed are over 35; communications – 46.7% aged between 46 and 55 and 20% are over 56.

Young employed up to 35 years of age mainly turn to:

- The sector of services (tourism, financial services), textile and knitwear – for the women;
- Construction and transport – for men.

#### **4.2. Nature of work**

The quality of work and working conditions are directly dependent on a number of factors related to the *nature of the work done* – technologies used (computers and Internet), localization of the work done (at home or in specially designed work premises), the influence of the working environment and the external environment (mostly work with clients, consumers, beneficiaries).

*Information technologies* are still little introduced and are used more rarely in comparison with EU countries. The relative share of people constantly working with computers is 12.6%. Information technologies are used in non-ferrous metallurgy<sup>10</sup> (25%), chemical industry (17.6%), communications (20%), electric power generation and distribution (11.1%), glass industry (16.7%), health care (12.5%), financial services (18%). The highest ratio of computer application is found with pharmacists (66.7%), while the greatest delay is found in light industry (5.1% of textile enterprises).

*Teleworking* is a specific form of organization that is extremely weakly developed in Bulgaria (0.3% of employed). Using modern information and communication technologies, this is an opportunity used mainly by young workers aged between 18 and 35, as well as by self-employed (the so-called free occupations – analysts, freelance architects, translators, journalists).

*Work with clients* is characteristic of 39.7% of the employed. By this indicator employed in Bulgaria are exceptionally close to the levels registered in the EU, women being twice more

<sup>10</sup> The percentage points quoted in this paragraph refer to those employed who use computers **all the time at work**.

than men and concentrated in the sectors of services, trade, health care and pharmacy, education and tourism.

### 4.3. Factors of working environment

A total of 45.5% of the employed are subject to *physical, chemical and biological agents*: noise – 15%, vibrations – 12%, chemical and biological agents – 15.7%, radiation – 2.8%. Some 9% work at high or low temperatures related to production, 6.2% - with hazardous products or substances and 10.4% - in the open.

There is a relation between exposure to physical factors and how large the enterprise is. The highest danger of exposure to vibrations and noise is relevant to people working at small (28.2%) and medium-sized enterprises (24.2%), which is related to the restructuring of the economy and the concentration of production in SMEs.

Employed aged between 36 and 45 are most exposed to the influence of physical factors (32.7%). As regards the 18 to 25 age bracket, this percentage is 19.1, and those above 56 - 23.4%.

### 4.4. Organization of work

*Repetitive and monotonous work* is measured by two indicators: repetitive hand movements and short repetitive operations with duration of 5 to 30 seconds. Repetitive hand movements prevail in the textile and clothing sector (74.4%), the pharmaceutical sector (66.7%) and in manufacturing (58.8%). These are followed by transport (46.4%), ferrous metallurgy (40%) and construction (35%). Repetitive hand movements are prevalent among those employed under permanent contract (25.1%), including in SMEs. In the case of self-employed this share is smaller, which is explained with the specifics of the work done - 1.8%.

Short repetitive operations of less than five seconds are made by 7% of the employed. Operations of less than 30 seconds are registered with 11.4% of the employed. The most frequent short repetitive and monotonous operations are those of less than 10 minutes (28.6%), less than 5 minutes (23.5%) and less than 1 minute (15.0%). This is an indicator pointing to the existence of stress because of the need to follow a certain rhythm of technological procedures and greater concentration.

*Moving heavy loads* is characteristic of men – 43.2% and 18.5% of women. In industry 23.1% of the workers and employees move heavy loads, and the same is valid of 19.2% in construction and 15.2% in transportation.

A total of 41.8% of the employed are forced to carry out certain types of operations that require exposure to *painful working postures*. Most affected are employees in the textile and knitwear industry (about 25.4%), in transport - 21.1%, industry - 18.3% and construction - 15.3%. The most protected in this respect are employees in communications, pharmacy and the state administration.

Workers and employees have a relatively low level of *autonomy* – the right to control the organization of their work, follow a certain rhythm of work, determine the distribution of working time and leave. A total of 53.6% of the employed cannot change the order of fulfilling tasks at their own choice and desire. The situation in respect to the methods of work is analogous – these are imposed by the employer and in only 42% of the cases the character of labour permits discussion of change in the methods used.

The greatest autonomy is enjoyed by those employed in health care (23.3%), construction (21.6%) and transport (14.7%).

*The form of labour relations also determines the degree of autonomy of the employed* in respect to the organization, methods and volume of work done. Those employed on a fixed-term contract have the smallest chances to determine part of the parameters of work, while the highest real opportunity is registered with self-employed.

**Work pace** emerges as an indicator liable to undergo a relatively high degree of personal intervention on the part of the workers. A total of 58.6% of employed can change their work pace at wish and if they choose to. This degree of freedom is definite in the case of self-employed, followed by people working under permanent and fixed-term contracts. In terms of economic branches, the greatest freedom in determining work pace is enjoyed by those employed in construction (21.3%), health care (18.0%), transport (16.3%), industry (9.6%). This opportunity is lowest in the case of those employed in glass industry (2.8%), power generation (1.7%) and ferrous metallurgy (also 1.7%).

The main factors influencing work pace are: automated systems with high pace of operation; work with clients; work performed by colleagues; direct control of supervisor.

A minimum number of employed **participate in planning the work process** – production planning (16.7%), selection of human resources (13.1%) and determining working time (16.5%). Those employed under permanent or fixed-term contracts have little opportunity to participate in these processes and consequently have minimum responsibility for planning the work process.

People employed under fixed-term contracts cannot really participate in the selection of staff as the status of fixed-term employed does not presuppose particularly large authority in determining the organization of work. In turn, self-employed bear full responsibility for the staff with whom they work and practically make their selection themselves.

Working time is mostly determined by the employer. Certain freedom to choose their own working hours is observed in the case of people employed in micro- and small enterprises.

A total of 19.1% of employed work at a shortage of working time. Therefore, one in every five employed may have a problem with the volume and complexity of the tasks set for the day, or else the work has low efficiency. This is sufficient reason for a need to streamline the organization of work.

Workers and employees are **personally responsible** for the quality of their work. A little over half of the employed (55.1%) fulfill certain quality standards. This relative share is highest in the case of people employed under permanent contract (80.5%). One-third of the employed (31.3%) are engaged in highly intensive work all workday and 10.3% - during one-fourth of working hours. A total of 62.2% of the employed work under specific deadlines. These circumstances are important from the point of view of the appearance of stress at work and the onset of chronic fatigue.

**The opportunity for career growth** presupposes learning innovative practices and professional enrichment by means of training and qualification. The greatest desire and the largest opportunity for career growth through training is registered with people employed in micro- and small enterprises (self-employed with employees, most frequently up to 10). These are the spheres of computer technologies, health care, services, tourism, pharmacy, light industry and chemical industry. People employed in heavy industry, glass industry and ferrous metallurgy are more conservative.

The degree of professional skill of employed and correspondence with the requirements for the respective occupation and work done are of particular importance for preventing accidents at work.

#### 4.5. Working time

Established working time – duration of working hours and working week, work models (late evening, Saturday and Sunday), satisfaction of the workers with their working hours, as well as the probability and their attitudes for change of the established work rate – have a direct impact on and are a source of risk of occupational accidents and occupational diseases.

