



STRATEGY OF CYPRUS
FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK
2021 - 2027



STRATEGY OF CYPRUS FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK DURING THE PERIOD 2021-2027

A. INTRODUCTION

The perpetual and main objective of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and the State of Cyprus and its Society, on the protection of workers, is the continual and constant improvement of safety and health levels in workplaces.

The Strategy of Cyprus for Safety and Health at Work for the period 2021 - 2027 defines the direction and priorities set for achieving the above stated objective in the ever changing work environment brought about by the European efforts for green, digital and demographic transitions. In addition, the actions mentioned in this Strategy aim at achieving the “Vision Zero” approach to work-related deaths in the European Union, with zero fatal workplace accidents.

Particular emphasis will continue to be paid to micro enterprises, i.e. those with fewer than 10 employees, which constitute the overwhelming majority of enterprises in Cyprus. Also, the new Strategy emphasizes the risks of psychosocial factors, musculoskeletal disorders and new and emerging risks.

For the preparation of the Strategy, the views of the social partners, the results of the evaluation of the Strategy of Cyprus on Safety and Health at Work 2013 - 2020, the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027, the recommendations of the Committee of Senior Labour Inspectors (SLIC) and the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work (ACHSW) of the European Union for a new European Strategic Framework on Safety and Health at Work and the experiences gained in applying the existing safety and health at work legislation were duly taken into account.

B. EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK 2013 – 2020

The Strategy of Cyprus for Safety and Health at Work for the period 2013 - 2020 was a continuation of the Strategy of Cyprus for Safety and Health at Work for the period 2007 - 2012 and defined the directions and priorities for the continuous and steady improvement of safety levels and health in workplaces. This Strategy was extended for the year 2021, in order to avoid the existence of a time period without such a Strategy. This need arose due to the delay by the European Commission in adopting the new Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work. The extension of the Strategy was approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, who informed the Council of Ministers on 22.10.2020 accordingly.

The extent of implementation of the Strategy was evaluated on an annual basis through an Action Plan prepared for this purpose. The Action Plan included the actions of each Organization participating in the Pancypriot Safety and Health Council, as well as other Public and Private Sector Organizations that can contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy.



Both the text of the Strategy and the relevant Action Plan were approved by the Pancyriot Safety and Health Council, the Labour Advisory Board and the Council of Ministers at its meeting on 12.3.2014. On 3.7.2014, the Strategy was signed by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance and representatives of the Organizations participating in the Pancyriot Safety and Health Council.

Despite the problems that arose due to the economic crisis that hit Cyprus and the COVID-19 pandemic, which had adverse effects globally, all involved stakeholders continued to strive to achieve the goals of the Strategy.

The main results of the implementation of the 2013-2020 Strategy of Cyprus through the implementation of the relevant Action Plan are the following:

- The workplace Accident Frequency Index during the reporting period showed a decrease of 14.7% compared to the decrease of 27.3% observed during the period 2007-2012.
- Targeted Annual Inspection Programs based on national data and European campaigns were implemented. Through these Programs, 33.124 inspections were carried out in various sectors of economic activity. The 2020 Inspection Program was adapted to the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, by conducting targeted campaigns to address the adverse effects of the pandemic.
- New Regulations for the health surveillance of employees were approved, which regulate the procedures and the framework of the implementation of the health surveillance system in Cyprus. The implementation of the Regulations was further promoted through the issue of Ministerial Orders for various work activities, such as asbestos work, port work, work involving climbing work and work in mines and quarries.
- New Laws, Regulations, Orders and Codes of Practice on various Occupational Safety and Health issues were adopted and implemented, including Regulations for the regulation of safety and health issues in construction sites to replace the harmonizing Regulations of 2002, Orders for the regulation of thermal stress of employees during hot weather as well as new Regulations for the Registration of Premises, Installations, Enterprises and Work Places to replace the anachronistic provisions of the legislation for the mandatory registration of all premises, which fall under the definition of "factory" according to the Factories Law , Chapter 134.
- Special actions were promoted to reduce occupational accidents and occupational diseases in the Construction sector.
- The Department of Labour Inspection (DLI) in collaboration with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), developed new and revised existing Online Interactive Risk Assessment Tools (OiRA Tools) for 10 areas of economic activity including an additional tool for assessing the risks posed in the workplace by COVID-19. The aim of these tools is to facilitate the implementation of risk assessment and management procedures in the workplace for micro and small enterprises.
- In order to promote prevention and create a Health and Safety culture:

