

**NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR OCCUPATIONAL  
SAFETY AND HEALTH  
(NP OSH)  
2018 - 2020**

*Adopted with Council of Ministers Decision No. 801 of 22.12.2017*

**Sofia, 2018**

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Programme for Occupational Safety and Health, 2018-2020 (NP OSH 2018-2020) is a strategic document with which the Bulgarian Government sets the priorities for ensuring safety and health at work. It aims to outline the commitments and to focus the efforts of government authorities, employer and employee organisations and other non-governmental organisations on ensuring safe and secure working conditions, taking into account the changes at work and the emergence of new occupational hazards.

The national programme elaborates the priorities of the National Strategy for Health and Safety at Work, 2008-2012, and follows the EU policy guidelines outlined by the European Commission (EC) in the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020, and in the Commission Communication on “Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy” (COM(2017)12), where the occupational safety and health topic is put at the heart of quality and productivity at work. This means that taking into account the contribution of safety and health at work for better quality and productivity at work, we will encourage economic growth and employment. The results obtained from implementing the annual National Occupational Safety and Health Programmes over the period 2008-2014 have proven the importance of the strategic planning approach in pursuing a nationally responsible policy aimed at ensuring well-being at work as part of the measures to improve the functioning of the labour market.

NP OSH 2018-2020 is aligned with the main regulatory framework in the field of employment relations and sets objectives, priorities and actions which are in harmony with the main objectives of the National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2020 for improving the productivity and competitiveness of the economy to achieve balanced growth, sustainable convergence and improved welfare in the long term, as well as with the Priorities of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria (2017- 2021).

NP OSH 2018-2020 is a document that consolidates the efforts of the government and those of the social partners by contributing to their unity in the fulfillment of the commitments of the Republic of Bulgaria stemming from the membership in the European Union to guarantee the labor rights of the employees while promoting fair competition.

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

### 1. Macroeconomic development<sup>1</sup>

In 2016 Bulgarian GDP increased by 3.4% in real terms. Growth was balanced with contribution from both domestic demand (1.6 percentage points) and net export (1.8 percentage points). Bulgarian economy is expected to expand by 3% in 2017 driven by domestic demand and particularly by private consumption.

In 2016 there were favourable developments on the labour market and increase in the consumer confidence indicator. This tendency is expected to continue in 2017, pushing private consumption up by 2.3%.

At the end of 2016, the employment dynamics was positive and the average annual pace of increase was reported at 0.5%. The unemployment rate was lower than expected, and the larger drop in labour supply determined the lower level of participation of the population in the workforce. In the medium term, no significant differences in employment dynamics are expected, and unemployment rates and economic activity of the population will be lower.

The development of short-term indicators at the beginning of 2017 in terms of employers' expectations for recruitment during the year is positive for all observed sectors/economic activities, and unemployment registered until February continues to decline on an annual basis. The average employed number (European System of Accounts (ESA) 2010) is expected to increase by another 0.5% within the context of relatively high GDP growth and further domestic demand recovery. Positive developments will be grounded on the expected positive dynamics in service sector but also on job creation in industry sectors supported by increasing export. The unemployment level will continue to decrease to an average annual of 6.9% (LFS). The slower decline compared to the previous year will be driven by a more limited drop in the labor force as a result of measures for increasing the age and length of service needed for retirement, and the longer stay on the labour market. The pension reform is expected to strengthen its influence on the labour market participation during the years due to the gradual increase in the retirement age and length of service for retirement. Structural reforms on the labour market will also support the expected increase in the participation rate of the population in the labour force

In 2018-2020, the unemployment rate will further decrease to 6.2% in 2020, while average medium-term employment growth is projected at 0.5% annually. The acceleration in income growth is expected to be realized primarily through services sector as a result of both increased economic activity and a base effect of the marked reduction in the compensation per employee in services in 2016. The further increase in productivity, labor demand and inflation will determine the upward trend in income throughout the projection period, with their nominal rate of change at around 5-5.5%.

In 2017-2020, real labour productivity growth is expected at 2.6% on average and together with the expected wage dynamics will result in moderate nominal unit labour costs increase at an annual average of 2.3%. The relatively stronger growth in compensation per employee compared to productivity will reflect a gradual increase in the share of compensation of employees in gross value added (GVA) to 49.2% at the end of the forecasting horizon.

Given the current dynamics and the assumptions for the international raw material prices, the annual average inflation rate is projected to be positive at 1.2%, while end-of-period general consumer price level is projected at 1.3%. The expected higher international prices together with the depreciation of the euro against the US Dollar will result in higher domestic prices of energy and food, thus they will mainly contribute to the end-of-period inflation. Services prices are expected to increase only slightly, backed by the higher domestic demand, while non-food prices (exclusive of energy goods) will continue to decline, albeit at a slower rate.

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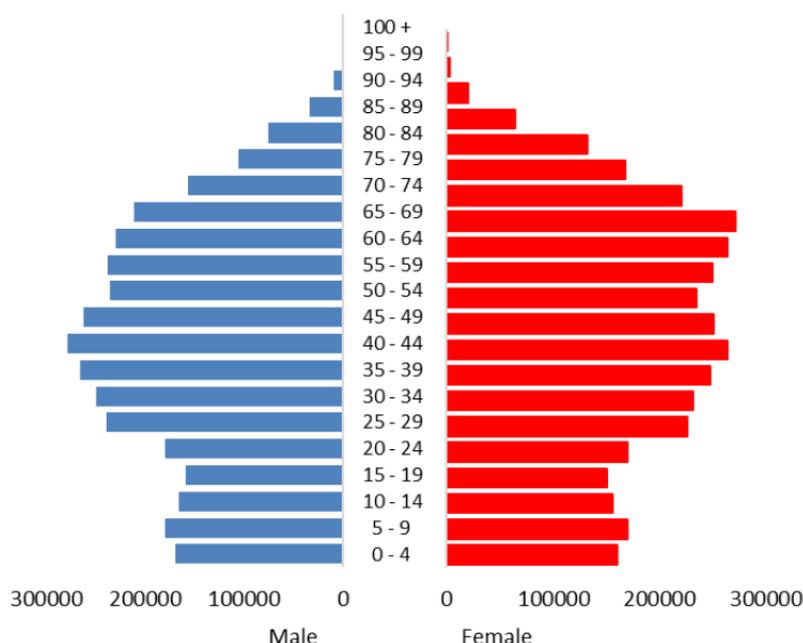
<sup>1</sup> Source: Ministry of Finance, [Convergence Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria 2016-2019](#), [“Europe: National Reform Programme - 2016 update”](#), [Spring 2017 Macroeconomic Forecast](#)

## 2. Demographic trends<sup>2</sup>

As of 31 December 2016, **the population of Bulgaria was 7 101 859 persons** representing 1.4% of the EU population. Compared to 2015, the country population decreased by 51 925 persons or by 0.7%. Male population was 3 449 978 (48.6%) and female – 3 651 881 (51.4%) i.e. 1000 males correspond to 1059 females. Males prevailed among the population aged up to 53 years, while with the increase in age, the number and the relative share of females in the total population of the country was higher.

**The process of population ageing continues.** By the end of 2016 the number of persons aged 65 and over was 1 472 116, or 20.7% of the country population. Compared to 2015, the share of the population aged 65 and over increased by 0.3 percentage points and compared to 2001 – by 3.8 percentage points.

**Figure 1. Age structure of the population as of 31.12.2016**



The relative share of the population aged 65 and over **for EU-28** is 19.2%. Italy has the highest share of elderly population (22.0%), followed by Greece (21.3%) and Germany (21.1%). In six countries, including Bulgaria, the share of the elderly is above 20.0%.

As of 31.12.2016, **children up to 15 years of age in the country were 1 001 019 or 14.1% of the total population number.** The share of children up to 15 years increased by 0.1 percentage points compared to 2015. By way of comparison, in the beginning of 2016 the share of the youngest population in the **EU-28** was 15.6%, the lowest share registered in Germany (13.2%) and Italy (13.7%) and the highest – in Ireland (21.9%) and France (18.5%).

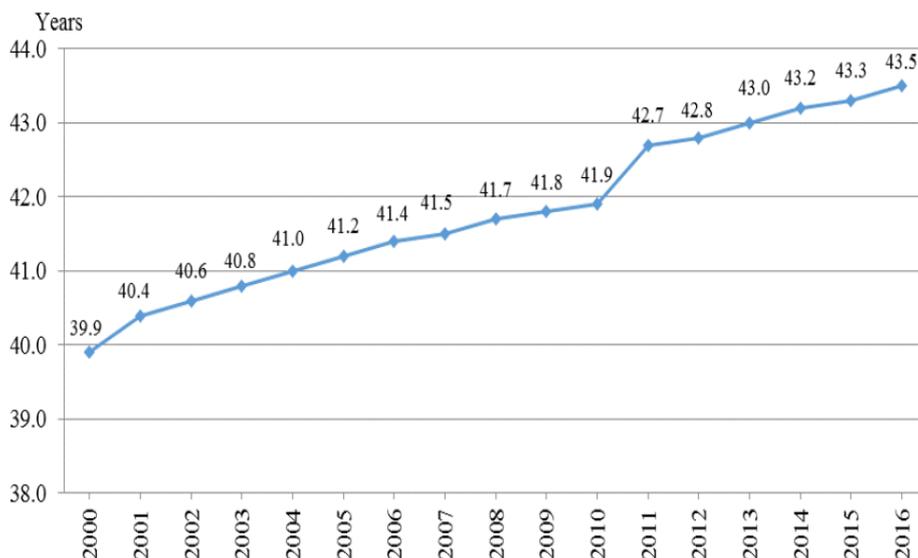
By the end of 2016, the total **age dependency ratio in Bulgaria was 53,4%<sup>3</sup>**, i.e. for every person in the dependent ages (under 15 and over 65) there are fewer than two persons of active age. By way of comparison, in 2005 and 2015 the ratio was respectively 44.5% and 52.4%. Population ageing leads to increase of the population **mean age**. It increased from 40.4 years in 2001 to 41.2 years in 2005 and to **43.5 years at the end of 2016**. Ageing of the population is observed both in urban and in rural areas. In urban areas the mean age of the population is 42.5 years and in the rural areas it is 46.2 years.