The prevalent rate (57.3%) of employed work 40-44 hours *a week*, with 40 hours a week put in by 53.0%. A total of 27.2% work between 45 and 60 hours a week, and 4.4% - more than 60 hours a week. A minimum number of employed work up to 20 hours a week (2.7%), people working from 21 to 29 hours a week (0.7%) and those who work up to 39 hours a week (7.7%).

The relative share of women (60.2%) who work from 40 to 44 hours a week is higher than that of men (54.2%). In the 45 to 60 hours a week interval, the share of men (31.5%) is larger than that of women 23.4%. A similar trend is observed in the case of work over 60 hours a week (6.7% - men, 2.7% - women).

*One woman in every four and one man in every three work from 45 to 60 hours a week. One man in every 15 and one woman in every 37 work over 60 hours a week.* These models of organization of working hours within the working week are directly related to the character of work, but also result from the social roles attached to the two sexes.

Although it is not a statistically significant factor *age* has an influence on the duration of the working week. The youngest employed (18-25) register a higher relative share at work of between 45 and 60 hours, as well as over 60 hours a week. Workers and employees aged above 56 prefer to work at a 30 to 39 hour week.

The longest working week is recorded with people of *primary education* (12.8% of them work over 60 hours).

*Employment relations* are a factor of statistical significance at the formation of the average duration of the working week. People working under permanent contracts do so within the working time established by the law, i.e. between 40-44 working hours a week. Nevertheless, nearly one in every four of this category puts in up to 60 hours of work a week.

People employed under fixed-term contract apply flexible working hours and one in every three works from 45 to 60 hours a week and about 5% - over 60 hours a week.

The longest hours are put in by self-employed without staff – one in every three works more than 60 hours a week and 46.7% - between 45 and 60 hours a week. These statistics show a large workload on the one hand or low efficiency of the working process (bad self-organization, incorrect judgment of the volume of tasks and the deadline for their execution and so on) on the other. These trends are directly related to the levels of traumatism at work.

A total of 5.9% of the workforce are employed *part-time*. This share is relatively low and shows the still small application of flexible forms of employment. Women work part-time more frequently than men – 59.3% of the part-time employed are women. Most frequently this form of employment is registered with people aged between 46 and 55, as well as with employed under fixed-term contract (20.4%), while it is most rarely found in the case of those aged 18 to 25 and self-employed with staff (2.9%).

*Work from 18 to 22 hours* is observed in 36.2% of employed, an interval in which men work more frequently (70.1% men and 56.6% women), as well as self-employed and those with fixed-term contracts.

*Night labour (from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am)* is registered by some 16.8%, mainly self-employed without staff (23.8%), self-employed with staff (17.9%) and people on fixed-term

contracts (18.4%). 16.7% of the employed under permanent contracts work under an established shift regime.

*Working on Saturday and Sunday* is registered with 42.1% of the employed. Nearly one worker or employee in every five works four Saturdays a month, i.e. this means that a permanent six-day working week is practically applied. 19.6% work three Saturdays a week and 10.3% - two Saturdays a week. Nearly two-thirds of fixed-term employed also work on Saturday at least once a month. At least one Sunday of work a month is registered with 6.9% of employed and 12.7% work two Sundays a month. The relative share of people who work three Sundays a month (2.3%) or four Sundays a month (5.3%) is considerably smaller. Nearly 72% never have to work on Sunday.

Therefore, a serious number of workers and employees work under “untraditional working models”, which in some cases indicates more flexible forms of organization of work and application of out-of-standard approaches in determining working hours. Saturday proves a work day for a not inconsiderable part of the employed of all ages, and this mostly depends on the type of employment relations. Sunday as an option for working time is accepted mainly by the youngest men.

The *working time regularity* indicator is a complex one and unites three important parameters of working time – identical number of working hours every week, identical number of hours every workday and one and the same working schedule.

In 81.6% of the cases working hours are determined by the employer, so that the worker has no alternative or choice. The positive thing is that in their majority (71.4%) employers maintain a relatively constant working schedule which reduces additional stress caused by the frequent change of working hours. Nevertheless, nearly one-third of employed are subject to this type of stress because of irregularity of working time. The most significant changes in registered data are those in respect to the number of work hours put in every day, which to a certain degree indicates faulty organization of labour (irregular distribution of tasks within one working week, weak control on actually put in hours), but may also mean a higher degree of freedom of the workers to determine the duration of their working hours within the workday themselves.

One in every four employed (25.0%) works *in shifts*. The most frequently encountered organization of work is rotating morning and afternoon shifts (42.0%) and rotating day and night shifts (24.9%). One in every five working shifts works according to a schedule rotating day, afternoon and night shifts.

The working time data registered are related directly to the degree of reconcilability of workers' working schedule with their personal life (non-working life). A total of 74.0% of the employed are more or less satisfied with their working time and consider it “appropriate” for their life out of work. At the same time, nearly every one in four employed does not improve his/her personal working time, quoting as a reason the unfavourable reflection of the established regime of work on life outside work. The type of employment relations corresponds to the degree of the displeased with working hours. Most displeased are the self-employed and those who work up to 20 hours a week – although small in quantity, these hours are scattered in untraditional intervals for work which, of course, reflects on the quality of their personal life.

#### **4.6. Discrimination and force**

The working environment presupposes working jointly or work related to contacts with people external to the workplace. It is with that a large number of the possible sources of force or discrimination is also related. The main sources of use of force in the working environment are of psychological, not physical nature, and condition the so-called psychosocial risks in the workplace.

Employed Bulgarians are threatened by physical force by individuals external to the workplace (clients, patients, consumers) twice more frequently than those employed in the EU (1.8% against 0.7%).

*Sexual harassment* is extremely rare. This indicator is with values far lower than in EU countries.<sup>11</sup>

Overall, the gravest sources of violence are attributed to the *relationships with colleagues, between executive and managerial staff*, which is a source of psychological violence – a disparaging attitude to work.

Sex is not definitive in bad relations with colleagues, but age is a statistically significant factor. This risk is most distinctive in both the case of the youngest employed (5.5%) and in the age group above 56 (8.4%).

The greatest danger of psychosocial risks is registered with employed who serve clients, patients and other consumers - the highest indicators are in health care (24%), transport (20%), and services (21%). People working in construction (20%), textile and knitwear (14%) and the heavy industry (8%) also complain of bad relations with their colleagues.

The age of workers emerges as definitive in “worker-superior” relations. The highest degree of disapproval of superior in the case of people with the longest experience, respectively the people of the highest age groups (5.4% of the group between 46 and 55 and 4.7% of the group above 56). The lowest relative share of dissatisfied (3.3%) is registered among young employed.

The gravest problems between the employed and their superiors are registered in health care (21%), textile and knitwear (15.8%), industry (15%) and transport (15%).

Women are more frequently victim to a disparaging attitude to their work – 7.7% at 5.8% in the case of men. This factor is most evident in the 46 to 55 age group, followed by employed aged between 36 and 45.