- enlightenment campaigns and a variety of enlightenment events such as seminars, workshops and training programs were held, including the international Vision Zero - Safety and Health Wellbeing campaign by the DLI, the Social Partners and / or other bodies,
 - special Guides were issued in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and special enlightenment and informative actions were carried out within 2020, regarding the management of the COVID-19 pandemic,
 - the institution of Competitions such as the Good Practice Competition in companies and the Poster and Good Practice Competition in schools in order to strengthen the integration of Safety and Health issues in Education, was continued and in addition, a new Cartoon Competition was organized in collaboration with the Cyprus Health and Safety Association and the Cyprus Cartoonists Association,
 - the informative activities for teachers and students on the use of the OiRA tool regarding risk assessment in schools and through the course on health and safety at work, prepared by EU-OSHA with the help of NAPO, the cartoon hero for safety and health, continued
 - publishing of legislation, leaflets and other enlightening material regarding OSH for informing workers, employers as well as the public in general through the website and Social Media of the DLI, as well as the websites and Social Media of the Social Partners and other bodies on issues related to Occupational Safety and Health continued,
 - cooperation with the social partners and organizations active in the construction sector was strengthened and joint actions were promoted, including actions to promote the campaign and vision for zero accidents at work (Vision Zero– Safety and Health Wellbeing).
- The operation of support institutions has improved. More specifically:
 - the number of Safety Officers in companies increased and at the end of 2020 the appointed Safety Officers rose to 177, compared to 128 in 2012,
 - the institution of the employer's consultation with his/her employees and their participation in Occupational Safety and Health issues was further strengthened, through the operation of the Safety Committees. In the Computerized System of the DLI, the registered Safety Committees at the end of 2020 reached 1,200 compared to approximately 1,000 at the end of 2012,
 - the institution of Approved Persons that provide External Protection and Prevention Services to employers and self-employed persons in Occupational Safety and Health issues has been expanded and better established,
 - the role of Safety and Health Coordinators in the stages of design and execution of construction projects was highlighted and better established,
 - the number of companies cooperating with an Occupational Physician in order to monitor the health of their employees has increased.



- In order to improve the effectiveness of inspections, the systematic training of DLI Inspectors continued in Cyprus and abroad, according to the learning needs identified on the basis of the Strategic Planning of the Department.
- Cooperation with academic institutions in Cyprus continued in order to promote research on Occupational Safety and Health issues and especially on new and emerging risks.

C. STRATEGY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK FOR THE PERIOD 2021 – 2027

The Strategy of Cyprus on Safety and Health at Work for the period 2021 -2027 aims at materializing the policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance for continuous and steadfast improvement of occupational health and safety levels.

The ten fundamental pillars of this Strategy are the following:

- The utilization and improvement of the Institutional Framework regulating Safety and Health at Work issues.
- The existence of a suitable and sufficient Legislative Framework for Safety and Health at Work.
- The operation of a suitable and adequate Labour Inspection System for Safety and Health at Work.
- The Improvement of the operation of Supporting Institutions.
- The expansion and improvement of the Health Surveillance and Health Promotion System of employed persons.
- Promotion of accidents prevention and nurturing a Safety and Health culture.
- Incorporation of Safety and Health at Work issues into other Policy Areas.
- Encouragement and utilization of scientific progress and relevant research.
- Close cooperation with the Social Partners and other stakeholders.
- Active participation in the Bodies and work activities of the European Union and in other European or International Organisations.

1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The existing Institutional Framework caters to the needs of the period 2021-2027 and is based on:

- The operation of the Labour Advisory Board, which advises the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance on all labour policy issues and submits recommendations and suggestions relating to labour legislation



- The operation of the Pancyriot Safety and Health Council which provides advice to the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance on the measures that need to be taken to prevent work accidents, on the improvement of occupational safety and health and on the review or introduction of new legislation, which is enhanced with the composition and operation of subcommittees of the Council for the study of specialized topics.

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Legislative Framework is fully harmonised with the corresponding Acquis Communautaire. The harmonization process will continue via new and / or updated national legislation, and at the same time, it will be updated whenever and wherever gaps and / or particularities are identified with respect to the situation in Cyprus. Especially, wherever needed, the legislation will be modernized so as to cover occupational risks relating to activities arising out of the digital transition, the green transition and the demographic transition.