**Figure 2. Mean age of the population**

<sup>2</sup> Source: Population and demographic processes in 2016 - NSI,

[http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/Population2016\\_722R06L.pdf](http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/Population2016_722R06L.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Number of persons in 'dependent' ages (persons under 15 years of age and above 65 and over) per 100 persons in 'independent' ages (persons aged 15 to 64 years) calculated in percentage.



The number of the population **at working age as of 31.12.2016** was **4 304 thousand persons or 60.6%** of the total population of the country, including 2 262 thousand men and 2 042 thousand women. In 2016, the population at working age decreased by almost 45 thousand or by 1.0% compared to the previous year. By the end of 2016, the number of the population **over working age** was 1 735 thousand persons or 24.4% and under working age were 1 063 thousand persons or 15.0% of the country population.

The reproduction of the population at working age is characterised by the **coefficient of demographic replacement** which shows the ratio between the number of persons entering working age (15-19 years) and the number of persons exiting working age (60-64 years). As of 31.12.2016 the ratio was **63**. By way of comparison, in 2001 every 100 persons exiting working age were replaced by 124 young people.

The country's demographic development after 1990 is characterised by a negative natural population growth. **Due to the negative natural population growth the country population decreased by 42 596 persons in 2016**. The population decrease measured by the **natural population growth rate is minus 6.0%**.

According to NSI data,<sup>4</sup> in the fourth quarter of 2016 **there were 3 005.9 thousand employed persons aged over 15 years and over**, of whom 1 612.6 thousand men and 1 393.4 thousand women. The relative share of employed persons in the total population aged 15 years and over was 49.2% and went down by 0.5 percentage points compared to the fourth quarter of 2015. The share of men was 54.9% and the share of women – 43.9%.

In the fourth quarter of 2016 there were 214.9 thousand **unemployed persons** and the **unemployment rate** was 6.7%. In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2015 the number of unemployed persons went down by 46.1 thousand and the unemployment rate decreased by 1.2 percentage points. Of the total number of unemployed persons in the fourth quarter of 2016, 118.3 thousand (55.1%) were men and 96.6 thousand (44.9%) were women. The unemployment rate was 6.8% for men and 6.5% for women.

In the fourth quarter of 2016 the **total hourly labour cost** (preliminary data) rose by 8.0% compared to the fourth quarter of 2015. The increase in industry was 8.1%, in services – 9.4%, and in construction – 2.2%.

According to the NSI business inquiries, in March 2017 23.5% of the industrial enterprises reported **labour shortage** as a factor limiting their activity.

The relation between the demographic trends and the characteristics of the labour force, as well as the challenges posed by population ageing to the labour market policies, including in the area of OSH, are recognised by the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020. Although at a slower average pace than the one illustrated by the data for Bulgaria, the EU population is also becoming older. The working population is ageing as well as the proportion of older workers in employment increases relative to that of younger workers. The working population

<sup>4</sup> Key indicators for Bulgaria <http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pages/KeyInd/KeyInd2017-04.pdf>

aged between 55 and 64 in the EU-28 is expected to increase by about 16% between 2010 and 2030. The policies related to the ageing population and workforce are aimed at enabling older workers to remain active and productive for a longer time.

In the light of the recent policy trends of reducing early retirement and extending labour force participation, it is of particular importance to identify the factors which determine the decisions to retire early. The results of the studies on employability among older workers show that the low level of participation of older people in the labour market is the combined result of pay conditions, lack of flexibility in the organisation of workplaces, insufficient skills and competences, and poor health status and less due to the desire to retire early. Extending one's working life obviously depends to a great extent on the adaptation of workplaces and the work organisation.

### 3. Educational and professional qualification structure of the workforce

The labour market development is determined to a great extent by the level of the **education and vocational qualification of the workforce**.

Data from NSI<sup>5</sup> show some improvement in the educational structure of the workforce — employment among primary and lower-educated people is decreasing more than that of those with higher education.

In 2012-2014, the number of employed persons with primary and lower educational attainment in the 15-64 age group increased by 26 %, with lower secondary education – by 0.1%, with upper secondary education – by 4.1% and with tertiary education – by 11.5%.

In 2014 the employment rate of persons with higher education (25-64) was 69.8%, upper secondary education – 54.8%, with lower secondary education – 20.8% and with primary and lower educational attainment – 11.4%.

The rates for 2016 were as follows: with higher education (25-64) – 71.3%; with upper secondary education – 55.6%, including with acquired professional qualification – 61.8; with lower secondary education – 20.6% and with primary and lower educational attainment – 12.1%. There is positive correlation between education and employment and the employment rate of persons with higher/tertiary education is thus higher than that of persons with primary and lower educational attainment.

In 2016, the workforce (total 2 954.3 thousand) was dominated by people with upper secondary education (including with specialised, professional, high-school upper secondary education) – 68,6% (1 695.7 thousand). People with higher/tertiary education (including with specialist, bachelor, master degree) make up 32.4% (956.3 thousand) of total workforce; with primary and lower educational attainment – 10% (451 thousand)<sup>6</sup>. The last years have seen some improvement in the educational structure of the workforce, with the share of people with tertiary education increasing and the share of all other levels of educational attainment decreasing.

**So far, the level of professional qualification of the workforce does not match the market requirements.** There is deficit in the training on modern basic and key skills. There is shortage of adequate qualification in new professions, mostly in new technologies in production and services, modern technologies in agriculture, management and marketing. Vocational education and training still fails to be aligned with the new labour market needs. There is an inconsistency between the professions studied and the professional qualification structure of graduates on one hand and the real labour market demands on the other hand. The vocational education list does not yet include the profession occupational safety and health specialist.

There is also a problem with the **weak demand of qualified labour** due to the limited capacity of the small and medium-sized business to offer development and career opportunities and their fragile positions, the low investment activity, the persistently low expectations which do not make it possible to outline the real staffing needs. Employment Agency's annual labour market surveys over the past 4-5 years show that there is mainly a demand of qualified specialists in the following professions: doctors, pharmacists, dentists, accountants and insurers in the smaller cities.

The practical education of students in the educational system is currently provided mainly in the school workshops and laboratories of the vocational schools and secondary schools or at specially equipped workplaces in the enterprises. The obsolete practical training equipment

<sup>5</sup> [Employed persons and employment rates of the population aged 15 and over in 2016](#)

<sup>6</sup> NSI data, [Labour Force Survey. The data are for the 15-64 age bracket.](#)

in the schools and the absence of resources to invest in practical training equipment limits and impedes the implementation of training in new professions and the capacity of the educational system to respond flexibly to the labour market changes and demands.

Within the vocational training and education, the OSH knowledge is an integral part of the professional competence for the respective profession. The progress in the inclusion of OSH training in the upper secondary vocational education curricula achieved through the measures implemented under previous programmes needs to be expanded and consolidated and the occupational safety and health activities should be integrated in the everyday work practices of every worker, as well as in the general policy and culture of the respective organisation through the implementation of periodic training and instructions at the workplace. In that light, the programme envisages measures in support of employers to fulfil their statutory obligation to provide training/information on OSH for the employees and officials in the enterprise. Support for the OSH training of the nationally representative employers' and employees' organisations and for the training and information for OSH specialists is also solicited under the programme.

#### 4. Working conditions<sup>7</sup>

##### 4.1. Results of control activities

Control activities are a major tool available to the State for ensuring correlation between the legislative requirements and the real working conditions in enterprises. In this context, NP OSH pays special attention to the role of control activities in the field of health and safety at work and sets out measures to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

In 2016,<sup>8</sup> the control bodies of the General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency made altogether 48 053 inspections. Inspected were 39 395 enterprises, 3 623 of them for the first time.

1 721 inspections were performed jointly with representatives of other state control authorities.

The established practice of GLI EA is to invite representatives of the trade unions and workers' representatives from the Working Conditions Committees/Groups (WCC/WCG) to participate in the inspection visits to the enterprises. The report data show that representatives of the trade unions participated in 333 inspections and representatives of WCC/WCG – in 1 809 inspections.

To raise the effectiveness of the control activity, 12 929 inspections for fulfilment of mandatory prescriptions (follow-up control) were carried out in 2016 against 12 854 in 2015.

586 inspections were performed to investigate occupational accidents and incidents.

The 39 395 enterprises inspected employ 1 567 267 persons, including 684 696 women. It was found that said enterprises employ 27 253 persons with permanently reduced working capacity, 24 184 persons transferred to a more appropriate job (occupational rehabilitation), 62 332 pensioners, 3 752 foreigners and 16 714 civil servants.

The breakdown of inspected enterprises by size is as follows:

- Micro enterprises – 24 963;
- Small enterprises – 9 840;
- Medium-sized enterprises – 3 476;
- Big enterprises – 1 116.