The other serious source of psychological risk is the appearance of *discrimination by age*. Although based on self-assessment, this indicator sums up both the subjective sense of discrimination and really occurring circumstances.

Specialists with secondary education are most frequently the object of discrimination by age (4.6%). Specialists with higher education are protected a little better (2.4%). The type of employment relations has a direct impact on the appearance of discrimination by age. There are opportunities for it to appear mostly in the case of employed under permanent contract and fixed-term contract, while in the case of self-employed this factor is not registered significantly.

## **5. Work-related traumatism<sup>12</sup>**

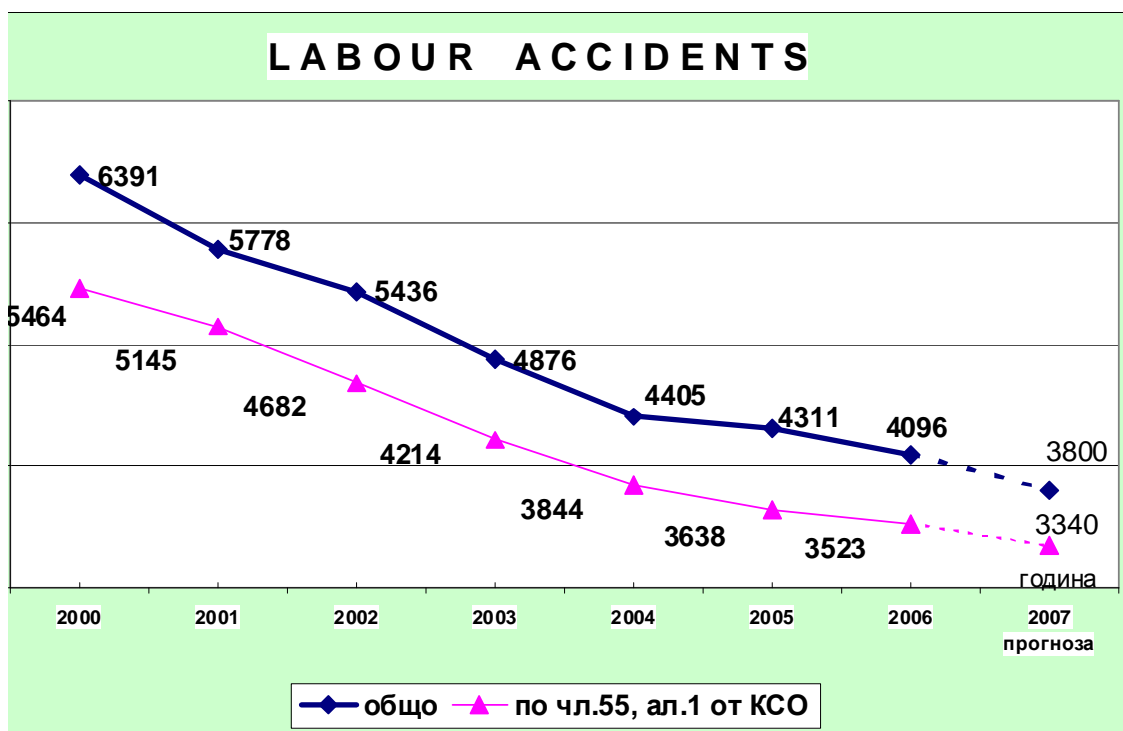
### **5.1. Occupational accidents**

The period from 2000 to 2006 registered a sustainable trend of reduction of the total number of occupational accidents<sup>13</sup>, these numbering 6,391 in 2000, 5,778 in 2002, 4,876 in 2003, 4,405 in 2004, 4,311 in 2005 and reaching 4,096 in 2006.

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<sup>11</sup> The question of sexual harassment is an exceptionally delicate one. Its treatment depends on cultural peculiarities. In the case in point, sexual harassment is understood as the state of obvious persecution or creation of a dependence on the career of the employed. Consequently, the sexual harassment indicators are obviously lower in Balkan countries and far higher in western societies where the understanding of the concept of sexual harassment itself is much broader.

<sup>12</sup> Source: National Social Security Institute occupational accidents information system.



Distribution of occupational accidents at the workplace (as referred to in Article 55 (1) of the Social Insurance Code) *by gender* shows a smaller number of occupational accidents occurring with women than with men:

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Sex</b>				
<b>Men</b>	3,193	2,901	2,733	2,635
<b>Women</b>	1,021	943	905	888

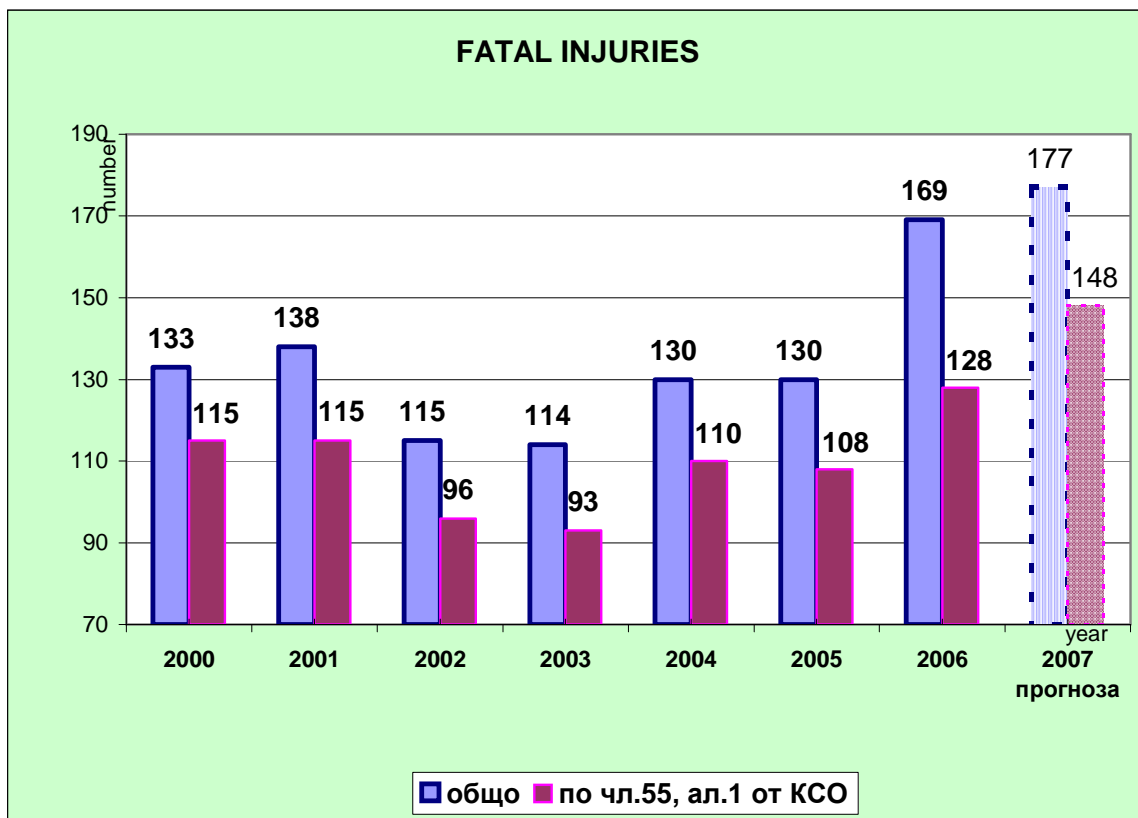
In the period under review, occupational accidents leading to *temporary incapacity* declined by 36.53% and occupational accidents with a *fatal outcome* increased by 11.30 %. The total number of fatal occupational accidents (765) and those that led to temporary loss of capacity to work (29,745) are a grave burden in social and economic respect, as well as a serious challenge to the activities for improving occupational safety and health.

