



## **STRATEGY OF CYPRUS FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK DURING THE PERIOD 2013-2020**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The ultimate and main objective of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the Cyprus Society, on the protection of workers, is the continual and constant improvement of safety and health levels in the workplace.

The Strategy of Cyprus for Safety and Health at Work 2013 - 2020 states the guidelines and priorities set to achieve the above objective. Particular emphasis will be paid to micro enterprises, ie those with fewer than 10 employees, which constitute the overwhelming majority of enterprises in Cyprus.

Also, the new Strategy emphasizes the dangers of psychosocial factors and the musculoskeletal disorders.

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 2007 - 2012, the strategies of other Member States of the European Union, 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 Safety and Health Strategy at Work and the experiences gained in applying the existing legislation on safety and health at Work are taken into consideration.

### **B. EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGY ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK 2007 – 2012**

The main results from the implementation of the 2007-2012 Strategy of Cyprus through the implementation of the relevant Action Plan are the following:

- The incidence rate of accidents decreased by 27.23%, exceeding the original and very ambitious goal of 25%. Also, the annual number of accidents that caused the absence of employees from work for more than 3 days fell below the psychological threshold of 2,000. In particular in the construction sector a reduction in the frequency of accidents by 42.2% was achieved.
- The amendment in 2011 of the Safety and Health at Work Laws significantly increased the maximum penalties that may be imposed for breaches in safety and health at work issues, which is expected to become more deterrent for future violations of the law.
- Carried out more than 25,000 inspections to monitor the enforcement of legislation that regulates Safety and Health at Work issues.
- The Department of Labour Inspection (DLI) organized by itself or participated in numerous awareness raising and training events like seminars, workshops, training programs organized by social partners and / or other organizations. Aggregated over the period 2007 - 2012 the DLI participated in 500 such events that were attended by about 18,000 people. At the same time, during the period 2007 - 2011 about 2,350 programs on Safety and Health at Work which involved more than 27,500 people were subsidized by the Human Resource Development Authority and European Funds.
- The effectiveness of inspections was improved by a more systematic training of inspectors through their participation in training courses and study visits in Cyprus and abroad and through interdepartmental educational programs.



- Further strengthened the consultation of the employer with its employees and their participation in the Safety and Health at Work issues with doubling of the Safety Committees that operated in 2007, which at the end of 2012 exceeded 1,000.
- Expanded and consolidated the institution of External Safety Persons known as External Protection and Prevention Services (EXYPP), which provide support to Health and Safety issues for employers and self-employed.
- Increased the number of Safety Officers and staff of the Internal Protection and Prevention Services (ESYPP) working within companies. In 2007 there were 47 appointed Safety Officers while in 2012 amounted to 128.
- Promoted in cooperation with the Public Administration and Personnel Department, issues of Safety and Health at Work in the Public Sector through the preparation and use of a Guide on Organization and Management of Health and Safety issues in the Public Service as well as through the training of Safety Representatives and Safety Officers in the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration and Productivity Centre respectively.
- Promoted the integration of OSH issues into other policy areas and especially their integration achieved in the education system within the context of the educational reform. The Health Education course includes sections on Safety and Health at Work and is taught in almost all levels of the education system.
- Signed joint Policy Declaration between the social partners and other interested professional bodies to reduce accidents and occupational diseases in the construction sector and promoted specific measures to achieve the objectives of the Joint Declaration.
- Upgraded the quality of scaffolding manufactured in Cyprus and used in the Cyprus market through a project funding contractors, in line with European standards and worth over 10 million Euros,
- Improved the tender procedures for the execution of construction works by the inclusion within the terms of tender documents, conditions and requirements for safety and health issues.
- Carried out many systematic raising awareness campaigns and inspections according to the Annual Program of the Department of Labour Inspection. Also DLI participated in all the campaigns organized at a European Level by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EUOSHA) and the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee of the European Union (SLIC).
- Organized Competitions on Good Practice and Safety Committees in the field of Safety and Health at Work within enterprises as well as Poster and Good Practice Competitions within Schools. Two Cypriot companies were awarded by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work for examples of good practice which were submitted in European Competitions Good Practice Awards.
- Began working with academic institutions to promote research in the Safety and Health at Work.
- Implemented technical assistance project through funding from the European Union amounting to 1.7 million euro through which more than 2,000 persons were trained for Safety and Health at Work, prepared informative material, evaluated the Labour Inspection System of the Department of Labour Inspection and purchased instrumentation for the needs of Inspectors,
- Successfully completed the activities established during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union on Safety and Health at Work.