Compared to the data about the enterprises inspected in 2015, the number of micro enterprises covered by inspection activities remains constant<sup>9</sup>.

Inspections in 2015 covered 766 enterprises owned by foreign nationals or foreign invested enterprises, including 105 owned by Greek nationals, 63 owned by Turkish nationals, 68 owned by Italian nationals and 260 enterprises with other owners.

In the effect of the inspections performed in 2016, **there were established altogether 212 357 violations** of compliance with the requirements and standards of the labour legislation, the Employment Promotion Act and the Public Service Act.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Project BG051PO001 "Prevention for Safety and Health at Work", "National General Profile on OSH Survey, 2012", <http://projects.gli.government.bg/index.php?mod=content&show=10>

<sup>8</sup> 2016 Activities Report of GLI EA [http://www.gli.government.bg/upload/docs/2017-05/Doklad\\_2016\\_IA\\_GIT.pdf](http://www.gli.government.bg/upload/docs/2017-05/Doklad_2016_IA_GIT.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Up to 9 employed persons inclusive

The breakdown of violations by major group is as follows:

- Violations of OSH regulations – 99 709;
- Violations of the labour law – 111 878;
- Violations of the provisions of EPA – 624;
- Violations of the provisions of PSA – 146.

With regards to the above violations, the control bodies of GLI EA applied 205 516 administrative enforcement measures (AEM).

The breakdown of the established OSH violations is as follows:

- Violations of the rules for OSH organisation and management – 61 714 or 61.9% of all infringements in the field of health and safety at work;
- Violations of the rules for safety of the work equipment and technological processes – 25 394 or 25,5% of all infringements in the field of health and safety at work;
- Violations of the rules for occupational hygiene and health prevention – 12 601 or 12.6%.

The biggest group is that of violations of the rules for organisation and management of the OSH activities. One of the major reasons is that these activities are assigned to officials who do not have the required competence and knowledge of the legislation on ensuring OSH. This group includes also violations related to the induction and training of staff and officials – 17 536, absence of internal OSH documents – 8781, risk assessment – 11 707, etc. Such violations are most commonly made by small and medium-sized enterprises.

Ranking next are the violations in the field of safety of the work equipment and the technological processes – 25 394 or 25.5% of the OSH violations. Violations of electrical safety make up the highest relative share in this group – 34% of all violations of the rules for safety of the work equipment and technologies. This means that the electric shock hazards are seriously underestimated by many enterprises. The wide use of electricity (even on temporary sites and in the open air) is a prerequisite for exposure to hazards of a huge number of workers and other individuals who are at the worksite for other reasons. Despite the strict rules for the design and operation of electrical equipment, self-made or faulty electric switchboards, power cables and electrical devices are still found during the inspections.

Violations concerning the absence of protective and interlocking devices are 2079 or 8% of all violations in the field of ensuring the safety of the working equipment and the technological processes.

Violations in the field of ensuring the safety of the working equipment and the technological processes are the most common causes of accidents. The share of these violations relative to the total number of violations shows that they are not many but their gravity is significant because each one of them may give rise to an accident.

The violations of occupational hygiene are 12 601 or 12.6% of all HSW infringements. They have decreased compared to 2015.

Such violations most commonly include:

- Failure to conduct prophylactic health checks – 3615;
- Failure to provide sanitary services – 3261;
- Unavailability of data on the risk factors – 2006;
- Failure to implement a physiological regime of work and rest – 535;
- Failure to provide personal protective equipment – 397.

Incompliance with the occupational hygiene requirements is directly connected with employers' reluctance to invest in securing air conditioning, waste treatment plants, new and safer work equipment, building or overhaul of sanitary facilities. Such problems are detected mostly in enterprises operating equipment and technologies commissioned before the enforcement of the modern safety requirements.

An essential element and a starting point in the organisation and management of activities for securing OSH for workers is the risk assessment and the implementation of measures to remove or reduce the risks to acceptable levels. Recognizing the importance of this activity, the control bodies of GLI EA pay special attention to the quality of the risk assessment in the enterprises, the measures identified to remove the risks and their implementation.

The data for the inspection activities in 2016 show that 94% of all inspected enterprises have made risk assessment.

The enterprises which have adopted programs and have implemented measures to remove the established occupational risks and hazards make up 98% of all enterprises with conducted risk assessment.

*The comparative analysis of results of 2016 against 2015 shows that the relative share of the enterprises which have taken measures to remove occupational risks and bring the working conditions in line with the statutory requirements remains constant.*

The results of the inspections for compliance with the statutory requirement to employers to provide occupational health service for their employees show that in 2016 93% of the inspected enterprises had secured such services.

There are working conditions committees or groups in 10 566 enterprises. Given that about 63% of the inspected enterprises have up to 9 employees and the Health and Safety at Work Act exempts from that obligation employers with up to 5 employees, the percentage of enterprises which are required to have WCC/WCG but have failed to set up one is very low.

*The intensive control activities carried out by GLI EA in recent years resulted in improved working conditions in the enterprises.*

The inspections carried out in 2016 show that there are 20 173 enterprises with established working conditions data.

In 2016, 7.5% of the workers under employment contracts in the inspected enterprises with established data about the occupational risk factors worked under conditions not in compliance with norms and requirements. By way of comparison, in 2015 they were 12.3%, and in 2014 – 9.6%. The biggest share of employees working under conditions at variance with the hygienic norms was found in the enterprises in the following economic activities ‘Mining of coal’, ‘Manufacture of basic metals’, ‘Production and distribution of electricity, steam and gaseous fuels’, ‘Mining support service activities’, ‘Mining of metal ores’, ‘Manufacture of fabricated metal products except machinery and equipment’, etc.

The biggest share is that of employees working under conditions at variance with the microclimate hygienic norms and requirements – 51%, followed by employees working under higher than admissible levels for noise (32%), physical workload (20%), dust (12%) and chemical agents (9%). There are several reasons for that. First, a considerable part of the production equipment in the enterprises is obsolete and the working environment is thus derated in terms of noise, vibration and dust. In most instances, its replacement with new equipment requires sizeable investments. Next comes (in particular in small and medium-sized enterprises) the problem with the use of rented equipment and/or premises. Given the temporary nature of the lease, those employers are demotivated to invest in improvement of the working conditions in the rented premises and/or working equipment.

With a view to creating safe jobs, the support to employers who invest in improvement of the working conditions, introduction of new and reconstruction and repair of the existing working equipment, building of technical systems for control of the working environment parameters, etc., should continue through measures laid down in NP OSH.

The inspections **in high risk sites subject to regular control** make it possible to track down, over a relatively short period, the organisational and technical changes with regard to ensuring health and safety at work in the sectors and activities with high level of production risk. In the event that violations of the labour legislation are identified, the labour inspectors take steps to prevent the possible preconditions of occurrence of occupational accidents and industrial accidents.

In 2016, 1162 inspections were made in high risk sites with total 132 057 employees. A portion of the inspections – 69, were carried out in cooperation with representatives of other control authorities – Ministry of Environment and Water and Hazardous Substances Control Service at the Ministry of Interior. Another practice applied by the control bodies of GLI EA is to invite representatives of the workers from the working conditions committees and groups in the inspected enterprises, as well as representatives of the trade union sections, to attend the inspections. A significant portion of the sites under regular control fall as well under the scope of

the Ordinance on preventing major accidents with hazardous substances and limiting their consequences. The main results of the inspections are as follows:

- 4949 violations established;
- 4878 administrative enforcement measures undertaken, including stopped machines and facilities – 43;
- 10 prescriptions for introducing a special mode of safe operation;
- Suspension of work of 11 workers and employees;
- 88 statements of administrative violations drawn up.

In general the employers of the included in the register for high risk enterprises in the economic activities: ‘Manufacture of non-ferrous metals’, ‘Manufacture of weapons and ammunition’, ‘Mining of coal’, ‘Oil and natural gas extraction’, ‘Manufacture of glass’, ‘Manufacture of ceramic products’, and ‘Manufacture of cement, lime and plaster’ have fulfilled the major requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Total of 4662 **inspections at construction sites** were carried out in 2016; 23 967 violations were established, including 14 416 in the field of health and safety at work, 9395 in the field of employment relations and 156 violations of the Employment Promotion Act. In regards to the violations established and of their harmful consequences, the labour inspectorates applied 22 651 administrative enforcement measures and drew up 162 statements for suspension of construction and assembly works at sites or sections thereof, as well as of the operation of unsecured machinery and equipment due to high risk of HSW non-compliance. 44 workers were suspended from work for not knowing the HSW rules and not having the required competence.

1673 statements of administrative violations were issued to employers and officials, including 770 for violation of the health and safety at work rules and 1299 for violations of the employment relations rules, 35 statements for violations in the field of employment promotion and 18 statements for hindering the control body. Labour inspectors issued to employers 95 statements for failure to fulfil within the prescribed deadlines the enforcement measures imposed.

Construction activities under the National Programme for Energy Efficiency of Multi-Family Residential Buildings continued in 2016. The construction works for external thermal and hydro insulation and carpentry replacement include mainly use of scaffolds and stairs, while the rope access method is hardly ever used.

The inspections showed that clients still underestimate their obligation to demand compliance with the HSW rules from the main actors in the construction process – designer, independent construction supervisor, builder and subcontractors. Entering into a construction contract with a builder, clients assume that they transfer all of their obligations and responsibilities for the safe performance of works on the sites which is inadmissible according to the existing legislation. The importance of the Safety and Health Plan (SHP) is totally underestimated and assigning its development to the designer, the client often fails indeed to take knowledge of its content. It is a common practice for SHPs to repeat texts from Ordinance No. 2 on the minim occupational safety and health requirements for construction and assembly works, without any link to the site concerned and without laying down any specific measures for the safe performance of the individual stages of the construction and assembly works.