<sup>13</sup> Social Insurance Code: **Article 55.** (1) Occupational accidents shall be any sudden impairment of health which has occurred during and in connection with or because of the work performed, as well as during any work performed in the interest of the enterprise where the said impairment has resulted in loss of working capacity or death.

(2) Occupational accidents shall furthermore be any injury of a person insured under Article 4 (1) and (2) herein during the usual commuting to or from the working place to:

1. the principal place of residence or to another additional place of residence of a permanent nature;
2. the place where the insured person customarily takes his or her meals during the working day;
3. the place where a remuneration is received.

(3) Occupational accidents shall not be the case where the insured person has deliberately impaired his or her health.

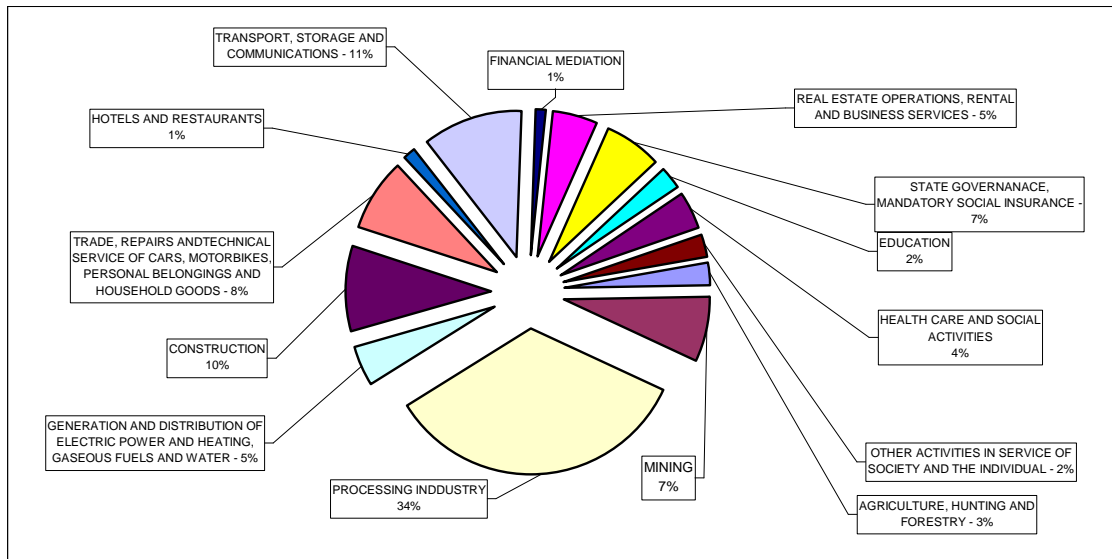


In 2006 the frequency of occupational accidents in Bulgaria was 1.74 cases per 1,000 insured individuals.

The highest risk *economic sector* is mining and quarrying, with an incidence rate of 10.80 cases per 1,000 insured, which is six times above the average for the country. There is also a high incidence rate of occupational accidents in the sectors of generation and distribution of electric power and heating, gaseous fuels and water – 3.63 and in transport, storage and communications-2.95.

The largest number of occupational accidents occurred in manufacturing (2,421 in 2000; 1,273 in 2006). This is followed by transport, storage and communications (559 in 2000; 381 in 2006), construction (392 in 2000; 353 in 2006) and mining and quarrying (661 2000; 272 in 2006).

#### DISTRIBUTION OF OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS BY SECTORS OF THE NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, 2006



One group seriously endangered by occupational accidents features *micro- and small-sized enterprises*, as in their case the number of accidents in 2006 increased as compared to 2004 (from 116 to 125 and from 491 to 540). For the 2003 – 2006 period the largest number of occupational accidents were registered in large enterprises, the trend being that of reduction from 2,848 in 2003 to 2,258 in 2006. This trend is also recorded with medium-sized enterprises where accidents have dropped by 12.06 %.

The distribution of occupational accidents by *workplace* for 2003 – 2006 shows that the largest number of accidents occurred at the usual workplace – a total of 9,709, while the most vulnerable *age group* in this respect is the one within the range of 45 to 54 years, with a total of 5,704 accidents.

One should pay attention to the relation between the number of occupational accidents and the duration of *working experience in the occupation*. In 2003 - 2006 the largest number of accidents occurred with employees with experience of up to one year – a total of 4,501. These are followed by employees with occupational experience of 10 to 20 years.

The trend related to occupational accidents and *the duration of work at the enterprise* reports an increase of accidents in the case of workers employed at the enterprise from 3 months to 1 year, their number in 2006 having increased by 61% in comparison with 2003.

## 5. 2. Occupational diseases

Occupational diseases are conditions which occur exceptionally or prevalently under the influence of factors of the working environment or the process of work on the organism. They do not have a bad prognosis in respect to life, but nevertheless their social significance is large because of the following reasons:

- They affect people at active working age and with considerable professional experience and qualification (usually aged 35 – 55);
- They have a certain place in the structure of morbidity;
- They easily acquire a chronic and recurrent form;

- In a number of cases they create the opportunity for long-term temporary loss of working capacity or even disability;
- As nosology they have a serious presence in the health care of developed industrial countries;
- They can generate considerable losses for employers, employed and the state.

According to data provided by the National Center of Public Health Protection, for the 2004-2005 period the total number of ***newly-registered (certified) individuals with occupational diseases stands at 499***, including 262 men and 237 women. The largest share of individuals with occupational diseases belongs to those aged 45 to 54 (207 cases) and those aged 55 to 64 – 172 cases. In recent years, too, the largest number of cases of occupational diseases was recorded with workers with experience in employment of 20 to 30 years, these being 126 for 2004 and declining to 91 in 2005. These are followed by cases of occupational disease in employed with total contributory service over 30 and up to 40 years – 97 in 2004 and 54 in 2005. Statistics indicates that the largest number of cases of occupational disease is registered with people with occupational experience between 10 and 20 years – a total of 183 for the period under review, while those with experience in the interval of over 20 and up to 30 years are 108.

***The economic activities*** with the largest number of newly-registered cases of occupational disease for 2004-2005 are: processing industry – a total of 236; mining and quarrying – 106 cases; transport – 29 cases, construction – 25 cases, state governance, mandatory social security – 24 cases.

***The unfavourable factors of the working environment and the process of work***<sup>14</sup>, that led to the largest number of cases of occupational disease over the period under review include: mechanical vibrations – a total of 111 cases; locomotory monotonous, repetitive work – 56 cases; work at high speed – 54 cases; working postures – 46 cases; varied movements – 40 cases; dust – 36 cases; noise – 31 cases; carrying and lifting weights – 30 cases.