Moreover, the simplification of the national Legislative Framework will be promoted, via the reduction and unification of legislative acts, without undermining the level of Safety and Health at Work standards.

3. SUITABLE AND SUFFICIENT LABOUR INSPECTION SYSTEM

Labour Inspection is mandatory for the most effective enforcement of legislation aiming to protect workers as well as to safeguard free and fair competition amongst enterprises.

The Labour Inspection System must be comparable with the corresponding Systems operating in other Member States. This is accomplished by way of the following:

- Implementation of a targeted and proactive inspection programme, based on accurate, field derived data arising from inspections, accidents, occupational diseases, dangerous occurrences as well as indicators arising from relevant surveys.
- Establishment of suitable structures within the Department of Labour Inspection for (a) the enforcement of legislation for the safety and health of workers engaged in offshore hydrocarbon drilling activities and the safety of such installations and (b) the control of installations including natural gas installations, where major accidents may occur.
- Arrangements for the provision of suitable, continuous and systematic training of Inspectors with regard to existing, new and emerging risks, such as risks arising from new forms of employment (e.g. telework, part-time work, platform work), new technologies and digitalisation, at the same covering topics relating to offshore activities.
- Provision to Inspectors of suitable technological equipment and supporting them with computerised systems. Also, promotion of the use of digital tools such that workplace inspections shall become more productive, in tandem with prevention and relevant action following legislative contraventions discovery.

- Adaptation of the Labour Inspection System for effectively dealing with emergency situations facing workplaces such as pandemics. For this reason, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the current Specialized Plan for Action and Readiness for the management of future crises relating to health (e.g. pandemics), which includes the enforcement of relevant European Directives and Tools. Additionally, and up to 2023, a cooperation mechanism will be established between the competent Authorities for Public Health and Occupational Safety and Health.
- Exchange visits of Inspectors from Cyprus with Inspectors from other European Union Member States, aiming at acquiring knowledge and experience.
- Strengthening of the cooperation and information exchange between the Department of Labour Inspection and other relevant national Authorities, aiming at improving safety and health levels in all employment sectors. For this reason, the existing close cooperation with other Authorities, such as the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry, the Cyprus Police, the Cyprus Fire Service, the Department of Labour, the Mines Service, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Road Transport, will be further promoted.
- Improvement of the structure and staffing of the Department of Labour Inspection.

4. SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONS

The Supporting Institutions shall be improved as follows:

- Provision of targeted support and information to the Safety Officers as well as to the Approved Persons who provide Services for the Protection and Prevention on safety and health at work issues. Strengthening of the framework and relevant procedures regarding the institution of Approved Persons who provide Services for the Protection and Prevention.
- Improvement of the institution of the Safety Committees, aiming at a more active attendance of the workers' representatives and the strengthening of consultation for the promotion of safety and health at work, aiming at developing safe, healthy and productive workplaces.
- Promotion of the establishment and operation of Internal Services of Protection and Prevention and appointing Responsible Persons for Safety issues, as well as their deputies, aiming at the appointment by employers of such persons, to deal with protection and prevention activities in the workplace.

5. EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE SYSTEM OF HEALTH SURVEILLANCE AND HEALTH PROMOTION OF WORKERS

The Health Surveillance System for Workers will be improved through the implementation of an Action Plan which was prepared after the completion of a relevant study and through the enforcement of the legislation on Health Surveillance and the publication of relevant Decrees.

The effort for improving the registration, monitoring and prevention of occupational diseases will be continued. Special effort will be made for the combating of musculoskeletal diseases, psychosocial factors, stress at work and diseases caused by the use of dangerous chemical substances.

Promotion of the European Code against cancer, aiming to inform the workers of the reduction of occupational diseases and deaths due to cancer will be carried out. In this framework, efforts will be made for non-discrimination and the reintegration into work, of workers suffering from cancer.

Effort will be made to manage occupational risks related to diseases of the circulatory system (cardiac and cerebral).

Assessment and management of the risks that might have an impact on workers with disabilities and workers affected by pandemics.

Management of risks in the healthcare sector, through the development and implementation of safe method statements, the provision of appropriate training and the health surveillance, according to the Regulations for the health surveillance of workers.

Moreover, the DLI intends to:

- seek the peer evaluation of the prevailing situation related to psychosocial and ergonomic risks in several economic activities,
- monitor the changes in the field of carcinogenic limit values and the management of biological agents,
- promote a Workplace Safety and Health Policy for all Ages, aiming to address the problems arising from the ageing workforce, and thus improve the quality of life of older workers, in view of the announcement by the United Nations General Assembly of the Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021 - 2030). In this context, a special Action Plan will be formulated, which will focus on the development of a working environment that will promote sustainable working life.

6. PROMOTION OF PREVENTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY CULTURE

The promotion of prevention of occupational accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences, as well as the development of positive safety culture and health culture will be implemented through:

- Regular and targeted inspections of workplaces.
- Campaigns which will be organized based on the recommendations of EU-OSHA and the European Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC).
- Collaboration for the establishment and effective operation of the Safety Committees
Publications and articles in the newspapers/magazines of the Social Partners and other organizations / institutions with particular interest in issues of safety and health at work.
- Preparation and dissemination of simple, comprehensive and inclusive informative material.
- Distribution of informative or other material prepared by EU-OSHA.
- Publicizing of the legislation, informative / enlightening material and other information that concern activities which contribute to the promotion of occupational safety and health, on websites and social media of the DLI and other stakeholders.
- Organizing, or co-organizing with other institutions, including the Social Partners, seminars, meetings and other awareness-raising activities.
- Promotion of other forms of cooperation with institutions /organizations that have a particular interest on issues of safety and health at work.
- Organization of or participation in training and instruction programmes.
- Use of economic incentives and disincentives.
- Use of voluntary tools, such as competitions, etc.
- Publication of good practices
- Implementation of plans and programmes for the promotion of health in the workplace and collaboration with medical staff.
- Development of collaboration with stakeholders representing Consultants, Designers and Manufactures of projects and equipment.



- Collaboration with Mass Media.
- Encouragement of workers, non-governmental organizations and the general public to be in contact with the DLI.
- Integration of health and safety at work in every level of operation of the organization.
- Helping (Micro and Small Enterprises) MSEs manage occupational safety and health through the use of simple and efficient tools, electronic applications and guides (e.g. OiRA tools). The DLI has prepared and will promote a Policy on the use of OiRA tools which are easy to use, flexible and cost free.
- Provision of continuous guidance and training to MSEs regarding risk assessment and the implementation of preventive and protective measures.
- Implementation of targeted enlightening campaigns in cooperation with the Press and Information Office and or/other governmental or non-governmental stakeholders
- Promotion of the approach of Vision Zero fatal accidents at work

7. INTEGRATION INTO OTHER POLICY SECTORS

Integration of occupational safety and health issues into other policy sectors and in particular the following:

7.1 Education

The inclusion of occupational safety and health issues in the curriculum of:

- Public and private schools at all levels of education, i.e. Primary, Elementary, Secondary General (Gymnasium, Lyceum) and Technical Education,
- Higher education institutions of Cyprus and particularly the curricula in disciplines of engineering science and other study subjects related to the construction, chemical and process industries, storage of dangerous chemical substances as well as offshore hydrocarbon extraction facilities,
- Training Schools of Public Organizations, and Postsecondary Training Institutes (Education Institutes after graduating from secondary level education) as well as other Vocational Training Schools,

So that today's pupils and students, but tomorrow's employers and employees, gain knowledge over time in Safety and Health issues as well as developing a safety culture. Actions to inform and raise awareness of teachers on Occupational Safety and Health will be continued.

7.2 Employment

- The training of new entrants to employment in occupational safety and health issues.
- The inspection of the premises of the employer concerned and the imposition of



conditions with the aim of improving safety and health at work in the context of the examination procedure for granting alien employment permits by the Department of Labour.

- Conduct of effective inspections and monitor compliance with occupational safety and health obligations for seasonal workers in high-risk occupations.

7.3 Development

The imposition of conditions for Safety and Health at Work, within the framework of the procedure for obtaining Planning or Building Permits or Approval Certificates for premises to be used as places of work as well as the integration of health and safety at work issues in the processes of Public Procurement.

7.4

Certification

n of Professional Qualifications

- The inclusion of OSH issues to the subjects under examination in the context of certification of professional qualifications in various sectors of the economy.
- Cooperation of the social partners and other organizations and bodies to promote the implementation of the defined Standard Professional Qualifications

7.5 Provision of Subsidies

The inspection of premises, to apply the minimum levels for Safety and Health, in cases where funding is provided to industries, farms and other businesses premises through upgrade programs for equipment, facilities, reallocation of companies, etc. such as obtaining Certificates of Registration for the premises of a business.

8. ENCOURAGEMENT AND UTILISATION OF SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS AND RESEARCH

In collaboration with Academic Institutions, Research Institutes and Services in Cyprus and abroad, research will be sought or both existing and new and emerging risks aiming at minimizing accidents at work, occupational diseases and dangerous occurrences. In this context, research promotion will be pursued on occupational health and safety issues related to green development, teleworking, digitalization and new technologies such as nanotechnology and waste management technology. Furthermore, the research pursued will cover demographic changes, changes in employment and the relationship between productivity and working life.

Also, the assignment of studies and research to suitable Organizations / Institutions / Research Centers and Experts will be sought for the improvement of knowledge on issues of occupational safety and health.

9. COLLABORATION WITH THE SOCIAL PARTNERS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The improvement of health and safety at work levels requires the active participation of all the involved stakeholders. Each stakeholder may contribute depending on the activities



carried out. Employers, employees, self-employed persons, governmental institutions, local authorities and other institutions are expected to participate in the implementation of the Strategy.

The collaboration with the Social Partners constitutes the cornerstone of the policy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

The high level of collaboration that exists between the Social Partners will be fully utilized and the provision of technical assistance to the Organizations of Social Partners aiming at upgrading their capacity to promote training and guidance to their members will be strengthened. The materialization of all Policy Declarations, existing and new, concerning health and safety at work, signed / or to be signed between the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and the Social partners will be promoted.

Also, the collaboration with the local authorities as well as with other institutions and specifically those that deal with regulating professional qualifications, market surveillance and the protection of environment will be promoted.

Finally, in cooperation with other competent Authorities / Organizations / Social Partners issues regarding:

- Discrimination at work due to gender during the design stage, for example of workplaces, law enforcement and report preparation (e.g. Risk Assessment) will be promoted,
- Farmers' education in order to increase their knowledge and skills in occupational safety and health, including the issue of safe use of chemicals and in particular plant protection and biocidal products will be provided.

10. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EUROPEAN OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

10.1 Advisory Committee for Safety and Health at Work (ACSHW)

Regular monitoring of the work and active participation in the Plenary and in the Working Groups of the Advisory Committee for Safety and Health at Work that deal with issues which Cyprus has an interest in, so that there is an immediate knowledge of the development and the positions of the European Commission and the Member States.

The uninterrupted attendance of the representatives of the Social Partners in this Committee will also be sought.

10.2 Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC)

Active participation in the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee as well as in the corresponding Working Groups so that immediate information is obtained on the current situation and the procedures which are followed by the Labour Inspection Services of the other Member States aiming at the exchange of Good Practices and



the improvement of Cyprus's Labour Inspection Services, where this is considered necessary.

10.3 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA)

Active and continuous participation in the Governing Board of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

The DLI, in its capacity as the Cyprus Focal Point of the European Agency for the Safety and Health at Work, will continue to take part in decision making procedures, in policy development, in the development of OiRA tools, and in general, will continue to contribute to and benefit from the multifaceted support provided by the Agency.

The uninterrupted participation of the representatives of the Social Partners in the Agency's Management Boards as well as in the Enterprise Europe Network will also be sought.

10.4 European Statistical Service

Participation of Cyprus in the proceedings of the European Statistical Service handling issues of Safety and Health at Work so that there is immediate information on the developments and the requirements for new statistical data in order to timely promote the required actions.

10.5 International Labour Organization (ILO)

When and whenever is required, there will be active participation in the proceedings of the Annual Conference of the International Labour Organization of the United Nations as well as in each of the Ad-hoc Technical Committees that are occasionally established to examine special subjects with regard to Occupational Safety and Health.

Effective utilization of the Conventions and Recommendations as well as other informative documents / guides of the Organization to highest degree.

10.6 International Social Security Association (ISSA)

Participation in the activities of the International Social Security Association especially with regarding the sectors of Construction and Electricity and promotion of informative material developed for Safety and Health at Work issues.

10.7 European Chemical Agency (ECHA)

Participation in actions related to the protection of workers from exposure to dangerous chemical substances.

Important Note: This document constitutes an unofficial translation of the document «Στρατηγική της Κύπρου για την Ασφάλεια και Υγεία στην Εργασία 2021-2027». In cases of any differences in interpretation, the Greek text prevails.