1681 violations of the occupational hygiene were established at construction sites in 2016, a significant portion of them concerning the sanitary services. However, there have been fewer problems related to ensuring adequate sanitation at construction sites. There is also a positive trend in providing potable water and chemical toilets at the construction sites.

A significant share of all violations established at construction sites is related to the employment relations – 9395. The inspections detected 474 persons working without employment contracts or persons admitted to work without being provided with a copy of the concluded employment contract and a copy of the notice of its registration certified by the territorial directorate of the National Revenue Agency (TD NRA).

Joint inspections in cooperation with other control bodies, mainly with representatives of MoI, contribute to addressing a serious problem of the inspections at construction sites, in particular non-cooperation or hindering of control by some employers and by the workers. 38

statements of hindrances to control bodies in the discharge of their official duties were issued in this connection.

In 2016, 1527 inspections were carried out in **1382 enterprises having significant impact on the level of work-related traumatism** in the country. Inspections covered not only enterprises with high rate of work-related traumatism, but also other enterprises which had registered occupational accidents over the year. Total 8089 violations were established, including 5612 in the field of health and safety at work. With a view to the violations, the labour inspectorates applied 7823 administrative enforcement measures, including suspension from operation of 37 machines and facilities posing a threat to the life and health of workers.

The results of the control activities showed that the employers of the inspected enterprises corrected their policy for ensuring occupational safety and health, created better organisation and took measures to increase the safety level of workplaces. In cases of accidents, exceptional instructions are provided to explain and analyze the causes of accidents and to instruct about the measures to prevent such occurrences.

The highest level of overlooking of regulations and formalism is observed when conducting instruction and training. The purpose of briefings for instructions and training is to provide workers with knowledge and skills and to motivate them for safe work. The hazardous behaviour of injured workers and employees is thus directly dependent on the managerial environment. Therefore, the measures for building a culture of prevention in enterprises are an important priority of NP OSH.

## 4.2. Work-related traumatism<sup>10</sup>

### 4.2.1. Occupational accidents

A permanent downward trend has been registered in work-related traumatism in the past decade, including the period covered by the National OSH Strategy, 2008-2012, and the annual programmes for its implementation. Along with the positive effect of the joint planning efforts of all actors in the labour process to improve the working conditions, it cannot be denied that the above trend also reflects the general downsizing of production. This is evidenced also by the relative growth rates of the traumatism indicators in 2011-2013.

The country average values of occupational accidents in 2014 (final data) are as follows:

- Frequency rate  $R_f$  = total 1.09 (including under<sup>11</sup> Article 55, paragraph 1 of the Social Insurance Code (SIC) – 0.91) (number of occupational accidents per 1000 insured persons);
- Frequency index  $I_f$  = 0.62 (0.52 at the workplace) (number of occupational accidents per 1 million man-hours worked);
- Weight coefficient  $C_w$  = 0,099 (0,082 at the workplace) (calendar days lost due to occupational accidents (WA), per one insured person);
- Weight index  $I_w$  = 57 (47 at the workplace) (calendar days lost due to WA per 1 million man-hours worked).

The specific values of the indicators of occupational accidents total for the country in 2014 remain almost the same as in 2013.<sup>12</sup>

According to operational data from NSSI<sup>13</sup>, 2880 occupational accidents were registered in the National Social Security Institute in 2015, including **2 384 accidents at the workplace. Fatal occupational accidents at work** in 2015 were 85, and those leading to disability - 5. The calendar days lost as a result of occupational accidents at work (Article 55, paragraph 1 of SIC) totalled 126 919.

There were total 2848 occupational accidents in 2016, including **2257 – at the workplace. Fatal occupational accidents at work were 71 in 2016 and those leading to disability were 8**. The calendar days lost as a result of occupational accidents at the workplace

<sup>10</sup> Information source: Occupational Accidents Information System of the National Social Security Institute.

<sup>11</sup> i.e. accidents at the workplace

<sup>12</sup> Note: the figures in brackets show the values of the occupational accident indicators under Article 55, paragraph 1 of the Social Insurance Code

<sup>13</sup> The data for 2015 are as of 11.1.2016 and the data for 2016 – as of 16.1.2017.

(Article 55, paragraph 1 of SIC) totalled 112 546. Decrease is registered on all of the cited indicators in 2016 compared to 2015.

The top five economic activities by number of occupational accidents in 2015 include: ‘Land transport’ – 176; ‘Retail trade, except of motor vehicles’ – 141; ‘Mining of metal ores’ – 110; ‘Administration of the State’ – 107 and ‘Wholesale trade except of motor vehicles and motorcycles’ – 103.

In 2016, the same economic activities registered again the highest number of accidents: ‘Land transport’ – 177; ‘Retail trade, except of motor vehicles’ – 145; ‘Administration of the State’ – 117; ‘Mining of metal ores’ – 116, and ‘Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment’ – 102.

The highest number of fatal occupational accidents in 2015 was registered in the economic activities ‘Land transport’ – 11; ‘Corp and animal production, hunting’ – 6; ‘Mining of metal ores’; ‘Construction of buildings’ and ‘Civil engineering’ with 5 fatal occupational accidents each, making up about 25% of the total number. Occupational accidents leading to disability (total 5) were registered in ‘Mining of coal’, ‘Manufacture of wood and of products of wood’, ‘Water collection, treatment and supply’, ‘Civil engineering’ and ‘Security and investigation activities’ – 1 each.

In 2016, the highest number of fatal accidents (total 71) was registered again in the economic activities ‘Land transport’ – 14; ‘Construction of buildings’ and ‘Specialised construction activities’ – 6 each; ‘Civil engineering’ and ‘Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment’ – 5 each. Occupational accidents causing disability (total 8) were registered in total of 6 economic activities.

#### 4.2.2. Occupational diseases

47 files for occupational diseases communicated with “quick notices”<sup>14</sup> were opened by the territorial divisions of NSSI in 2016. There were 40 persons with suspected occupational nature of their illness. The low level of cases of suspected occupational disease registered in the preceding years persists (63 persons in 2011, 27 persons in 2012, 48 persons in 2013, 72 persons in 2014 and 58 persons in 2015).

In 2016, the highest number of cases of occupational diseases was registered in TD of NSSI in Pernik – 14; Smolian – 5; Sofia District – 5 and Blagoevgrad – 4, followed by Vratsa and Sofia City with 3 each; Plovdiv and Haskovo with 2 each; Burgas, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Ruse, Sliven, Stara Zagora and Yambol with 1 each. The other 11 TDs of NSSI did not receive quick notices of suspected occupational disease.

The 2016 occupational pathology structure shows that the highest number of “quick notices” were sent for:

- Musculoskeletal disorders and disorders of the peripheral nervous system – 16 cases, including 10 due to physical effort and 6 – to whole body vibrations;
- Dust induced respiratory diseases and allergies – 13 cases, including 6 of silicosis, 3 of other types of pneumoconiosis, 2 of chronic bronchitis, 1 of asbestosis and 1 case of lung cancer;
- hearing impairment, caused by noise – 12 cases;

The other cases of suspected occupational disease included illnesses caused by the effect of chemical agents – 6 cases (sulphur oxides – 4, chrome – 1, ketones – 1).

Bulgaria has a much lower **rate of detected occupational disease incidence and prevalence** compared to the other EU Member States, which means that, along with the improved working conditions in the enterprises over the past years, there are also some defects in the system of health surveillance of workers and early detection of occupational diseases. In this context, NP OSH, 2018-2020, includes measures to improve the quality of occupational medicine services for workers and employees as well as for prophylaxis and rehabilitation of work-related injuries.

<sup>14</sup> Specific form for notification of newly identified or suspected cases of occupational diseases

## II. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE OSH SYSTEM

The government policy in the field of occupational safety and health in the Republic of Bulgaria is determined by the **Council of Ministers**.

**The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy** designs, directs, coordinates and implements the government policy for ensuring occupational safety and health.

**The General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency** exercises overall control for compliance with the labour legislation on ensuring health and safety at work and on employment relations, as well as specialized control under the Employment Promotion Act and the other statutory instruments on employment and unemployment containing explicit provisions to that end.

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

**Institutions within the system of the Ministry of Health** – Regional Health Inspectorates (RHI), National Centre of Public Health and Analyses (NCPHA), National Centre for Radiobiology and Radiation Protection (NCRRP).

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

**Other specialised authorities and institutions on control and supervision** – State Agency for Metrological and Technical Surveillance (SAMTS), Directorate for National Construction Supervision (DNCS), Directorate General “Fire safety and Protection of the Population” (DGFSP) and others.

Through its territorial divisions, **the National Social Security Institute (NSSI)** exercises control in respect of the working capacity assessment, investigates occupational accidents, maintains occupational accidents information system.

**The Working Conditions Fund** at the Minister of Labour and Social Policy actively supports the activities for ensuring safety and health at work. The Fund provides financial resources for training of employers, trade union members, members of working conditions committees and groups and specialists in safety and health at work in the enterprises. It grants funds to projects for occupational disease diagnostics and co-finances projects focused on addressing specific issues with a view to improving the working conditions. It also finances the preparation, printing and distribution of educational and other information materials. National conferences, meetings, seminars and other events in the field of safety and health at work are organised with financial support from the Working Conditions Fund.