Accounting occupational diseases by groups defining ***occupations***, one can conclude that the largest number of cases are registered with the following groups of occupations: underground miner, underground worker, driller – a total of 93 cases; handicraft worker in textiles and ready-to-wear – 64 cases; turner, fitter, grinder – 42 cases; driver – 31 cases; mechanic, welder – 22 cases, spinner, knitter – 21 cases; tractor, earthmoving plant operators – 21 cases.

In the period under review, 39 cases of occupational diseases have led to 50-70.99 % ***permanently reduced working capacity***, 6 cases – to 71-90 %, and those with over 90 % are 3. There are 451 cases with less than 50 % permanently reduced working capacity.

In 2004 and 2005 the certified and repeatedly certified persons with occupational diseases numbered 2,178, including 1,292 men and 886 women. Most of them were aged 45-54 – 931, with total contributory service of over 20 and up to 30 years – 790; with occupational experience from 10 to 20 years – 647, and with permanently reduced working capacity of 50-70.99 % – 579 cases.

## II. OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH POLICY

The policy in the field of health and safety at work is aligned with: the Lisbon Strategy of interaction of policies to deliver stronger, lasting growth and create more and better jobs, modernize social protection and encourage sustainable development, and from there - of the need to reconsider working conditions, the organization of work and the opportunities to reconcile lifelong learning and work; with the European Community Strategy 2007-2012 on

<sup>14</sup> According to the classification of Pathogenetic Agents/factors Causing Occupational Disease from the Occupational Diseases Statistical System (promulgated, *State Gazette* No. 5/2004).

Safety and Health at Work which focuses on promotion to provide “wellbeing at work” and the International Labour Organization Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health, which considers worthy work equal to safe work and calls for fair globalization.

The implementation of a purposeful social policy to provide health and safety at work is a varied and complex process, related to the realization of a set of legislative, organizational and economic, social, technical and health care measures. The aim is to raise the quality of every kind of labour and to improve permanently the condition of all elements of this notion, as well as to provide the opportunity for a long and productive life of people at work.

The priorities in this field are aimed at preserving the health, capacity to work and life of employed. Provisions have been made for simultaneous action along all axes: competitiveness of employers, good quality of living and working conditions, training and development of a culture of prevention.

Bulgaria’s active social policy in respect to conditions at work is aimed at:

- A comprehensive approach to promote the provision of wellbeing at work;
- Increasing the preventive culture of employed and further development of the system of prevention by means of: improving legislation, training and education, social dialogue, general social responsibility, economic initiatives, partnership between all participants in work;
- Development of the competitiveness of Bulgarian employers on the basis of a target-oriented social policy and the achievement of quality in the activity focused on safety and health at work;
- Promotion and popularization of innovative and adaptive forms of organization of work with a view to improve quality, work productivity, occupational safety and health;
- Comprehensive and effective integrated control of abidance by labour legislation;
- Provision of the necessary quality of training in the field of occupational safety and health;
- Expansion of the infrastructure of services for consulting and supporting employers and improving the quality of this activity;
- Development of social security systems and insurance activity and their effective inclusion in the work on providing occupational safety and health at enterprises.

The development of the activity aimed at safety and health at work follows the basic guidelines and principles of European and international law concerning:

- Risk prevention;
- Assessment of risks that cannot be avoided;
- Limitation of risks at source of origin;
- Adaptation of work to worker, particularly in respect to the design of workplaces, the choice of working equipment, methods of work and production, with a view to eradicate monotonous work, work with imposed rhythm, as well as to reduce their impact on the health of workers.
- Alignment with technical progress;
- Substitution of hazardous for safe or with less hazardous;

- Identification of existing hazards and sources of factors detrimental to safety and health;
- Implementation of consistent comprehensive preventive policy including technology, the organization of work, working conditions, social relations and the impact of the elements of working environment and the process of work;
- Use of collective protection means with an advantage over personal protection means;
- Giving workers relevant instructions.

Aiming at the successful development of the activity on safety and health at work, a law<sup>14</sup> determines the main rights, obligations and responsibilities of all participants in the labour process: state, employers; employed; persons who on their own account work alone or in partnership; as well as other organizations and legal persons. All requirements of the framework Council Directive 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work have been introduced entirely through the Health and Safety at Work Act.

A system of standards, concrete requirements and obligations to provide safety and health at work has been developed, creating real grounds for implementing the principles of the common European market.

Provisions have been made for the minimum requirements that employers have to fulfill to provide the safety and health of their workers and employees. A foundation has been made for management and planning of the activity to providing safety and health at work on the basis of occupational risk assessment. It is mandatory to provide medical surveillance of the workers and employees, as well as to provide the necessary information and appropriate training aligned with the character of the work done and the qualification of the workers.

The principal requirements of the European Union and the International Labour organization in respect to the establishment of uniform state control have been introduced. Overall control on abidance by labour legislation is effected by the General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy.

To achieve fair distribution of security contributions between individual employers and motivation for safe and healthy work, a system has been developed and functions to determine differentiated amounts of social security contributions for occupational accidents and occupational diseases, depending on the degree of risk in the different sectors of the economy. Mandatory occupational accidents insurance of workers and employees has been introduced.

### **III. SHW SYSTEM INSTIUTIONAL CAPACITY**

#### **1. Institutions in the field of SHW**

State policy in the field of safety and health at work in the Republic of Bulgaria is determined by the **Council of Ministers**.

**The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** develops, coordinates and implements the state policy on providing safety and health at work.

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<sup>14</sup> Health and Safety at Work Act. (*Promulgated, SG No. 124/1997, amended No. 86/1999, No. 64/2000, No. 92/2000, No. 25/2001, No. 111/2001, amended and supplemented, No. 18/2003, amended, No. 114/2003, amended and supplemented, No. 70/2004, No. 76/2005, amended, No. 33/2006, amended and supplemented, No. 48/2006, amended, No. 102/2006, amended and supplemented, No. 105/2006, No. 40 of 18.05.2007.*)

**The General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency** is a state authority which exercises overall control on abidance by labour legislation to provide safety and health at work and on employment relations, as well as specialized control pursuant to the Employment Promotion Act and the other statutory instruments in the field of employment and unemployment with explicit provisions to that end.

**The Ministry of Health** manages and coordinates the activity on the protection and improvement of health at work.

**Institutions within the system of the Ministry of Health** – Regional inspectorates of protection and control of public health (RIPCPH), National Center of Public Health Protection (NCPHP), National Centre for Radiobiology and Radiation Protection (NCRRP).

**Other ministries** with functions in the field of safety and health at work – the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, the Ministry of Economy and Energy, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Interior and others.

**Other specialized authorities and institutions on control and supervision** – State Agency for Metrology and Technical Surveillance (SAMTS), National Construction Supervision Directorate, National Fire Safety and Protection of Population Service and others.

Through its territorial divisions **the National Social Security Institute (NSSI)** exercises control in respect to expertise of capacity to work, investigates accidents at work, maintains an information system of employment accidents.

Through the **Working Conditions Fund** the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy actively supports the activities for providing safety and health at work. The fund provides financial means for training employers, trade union members, members of committees and groups on working conditions and specialists in safety and health in enterprises. It grants funds for projects focused on diagnosis of occupational diseases and part of projects aimed at solving concrete problems for improving working conditions. It also funds the preparation, printing and distribution of educational and other information materials. National conferences, meetings, seminars and other events in the field of occupational safety and health are held with the financial support of the Working Conditions Fund.

There is an **infrastructure of units for providing assistance to employers** at the implementation of requirements and obligations to provide safety and health at work – occupational medicine services, safety and health at work training and consultation centres.

The national policy for providing safety and health at work is formed and implemented on the basis of trilateral cooperation at national, sectoral and regional level.

The **National Council on Working Conditions (NCWC)** is a permanent authority at national level for coordination, consultation and cooperation at the drafting and implementation of the policy for providing safety and health at work. All decisions, opinions and recommendations are adopted by consensus of the council members.

Regional councils for trilateral cooperation on safety and health at work have been established in all administrative regions. Committees on working conditions at enterprises have been established to provide dialogue between employers and workers and employees.

**The sectoral and branch councils on working conditions** consist of representatives of the national sector or branch federations, associations and trade unions of employed, of sector or branch structures of employers and equal to their number representatives of the respective ministry or authority.

**The regional (regional and municipal) councils on working conditions** consist of representatives of the existing regional unions or organizations of employed and employers, and

equal to their number of representatives of the regional administration or local self-government authorities.

To date there are about 25 branch councils in industry, power industry, construction, transport, leather industry, railway transport and more than 37 municipal councils on working conditions.

## **2. Capacity of the HSW system**

Statistics reported the lowest level of occupational traumatism in the past 10 years. These statistics are favourable but also engaging in respect to uniting efforts and effective partnership at resolving problems in the field of safety and health at work and seeking new forms of motivation for healthy and safe work.

Costs have been reduced considerably because of the limited budget funds necessary for different measures and administrative maintenance of the system in the field of safety and health at work. The low level of financial backup of the administrative system allows it to function, but does not permit the essential development that is needed.

There still isn't a uniform national information system in the field of occupational safety and health, which is of particular importance for the implementation of effective policy and realization of adequate measures for improving working conditions and protection of employed. An information system is necessary, which would provide adequate and reliable information about enterprises, taking into account the character of their operation, occupational risks, the level and dynamics of traumatism, and others.

One essential problem is the lack of a national Centre on Safety and Health at Work to collect, summarize and distribute information in the field of HSW adapted to contemporary development of science, technologies and practice. Studies should be conducted, as well as analyses and evaluations, on the basis of which adequate policies will be implemented and adequate support would be provided for the development of a culture of prevention in all stakeholders in labour.

In spite of the trend of an increasing number of enterprises which really fulfill their obligations to provide safety and health for their employed, the economic and social changes generate new challenges before both the employers and the entire system of providing safety and health at work. Building the capacity of the entire system for providing safety and health at work will increase the quality and effectiveness at work and will lead to providing real protection of the workforce.

It is necessary to develop the capacity of the General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency, the social partners and all specialized structures and units working to provide safety and health at work in order to guarantee the effective application of the policies on safety and health at work. Encouragement of initiatives for training, qualification and vocational education corresponding to the challenges and needs of the labour market will raise the quality of services offered and will ensure a higher degree of protection from occupational hazards.

It could be said that the system of studying employer needs of workforce with certain qualification is hardly developed, one that would serve both the objectives of education in the system of secondary and higher schooling, and the realization of healthy and safe work.

## **3. Monitoring of working conditions**

The General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency monitors working conditions in the country through the mechanisms of control of employment relations and providing safety and health at work. Data about the condition of working conditions by economic activity (sectors of the economy) at national and regional level are provided by the drafting of periodic reports covering the spheres of control.

Through the National Register of Occupational Accidents the National Social Security Institute prepares regular reports on the condition of employment traumatism in the country, as well as Annual Statistics of Accidents at Work and Commuting Accidents.

The reports from the monitoring of working conditions and occupational traumatism account for the changes of the indicators for fulfillment of the requirements of legislation and policies (programmes, activities, measures) for providing safety and health at work and their development.

The system of indicators was streamlined and provides good opportunities for analysis of the condition of working conditions at national and sectoral level, and in enterprises.

The main indicators monitored by the General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency are:

- Total number of enterprises, including SMEs with established violations on safety and health at work, employment relations and pursuant to the Employment Promotion Act;
- Applied enforced administrative measures for: suspended projects and putting into operation; stopped machines, jobs etc.; suspended execution of illegal orders; individuals suspended from work; introduction of special regime of work; suspension of enterprise, etc.;
- Memoranda of ascertainment;
- Effective punitive decrees;
- Permits granted for employment of individuals below 18 years of age;
- Registered collective labour contracts.

The main indicators monitored by the National Social Security Institute are: total number of occupational accidents; mean number of insuring parties; mean number of insured individuals; number of accident at work with fatal outcome; coefficients of frequency and gravity; indices of frequency and gravity, etc.

The monthly and annual monitoring of the activities on providing safety and health at work is conducted by specialized units in the system of MLSP and NSSI.

Within the framework of monitoring the activities for providing HSW sufficient attention is not paid to regional differences and structural changes in the economy. There are no systematic studies following the changes in sectoral policies for providing HSW and the respective traumatism.

#### **4. Principal challenges**

Conditions at work are a feature that has direct influence on the general performance of enterprises in real economy.

Analysis of the current condition, trends and prospects for the development of activities on providing HSW permits the designation of some principal challenges which will determine the development of the policy on safety and health at work in the period up to 2012.

Efforts in the past few years have been aimed at supporting the practical implementation of legislation in the country. As a result of the purposeful policy of the Government and the social partners, essential progress has been made on providing safety and health at work for employed. The average annual growth of fulfillment of the legislative requirements on safety and health at work by employers stands at 12 %. There is a permanent trend of a declining number of occupational accidents in Bulgaria.

We could also add the following to the positive findings from the application of legislation on safety and health at work:

- A large part of the requirements and principles for providing safety and health at work contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act are really applied in practice.
- Labour inspectors report that there is proof of general improvement of the activity on providing safety and health at work in the country.
- The European standards of safety and health at work are not only an objective but an achievement for a large number of enterprises.
- The number of enterprises which invest in safe technologies and working equipment is increasing constantly.
- Considerable experience has been accumulated in preparing risk assessment and that reflects in their good quality; there is an increasing share of enterprises which have implemented programmes for eradication and minimizing industrial risk.
- A large number of enterprises have developed and endorsed internal statutory instruments – regulations on internal working procedures, rules and instructions for safe work, rules of organization of salaries and so on.
- The circle of enterprises that have provided occupational medicine service to their workers and employees has expanded considerably.

**These positive trends are expected to continue.**

Regardless of the implementation of main trends of the policy of safety and health at work, a number of challenges also exist. In the first place, the country is faced by a group of problems which require concentration of efforts and resources for their direct resolution. These include:

- The new challenges for protection of employed caused by economic and social changes;
- The large number of SMEs in which knowledge of safety and health at work is insufficient or frequently lacking; the risks are not identically expressed in large and small enterprises;
- The trend of increasing working time and labour intensity, which leads to increasing stress on the job;
- Bulgarian production in a number of economic activities is still done with outdated machines and equipment, which not only do not have competitive output but also generate hazards for workers;
- Ineffective risk monitoring and assessment systems;
- Inadequate professional qualification level of workforce;

- Insufficient vocational training of employed with a view to providing safety and health at work.

Nor could one overlook the challenges before the management of health and safety at work, posed by demographic changes, the ageing of the working population and the new trends in employment, including increasing self-employment, outsourcing and increasing employment in SMEs.

The participation of women on the labour market continues to increase. Special attention should be paid to the aspects of health and safety concerning women in particular.

Last but not least, we also have the matters related to ineffective state control in the field of labour, the insufficient qualification of control authorities, insufficient resources and information backup (people, equipment, mobility, information systems and others).

#### **IV. VISION, GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

The vision of the Strategy on Safety and Health at Work 2008 – 2012 is for Bulgaria to become a country of high quality and productivity labour based on occupational safety and health.

##### **Goals and priorities**

**The Community Strategy 2007-2012 on Health and Safety at Work** encourages member-states to undertake a commitment for the implementation of measures aimed at continuous, sustainable and regular reduction of accidents at work and occupational diseases.

**The main goal** of the Strategy on Safety and Health at Work for Bulgaria is: **reduction of occupational accidents by 25 %.**

To achieve this ambitious goal, the following measures will be implemented in the following priority fields.

- 1. Guaranteeing correct application of legislation in the field of safety and health at work.**
- 2. Promoting development and application of sectoral strategies**
- 3. Occupational risk management**
- 4. Promoting preventive culture and changes in workers' and employers' behavior aiming the health protection**

##### **Priority 1. Guaranteeing correct application of legislation in the field of safety and health at work**

The realization of this priority presupposes the application of a complex of measures and means for the *effective application of legislation in the field of safety and health at work*, which is of fundamental importance for protecting the life and health of workers on the one hand, and puts all operating enterprises on an equal footing – on the other.

Channeling efforts into the sectors considered risky and to the categories of most vulnerable workers and employees (young and ageing employed, workers and employees under

fixed-term contracts and badly qualified), as well as the SMEs and the public sector will contribute considerably to reducing the number of occupational accidents on the job and occupational diseases. It is necessary to increase the commitment of all participants in the activity on providing HSW both at national level and at enterprise level.

Measures guaranteeing a high degree of abidance by legislation will be applied with a priority, wit a stress on SMEs and high-risk sectors:

- Distribution of good practices;
- Training of workers, employees and managerial staff;
- Development of easily applicable risk assessment tools;
- Distribution of information in understandable language and of easily understood and easily applicable guidelines;
- Access to high quality external services for prevention;
- Use of labour inspectors as mediators to promote better application of legislation in SMEs;
- Application of economic measures at Community level (for example through structural funds) and at national level in respect to micro-enterprises and SMEs.

*Building capacity for monitoring and control of the application of legislation* is a mandatory condition for to guarantee comparable degrees of protection of employed in all enterprises. An important condition to achieve this objective is undertaking measures for improving quality and effectiveness of control on abidance by labour legislation:

- Complementing the rights of control authorities;
- Improving coordination and control on the activity of all control authorities in the field of labour with legislation providing for: the manner of functioning of the national system of labour inspection; the types of control activities included in labour inspection; the manner of interaction between state control authorities engaged in labour inspection; control of the activity of state control authorities engaged in labour inspection;
- Increasing administrative penal liability for violations of labour legislation;
- Increasing the strictness of enforced administrative measures applied;
- Building the administrative capacity of the General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency.

*The development of legislative framework* should be:

- Aimed at the achievements of technical progress and development of the labour market;
- Guarantee consistent, simplified and effective application;
- Reduce administrative costs which are a burden to enterprises.

All measures aimed at the creation of legislation feasible for enterprises will be implemented by improvement and simplification of national legislation, without however reducing the existing levels of protection.

## **Priority 2. Promoting development and application of sectoral strategies**

The success of the strategy depends on that to what degree coordinated sectoral strategies will be developed and applied, ones that will set quantitative goals for reducing the incidence of occupational accidents and diseases.

Sector strategies will be drawn up on the basis of comprehensive analysis and evaluation of development by sectors (branches), with the active participation of and consultation with all stakeholders, including the social partners. Priority will be given to the implementation of measures aimed at enterprises showing deviations from the requirements for safety and health at work, as well as at the most frequently encountered risks and the most vulnerable workers.

Sector strategies should cover the following fields:

- *Prevention of health hazards by increasing the effectiveness of monitoring;*

Working conditions that have an adverse effect on health can have long-term effect and cause later occupational diseases and health problem even after a period of 20 years exposure to harmful substances as the case with asbestos is. Monitoring the health of workers is a main instrument in the efforts to prevent such problems.

- *Measures for rehabilitation and reintegration of employed;*

It is necessary to encourage the Occupational Accidents and Occupational Disease Fund of State Public Insurance to undertake measures for the drafting of national branch programmes (strategies) for rehabilitation and reintegration of employed who are forced to change their jobs as a result of accidents at work or who have lost their jobs due to a different degree of permanent loss of capacity to work.

- *Alignment with social and demographic changes;*

The challenges stemming from the demographic change of the workforce are clearly defined. An adequate policy of safety and health at work at sector/branch level can help meet these challenges, mainly with better adaptation on the job to the individual needs and better application of ergonomic principles to the concept of workplaces and organization of work.

Regardless of the fact that the needs of an ageing active population should be met, the situation of the younger workers should not be overlooked, particularly those who are vulnerable to risks at work. If this aspect is overlooked it will lead to shifting risk towards the younger age groups and will create conditions for future problems.

### **Priority 3. Occupational risk management of the new and emerging risks**

*Basic scientific research*, as well as *applied research*, are absolutely necessary for improvement of knowledge on matter related to safety and health at work. They are of particular importance to describe situations of exposure, to identify causes and effects and to design preventive solutions and innovative technologies.

Research priorities should include psychosocial issues, musculoskeletal disorders, dangerous substances, knowledge of reproductive risks, occupational safety and health management, risks associated with several cross-factors (e.g. work organisation and workplace design issues, ergonomics, combined exposure to physical and chemical agents) and potential risks associated with nanotechnologies.

It is necessary to develop a National Centre of Safety and Health at Work which will conduct social and economic surveys in the field of innovation, organizational management and production, technological transfer, new forms of managerial development, etc. Knowledge should be generated and creativity and innovation opportunities should be stimulated to provide wellbeing at work.

Occupational risk management will also be achieved by:

- Evaluation of the impact of risks on the professional and health status of the workforce;
- Development and dissemination of applied scientific knowledge and experience;
- Development of effective programmes for occupational risk management and control involved with the application of new technologies and technological solutions, adapted to contemporary development of science and technological progress.

#### **Priority 4. Promoting preventive culture and changes in workers' and employers' behavior aiming the health protection**

Successful coping with the new obligations and challenges posed by legislation in the field of safety and health at work is related above all to realizing the significance of this activity and developing a preventive culture. Therefore, both employers and employed should realize the benefits of a well-functioning system of safety and health at work and the mutual responsibilities related to it. In this direction it is necessary to make additional efforts to increase the percentage of enterprises in which management of the activity on safety and health at work is integrated in the general company management and is an element of the quality system.

Companies which invest in active prevention policies to protect the health of their workers will obtain tangible results:

- ✓ reduction in costs arising from absenteeism;
- ✓ reduction in staff turnover;
- ✓ greater customer satisfaction;
- ✓ increased motivation;
- ✓ improved quality of products and services and enhanced company image.

These positive effects can be reinforced by encouraging workers to care for their safety and health, adopt habits and competencies which improve their general state of health

Changing people's attitudes to health and safety issues at work involves, among other things:

- ✓ activities for raising awareness;
- ✓ ensuring that the rules relating to the information, training and participation of workers are applied fully and effectively.

Technical rules, manuals with practical principles and guidelines on safety and health at work will be of particular importance for employers at fulfilling their obligations to provide occupational safety and health. It is necessary to develop manuals, methodologies, codes of good practices and other instruments providing alternative solutions for the application of legislation and ones that are adequate to the risks in the respective sectors of the economy, which will raise their awareness and motivation to apply the legislation.

*The integration of health care in safety, lifelong learning and gender equality in business management and all educational levels* guarantee the development of preventive culture oriented towards all strata of society and reaching the workplace. Specialized programmes on safety and health at work at all levels of the educational cycle will develop the educational and professional

profile of the workforce and will form a culture setting store by the prevention of occupational risks. Primary education plays an important role, since basic preventive reflexes are developed during childhood.

Special attention should also be paid to the training of young entrepreneurs in occupational safety and health management and to training for workers to make them aware of the risks in the company and how to prevent and combat them. This is particularly important for SMEs and migrant workers.

It is necessary to improve the *instruments of social dialogue* and encourage social partners:

- ✓ to actively cooperate with the government at the development of national programmes on safety and health at work;
- ✓ to draw up initiatives in the context of the sectoral social dialogue and to ensure that workers' representatives are given a greater coordinating role in the systematic management of occupational risks;
- ✓ to popularize actively the main principles of prevention at the workplace in enterprises;
- ✓ to continue to cooperate actively on the prevention of emergence of new risks at the workplace, especially those of a psychosocial nature;
- ✓ to enhance, both on national level and at the level of enterprise, technical assistance and training of representatives of workers and employees who have responsibilities related to occupational safety and health, as well as of other employed, with a special focus on SMEs.

## **V. APPLICATION AND REPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK**

### **1. Financial backup of implementation of the Strategy on Safety and Health at Work**

Achieving the objective and priorities of the Strategy requires backing up the priorities with financial resources. It is exceptionally important to spend the existing resources effectively and efficiently, particularly in view of the fact that different institutions will take actions aimed at the solution of general problems (occupational risk prevention, education and training, monitoring and information, etc.). In relation to this, planning and implementation of the measures mapped out will occur within the framework of programme budgeting. This will provide the necessary degree of coordination between the individual institutions and policies for the implementation of the respective tasks. The necessary administrative capacity will also be provided for carrying out the activities mapped out. The institutions in the field of HSW listed in Item III, HSW System Institutional Capacity, will be responsible for the successful implementation of the objectives and tasks.

The implementation of the Strategy is also provided for financially from the programmes of the Human Resources Development Operational programme, the Occupational Accidents and Occupational Disease Fund of State Public Insurance and the Working Conditions Fund with the Minister of Labour and Social Policy, as well as by funds of employers and other sources.

Coordinated use of the existing financial resources from all sources given here means that the fulfillment of the objectives of the strategy will not require an increase of the share of redistribution of GDP through the intervention of the state.

The concrete annual actions and their financial backup from the different sources of funding will be determined in the national Programme on Safety and Health at Work adopted by the Council of Ministers.

## **2. Expected results**

The results expected from the achievement of the strategy objectives and priorities are grouped in the following directions:

### ***2.1. Improved and simplified legislation without reduction of the existing levels of protection of employed***

Since national legislation in the field of safety and health at work is comprehensive, the stress has been laid on updating and simplifying already existing legislative measures without lowering the existing levels of protection. The benefits generated as a result of applying this legislation are expressed mainly in the reduction of the degree of occupational risks and increasing the protection of employed.

Preservation of the differences in the application of minimum requirements set down in national legislation and EU directives would hinder the establishment of an identical field of action for enterprises on the labour market in Bulgaria and the EU, and would lead to unfair competition based on low standards for working conditions.

### ***2.2. Continuous, sustainable and regular reduction of the occupational diseases and occupational diseases***

The significance of this outcome is shown by the reported degree of occupational traumatism in the country. The consequences of occupational accidents and occupational diseases have both an economic and social impact.

Reduction of the number of number of occupational accidents and occupational diseases will lead to a reduction of:

- The amount of working time lost as a result of absence from work due to temporary incapacity to work;
- The number of persons leaving enterprises because of bad working environment or because of premature retirement and incapacity to work (disability);
- The costs sustained by employers for assisting return to work (consultations, training, adaptation to the workplace, etc.);
- Production capacity – lost production time, not produced products and not provided services as a consequence of an event ending in trauma;
- Social security and insurance burden;
- Distress and suffering etc.

### ***2.3. Improved methods of the occupational risk management***

The preventive systems of safety and health at work management developed on the basis of: risk assessment; provision of information and training to employed; provision of appropriate working environment and working equipment; medical monitoring and others, actually lead to:

- Improving wellbeing and satisfaction with work, including for the vulnerable groups on the labour market;
- Improvement of the quality of products and services;
- Boosting the image of enterprises;

- Boosting labour productivity.

Safety and health at work have a prime role for improving the competitiveness and productivity of economic activity by reducing the cost of accidents and deterioration of health.

### **3. Monitoring and evaluation of SHW Strategy implementation**

The full cycle of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the objectives and priorities includes:

- Ex-ante evaluation of measures and initiatives with a view to achieving better quality.

Depending on the available information, ex-ante evaluation will include different elements such as: the reasons for the origination of a certain problem; concrete target group peculiarities; expected general and specific results from the planned actions; indicators for measuring the objectives set; possible alternative approaches to achieve the desired result; experience amassed from the implementation of other measures; analysis of the effectiveness of actions suggested (cost/benefit type).

- Ongoing monitoring on the part of the institutions responsible for the implementation of concrete measures.
- Subsequent evaluation of execution and impact from the implementation of the programmes and measures.

Impact assessments will be carried out to identify the real results for the end beneficiaries from the implementation of actions under the individual priorities of the strategy.

Action will be taken in the following directions with a view to improving the monitoring and evaluation information base:

- Integration of the National Register of Occupational Accidents as part of the National Social Security Institute information system;
- Development of an information database for labour inspections;
- Development of the instruments for collecting and providing information about working conditions;
- Development of the approach for forming policies on the basis of results of surveys, studies and other scientific methods of assessment of working conditions and the need of concrete measures to improve the results of applying the strategy. The capacity of institutions on HSW will be developed for strategic analysis and forecasting of the processes of occupational risk management and control.