

## Benefited Service Period: Amendments to the System and Practical Obligations for Employers

The amendments to the Rulebook on Job Positions and Occupations in Respect of Which Pensionable Service Is Calculated with Extended Duration (“Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 25/2026, hereinafter: the “**Rulebook**”) have entered into force and once again brought into focus the issue of so-called *benefited service period*.

The Rulebook presents a regulatory framework identifying job positions and occupations where work is particularly strenuous, hazardous or harmful to health, notwithstanding the application of occupational safety measures, where significant physiological strain and accelerated loss of working capacity may occur, as well as occupations whose performance is limited by age or conditioned by specific psychophysical abilities of the employee.

### Categories of occupations covered by the Rulebook

The Rulebook systematically covers several categories of occupations in respect of which the legislator recognizes the need for special pension treatment, including in particular:

- jobs in mining and underground exploitation;
- jobs in the metallurgical, chemical, petrochemical and process industries;
- jobs in energy, thermal power, gas and infrastructure systems;
- jobs in transport, railway transport and aviation;
- jobs involving protection, rescue operations and emergency response;

- jobs involving an increased risk of occupational injuries or occupational diseases;
- jobs involving continuous exposure to harmful working environment factors and
- jobs where the nature of work requires specific psychophysical capabilities of the employee.

The Rulebook also differentiates between various degrees of service extension, so that, depending on the intensity of risk and severity of working conditions, every 12 months of effective work may be calculated as 14, 15, 16 or 18 months of pensionable service.

### Most significant amendments

The latest amendments of the Rulebook are primarily aimed at further specifying and expanding certain job positions in the fields of metallurgy, energy, petrochemicals, work at heights and emergency medical services.

#### • Ferrous metallurgy – steel plants

Within the ferrous metallurgy sector, the amendments significantly expand and further specify job positions in agglomeration plants, blast furnaces, converter steel plants, hot rolling mills, galvanizing facilities, energy units and firefighting units within steel plants.

The amendments particularly cover operational positions within production processes, including operators of technological equipment, smelters, casters, crane operators, continuous casting operators, desulfurization and dedusting operations, as well as positions related to the maintenance of technological equipment and energy systems.

It is particularly important that benefited service treatment now also expressly includes certain preventive, ongoing and shift maintenance positions within

production facilities, including locksmiths, mechanical locksmiths, electricians, welders and other technical occupations performed directly in conditions involving increased professional risk.

Depending on the type of work and degree of exposure to risks, the Rulebook provides for different levels of service extension, whereby 12 months of work may be calculated as 14, 15 or 16 months of pensionable service.

- **Chemical and petrochemical industry**

Within the petrochemical production sector, members of firefighting units, i.e. firefighters employed in the petrochemical industry, are now additionally covered, with 12 months of work being calculated as 14 months of pensionable service.

- **Energy sector and thermal power plants**

Within electricity generation facilities, positions relating to desulfurization processes in thermal power plants have been additionally included, with 12 months of work being calculated as 14 months of pensionable service.

- **Emergency medical services**

Job positions within emergency medical services have also been further specified:

- physicians providing emergency medical assistance at the scene and during transport will have 12 months of work calculated as 15 months of pensionable service;
- medical technicians, senior medical technicians and ambulance drivers will have 12 months of work calculated as 14 months of pensionable service.

- **Work at heights – a new category**

A completely new category has been introduced for work at heights, namely **rope access workers**, for whom 12 months of work are calculated as 16 months of pensionable service.

This amendment may have significant practical implications for employers in construction, infrastructure projects, facility maintenance, industrial plants, energy systems and other sectors involving specialized work at heights.

### What is particularly important for employers?

Entitlement to pensionable service calculated with extended duration is not assessed solely based on the formal job title, but rather based on the actual nature of duties performed, working conditions, level of exposure to professional risks and the manner in which work is organized in practice.

A different formal classification of job positions will not suffice where the actual working conditions correspond to occupations covered by the Rulebook. Employers should therefore **verify whether they have employees whose duties may fall within the relevant categories, whether their occupational health and safety documentation is aligned with the actual scope and nature of the employees' duties, and whether pensionable service and related contributions for employees covered by the Rulebook are being properly calculated and paid.**

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