There is an **infrastructure of units for providing assistance to employers** to meet the requirements and fulfil their obligations for ensuring health and safety at work – occupational medicine services, working conditions measuring laboratories, safety and health at work training and consultation centres.

The effective trilateral cooperation at national, sectoral and regional level is an important factor for the implementation of the national occupational safety and health policy. The **National Council on Working Conditions** is a permanent body at the national level for coordination, consultation and cooperation in designing and implementing the policy for ensuring safety and health at work. **Regional Councils** for trilateral cooperation on health and safety at work have been established in all administrative regions. There are **sectoral and branch councils** on working conditions at the sectoral level. The dialogue between the employer and the workers in the enterprises is taking place through the **working conditions committees/groups**.

## III. MAJOR OSH CHALLENGES

The working conditions are an attribute which has direct effect on the general performance of enterprises in the real economy.

The analysis of the status, the trends and the development outlook of the OSH activities makes it possible to highlight some major challenges which will determine the development of the occupational safety and health policy in the period up to 2020.

Over the last few years the efforts have been focused on practical enforcement in the country. Significant progress has been made on ensuring occupational health and safety for workers as a result of the purposeful policy pursued by the government and the social partners.

The following can be added to the positive findings from the application of the occupational safety and health legislation:

- Most of the requirements and principles for ensuring health and safety at work contained in the Health and Safety at Work Act are applied in practice.
- Labour inspectors report that there is evidence of general improvement in the activities for ensuring occupational safety and health in the country.
- The European health and safety at work standards are a goal but also an achievement for many enterprises.
- The number of enterprises investing in safe technologies and working equipment is constantly rising.
- Significant experience has been gained in preparing risk assessments and this has effect on the quality of assessments. The share of enterprises with implemented programmes for eliminating and minimising the production risks is increasing.
- Many enterprises have in place developed and approved internal statutory instruments – regulations on internal working procedures, work safety rules and instructions, wage organisation rules, etc.
- The range of enterprises having occupational health services for their workers has been extended.

Due to the limited budget for different measures and administrative support of the occupational safety and health system, the costs are significantly lowered. The inadequate financial backup of the administrative system ensures its functioning but not the needed significant development.

Despite the upward trend in the number of enterprises which do fulfil their obligations to ensure occupational safety and health for their workers, the economic and social changes give rise to new challenges for employers, as well as for the whole system of ensuring occupational safety and health. In this context, the focus in the next period should be on **improving the work of prevention services** which are the most direct contributors to the working conditions of every workplace. It is also necessary to change the existing **system for medical surveillance of workers**, taking into account the changes planned in the medical assessment and workability assessment system, as well as to envisage measures to enhance the capacity of the relevant bodies and services concerned by the problem.

There is a need **to develop the capacity of General Labour Inspectorate EA**, of the social partners and of all specialised structures and units engaged with the provision of health and safety at work, with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the occupational safety and health policies. The promotion of initiatives for education, qualification and vocational training matching the labour market challenges and needs will improve the quality of the services provided and will ensure higher protection against occupational risks.

In 2016, the Labour Inspectorate started the implementation of Project BG05M9OP001-3.004 “Optimisation and innovation in GLI EA” under Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”. The project aims to optimise the work in GLI EA, focusing on improving the process of inspection activity planning and introduction of innovations in the training of inspectors. New flexible forms of inspection will be designed under the project through elements of self-control and intensification of the activity of the Working Conditions Committees (WCC) and Working Conditions Groups (WCG) in the enterprises. The implementation of the project activities will also raise the awareness of employers and employees in enterprises about ensuring occupational safety and health and labour legislation compliance.

**The system for studying employers’ demand of workforce qualified in specific areas**, which should be of service to the objectives of secondary and tertiary education as well as to achieving health and safety at work, can be assessed as underdeveloped.

**In addition, there should be noted the trends, changes and challenges, posed by globalisation, technological development and the demographic situation, to the nature and organisation of work at European, as well as at national level. All those challenges may be expected to bring about new or emerging occupational risks.**

For example, due to intensified competition and economic pressure, many companies are being restructured and decrease their activity or subcontract, including abroad, which has effect on **employment and on the work models**. The consequences of those processes for the workers include job insecurity and work intensification. The restructuring of enterprises, consisting in reorganisation, closure, merger and acquisition of companies, decreasing the activity, subcontracting, relocation of operations, etc., is necessary with a view to preserving the competitiveness of companies. The restructuring processes become permanent in nature and cover all Member States – more than 14 000 cases of restructuring of big companies were registered between 2002 and mid-2012 (Eurofound, 2012)<sup>15</sup>. There are empirical data that restructuring has a negative effect on the health of the directly affected workers who lose their job, as well as on those who continue to work in the restructured enterprises. In the context of organisational changes, in particular **restructuring, job insecurity and work intensification** emerge as the main OSH-related risk factors. It has been established that higher employment insecurity is linked to higher morbidity and mortality.

Globalisation and increasing competition also have a significant effect on the **production methods and the organisation of work**, resulting in gradual transition from more standardised models of organisation of work and working hours to more complex and diversified structures. Since the beginning of this century, the number of workers in atypical forms of employment (part-time employment contracts, self-employment, workers hired through agencies providing temporary employment) has increased significantly.

Globalisation is closely linked to the development of **new technologies, in particular ICT**. The rapid proliferation of ICT and Internet changed the way companies organise production and resulted in changed working conditions and organisation of work. ICT contributed to the development of a 24/7 economy which calls for flexible organisation of work, high degree of flexibility of working hours, quasi-permanent availability for work. The stronger use of computers and automated systems at work results in increased cases of work in a stationary position of the body and physical immobilisation at the workplace. Immobilisation is associated with higher health risks like ischaemic heart disease, some types of cancer, and psychological problems like depression and anxiety.

The structural, organisational and technological changes in the operational environment have a stronger effect on the **work-life balance**. The impact sources include factors like increased information load, a need for a rapid response, high requirements to the quality of customer service and related requirements for permanent availability of workers, as well as the rapid pace of change. There is a need for research of the impact of the new employment and work models, the different forms of flexibility and the implementation of new technologies (for example, mobile jobs realised with the help of ICT) on the work-life balance and the health and welfare at work.

The current transition to a service- and knowledge-based economy highlights the importance of **the sectors of services for the population and the citizens**. Those sectors provide an increasing number of high-skilled jobs, for example in information and communication technologies and marketing, but also a growing number of low-skilled and low-paid jobs, often characterised by non-standard working conditions and socially unacceptable working hours. Especially in the sectors of education, healthcare and social services, the employees are exposed to difficult working conditions combined with high emotional load, violence and harassment at work. Potential hazards to health in the social services sector include the increasing psychosocial risk of employees being available for work most of the time, as well as the new and frequent contacts with human beings. Along with the other problems, the victims

<sup>15</sup> Eurofound (2012), ERM Report 2012 – After restructuring: Labour markets, working conditions and life satisfaction Publication Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2012/61/en/1/EF1261EN.pdf>

of stress, violence and harassment suffer from depression, anxiety, stress, sleep disorders and attention difficulties. The consequences for the organisations include absence from work, accidents, lower productivity. This phenomenon is likely to gain in importance as the share of the services sector increases.

The existing **psychosocial and organisational risk factors** like high workload, tight schedules, long and/or non-standard working hours (shift work, night work), job insecurity or work in isolation, which can work together or separately, contribute to the development of some chronic disorders and illnesses. The nature of many of the integrated interactions of the work-related psychosocial risk factors, risk behaviours and chronic diseases and health conditions, including occupational diseases and health disorders, has not been adequately studied and clarified but the future studies in the field should provide the basis for the design of evidence-based policies and effective prevention strategies.

**The workforce diversity** is another element of the modern processes in enterprises and a challenge to the OSH policies and programmes. The pension reform increased the length of active working life which, along with the general population ageing, results in increased share of older workers in the enterprises. On the other hand, the youth employment policies and programmes, as well as the modern forms of vocational training are expected to increase the number of young people who will enter the enterprises for the first time. The number of women in the workforce is not expected to decrease because modern labour legislation creates good conditions for reconciling motherhood with work. The role and participation of women are expected to increase, including in traditionally “male” occupations and productions. The migrant processes across Europe will have effect also on the composition of the workforce, including in Bulgaria, through the higher number of migrant workers. The level of educational attainment and qualification of the workforce is also characterised with marked diversity at all levels – from the sectoral level to the individual enterprise. All that means that the OSH policy and management from the national level down to the enterprise level should take into account the differences in those groups of workers and should offer measures tailored to their specifics and needs.

The results of the implementation of the annual National Programmes for OSH (NP OSH) pursuant to the Strategy on Health and Safety at Work, 2008-2012, and NP OSH 2013 - 2014, show strong support by all stakeholders for continuing the **strategic and planning approach** at the national level, as well as for the need to review the objectives and priorities with a view to adapting the framework to the new challenges.

The measures and initiatives laid down in NP OSH 2018-2020 aim primarily at **reducing the incidence of accidents at work and occupational diseases**. That will contribute to mitigating the human and social consequences as well as to reducing the socioeconomic costs related to traumatism and occupational disease incidence.

With a view to making effective use of the workforce and enhancing its capacity, the measures are guided by the strategic objective of NP OSH 2018-2020 – “Improving the occupational safety and health of every worker and every workplace” by addressing **vulnerable groups of workers** (young or older workers, disabled workers, etc.).

