

Strategy for occupational safety and health in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2024 to 2027 with an action plan for its implementation

Based on Article 38, paragraph 1 of the Law on the Planning System of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 30/2018), the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a new Strategy for Occupational Safety and Health in the Republic of Serbia for the period from 2024 to 2027 with the Action Plan for its implementation ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 84/2024, hereinafter: "Strategy") that will continue further activities on the implementation of the occupational safety and health policy and harmonization with the standards in this area that are valid for the member states of the European Union.

The general goal of the Strategy is to reduce the number of work-related injuries by 5% in the period of its implementation compared to the total number of work-related injuries for the previous five-year period of implementing the Strategy according to the records of the Labor Inspectorate.

The specific objectives of the Strategy are:

- 1) Improvement of the regulatory framework in the field of safety and health at work;
- 2) Promotion of the importance of prevention in the field of safety and health at work;
- 3) Improvement of working conditions in order to prevent injuries at work, occupational diseases and work-related diseases;
- 4) Improvement of records on work injuries and licenses.

The Ministry of Labour, Veterans and Social Affairs (hereinafter: "Ministry") is directly responsible for managing the Strategy and Action Plan, while the funds for its implementation are provided by the Law on the Budget of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", No. 92 /2023 and 79/2024).

The legal framework for occupational safety and health consists of 17 legal acts at the national level (of which 12 are laws, 1 regulation and 3 regulations) and at the international level, it consists of a large number of conventions of the International Labor Organization in the field of occupational safety and health, ratified by the Republic of Serbia. Some of the conventions include: Convention No. 155 on safety at work, health care and working environment adopted in 1981 and Convention No. 187 on the promotional framework of safety and health at work adopted in 2006 and others.

According to the data available in the Strategy, there was an increase in the number of work injuries, which in 2023 was as many as 22,910. It is believed that the increased number of employees contributed to this, which also caused a significant increase in inspection supervision due to injuries with a fatal outcome.

The activities with the highest number of fatal and serious injuries at work with a fatal outcome are construction (with as many as 47.5% of fatalities), industry, communal activities and recycling (10%), agriculture and forestry (5%).

In addition, non-reporting and inadequate reporting of occupational diseases was under revision, so employers are reminded that they are obliged to report all occupational diseases to the competent labor inspectorate within three consecutive working days at the latest. Otherwise, fines ranging from 800,000 to 1,000,000 dinars can be imposed.

In order to improve the system of safety and health at work in the future, inspection supervision over the implementation of regulations will continue, the labor inspectorate will improve the checklists in the field of OSH in sensitive sectors, which currently exist for the construction and forestry sectors.

Also, an electronic unified register of work injuries, a unified register of issued, renewed and revoked licenses will be introduced as a centralized database.

We remind all employers that they are obligated to organize and align their business operations with the provisions of the Law on Occupational Safety and Health ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 35/2023, the "Law"), no later than two years from the date the Law comes into force, i.e., **by May 7, 2025**. The Law, among other things, introduces new requirements regarding mandatory medical examinations, employee training for safe and healthy work, specific obligations related to the organization of high-risk activities, and the manner of organizing and performing

occupational safety and health duties in certain sectors, along with stricter penalties for non-compliance with the Law.

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