- Set up the basis for the establishment of a health surveillance system of employees by implementing a specific action plan. Within this framework, Regulations for the Notification of Occupational Diseases and Regulations for the First Aid were issued in 2007 and 2009 respectively. Also legislation for monitoring the health of employees has been prepared and is currently in consultation with the Social Partners. However, not all of the desired results were achieved since Notification of occupational diseases did not increase substantially despite the fact that such diseases occur.
- Based on a Europe-wide poll conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work at the end of 2012 work-related stress is considered more frequent in Cyprus than anywhere else in Europe, although half of employees think it is well controlled in the workplace .
- It is considered that all the above actions resulted in 67% of Cypriot workers stating that they feel sufficiently informed about Occupational Health and Safety. This number is based on Europe-wide poll conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work at the end of 2009. Across Europe the average was 66%.

### **C. STRATEGY ON HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK 2013 – 2020**

The Strategy of Cyprus on safety and health at work 2013 -2020 is aiming at materializing the policy of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance for a continuous and steadfast improvement of occupational health and safety levels.

The fundamental pillars of this Strategy are the following:

- The utilization and improvement of the Institutional Framework.
- The existence of a suitable Legislative Framework fully harmonized with the European Acquis.
- Operation of a suitable and adequate Labour Inspection System.
- Improvement of the operation of suitable Supporting Institutions.
- Operation of a suitable Health Surveillance System of the workers.
- Promotion of accidents prevention and promotion of Health and Safety culture.
- Incorporation of Safety and Health at Work issues into other Policy Areas.
- Encouragement of the scientific progress and research.
- Close cooperation with the Social Partners and other stakeholders.
- Active participation at the Bodies and activities of the European Union.

The implementation of the Strategy will be evaluated at regular intervals through an Action Plan prepared for this purpose.

#### **1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The existing institutional framework responds to the needs of this eight year period. This framework is based on:

- The operation of the Labour Advisory Board, which provides advice to the Minister of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance on all labour policy matters and submits recommendations and suggestions on labour legislation.
- The operation of the Pancyprian 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.

## **2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

The legislative framework is fully harmonised with the corresponding Acquis Communautaire, but will be updated whenever and where gaps or and particularities are identified with respect to the situation in Cyprus, including needs arising from searching, drilling and transportation of hydrocarbons in offshore installations.

Moreover, the simplification of the national legislative framework which was in effect before the harmonisation with the Acquis Communautaire, will be promoted.

## **3. SUITABLE AND ADEQUATE LABOUR INSPECTION SYSTEM**

Labour Inspection is necessary for the more effective enforcement of legislation aiming to protect workers and to secure free and fair competition between enterprises.

The Labour Inspection System must be comparable with the corresponding systems of the rest of the Member States and this will be accomplished by the following:

- Implementation of an inspection programme based on accurate and true data from inspections, accidents, as well as other indicators arising from relevant surveys.
- Establishment of proper structures within the Department of Labour Inspection for (a) the enforcement of legislation on health and safety of the workers at offshore hydrocarbon drilling activities and the safety of these installations and (b) the control of installations that could cause major accidents including natural gas installations.
- Arrangements for the provision of suitable and systematic training of the Inspectors covering issues on offshore activities.
- Exchange visits of Inspectors from Cyprus with Inspectors from other Member States of the European Union aiming at acquiring knowledge and experience.
- Further promotion of the cooperation with other Services, such as the Police, the Cyprus Fire Service, the Department of Labour, etc.
- Provision to the Inspectors of suitable technological equipment and supporting them with computerised systems.
- 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.
- Improvement of the institution of the Safety Committees, aiming at a more active attendance of the representatives of the workers for the promotion of safety and health at work and their utilization within the framework of operation of each enterprise.

## **5. SUITABLE HEALTH SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM FOR THE WORKERS**

The Health Surveillance System for the Workers will be operable through the implementation of an Action Plan which was prepared after the completion of a relative study and through the introduction of new legislation.



There is a need for the focusing of the efforts in the registration, monitoring and prevention of occupational diseases. Specifically, efforts must be made for the combating of musculoskeletal diseases, occupational stress and diseases that are caused from the use of dangerous chemical substances.

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

The promotion of prevention of work accidents and occupational diseases and the development of Health and Safety culture will be materialised:

- By means of regular and targeted inspections.
- By means of campaigns which will be organized on the basis of decisions of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and of the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee of the European Union.
- By means of the collaboration for the establishment and effective operation of the Safety Committees.
- With publications and articles in the newspapers/magazines of the Social Partners and other organisations / institutions with particular interest in issues of safety and health at work.
- With the preparation and distribution of simple, comprehensive and understandable informative / training material.
- With the distribution of material which is prepared by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.
- With the publication, at the web page of the Department of Labour Inspection of the legislation, informative / enlightening material and other information that concern activities which contribute to the promotion of occupational safety and health.
- With the organisation, or the co-organisation with other institutions, including the Social Partners, of seminars and meetings and other awareness raising / informational / training activities.
- By means of other forms of collaboration with the institutions /organisations that have a particular interest on issues of safety and health at work.
- By means of education and training programmes.
- With the use of economic incentives and disincentives.
- With the use of voluntary tools, such as Competitions, etc.
- With the implementation of plans and programmes for the promotion of health at the workplace and the collaboration with the medical world.
- With the development of cooperation with the institutions that represent Consultants and Designers.
- With the collaboration with the Mass Media.
- With the encouragement of the workers but also the members of the public to communicate with the Department of Labour Inspection.
- With the incorporation of health and safety at work issues in all levels of enterprises operation.
- By supporting micro and small and medium enterprises through the use of simple functioning tools (e.g. risk assessment interactive tool).

## **7. INTEGRATION INTO OTHER POLICY SECTORS**

Mainstreaming of safety and health at work issues into other policy sectors and in particular the following:

### **7.1 Education**

The integration of safety and health issues in the curriculum of:

- Public and private schools at all levels of education, i.e. Pre-elementary, Elementary, Gymnasium, Lyceum and Technical Education,



- higher education institutions of Cyprus and particularly the curricula in disciplines of engineering and other study subjects related to the construction, chemical and process industries as well as offshore hydrocarbon extraction facilities,
- Training Schools of Public Organizations, and Metalykiakon Training Institutes (Education Institutes after graduating from Lyceum) 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.

## **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 permit by the Department of Labour.

## **7.3 Development**

The imposition of conditions for Safety and Health at Work, within the framework of the procedure for obtaining Planning and Building Permits 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 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.

## **7.5 Provision of Subsidies**

The inspection of premises, to apply the minimum levels for Safety and Health, in cases financing is provided in industries, farms and other businesses through upgrade programs for equipment, facilities, reallocation of companies, etc.

## **8. ENCOURAGEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS AND RESEARCH**

In collaboration with Academic Institutions, Research Institutes and Services in Cyprus and abroad, research on gaps of knowledge will be sought in order to face existing or emerging risks.

Research promotion will be pursued on occupational health and safety issues and in particular in new technologies such as waste management and nanotechnology. Furthermore the pursuit research will cover demographic changes, changes in employment and the relationship between productivity and working life.

Also, the assignment of studies and research to suitable organisations / institutions 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 require the active participation of all stakeholders involved. Each stakeholder may contribute depending on the activities its conducting. Employers, employees, self employed persons, governmental institutions, local authorities and other institutions should take part in the efforts made.



The collaboration with the Social Partners constitutes the cornerstone of the whole 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 Organisations of Social Partners aiming at the upgrading of their capacity to promote training and guidance to their members will be strengthened. The materilisation of all Policy Declarations concerning health and safety at work, signed / or to be signed between the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and 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.

## **10. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AT THE BODIES OF EUROPEAN UNION AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

### **10.1 Advisory Committee for Safety and Health at Work**

Regular follow-up of the work and active participation 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 other 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**

Active participation at the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee as well as the corresponding Working Groups so that there is an immediate information 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 our own Labour Inspection Services, where it is considered necessary.

### **10.3 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work**

Active participation at the Governing Board of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work so that Cyprus will benefit from this participation.

Effective operation of the Department of Labour Inspection as the Focal Point of the European Agency for the Safety and Health at Work so that there is the capability to exploit the funds that Cyprus is entitled of as well as the informative or other material that the Agency prepares, in the highest possible degree.

The uninterrupted participation of the representatives of the Social Partners in the Agency will also be sought.

### **10.4 European Statistical Service**

Participation at the proceedings of the European Statistical Service 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 Organisation

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

Effective utilization of the Conventions and Recommendations as well as other informative documents / guides of the Organisation in the maximum possible degree.

**Important Note:** This document is unofficial translation of the document «Στρατηγική της Κύπρου για την Ασφάλεια και Υγεία στην Εργασία 2013 -2020». In cases of any differences in interpretation the Greek text prevails.