Greater awareness of health among workers can only be achieved if **the culture of prevention**, which enables safety and health issues to be present consistently in all aspects of the functioning of the enterprise, is widespread. Therefore, the enterprise’s management has a decisive influence on corporate culture and acts as a driver for changes among workers at the behavioural level.

Therefore, health and safety at work should be viewed as an important corporate goal of the organisation, like quality, customer satisfaction, productivity, growth and profit. Occupational safety and health for workers can be more effectively achieved if the measures to attain them become part of the **quality management system**.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES OF NP OSH 2018-2020

**Strategic objective** of the National Programme for Occupational Safety and Health, 2018-2020:

**Improving the occupational safety and health of every worker and every workplace.**

Measures in the following priority areas will be implemented to attain the main priorities of the programme:

1. Improving the application of the OSH legislation;
2. Prevention of occupational risks, including new and emerging risks;
3. Prevention of occupational diseases and occupational accidents.

### **Priority Area 1. Improving the application of the OSH legislation**

The EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020, as well as Commission Communication on “Safer and Healthier Work for All - Modernisation of the EU Occupational Safety and Health Legislation and Policy” of 10 January 2017 stress that the occupational safety and health policy is contributing to the objective of improving the safety and health of workers in the EU and in the Member States, as well as to creating a level-playing field which is important for the single market. At macroeconomic level, investment in OSH contributes to the competitiveness of enterprises and thus to national competitiveness. There is a need to continue the efforts to ensure effective worker protection against the background of the changing nature of work and new risks.

The multiannual intensive process of evaluation of the EU OSH acquis which was closed in early 2017, confirmed that, in overall terms, the OSH legislation is consistent, coherent and understandable. The EU OSH legal framework based on the Framework Directive and the specific directives dealing with specific risks remains relevant and effective.

The EU strategic documents determine that the future priority lines of action modernise policies and legislation should be focused on:

- fighting occupational cancer and dealing with dangerous chemicals through legislative proposals accompanied by practical guides and awareness raising measures;
- helping businesses, in particular micro-enterprises and SMEs, comply with occupational safety and health rules;
- cooperation with Member States and social partners to remove or update outdated rules and to refocus efforts on ensuring better and broader protection, compliance and enforcement on the ground.

In that context, NP OSH 2018-2020 sets out legislative improvement measures at national level, especially with a focus on SMEs, subject to the following conditions: the principle of minimum requirements for ensuring OSH shall not be violated; the existing levels of protection shall not be reduced; the administrative burden for the enterprises as well as for the institutions having competence in OSH shall not be increased; conditions conducive of unfair competition shall not be created.

NP OSH 2018-2020 includes legislative initiatives for harmonising the occupational exposure limit values with regard to chemical agents and carcinogens/mutagens, in line with the upcoming amendments to the occupational safety and health directives on risks related to exposure to chemical agents and carcinogens/mutagens.

Amendments to legislative instruments will be drafted to implement the planned legislative updates ensuing from the ex-post evaluation of the European law and practice in the areas of: work with display screen equipment (Directive 90/270/EEA); OSH signs and signals (Directive 92/58/EEA); biological agents (Directive 2000/54/EC); medical treatment on board fishing vessels (Directive 92/29/EEA); workplaces (Directive 89/654/EEA); personal protective equipment (Directive 89/656/EEA).

Enforcement and uniform application of the legislation is among the most important challenges of the OSH policy. Companies and workers often learn about the OSH rules not until the visit of the labour inspector. This is a signal of the existence of awareness gaps which have to be addressed on a systematic basis. It is very important that the labour inspectorate is viewed as a body facilitating compliance and not as a barrier to the business. The labour inspectorate also has a key role in identifying and preventing undeclared work. Therefore inspections, while always aimed primarily at compliance, should provide assistance and be well targeted at specific risks, especially emerging risks and new technologies.

## **Priority Area 2. Preventing occupational risks, including new and emerging risks**

Effective prevention of work-related diseases calls for predicting potential negative effects on workers' health and safety of: exposure to chemical agents; new technologies; new products and processes used (nanomaterials); development of biotechnologies and "green" technologies; changes in the organisation of work as a result of ICT development (flexible and interactive business processes); new, atypical contractual agreements and models of work; occupational stress; ergonomic risks, etc.

The risk assessment is a prerequisite for systemic OSH management and an important element of a more comprehensive process which should focus on building a culture of prevention. In this context, it is of paramount importance to ensure the high quality of risk assessment in enterprises.

The program provides for continuing the design and implementation of additional tools in support of the risk assessment process in SMEs and with a view to implementing risk assessment within the general management process at enterprise level. Simple and practical approaches should be encouraged to facilitate enterprises in risk management.

## **Priority Area 3. Prevention of work-related illness and accidents**

Statistics shows that musculoskeletal disorders are a major concern of workers and employees and work-related psychosocial risks are a growing problem. When we add to these findings the workforce ageing, there is a risk that the deteriorated operational environment will become a barrier to higher employment and economic growth. Therefore, by applying a holistic approach for prevention of occupational risk, employees and employers need to be driven by the huge benefits of a safe operational environment and by the effective measures for strengthening the health of worker.

The Health and Safety at Work Act enables the implementation of programmes for diagnosis of occupational diseases. The development of such programmes is a necessary measure for prevention of health risks by improving the effectiveness of medical surveillance. Successful extension of working life depends to a great extent on the respective adaptation of workplaces and work organisation, including working hours, the accessibility of workplaces and the consultations at work. It is also important to develop lifelong employability in view of workers' changing capabilities because of ageing. Innovative information and communication technologies, products and services offer a wide range of employability improvement opportunities. Measures for adequate medical surveillance, reintegration and rehabilitation enabling faster return to work after an accident or illness are also needed to avoid exclusion of workers from the labour market for a long period of time.

The measures set out in the **Table** below will be implemented within the priority areas laid down in NP OSH 2018-2020.

Table

**ACTIONS AND MEASURES BY PRIORITY AREA OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH, 2018 - 2020**

No.	Action/Measure	Description of the action/measure	Responsible institutions/actors	Implementation period	Expected result	Performance indicators	Financial resources required (BGN)/Source of financing
<b>Priority Area 1. Improving the application of the OSH legislation</b>							
<b>Developing national legislation in line with the better regulation principles, the EU law and the international standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)</b>							
1.	Harmonising the occupational exposure limit values with regard to chemical agents and carcinogens/mutagens, in line with the amendments to the occupational safety and health directives on protecting the health of workers with regard to risks related to exposure to chemical agents and carcinogens/mutagens	Drafting ordinances amending and supplementing: - Ordinance No. 13 on protection of workers from the risks related to chemical agents at work, with a view to transposing fourth and fifth European lists of indicative occupational exposure limit values for chemical agents; - Ordinance No. 10 on protection of workers from risks involving exposure to carcinogens and mutagens during work	MH, MLSP	In accordance with the deadlines laid down by the European Parliament and the European Commission in the relevant directives	Protection of workers from risks involving exposure to chemical agents and carcinogens / mutagens during work	Issued legislative instruments	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
2.	Improving the quality and control of the activities of the occupational medicine services for workers and	Development and promotion of standards for the activities of the occupational medicine	MH, MLSP	2018-2019	Implemented measurable requirements and criteria for the	Issued standards for the activities of the occupational	Within the approved budgets of the respective

	employees	services			quality of the services provided to employers in planning and organising the activities for ensuring and maintaining occupational safety and health	medicine services	institutions
3.	Improving the system of compulsory preliminary and regular health checks of workers and employees	Drafting an Ordinance on compulsory preliminary and regular health checks of workers and employees	MH/MLSP, social partners	2018-2020	Ensured medical surveillance and prevention of work-related illnesses	Issued legislative instrument	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
4.	Improving the system for training of representatives in working conditions committees and groups (WCC/WCG) in enterprises	Drafting Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 4 / 3 November 1998 concerning the training of representatives in working conditions committees and groups in enterprises	MLSP, MH	2019	Improved quality of OSH training of representatives in WCC/WCG in enterprises	Issued legislative instrument	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
5.	Setting OSH requirements for blasting operations and operations with explosives, products containing explosives, ammunition and pyrotechnic products	Drafting an Ordinance setting the terms and procedure for blasting operations	MLSP/ MoI, GLI EA,	2020	Protection of workers in blasting operations	Issued legislative instrument	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
6.	Setting minimum requirements for lighting at work	Drafting a Regulation on the minimum requirements for lighting at work	MLSP, MH	2020	Issued legislative instrument	Effective protection of workers from risks related to lighting at work	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions

7.	Improving the minimum OSH requirements for handling operations	Drafting an Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 12 / 30 December 2005 on ensuring occupational safety and health in handling operations	MLSP	2019	Protection of workers from risks related to musculoskeletal injuries at work	Issued legislative instrument	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
8.	Improving the OSH regulatory basis in metallurgy, metal casting and the energy sector	Updating: OSH Rules in mining enterprises in non-ferrous metals industries (B-01-03-03), MXM, 1971; Metal casting technical safety rules, MM, 1967; OSH rules for electrical installations of electric and thermal power plants and for electricity networks	MLSP, MH, ME, MEn, GLI EA, social partners in the industry - BAMI, BBCMB, TUF "Metal Workers", NF „Metallurgy", OSH officials in enterprises, external experts	2019-2020	Issued OSH rules	Prevention of occupational risks in metallurgy, metal casting and the energy sector	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
9.	Drafting an Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 2 / 2004 on minimum OSH requirements in construction and assembly works	Bringing Ordinance No. 2 / 2004 in harmony with the provisions of the Spatial Development Act (SPA) and Ordinance No. 4 / 2001 on the scope and content of investment projects (Ordinance No. 4 / 2001)	MRDPW/MLSP, social partners	2019	Ordinance amending and supplementing Ordinance No. 2 / 2004	Promulgated ordinance	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
10.	Amending the legislation related to the State (Uniform) OSH Rules	Setting up a working group to prepare a proposal for: • Drafting legislative	MLSP, MH/ social partners	2018 – 2019	Updated legislation and eliminated conflicts	MLSP, MH Decision on repealing of	Within the approved budgets of the

		instruments repealing the State (Uniform) OSH Rules; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repealing the Rules for which replacing legislative instruments will not be drafted</li> </ul>				Rules and on drafting of legislative instruments	respective institutions
11.	Updating Ordinance No 12 of 27 December 2004 on the provision of health and safety at work with motor vehicles	Updating the ordinance, taking into account the amendments to the OSH regulations and the provisions of the Road Transport Act and its implementing regulations	MLSP, MTITC/ social partners	2018 – 2019	Improving OSH in operations with motor vehicles and eliminating the duplication of activities	Legislative instrument promulgated in SG	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
<b>Ensuring effective and efficient control for compliance with OSH legislation</b>							
12.	Strengthening the administrative capacity of GLI EA	Creating a database of control sites  Designing new and flexible inspection forms  Development of an electronic training and knowledge control system	GLI EA/ CHRDRI at MLSP	2018-2020	Inspectors' upskilling and maintenance of the acquired specific knowledge and skills for provision of effective and high-quality control	Database created.  Created distance learning platform  Created inspection questionnaires  Upskilled inspectors	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions  Project BG05M9OP00 1-3.004 "Optimization and Innovation in GLI EA"
13.	Provision of effective control	Targeting control activities in enterprises carrying out activities at construction sites, including under the National Programme for Energy Efficiency of Multi-Family Residential Buildings	GLI EA	2018	Improved protection of workers carrying out works under the programme	Number of Inspections carried out	Within the approved budget of GLI EA

		Targeting control activities to agricultural producers for compliance with OSH requirements and legality of employment contracts	GLI EA	2018	Improved protection of workers engaged in short-term seasonal agricultural work	Number of Inspections carried out	Within the approved budget of GLI EA
		Inspecting enterprises with risk productions and activities, which are subject to regular control	GLI EA	2018-2020	OSH prevention in risk productions and activities	Number of Inspections carried out	Within the approved budget of GLI EA
		Inspection for legality of the employment relationship and fight against undeclared work.	GLI EA	2018-2020	Protection of the social rights of workers	Number of Inspections carried out	Within the approved budget of GLI EA
		Inspection for legal hiring of foreign nationals, including illegal immigrants, and admission of posted workers from EU Member States and from third countries..	GLI EA	2018-2020	Protection of the social and labour rights of foreign nationals working (posted) in Republic of Bulgaria	Number of Inspections carried out	Within the approved budget of GLI EA
14.	Development of criteria to evaluate the likelihood of committing violations of the labour legislation and the gravity (risk) of control sites	Developing a scale to group control sites according to the risk. The grouping will be used to plan the inspection activities and the enterprises with higher risk will be subject to more frequent checks	GLI EA	2018	Developed risk assessment criteria  Optimised control activities, including in SMEs	Number of identified enterprises with highest risk.  Number of checks carried out in risk enterprises	Project BG05M9OP00 1-3.004 “Optimization and Innovation in GLI EA”
15.	Joint participation of inspectors in national control campaigns and in (pilot) projects of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)	Study and application of best practices for effective control of hazardous chemical substances in the workplace environment.	RIEW, GLI EA, RHI	According to approved national control plans and planned (pilot) ECHA	Harmonised activities for fulfilment of the requirements for safe production and/or use of hazardous chemical substances	Number of participations in ECHA projects and national control campaigns and (pilot) ECHA	Within the approved budgets of the relevant control bodies

				projects	and mixtures	projects	
16.	Investigation of accidents	Setting up working groups to investigate accidents, incidents and major casualties	MoI, FSPP, MEW, MD, RIEW, GLI EA	2018-2020	Investigation of the reasons why they occurred and preventing future occurrences	Number of investigations carried out	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
<b>Information support of the OSH policy</b>							
17.	Supporting software for online registrations of one-day employment contracts under Article 114a of LC	Providing agricultural producers with one-day employment contract forms for short-term seasonal farm work	GLI EA	2018-2020	Lower administrative burden for the agricultural producers	Number of provided one-day employment contracts under Article 114a of LC	Within the approved budget of GLI EA
18.	Processing and systematisation of statistical and operational information about occupational accidents and occupational diseases	Statistical information about occupational accidents for 2016, 2017 and 2018	NSSI	18 months after the end of the reference period	Statistical and operational information posted in the website of NSSI	Available up-to-date statistical information for the respective reference year	Within the approved budget of NSSI
		Annual operational information about occupational accidents for 2017, 2018 and 2019  Operational information about occupational accidents for every quarter of 2018, 2019 and 2020		15 days after the end of the reference period	Statistical and operational information posted in the website of NSSI	Timely operational information for the respective period	
19.	Upgrading the Occupational Accident Information System with a Control Activities module	Development of a software product for the introduction of inspection protocols, acts of established violations and issued penal decrees	NSSI	2018	Systematisation and tracking of the stages and information from the control activities and investigation regarding accidents	Operational Control Activities module	Within the approved budget of NSSI

20.	Processing and publication of information about temporary incapacity	Processing and publication of information about short-term sick leaves data	NSSI	2018-2020	Up-to-date information about temporary incapacity for the reference year	Published information about temporary incapacity	Within the approved budget of NSSI
<b>Addressing the challenges related to the application of legislation in SMEs</b>							
21.	Ensuring safety at work in enterprises, improving the workplace environment, the organisation of work and the management of human resources	Financial assistance to enterprises for: - designing, adapting and implementing human resources development systems in enterprises, including flexible employment options; - providing organised transport for workers; - ensuring health and safety at work, improving the occupational and health status of workers and employees; - provision of social benefits to workers	MLSP/micro-, small, medium-sized and big enterprises in their capacity of employers	2018-2020	Increased number of enterprises with improved working conditions	Number of enterprises which have received financing / co-financing under OSH projects  Number of workers with improved working conditions	Operation “Good and safe working conditions” under OPHRD 2014-2020
22.	Encouraging employers to improve the working conditions in enterprises, including in SMEs	Financing activities for modernisation of the work equipment and technologies; occupational risk management	Working Conditions Fund / employers	2018-2020	Increased number of enterprises with improved working conditions	Number of enterprises which have received co-financing.  Number of workers with improved	Within the approved budget of the Working Conditions Fund

						working conditions	
<b>Priority Area II Preventing occupational risks, including new and emerging risks</b>							
<b>Extending the role of social dialogue for ensuring better protection against occupational hazards</b>							
23.	Improving the role of social dialogue at sectoral and branch level	Regular discussion of OSH inspections, analyses, reports, records and recommendations in sectoral / branch working conditions councils	Sectoral/branch working conditions councils	2018-2020	Effective interaction of social partners at sectoral/branch level	Prepared minutes of meetings of sectoral/branch working conditions councils	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
24.	Strengthening and extending the role of social dialogue for enhancing the motivation for OSH enforcement	Conducting OSH training for representatives of: WCC/WCG, regional working conditions councils, sectoral (branch) working conditions councils, employers and employers' organisations	Social partners/ Working Conditions Fund	2018-2020	Enhancing the capacity of social partners at enterprise level for effective OSH enforcement	Number of OSH training seminars held	Within the approved budget of the Working Conditions Fund
		Conducting information campaigns for prevention of occupational hazards	Social partners/ Working Conditions Fund	2018-2020	Raising the awareness and motivation of workers and employers for OSH compliance	Number of information campaigns conducted	Within the approved budget of the Working Conditions Fund
		Holding meetings of social partners / members of working conditions committees in the regional laboratories at EEA with a view to applying measures to minimise and control work-related hazards in the regional laboratories at	EEA, WCC	2018-2020	Improving the safety culture and engaging managers in OSH activities	Number of meetings held and minutes approved	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions

		EEA					
25.	Development and improvement of non-judicial methods for settlement of collective labour disputes.	Provision of statistical data about indicators by sector, branch, municipality and enterprise in relation to the collective agreements (CA) database	GLI EA	2018-2020	Supporting the activity for settlement of collective labour disputes	Increased number of settled out of court disputes	Within the approved budget of GLI EA
26.	Organising competitive initiatives to award companies with achievements in the field of OSH in sectors with higher work-related traumatism – for example in construction	<p>Selecting a branch / sector to implement the initiative based on increased work-related traumatism according to previous year data;</p> <p>Designing criteria to assess the companies in the respective sector;</p> <p>Conducting a review with regard to compliance with the criteria by the different companies, ranking;</p> <p>Announcing and awarding appropriately the companies with best OSH achievements from the respective sector, branch, industry for a given period</p>	<p>MLSP</p> <p>GLI EA</p> <p>Social partners</p>	2018	<p>Focusing the attention of all stakeholders on OSH issues in a specific branch, sector;</p> <p>Improving OSH activities in enterprises and OSH control;</p> <p>Encouraging OSH cooperation between government institutions and social partners;</p> <p>Reducing work-related traumatism in the respective branch or sector</p>	<p>Involvement of companies from the respective branch/sector. Conducted OSH review by GLI EA and information campaign. Changes in work-related traumatism data in the post-event period.</p>	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
<b>Developing and implementing practical tools for control of occupational hazards</b>							
27.	Updating the instructions on the control for application of Regulations REACH и CLP	<p>Improving the interaction between the regional structures of MEW, MH and MLSP, depending on their functional competence.</p> <p>Identifying the target groups</p>	MEW/MH and GLI EA	2018	Improving the quality of REACH and CLP control	Updated control instructions	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions

		subject to control and the control priorities, etc.					
28.	Designing a specialised brochure/manual for OSH in handling chemical substances and reactants / sampling water samples from larger water basins and by climbing	Brochure / manual for OSH in handling chemical substances and reagents / water sampling from large water reservoirs and by climbing	EEA	2019	Raising the level of occupational safety and the occupational safety culture	Brochure/ manual designed and brought to the knowledge of the staff	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
29.	Limiting the risk of asbestos-related illnesses	Creating a national register of workers exposed to asbestos	MH, NCPHA, RHI, GLI EA, OHS	2018-2020	Data about workers exposed to asbestos	Operational register	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
		Activities to improve the capacity of OSH experts and population's awareness about the health risks from exposure to asbestos and about identifying asbestos containing materials in the household and in the environment	NCPHA	2018-2020	Improved capacity of OSH experts to prevent health risk from exposure to asbestos. Improved awareness of the population.	Number of studies carried out Number of training materials Number of information materials	Within the approved budget of NCPHA
		Coordinates actions of MH and GLI EA control bodies what regard to authorisations, declaring and control of exposure to asbestos	RHI, GLI EA	2018-2020	Improved control of enforcement with regard to exposure to asbestos	Number of enterprises covered	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions
<b>Awareness raising and culture of prevention</b>							
30.	Improving the awareness and competence of those active in the area of	- Organising and holding thematic courses; - Designing training	NCPHA	2018-2020	Raised awareness of those active in the area of ensuring	Number of trainings held Number of	Within the approved budget of

	ensuring OSH	materials; - Dissemination of best practice examples – selection and dissemination of best practice examples from proven European and other sources			OSH – medical and non-medical specialists, employers and managers, workers and their representatives – trade unions, WCC and WCG	training materials	NCPHA
31.	Improving the competence of managers and of those active in the integration of OSH management systems and quality standards	Designing training materials and conducting trainings for integration of common management systems	Social partners	2018-2020	Raised awareness of those responsible for OSH management systems	Designed manuals and training materials. Trainings conducted	Within the approved budgets of the respective organisations
32.	Holding national events within the EU OSHA campaign “Healthy Workplaces Manage Dangerous Substances” 2018-2019	Holding national events (conferences, seminars) to promote best practices of ensuring OSH in handling dangerous chemical substances.	MLSP/MH, social partners	2018-2019 European OSH Week – October 2018 and October 2019	Presentation of information about specific risks in handling dangerous substances	Number of participants. Information materials provided. Best practices of enterprises presented	EU OSHA; MLSP – National Focal Point
		Holding the national phase of the European Good Practice Awards competition.	MLSP/MH, social partners	November 2018	Presentation of measures and good practices for ensuring OSH in handling chemicals	2 Bulgarian enterprises nominated for the European stage of the competition	
33.	Holding national events within EU OSHA 2020-2021 campaign “Healthy Workplaces – Prevention of Work-Related	Holding national events (conferences, seminars) to promote good practices of ensuring OSH for vulnerable groups of	MLSP/MH, social partners	European OSH Week – October 2020	Presentation of information about specific risks and prevention of work-related	Number of participants. Information materials provided. Good	EU OSHA – NFP, MLSP

	Musculoskeletal Disorders”	workers, in relation to the main theme of the campaign  Holding the national phase of the European Good Practice Awards competition			November 2020	musculoskeletal disorders  Presentation of measures and good practices for ensuring OSH and prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders	practices from enterprises presented  2 Bulgarian enterprises nominated for the European stage of the competition	
34.	Distribution of publicity and information materials via the EA OSHA national focal point network	Distribution of information materials of EU OSHA – results and reports of pan-European studies, good practice guides, risk assessment tools, etc.	MLSP – NFP network	2018-2020	Printed and electronic information materials provided	Number of information materials provided	EU OSHA - NFP	
35.	Holding upskilling trainings in the field of accidents prevention and rescue	Designing and implementing programmes for training, retraining and instruction of workers and employees on handling dangerous substances in enterprises	MLSP, GLI EA, professional organisations	2018-2020	Management of the risks of accidents and incidents involving dangerous substances	Number of trainings held	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions	
36.	Holding meetings and training seminars on dangerous/hazardous chemical substances for the industry and the control bodies at central and regional level	Clarifying the obligations of the producer and consumer companies along the HCS supply chain with regard to compliance with OSH legislation and the Regulations REACH <sup>16</sup> and CLP <sup>17</sup>  Exchange of information	MEW/ MLSP, MH, RIEW, GLI EA, RHI, social partners	2018-2020	Raised awareness and competence, sharing of good practices of safe management of chemicals	Number of meetings and seminars held	Within the approved budgets of the respective institutions	

<sup>16</sup> Regulation (EC) No. 1907/2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals

<sup>17</sup> Regulation (EC) No. 1272/2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures

		between inspectors on the current status of the persons responsible for compliance with the legal requirements					
<b>Priority Area III Prevention of work-related illnesses and occupational accidents</b>							
37.	Provision of health surveillance in economic sectors at risk	Diagnosis of occupational diseases	Working Conditions Fund/MH	2018-2020	Clinical diagnosis of suspected occupational illnesses	Number of cases	Within the approved budget of the Working Conditions Fund
38.	Rehabilitation and reintegration of workers with health problems and victims of occupational accidents or occupational diseases	Rehabilitation and integration of workers and of those with reduced work capacity or permanent disability due to occupational accidents or occupational diseases	NSSI	2018-2020	Improved occupational and health status of workers	Number of workers covered by rehabilitation	Within the approved budget
39.	Ensuring health surveillance in the Healthcare Sector	Identifying major risk factors causing deterioration of the health and work capacity of certain occupational groups in the health sector	NCPHA	2018-2019	Limiting the health risk factors for the workers in the healthcare sector	Study conducted Developed recommendations on limiting the harmful effect of risk factors causing deterioration of the health of public health workers	Within the approved budget of NCPHA
		National study of morbidity and absences from work caused by psychosocial risks in the healthcare	Social partners, MH, MLSP, NCPHA	2018-2020	Limiting the risk factors to the health of those working in the health sector	Study conducted Developed recommendation on limiting the	Within the approved budget of the Working Conditions

		sector				adverse effect of psychosocial risks	Fund
		National study of morbidity and absences from work caused by psychosocial risks in the education sector	Social partners, MH, MLSP, NCPHA	2018-2020	Limiting the risk factors to the health of those working in the education sector	Study conducted Developed recommendation on limiting the adverse effect of psychosocial risks	Within the approved budget of the Working Conditions Fund

**Abbreviations used**

BAMI	- Bulgarian Association of the Metallurgical Industry
BBCMB	- Bulgarian Branch Chamber – Machine Building
GVA	- Gross Value Added
GDP	- Gross Domestic Product
OSH	- Occupational Safety and Health
DGFSPP	- Directorate General “Fire safety and protection of the population”
SAMTS	- State Agency for Metrological and Technical Surveillance
SG	- State Gazette
DNCS	- Directorate for National Construction Supervision
EU-OSHA	- European Occupational Safety and Health Agency
EC	- European Commission
EU	- European Union
EU-28	- The 28 Member States of the EU
ESA 2010	- European System of Accounts 2010
HSW	- Health and Safety at Work
PSA	- Public Service Act
HSWA	- Health and Safety at Work Act
EPA	- Employment Promotion Act
GLIEA	- General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency
EEA	- Environment Executive Agency
ICT	- Information and Communication Technologies
CGHS	- Control of Generally Hazardous Substances
SIC	- Social Insurance Code
LC	- Labour Code
WCC/WCG	- Working Conditions Committees / Groups
MoI	- Ministry of Interior
ME	- Ministry of Energy
MH	- Ministry of Health
ME	- Ministry of Economy
MD	- Ministry of Defence
MEW	- Ministry of Environment and Water
MRDPW	- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works
SME	- Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
MLSP	- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
MTITC	- Ministry of Transport, Information Technologies and Communications
NSSI	- National Social Security Institute
NP OSH	National Programme for Occupational Safety and Health
LFS	- Labour Force Survey
NSI	- National Statistical Institute
NF	- National Federation
NFP	- National Focal Point
NCPHA	- National Centre for Public Health and Analyses
NCRBRP	National Centre for Radiobiology and Radiation Protection
OPHRD	- Operational Programme “Human Resources Development”
HCS	- Hazardous Chemical Substances
AEM	- Administrative Enforcement Measures
SHP	- Safety and Health Plan
FSPP	- Fire Safety and Protection of the Population
RHI	- Regional Health Inspectorate
RIEW	- Regional Inspectorate for Environment and Water
OHS	- Occupational Health Service
TUF	- Trade Union Federation
TD NRA	Territorial Directorate of the National Revenue Agency

TD NSSI  
CHRDRI  
CLP

REACH

- Territorial Directorates of the National Social Security Institute
- Centre for Human Resources Development and Regional Initiatives
- Regulation (EC) No. 1272/2008 on classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures
- Regulation (EC) No. 1907/2006 concerning the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals