Republic of Latvia

Cabinet

Order No. 34

Adopted 20 January 2016

**Regarding the Strategy for the Policy of the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020**

1. To approve the Strategy for the Policy of the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020 (hereinafter —  the Strategy).

2. To determine the Ministry of Welfare as the responsible authority for the supervision of the tasks laid down in the Strategy.

3. The Ministry of Welfare shall ensure the measures provided for in the Strategy for the implementation of the basic functions in 2016 within the framework of the granted State budget funds. The issue of allocation of additional funds from the State budget for the implementation of the measures provided for in the Strategy during the time period from 2017 to 2020 shall be examined during the preparation process of the Cabinet draft law on the State budget for the current year and draft law on medium-term budget framework together with the proposals from all ministries and other central State institutions for new policy initiatives in conformity with the financial possibilities of the State budget.

4. To implement the measures provided for in the Strategy, for the implementation of which it is intended to attract the funding of the European Union structural funds, within the framework of the specific support objective 7.3.1 “To improve labour safety, especially in enterprises of hazardous industries” of the operational programme “Growth and Employment”.

5. The institutions involved in the implementation of the Strategy shall by 1 March 2019 and 1 March 2021, submit information to the Ministry of Welfare regarding the course and results of performance of the tasks and measures laid down in the Strategy.

6. The Ministry of Welfare shall draw up and the Minister for Welfare shall submit the following to the Cabinet in accordance with the laid down procedures:

6.1. by 30 September 2019 — an informative report on interim period assessment of the implementation of the Strategy;

6.2. by 30 September 2021 — an informative report on final assessment of the implementation of the Strategy.

Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma

Minister for Welfare Uldis Augulis

(Cabinet

Order No. 34

of 20 January 2016)

**STRATEGY FOR THE POLICY OF THE LABOUR PROTECTION FIELD 2016-2020**

**List of abbreviations**

EU — European Union

ESF — European Social Fund

MoES — Ministry of Education and Science

LMAOD — Latvian Association of Occupational Physicians

FTUCL — Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia

ECL — Employers’ Confederation of Latvia

MoW — Ministry of Welfare

RSU IOSEH — Riga Stradins University Agency “Institute for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health”

SLI — State Labour Inspectorate

**I. Summary of the Strategy**

The Strategy for the Policy of the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020 have been developed with a view to ensure safe and harmless to health working environment and thus to promote establishment of qualitative workplaces and prolongation of working life of the employed persons, and thus improving the economic situation of the State and enterprises and increase of the level of welfare of the whole society.

The previous policy cycle in the field of labour protection was implemented between 2008-2013, by developing and introducing the Guidelines for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2013, as well as the short-term policy documents developed on their basis — the Development Programme of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2010 and the Plan for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2011-2013. In carrying out assessment of the implementation of the Guidelines for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2013 (available on http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/LoadAtt/file15995.doc), it was concluded that the situation in the field of the labour protection has in general improved.

The policy result laid down in the Guidelines for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2013 (decrease in the number of fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employed persons by 30 %) has been exceeded, by reaching a decrease of 40.3 %. In carrying out assessment, it was concluded that such results are achieved by efficiently implementing the measures for the improvement of the labour protection situation.

At the same time the results of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”\* (hereinafter — the study) carried out by TNS Latvia and RSU Institute for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health indicate that in 2013 the situation in respect of certain aspects of labour protection requirements slightly worsened in terms of practical introduction of labour protection requirements, for example, in respect of a complete working environment risk assessment (after improvement established in 2010) — the working environment risk assessment has been completely carried out in less than 30 % of enterprises. It has several explanations; however, mostly it is to be related to changes in entrepreneurship after the economic crisis, respectively, new employers are entering the market who most often are not sufficiently informed about the requirements of the laws and regulations in respect of working environment, and the structure of enterprises is changing (the proportion of small-sized and micro enterprises increases, which in previous studies were emphasised as a risk group in respect of compliance with the requirements of the laws and regulations of labour protection).

It must be taken into account that introduction of legislative requirements in practice in the labour protection requires certain investments like it is in any other field. Although it has proved that these investments provide return in a long-term, because when healthier and more motivated employed persons work in a safe environment, productivity of the undertaking increases; however, such return of the invested funds cannot be seen immediately and under the circumstances of the financial crisis it was saved especially on the compliance with the labour protection requirements. In accordance with the results of the study, the number of those employers who have not spent any funds for the labour protection requirements has doubled (in 2006 it was 4.7 %, in 2010 — 6 %, but in 2013 already 11.3 %). Now, when more active entrepreneurial activity has resumed, especially in “hazardous sectors”, it is significant to ensure safe and harmless to health working environment and conditions.

Accordingly, in the future it is necessary to continue implementation of appropriate measures for reduction of the number of accidents and occupational diseases, by taking into account the most topical working environment problems identified in the studies. In the implementation of the intended measures, it is significant to involve social partners within the framework of a trilateral co-operation in order to ensure involvement of both representatives of employers and employees. In such aspect it is important to co-operate with organisations of employers and employees most widely represented in Latvia, which are ECL that represents employers of Latvia in the National Tripartite Co-operation Council, and FTUCL that are representatives of employees in this Council, in order to ensure implementation of the activities intended in the Strategy and practical introduction thereof in all regions of Latvia, taking into account that these largest organisations of employers and employees in Latvia are most widely represented in practically all regions of Latvia, they have developed co-operation at a regional level both mutually as well as with local governments.

In order to successfully implement the action directions laid down in the Strategy, in parallel, by using a tripartite co-operation authority, the assessment of the requirements of the laws and regulations shall be continued and, where necessary, updated in order to promote appropriate solution of the identified problems.

One of the significant identified problems is a low level of awareness of the public regarding labour protection issues. Although the level of awareness of the public regarding labour protection issues has increased in general, it is still assessed as non-sufficient. The main risk groups include young people with a low level of education, as well as inhabitants who work in micro and small-sized enterprises.

The high number of accidents, especially high number of serious and fatal accidents, and also especially large proportion of accidents in the hazardous sectors due to non-sufficient practical introduction of the labour protection requirements in enterprises are a significant problem.

The high number of persons suffering from occupational diseases, occupational and work-related diseases, which has increased over the last years, as well as late diagnostics of occupational diseases are another significant problem. Concurrently the structure of the most spread occupational diseases has changed, with the most rapid increase in the number of occupational diseases caused by physical overload.

 The necessity to acquire wider and deeper information regarding the situation in enterprises, compliance with the labour protection requirements and current labour protection issues has been established. as a significant challenge in order to assess the real situation and to plan the necessary measures.

Concurrently in order to ensure competent and proper supervision and control in the field of the labour protection, further training of SLI inspectors is required, by attracting qualified lecturers in order for the knowledge of SLI inspectors to comply with the rapid development of technologies especially in the hazardous sectors. Moreover, the capacity of the SLI shall be strengthened in order to promote qualitative and professional supervision in the field of the labour protection. It is also important to motivate SLI inspectors, by ensuring that professional, educated and experienced inspectors continue to permanently work for the SLI. It is also necessary to introduce new methods of work in practice and pay more attention to the preventive work.

By analysing non-standard forms of employment, it can be concluded that in these cases there are greater insecurity in respect of safety and health protection at work. In respect of the identified problems in safety and health protection at work of self-employed persons the low awareness and interest of self-employed persons in the labour protection issues must be mentioned. In addition, self-employed persons face such problems as improvement of accommodation conditions at workplace. Concurrently, it must be noted that specific information regarding labour protection issues at work of self-employed persons is not compiled or easily accessible.

In the previous period the number of fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employees was used as the performance-based indicator, because these data are more objective than the total number of accidents at work and can be compared with data of other countries. Taking into account that the total number of fatal accidents is comparatively small and fluctuating, within the framework of this Strategy the total number of persons suffered in serious accidents at work and died in fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employees is used as a performance-based indicator.

Main objective of the labour protection is to ensure employees as safe and harmless to health working environment as possible. In order to achieve it, taking into account the current trends in Latvia, the problems established, the present situation and available resources, as well as current challenges included in the EU strategical documents in the field of labour protection, several action directions have been laid down in the Strategy:

1. Public information;

2. Promoting efficient introduction of labour protection requirements;

3. Promoting health protection of employed persons;

4. Supervision and control of the field of the labour protection;

5. Ensuring safe working environment within the framework of non-standard forms of employment, as well as in the work of self-employed persons.

It is planned to pay special attention to the current risk factors in the implementation of these directions, to which sufficient attention has not been paid until now, for example, psycho-emotional and ergonomic working environment risk factors, use of new chemical substances, etc., not forgetting the classical working environment problems in the hazardous sectors: noise, vibration, injury risks, falls from height, work outside, etc. Concurrently the general principles and current issues — gender aspect, ageing of workforce, etc., will be taken into account.

By joining to the common EU labour protection policy, the previous and future policy in the field of labour protection is related to the policy at the EU level. The Strategy have been developed taking into account the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020, as well as the Council conclusions “EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020: Adapting to New Challenges” drawn up within the framework of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Concurrently labour protection issues are also related to other sectoral policies, viewing them in a wider context.

Implementation of the measures arising from the Strategy will be mostly ensured by using the State budget funding, including the special budget funding for the preventive measures for accidents at work. A range of measures will be implemented within the framework of projects co-financed by the ESF.

The social partners — ECL and FTUCL — were involved in all stages of development of the Strategy.

**II. Objective (Sub-objectives) of the Policy**

The main objective of the labour protection policy is creation of qualitative workplaces and subsequently safe and harmless to health working environment, which would promote prolongation of working life of the employed persons, improvement of the economic situation in the State and enterprises and increase of the level of welfare of the whole society.

**III. Policy Results and Performance-based Indicators**

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| **Policy result (PR)**— Those working conditions have improved in enterprises of Latvia, which ensure safe and harmless working environment for employees |   |
| **Performance indicator (PI)** | **2013** | **2014** | **2018** | **2020** |
| 1. The number expressed as a percentage of inhabitants of all the surveyed inhabitants who are well informed about the labour protection requirements.*Source:* The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” | **36.5 %** | **no data** | **38.5 %***(increase of 5 % compared to 2013)* | **40 %***(increase of 9.5 % compared to 2013)* |
| 2. The total number of persons suffered in serious accidents at work and died in fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employed persons.*Source: SLI* | **33.02** | **32.46** | **31.37***(decrease of 5 % compared to 2013)* | **29.72***(decrease of 10 % compared to 2013)* |
| 3. The number of persons suffering from occupational diseases in the age group of up to 44 years expressed as a percentage of all the persons suffering from occupational diseases.*Source: SLI* | **9.1 %** | **8.8 %** | **8.5 %***(decrease of 6.5 % compared to 2013)* | **8.1 %***(decrease of 11 % compared to 2013)* |
| **Link-up:** Policy result and objective comply with the following documents:- EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 (published on 6 June 2014);- Council conclusions “EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020: Adapting to New Challenges”;- National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020 (Action direction “Decent Work”, Task 3 “[247] Promotion of registered employment and socially responsible business, including elimination of hidden forms of employment, improvements in the workplace by strengthening the capacity of the Labour Inspectorate and the monitoring system, social dialogue, awareness-raising campaigns and support for the training of businesses and employees, including on various types of employment, matters relating to age diversity and workplace suitability. Involvement of the public in addressing social issues through facilitating the establishment and operation of social enterprises.”- In the situation description of the Guidelines for Inclusive Employment 2015-2020 the quality of workplaces is referred to in Paragraph 1.5 as a significant problem.- the 4th defined sub-objective of the Guidelines for Public Health 2014-2020: To facilitate healthy and safe life and working environment, to reduce injury and mortality due to external causes of death. Action direction: mitigation of injuries and impact of environmental risks on the public health, 4.10. To improve knowledge of medical practitioners (general practitioners, neurologists etc.) regarding factors causing occupational diseases and timely diagnostics of occupational diseases |   |

**IV. Action Directions and Tasks**

The following action directions have been set in order to achieve the policy objective and result:

1. Public information;

2. Promoting efficient introduction of the labour protection requirements;

3. Promoting health protection of employed persons;

4. Supervision and control of the field of the labour protection;

5. Ensuring safe working environment within the framework of non-standard forms of employment, as well as in the work of self-employed persons.

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|  **Action Direction No. 1:** Public information. |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Deadline (year)** | **Responsible institution** | **Co-responsible institutions** | **Link-up with the performance-based indicator** |
| 1. | To ensure increase in public awareness and level of understanding regarding labour protection issues, especially regarding working environment risk factors, and issues of labour rights, by facilitating the preventive culture. | 2020 quarter IV | SLI | MoW, RSU IOSEH | 1. PBI |
| 2. | To implement educating activities with a view to increase the level of knowledge of students of educational institutions regarding issues of labour protection and labour rights. | 2020, quarter IV | SLI | MoW, MoES, RSU IOSEH, FTUCL | 1. PBI |
|  **Action Direction No. 2:** Promoting efficient introduction of the labour protection requirements. |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Deadline (year)** | **Responsible institution** | **Co-responsible institutions** | **Link-up with the performance-based indicator** |
| 1. | To ensure support for enterprises in the implementation of the labour protection requirements. | 2020, quarter IV | SLI | MoW, ECL, FTUCL | 2. PBI |
| 2. | To implement training for the persons involved in the compliance with the labour protection requirements: employers, employees, labour protection specialists. | 2020, quarter IV | SLI | MoW, ECL, FTUCL | 2. PBI |
|  **Action Direction No. 3:** Promoting health protection of employed persons. |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Deadline (year)** | **Responsible institution** | **Co-responsible institutions** | **Link-up with the performance-based indicator** |
| 1. | To facilitate improvement and updating the knowledge of physicians of occupational diseases and occupational health, general practitioners and other medical treatment persons regarding factors causing occupational diseases, timely diagnostics of occupational diseases and current issues in the field of occupational health. | 2020, quarter IV | RSU IOSEH | MoW, MoH, LMAOD | 3. PBI |
| 2. | To improve knowledge and skills of employees in the issues of health promotion at work. | 2020, quarter IV | SLI | MoW, RSU IOSEH | 3. PBI |
| 3. | To improve prevention, diagnostics and medical treatment of occupational diseases. | 2020, quarter IV | MoW | MoW, LMAOD, RSU IOSEH | 3. PBI |
|  **Action Direction No. 4:** Supervision and control of the field of the labour protection. |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Deadline (year)** | **Responsible institution** | **Co-responsible institutions** | **Link-up with the performance-based indicator** |
| 1. | To acquire additional information and data regarding the situation in the field of labour protection and labour rights. | 2020, quarter IV | SLI | MoW, RSU IOSEH, ECL, FTUCL | 2. PBI |
| 2. | To ensure efficient State supervision and control, by strengthening the capacity of the State Labour Inspectorate. | 2020, quarter IV | SLI | MoW | 2. PBI |
|  **Action Direction No. 5:** Ensuring safe working environment within the framework of non-standard forms of employment, as well as in the work of self-employed persons. |
| **No.** | **Task** | **Deadline (year)** | **Responsible institution** | **Co-responsible institutions** | **Link-up with the performance-based indicator** |
| 1. | To implement measures for ensuring of safety and health protection for the persons who perform the work within the framework of non-standard forms of employment (distance work, persons employed in households, etc.). | 2020, quarter IV | MoW | SLI | 1. PBI |
| 2. | To promote ensuring safe working environment and working conditions for self-employed persons. | 2020, quarter IV | MoW | LSI, RSU IOSEH | 1. PBI |

**V. Territorial Perspective**

Labour protection policy will be implemented within entire territory of Latvia and will apply to all enterprises of Latvia and persons employed by them. The planned tasks and measures will be implemented in both Riga and regions.

\* The Ministry of Welfare after approval of the project in accordance with the procedures laid down in the laws and regulations will submit a request of appropriation re-allocation from Programme 80.00.00 “Unallocated Financing for the Implementation of the Projects and Measures Co-financed by European Union Policy Instruments and Other Foreign Financial Assistance” of Department 74 “Funding to be Re-allocated in the Process of Implementation of the Annual State Budget”

Minister for Welfare Uldis Augulis

**Annex to**

Strategy for the Policy of

the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020

**Characterisation of the Present Situation and Identified Problems**

The objective of the Strategy for the Policy of the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020 (hereinafter — the Strategy) is ensuring of qualitative workplaces, thus creating working environment that is safe and harmless to health of employees. Such working environment, in its turn, will facilitate improvement of quality of life and prolongation of working life of employees, thus in general also facilitating improvement of the economic situation of the State and enterprises and increasing the level of welfare of the whole society.

Acceptance of the Strategy will ensure continuation of the previous policy in the field of labour protection. During the time period from 2008-2013 the political framework of labour protection was formed by the Guidelines for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2013, as well as short-term policy documents developed on their basis — the Development Programme of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2010 and the Plan for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2011-2013. The Ministry of Welfare carried out interim assessment of introduction of the abovementioned documents, as well as developed the Informative Report Regarding Implementation of the Guidelines for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2018-2013 and Plan for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2011-2013 (available at http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/LoadAtt/file15995.doc). In the assessment of the implementation process it was concluded that the situation in the field of labour protection in general has improved. In order to ensure further improvement of the situation, it is necessary to continue implementation of appropriate measures for the reduction of the number of accidents at work and occupational diseases, by taking into account the most current working environment problems in Latvia, the groups of employed persons most exposed to risk, as well as the groups of those enterprises, in which the laws and regulations governing the labour protection are often infringed, identified in the studies “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”1 carried out by TNS Latvia and RSU Institution for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health.

A reduction of 30 % in the number of fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employees has been determined as a policy result in the previous period. Thanks to efficiently implemented measures for the improvement of labour protection situation, this result is exceeded, by reaching a reduction of 40.3 %.

The total number of fatal accidents is comparatively small and fluctuating; therefore in order to assess the policy implementation more objectively, within the framework of this Strategy the total number of persons suffered in serious accidents at work and died in fatal accidents at work per 100 000 employees is used as a performance-based indicator. Moreover, the causes of serious and fatal accidents are similar and only as a result of coincidence of different circumstances a fatal accident has not occurred.

Regardless of the proportion of hidden accidents, it is also necessary to reduce the number of light accidents which do not cause any significant and continuous influence on the health of employees. Thus the measures planned within the framework of the tasks laid down in the Strategy will be directed also towards prevention of such accidents and increase of the total labour protection level.

The previous and future policy in the field of labour protection is related to the policy at the EU level. In determining the operational principles and objectives to be achieved included in the Guidelines for the Development of the Labour Protection Field for 2008-2013, the EU Strategy on Health and Safety at Work 2007-2012 “Improving Quality and Productivity at Work” has been taken into account, which was intended for the reduction of the number of accidents at work.

On 6 June 2014, the European Commission published a new notification regarding EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020 (hereinafter — EU Occupational Protection Strategy), which traditionally is used as the basis for national strategies in the EU Member States. The strategical objectives, most significant challenges and action directions in the field of occupational protection are demonstrated in the EU Occupational Protection Strategy. The following have been mentioned as three most significant challenges in the EU Occupational Protection Strategy:

1) to improve the present implementation of safety and health protection at work in the Member States, in particular by enhancing the capacity of micro and small-sized enterprises to put in place effective and efficient risk prevention measures,

2) to improve the prevention of work-related diseases by tackling existing, new and emerging risks,

3) to take into account ageing of the EU workforce.

On the basis of the EU Occupational Protection Strategy, the Latvian Presidency drew up Council conclusions “EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020: Adapting to New Challenges”, which have been approved in the meeting of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on 9 March 2015. These Council conclusions are an instrument, which will promote and support practical introduction of the EU Occupational Protection Strategy, thus facilitating improvement of working environment in the EU Member States and development of competitiveness.

In the Council conclusions special attention was paid to the following challenges:

1) facilitating introduction of labour protection requirements, especially in small-sized and micro enterprises by using different support instruments;

2) prevention of occupational and work-related diseases:

- diseases of musculoskeletal system,

- tumours caused by carcinogen substances,

- new and emerging risks (stress at work, ergonomic risks, new chemical substances);

3) prolonging of qualitative working life and addressing the issue of ageing of the workforce.

In general, documents of the EU level in labour protection (both the EU Occupational Protection Strategy and Council conclusions) encourage the Member States to establish national strategies (policy documents) thus creating a unified policy at the EU level. This Strategy will serve as an investment in the implementation of the common EU strategy. However, the abovementioned documents include a call for the Member States to actively use the ESF and other European Union structural funds and investments funds, in order to finance measures, which are related to labour protection, with a view to promote sustainable, qualitative employment and social inclusion, especially:

- by using fund resources for adapting changes of employees, enterprises and entrepreneurs, by developing and implementing innovative and more productive types of work organisation, including in health protection and labour safety at work, training, by promoting distribution of the best practice etc.;

- by prolonging healthier working life, by developing and implementing measures in order to promote healthy environment and mental well-being at workplace;

- by developing and implementing measures in order to promote healthier lifestyle and reduce or prevent working environment factors influencing health (for example, influence of chemical substances, passive smoking);

- by supporting deepening of understanding and training of labour inspectors in order to improve knowledge, skills and administrative abilities in addressing issues related to health protection and safety at work;

- by supporting training and measures for small and medium-sized enterprises in respect of implementation of the electronic risk assessment tool OiRA developed by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and other IT-based tools.

The Member State shall develop the strategies taking into account the most topical problems, situation and available resources in the particular Member State. In Latvia, the Strategy for the Policy of the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020 are mainly based on the newest available data and information. The following most important sources of information have been used in the Strategy:

1) statistical data of the SLI regarding accidents at work and performance results of the SLI;

2) data of the Occupational and Radiation Medicine Centre of State limited liability company “Pauls Stradins University Clinical Hospital” regarding the detected occupational diseases;

3) results of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”2 carried out by TNS Latvia and RSU IOSEH, conclusions and proposals regarding different aspects and problems of the labour protection field.

Labour protection issues are viewed in a wider context by relating them to policies of other sectors. A workplace, which is safe and harmless to health is regarded as one of the significant work quality factors in the European Commission Review “Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2014” and it facilitates motivation and output at work, reduces absences from work, thus improving work productivity and flexibility of the labour market in a direct way.

**Subjects Involved. Political and Legislative Framework.**

Efficient ensuring of labour protection depends on the objectives and action directions included in the labour protection documents, normative regulation in labour protection, and efficient implementation of the requirements of this policy and laws and regulations in practice. Several subjects are involved in ensuring the labour protection requirements and each of them has its own role in the implementation of the labour protection requirements. In this process employers (merchants), employees, labour protection specialists, the State Labour Inspectorate, competent specialists, competent authorities, trusted representatives, scientific institutions, laboratories, physicians of occupational health and occupational diseases, as well as social partners are involved in this process, by representing both the interests of employed persons and employers.

In accordance with general principles of labour protection **an employer** has a duty to organise labour protection system, which includes internal supervision of the working environment, including the working environment risk assessment, establishment of an organisational structure of labour protection, as well as consultations with employees in order to involve them in the improvement of labour protection. An employer has a duty to ensure operation of the labour protection system in the enterprise, as well as to cover expenditure related to labour protection. Thus more responsibility is determined for an employer.

A **labour protection specialist** or an employee whose duty is to organise and control labour protection measures and carry out internal supervision of the working environment and who is trained in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Cabinet has a significant role in the implementation of the requirements of labour protection.

Concurrently **scientific institutions**, which carry out both the scientific research and participate in the implementation of preventive measures, are involved in the implementation of labour protection measures more generally. The operation of the labour protection system cannot be imagined without complete working environment risk assessment and measurements of working environment risk factors carried out by the accredited **laboratorie**s. Medical practitioners have a significant function in ensuring health supervision of employees, especially **physicians of occupational diseases**.

An employer may involve both **competent specialists** (a specialist who is competent to carry out internal supervision of the working environment in an enterprise and whose competence is assessed in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Cabinet3) or a **competent authority** (an authority, which carries out internal supervision of the working environment in an enterprise on the basis of the relevant agreement and the competence of which in labour protection issues has been assessed in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Cabinet).

Within the framework of an enterprise **employees, trusted representatives of employees** (a person elected by employees who is trained in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Cabinet and represents interests of employees in labour protection) are involved in the implementation of labour protection measures, as well as **representatives of employees** (a trade union of employees, on behalf of which a trade union authority or an official authorised by the articles of association thereof, and authorised representatives of employees, the powers of which do not include the rights that are exclusively granted to trade unions of employees, act) have a significant role.

Involvement of **social partners** is significant in the implementation of labour protection, namely, active co-operation between employers and organisations thereof with an employee or representatives of employees which traditionally are trade unions of employees. This co-operation is important not only in relation to practical implementation of labour protection issues, but also at the sectoral level, as well as at the State level, by establishing policies and creating normative regulation. In conformity with the Labour Protection Law, the State policy in the field of the labour protection is directed towards performance of preventive measures and amongst other is based on co-operation between the State, organisations of employers and trade unions. Involvement of social partners in the labour protection is a precondition for efficient establishment of the system, because only by active involvement of social partners it is possible to achieve the best result, by ensuring balanced compliance with the interests of both employers and employees. Within this context, activities of the **Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia** (hereinafter — FTUCL) and **Employers Confederation of Latvia**(hereinafter — ECL) are especially significant. The abovementioned organisations are the largest organisations of social partners, which in conformity with theEmployers' Organisations and their Associations Law and the Law On Trade Unions represent interests of the partners at the State level. Moreover, in conformity with the By-laws of the National Tripartite Co-operation Council of 30 October 1998 the representatives nominated by the Cabinet (the government), ECL, and FTUCL form the National Tripartite Co-operation Council on the basis of parity.

Concurrently, Section 8 of the Employers' Organisation and Their Associations Law provides for such functions of the employers' organisation as to represent the interests of employers' organisation in relations with trade unions, State and local government authorities, to organise training of the members of the employers' organisations, to provide consultations on issues of employment relations, as well as to participate in settlement of labour disputes. In its turn, Section 12 of the Law On Trade Unions provides for the rights of trade unions and implementation thereof, but Section 2 of this Law states that the method by which the trade unions represent the interests of employees shall be determined by the articles of association of the trade union. The tasks of the FTUCL are to represent the interests of the organisation in the State and administrative authorities, employers' and other organisations, as well as in tripartite co-operation councils of employers, State and trade unions of the national level. Concurrently FTUCL provides consultations on legal and socio-economic issues, organises educating of the heads, specialists, experts of member organisations, heads of regional trade union centres etc.

Moreover, in conformity with the By-laws of the National Tripartite Co-operation Council of 30 October 1998 the representatives nominated by the Cabinet (the government), ECL, and FTUCL form the National Tripartite Co-operation Council on the basis of parity.

Taking into account that ECL and FTUCL are organisations of employers and employees represented in the entire territory of Latvia, which have developed co-operation at a regional level, as well as previous investment of these organisations in the establishment of safe working environment in enterprises and experience in addressing and practical introduction of labour protection issues, it is significant to closely co-operate with ECL and FTUCL also in the future in the implementation of the tasks laid down in the Strategy, in order to take into account opinion of all parties, as well as in order for the intended measures to reach as large number of employers and employees as possible, thus promoting improvement of public awareness and involvement of the public.

State supervision and control is ensured by the **State Labour Inspectorate** (hereinafter — SLI), by implementing the functions and tasks laid down in the law4 governing its functions.

In order to increase the level of public awareness, to explain labour protection requirements to the public and to help both employers and employees, in the compliance with the labour protection requirements, RSU IOSEH implements preventive measures. Preventive measures shall be implemented in conformity with Section 13, Paragraph six of the Law On Compulsory Social Insurance in Respect of Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases by using the funds of the special budget of accidents at work. RSU IOSEH has extensive experience in the working environment assessment, measuring working environment risk factors, as well as in educating physicians of occupational diseases and occupational health, employers, employees and the public in general regarding issues of working environment safety and health protection at work. In order to ensure provision of qualitative and current information to the public, as well as improvement of professional knowledge of personnel involved in health care, it is important to involve RSU IOSEH in the implementation of the measures provided for in the Strategy.

The normative regulation in the field of labour protection is ensured and it is made by the Labour Protection Law (adopted by the *Saeima*(Parliament) on 20 June 2001) and Cabinet regulations issued on its basis. EU directives in the field of labour protection have been transposed in the laws and regulations, thus the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia comply with the EU requirements, ensuring equal protection level for the employees of Latvia. However, introduction of the laws and regulations in the practice is a significant challenge.

In accordance with Eurobarometer survey “Working Conditions in the European Union” the working conditions in general in Latvia are assessed as good by 47 % of inhabitants (average in the EU — 53 %), at the same time 47 % of inhabitants assess working conditions as poor (average in the EU — 43 %); thus in general the opinion about working conditions in Latvia is slightly worse than on average in the EU. 25 % of respondents in Latvia consider that working conditions have improved during the last 5 years, which is the fourth highest indicator in the EU (on average in the EU — 12 %), 28 % of them consider that working conditions in Latvia have decreased (on average in the EU — 57 %)5. However, it must be emphasised that within the framework of this survey the term “working conditions” means safety and health protection at work, working hours, work organisation, representation of employees and relations with the employer. 74 % of employees in Latvia are satisfied with safety and health protection at work, which is the second lowest indicator in the EU (on average in the EU — 85 %), 25 % are not satisfied with safety and health at work (on average in the EU — 14 %).

In order to achieve the defined objective, several action directions have been determined in the Strategy for the Policy of the Labour Protection Field 2016-2020:

1. Public awareness;

2. Promoting efficient introduction of labour protection requirements;

3. Promoting health protection of employed persons;

4. Supervision and control of the field of the labour protection;

5. Ensuring safe working environment within the framework of non-standard forms of employment, as well as in the work of self-employed persons.

Information in conformity with each of the abovementioned action direction is provided in the next sections, more widely characterising the present situation, highlighting the problems identified and solutions offered, as well as providing assessment of the initial influence of the solutions offered.

**1. Public awareness and development of preventive culture.**

1.1. Present situation

Public awareness demonstrates understanding of labour protection issues and development of preventive culture. Just by understanding and assessing the significance of one's own and other persons' safety and health protection, employees and employers can completely comply with the labour protection requirements and use safe working methods in a daily work, thus preventing accidents at work and development of occupational diseases.

Until now information to the public has been provided in several ways, the measures are implemented by both the responsible State institutions and organisations of social partners. Each year in conformity with Section 13, Paragraph six of the Law On Compulsory Social Insurance in Respect of Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases RSU IOSEH implements preventive measures, by using the funds of special budget for accidents at work, however not more than in the amount of 0.5 % of the total amount of the funds of the special budget for accidents at work laid down in the annual State Budget Law. Different informative materials are issued, video materials are created, campaigns are implemented, as well as seminars are organised on different topical issues for labour protection specialists in both Riga and regions.

In accordance with Section 3 of the State Labour Inspection Law one of the tasks of the SLI is to provide free of charge consultations to employers and employees regarding employment legal relations and requirements of the laws and regulations of labour protection. In seminars, conferences and informative campaigns organised by the SLI, employers, employed persons, their representatives and trusted representatives, labour protection specialists, as well as the public in general are informed about current labour protection issues.

The SLI maintains the contact point website www.osha.lv of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, as well as the website www.stradavesels.lv, which are supplemented with updated information and materials in the field of labour protection on a regular basis, thus becoming as a significant source of information in the field of labour protection. The SLI uses actively the new technologies and communication methods in informing and educating the society, thus attaining as wide target audience as possible. For this purpose the SLI has established Twitter accounts www.twitter.com/darbainspekcija and www.twitter.com/darbaizsardziba, a Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/darbainspekcija), as well as a Slideshare account (http://www.slideshare.net/Valsts\_darba\_inspekcija) and a Youtube channel of the SLI by ensuring access to presentations from different seminars and conferences, as well as video materials, which facilitate understanding of the labour protection requirements. The interactive tools established by the SLI: a game regarding working environment risks “Recognise Hazard”, the calculator of accident costs, as well as interactive maps of accidents should be mentioned as innovative news in the electronic environment.

Different measures for informing and educating employed persons, employers, as well as children and youth regarding labour protection issues during the time period from 2008-2013 have been organised also within the framework of ESF projects “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” implemented by the ECL and FTUCL. During implementation of these projects, consultation centres have been established in regions, as well as work has been done for organising competitions educating the youth, which are planned to be used within the framework of further ESF projects, continuing awareness raising measures in the field of labour protection.

During the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia 2012-2013”6 to the question on how in general a respondent is informed about issues related to working conditions and working environment, 36.5 % of inhabitants replied that they were well informed. The highest level of awareness has been observed among respondents in the age groups from 35 to 44 years of age (47.6 %), with higher education (56.7 %), as well as employees of large enterprises (66 %). In its turn, the lowest level of awareness is among inhabitants in the age group from 15 to 24 years of age (26.4 %), with low level of education (elementary school or unfinished basic education — 10.9 %), as well as among employees of small-sized enterprises (with 10-49 employed persons) (48.3 %). In its turn, in respect of working environment risk assessment, 65.1 % of inhabitants replied that they were informed about, but only 31.7 % indicated that they were well informed.

1.2. Problems identified

Level of awareness of inhabitants regarding labour protection issues should be assessed as non-sufficient in general (in total only 36.5% were well informed, but 31.7% were well informed about the working environment risk assessment).

The main risk groups include young people with a low level of education, as well as inhabitants who work in micro and small-sized enterprises.

Lack of auxiliary materials for training and instructing of employees, non-sufficient understanding and performance of requirements of laws and regulations, lack of knowledge and unwillingness to obtain additional information, to learn and comply with the requirements, are possible causes of the low level of awareness of persons employed in small-sized and micro enterprises.

1.3. Solution to problems

In order to **solve** the problems detected, it is necessary to take measures for increasing the level of knowledge and understanding in the society about safe and lawful working environment, and for facilitating preventive culture.

It is important to organise different educating measures, for example, seminars, discussions, for raising awareness of inhabitants regarding labour protection issues. Development of clear and understandable informative materials which would contain the most important labour protection issues presented in a short and visible manner could also be a solution. Such materials may be different instructional materials, also short video films or video advice. Using informative materials, it is possible to inform both employers and employed persons regarding current labour protection issues, as well as new and current working environment risk factors.

It is also important to inform employed persons and the public in general about tasks, activities, procedures for election of representatives and trusted representatives of employed persons, thus updating the necessity for active work of representatives and trusted representatives of employed persons and facilitating efficient work of representatives and trusted representatives of employed persons. Concurrently, the possibilities to improve protection mechanisms of representatives and trusted representatives of employed persons must be assessed.

In order to improve the level of awareness among inhabitants with a low level of education, as well as in order to facilitate development of preventive culture in general, it is important to include the introduction in labour protection already in the educational programmes of basic education.

Accident statistics in whole Europe indicates that young people who are not sufficiently informed either regarding their duties, or rights in the field of labour protection and labour rights when they enter in the labour market form a risk group in the working environment, and therefore they suffer in accidents most often. Taking into account the significance of preventive work, especially when taking care of health and safety of young and future employed persons, by preparing them for work life, it is intended to maintain the direction, which is directed towards educating students of vocational educational institutions regarding labour rights and labour protection issues, for example, by improving and continuing competitions among young people of vocational educational institutions, as well as by organising practical classes with tasks, role games, self-study tasks, demonstrations of safe work techniques. It is planned to involve in this activity those educational institutions, which prepare specialists of those professions, which will be employed in hazardous sectors.

In respect of increasing the level of awareness of young people in general, it is also necessary to include labour protection issues in the educational programmes of secondary education, as well as of vocational secondary education, concurrently it is significant to implement measures suitable and attracting for young people, by using the new technologies and communication channels popular among young people.

One of the tasks in the development of the labour protection field is to increase the level of awareness of inhabitants employed in micro enterprises and small sized enterprises regarding labour protection issues, by facilitating introduction of more complete labour protection systems in conformity with the requirements of laws and regulations, as well as by facilitating the ability to introduce useful and efficient risk prevention measures. Thus solutions will be related to measures aimed directly at this target group for informing, educating, acquisition of skills, facilitation of understanding of employers and employed persons, including development of different auxiliary aids.

Until now as a result of measures taken, a large number of materials, interactive tools and updated information regarding different labour protection measures are available to the public. The commenced activities for informing the public should be continued, because changing the attitude of the public is a long-term process; besides conclusions regarding influence of the measures implemented in the preceding period can be made later, taking into account the fact that a large part of activities was carried out relatively recently, in 2012 and 2013. Concurrently it would be necessary to seek for new methods for informing the public, taking into account development of technologies and current issues in order to cover as wide target audience as possible, especially those employers and employed persons who are not aware of the importance of labour protection and do not use the available materials. Besides, information shall be especially suitable and understandable for a particular target audience.

Without continuing the started action direction in informing the public and not promoting active public education measures and activities, it is expected that the level of public awareness will start to reduce, because labour protection issues comparing to other current issues highlighted in the public, without being updated, seem insignificant. It is important to ensure training and awareness especially among young people, because otherwise the level of awareness and knowledge regarding safety and health at work which is low already, will predictively decline. A result of non-sufficient knowledge and lack of information regarding safety and health protection at work is potential increase in the number of accidents at work, including increase in the number of serious and fatal accidents, because in analysing the SLI report for 2014, it can be seen that unsafe action of a person is indicated as the main cause of accidents (76.8 %), including labour safety regulations or instructions have not been complied with (30.4 %), non-sufficient attention (34.8 %). 7 In its turn, when an accident has occurred at work, it is a severe situation for both the victim and the employer, as well as additional expenditure and losses for the particular enterprise and national economy in general.

1.4. Assessment of the initial impact of the solution offered.

When analysing study results, it can be seen, that in preceding periods public and youth informing activities and resources invested therein have given positive results since both the level of public awareness in general and the level of youth awareness regarding labour protection issues have increased. Thus, although public awareness and especially youth awareness in general are assessed as non-sufficient, a positive trend for the situation to improve is observed in terms of public awareness regarding labour protection (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Dynamics of the level of awareness of the inhabitants during the time period between 2006-2013

In continuing active public informing through different measures, informative materials, workshops, exchange of experience by both using the available technologies and creating easily perceivable visualised information regarding significant and current labour protection issues, further growth in the level of awareness of the inhabitants is forecast, approaching a more optimal indicator. It is important that different information channels are used for informing, thus reaching different groups of inhabitants. By paying special attention to informing employees in hazardous sectors and small-sized and micro enterprises, moreover, by emphasising specific risks existing particularly in these fields, increase in awareness of persons working in these sectors and enterprises is forecast, which in its turn will promote development of preventive culture. Subsequently, it is expected that the number of serious and fatal accidents will decrease, because when employed persons are better informed about working conditions and safety and health protection measures thus paying more attention to safety issues at work, the number of those accidents, the cause of which is unsafe action of a person which is referred to as the main cause of accidents in the SLI report for 2014, will decrease.

Concurrently, by actively continuing implementation of educating and informing measures directed towards children and youth audience by using the new technologies and most suitable ways for delivering and distributing information for this target group, it is expected that the knowledge of youth regarding labour protection issues will increase thus reducing the proportion of the accidents especially among youth. It can be concluded from the SLI report for 2014 that the largest number of persons suffered in accidents is in the group of those employed persons who have comparatively small experience, i.e., who have worked in the position, by performing which the accident has occurred, for less than 3 years. In this group 135 serious accidents, which account for 63.4 % of all serious accidents, and 32 fatal accidents, which account for 78 % of all fatal accidents, have occurred8. It is possible to reduce the number of these accidents by educating and informing exactly youth and employed persons who have started work in a new position.

The reduction of the number of accidents, especially the reduction of the number of serious and fatal accidents, shall reduce the expenditure related to accidents for both the victim and the employer and for the State in general as well as the amount of compensations and benefits disbursed for the days of illness, medical treatment and cases of disability that may occur. Concurrently, by reduction of the number of persons who have suffered in serious and fatal accidents, there will be fewer persons who cannot be completely involved in the labour market and provide their contribution in the development of the national economy due to consequences of the accident. Thus the abovementioned activities will provide a positive investment in both entrepreneurship and the national economy in general.

Different studies carried out at EU level and in the world attest that investment in preventive labour protection measures facilitates welfare of employed persons and is cost-effective also financially in long-term. In accordance with the most recent estimations investments in this field may generate 2.2 profit coefficient on average9.

**2. Implementation of the Labour Protection Requirements in Enterprises.**

2.1. Present situation

Regardless of the fact that the system of laws and regulations in the field of labour protection is organised and laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia comply with the EU requirements, in ensuring an equal level of protection for employed persons of Latvia, implementation of such laws and regulations in practice is a significant challenge. This issue became particularly topical under the influence of the economic crisis, when enterprises often reduced expenditure especially on labour protection measures. Upon resuming active entrepreneurship, especially in hazardous sectors, it is important to ensure working environment that is safe and harmless to health and which in long-term will promote loyalty of employed persons toward an enterprise and motivation and thus improving quality of work.

In conformity with the requirements of the Labour Protection Law the duty of an employer is to organise a labour protection system the most important part of which is working environment risk assessment, determining those risks, which could influence safety and health of employed persons, and establishment of a plan for labour protection measures, determining measures, which are necessary in order to prevent or reduce the risks of working environment. The most important indicator, which demonstrates how an enterprise has introduced labour protection requirements is the working environment risk assessment carried out and the plan for labour protection measures laid down in order to prevent the risks identified thus ensuring safety and health of employed persons at work.

According to the results of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”10, the working environment risk assessment has been completely carried out only for 28.5 % of enterprises; for 19 % it has been carried out only partly, but for 49 % it has not been carried out at all, which is a rather low indicator in respect of ensuring of the labour protection requirements in an enterprise. Most often working environment risk assessment has not been carried in micro enterprises and enterprises, in which the main sector of activities is mining and quarrying (22.0 %), fishery (26.4 %) and agriculture, forestry (32.6 %). In its turn, the plan of measures is drawn up only for 62 % of enterprises, in which the working environment risk assessment (completely or partly) has been carried out that indicates that **enterprises have not organised safe working environment for their employees, despite the requirements of the laws and regulations**. Upon finding the most significant reasons of employers, which hinder/prevent them from taking the necessary labour protection measures in their enterprise, 59.9 % of the employers admit that there is nothing hindering them. In its turn, employers have mentioned the lack of resources as the most common obstacle — 15.4 %.

Moreover, by analysing the level of awareness and understanding of employers regarding working environment factors, it must be concluded that 37.5 % of employers have indicated that none of the employees of the enterprise is exposed to hazardous working environment risk factors. In its turn, by analysing these data according to the size of enterprise, it must be concluded that **this understanding is weaker especially in micro enterprises**, since 59.7 % of employees working in micro enterprises have admitted that none of the employees of the enterprise is exposed to hazardous working environment risk factors. The fact that there is no workplace without any working environment risk factors should be taken into account, but it is important to identify, assess and prevent them in order to reduce or prevent risk for safety and health of employed persons.

Consulting with employed persons is a significant element of the labour protection system. This element is significant when assessing the labour protection system established by the employer. The questionnaire of employed persons indicate to a high level of awareness in instructing in work safety issues (in general 94 %; in enterprises with 250 and more employees — 97 %); in its turn in micro and small-sized enterprises this indicator is lower (1-10 employees — 88.9 %, 11-49 employees —93.8 %). The information provided for in the SLI report regarding accidents, which have occurred at work, indicates that in enterprises with up to 5 employed persons — 3.4 %, and in enterprises with from 6 up to 49 employed persons — 16.7 % of the registered accidents have happened; the situation is even more severe with fatal accidents (with up to 5 employed persons — 14.6 %, and from 6 up to 49 employed persons — 29.3 % of fatal accidents).

It means that not only instructing of employed persons, but also informing regarding accidents that have occurred at work shall be included in the consulting system. Paying special attention to small and medium-sized enterprises.

In its turn, SLI statistical data show that infringements of the laws and regulations governing labour protection constitute 66.5 % of all infringements detected by SLI officials in 201411. Information obtained during inspections of enterprises carried out by SLI officials indicates that a part of employers and labour protection specialists do not understand the requirements of the laws and regulations or comply with them and implement them formally, because they do not see the working environment risk assessment as a basis for the establishment of a functioning labour protection system and safe working environment, but regard it as a burden. By risk assessment existing in the working environment, employers understand only detection of risk factors, therefore no actual action takes place in order to mitigate or prevent the risks identified; often after risk assessment employed persons even are not familiarised with risks, to which they are exposed during working hours, plans for labour protection measures are not drawn up. Moreover, the SLI has detected incompletely developed or out-of-date labour protection instructions in which, for example, conditions for use and storage of personal protection means, measures for prevention/mitigation of risk factors existing in working environment are not included, labour protection instructions are not developed in conformity with the work to be carried out, thus employed persons have not received an adequate initial instructing, as well as in many enterprises labour protection specialists do not have appropriate education, employed persons are not sent to health examination etc.12

Taking into account the data of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”13, and analysis of the surveys carried out by the SLI on the groups of enterprises, where in general the level of compliance with the laws and regulations of labour protection is lower, **small-sized and micro enterprises must be indicated as a special risk group, in which due to limited knowledge and resources it is often more difficult to understand and comply with the labour protection requirements.** Moreover, small sized and micro enterprises form the largest part of the enterprises of Latvia (92.0 %14). Therefore special attention shall be paid to this group of enterprises in the future, by offering aid instruments of different types, guidelines and easy to understand information of other type, taking into account the development of the new technologies and communication methods.

The indicator, which traditionally characterises the situation in the field of labour protection and the level of implementation of labour protection requirements is the number of accidents occurred at work. According to the data of the SLI annual report, 1763 employed persons suffered in **accidents** in 2014; 213 of them had severe injuries and 41 died 15 (see Figure 2). Compared to 2013, the number of persons suffered in accidents at work has increased by 9 %, the number of seriously suffered persons has decreased by 7 %, but the number of fatal accidents has increased by 25 %.



Figure 2. Dynamics of the number of accidents at work (2009-2014)

*Source: SLI*

By analysing the accidents at work by sector, it must be concluded that the largest proportion in statistics is formed by enterprises, in which in conformity with the working environment characterisation it is more likely to cause risk for safety and health of employed persons (enterprises of hazardous sectors). Accordingly **during the last years the majority of accidents, especially severe and fatal, have occurred in manufacturing industry, transport and storage sector, construction, agricultural and forestry sector**; therefore special attention must be paid to health protection and working environment safety and improvement of persons employed in these sectors. Proportion of accidents in large groups of hazardous sectors compared to the total number of accidents in all sectors is shown in Figures 3 and 4.





Figure 3 and 4. Proportion of accidents at work (total number), (the number of serious and fatal accidents) in enterprises of hazardous sectors (2010-2014)

*Source: SLI.*

Moreover, by analysing by the size of an enterprise, it can be seen that **persons employed in small and medium-sized enterprises with up to 250 employed persons suffer more in serious and fatal accidents, which actually account for 70.8 % of the total number of serious and fatal accidents in enterprises (see Figure 5).**



Figure 5. Number of serious and fatal accidents depending on the size of an enterprise (2014).

*Source: SLI*

It must be admitted that one of the problems in Latvia in the field of labour protection is hidden or non-registered accidents, regarding which employers or employed persons themselves do not notify due to different reasons and which are also related to the monitoring quality of indicators in the field. According to SLI data, the total number of accidents in large enterprises is higher (52 % of the total number in enterprises with over 250 employed persons), because large enterprises are also more responsible in respect of investigation of non-serious accidents.

Due to a large number of hidden accidents, the available statistical data regarding the total number of accidents may be compared only within the framework of Latvia with retrospective data, and trends may be observed; but such interpretation of results will not be right for comparison of the situation with other European countries. In order to be able to compare the number of accidents with other countries more objectively, it is necessary to compare data regarding fatal accidents, which are harder to be hidden, therefore their listing is more precise. Compared to the average indicator of the European Union Member States, **the number of fatal accidents in Latvia is at least 2 times higher than on average in the EU**— in 2014 it accounted for 5.2 cases per 100 000 employed persons (see Figure 6). It is slightly higher than in Lithuania and twice higher than in Estonia. The indicator of fatal accidents reached the highest value during the time of economic growth — in 2007; in its turn, after the economic crisis — in 2009 it decreased, which can be partly explained also by increase of emigration in the country, as well as by decrease of the economic activity in hazardous sectors (construction, manufacturing, etc.). However, it can be seen that after resumption of the economic activity, the number of accidents increases again.



Figure 6. The dynamics of the number of fatal accidents per 100 000 employed persons in the Baltic States and in the EU on average during the time period from 2007 to 2014

*Source: SLI*

By analysing the statistical data available in the SLI report for 2014 in respect of the instructing of suffered persons, it can be seen that the largest part of employed persons (98.2 %) have been instructed at workplace, and introducing training have been carried out for them as well (96.7 %). However, examining the causes of accidents, it may be concluded that often instructing either takes place formally or employed persons do not pay sufficient attention to it, because unsafe action of a person is mentioned as the main causes of accidents (76.8 %), including, labour safety rules or instructions have not been complied with (30.4 %), non-sufficient attention (34.8 %).16

Social partners have a significant role in improvement of working environment and working conditions — employers' organisations and trade unions. In accordance with the results of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”, in enterprises, in which a social dialogue is developed (for example, where a collective agreement has been entered into, which have become members of employers' organisations) the requirements of the laws and regulation of labour protection are better complied with. In the future a greater involvement of social partners in the arrangement of labour protection issues should be promoted, as well as activity of employed persons and trusted representatives.

In order to promote social dialogue at the level of enterprises, it is important to support and promote election of representatives and trusted representatives of employed persons, by also improving protection mechanisms of their activities. It is especially important to facilitate informing of employed persons, their representatives and trusted representatives about accidents that have happened in the enterprise, about causes detected as a result of the investigation, and measures laid down in order to eliminate these causes. It would facilitate involvement of both employed persons and their representatives and trusted representatives, in the improvement of working environment of the enterprise. **Enterprises of the private sector, enterprises where non-registered employment exists, i.e., where at least a part of the salary is paid in an envelope, as well as enterprises, which have been recently established** must also be regarded as risk groups, to which special attention is to be paid in respect of compliance with the requirements of the laws and regulations of labour protection. In addition to these risk groups in accordance with the data of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”,**enterprises, which are located in Riga and Zemgale Region,** must be regarded as a risk group in breakdown by region, but **fishery, agricultural, forestry, paper and paper product manufacturing, printing and publishing, textile product and garment manufacturing, metal and ready made metal product production enterprises** must be regarded as a risk group in breakdown by sector.

As **persons employed also by enterprises of other hazardous sectors are exposed to a higher risk to accidents and occupational diseases**, an increased attention shall also be paid to this group of enterprises, ensuring a consultative and informative support, as well as efficient supervision.

2.2. Problems identified

A high number of accidents, especially a large proportion in hazardous sectors, the cause of which is mostly unsafe working environment in enterprises, which is related to a non-sufficient practical implementation of labour protection requirements in the enterprises.

Especially high number of serious and fatal accidents, which in Latvia is higher than on average in the EU.

 Small-sized and micro enterprises are a special risk group.

Work places in the enterprises of manufacturing industry, transport and storage sector, construction, agricultural and forestry, as well as fishery, manufacturing of paper and paper products, printing and publishing, manufacturing of textile products and garments, manufacturing of metal and metal products.

Enterprises of the private sector, enterprises where non-registered employment exists, i.e., where at least a part of the salary is paid in an envelope, as well as enterprises, which have been recently established.

Enterprises which are located in Riga and Zemgale Region.

2.3. Solution to problems

Taking into account the abovementioned problems and causes of the problems, the solution to the situation should be directed towards the reduction of accidents at workplaces, by informing, training and educating employers and employed persons, educating future employees (young people), by promoting change of attitude and understanding, and by improving knowledge and skills. The supervision by the SLI and preventive work in enterprises of hazardous sectors are a significant component of the solution to the problem.

It is necessary to promote practical implementation of the laws and regulations of the field of labour protection and labour rights especially in small-sized and micro enterprises, which in conformity with NACE general industrial classification of economic activities carry out any of the types of commercial activities where there is increased risk for safety and health of employed persons17. Improvement of working environment especially in enterprises of hazardous sectors, as well as in small-sized and micro enterprises would be possible by providing them special consultative support and assisting them to assess and prevent working environment risks and to organise working environment accordingly.

In order to promote practical implementation of labour protection requirements at the level of enterprises, a social dialogue shall be promoted at the level of enterprises, by promoting more active involvement of employed persons in the operation of labour protection system, election and active operation of representatives and trusted representatives of employed persons, by concurrently also improving protection mechanisms of their activity. It is important to inform employed persons about accidents that have happened in the enterprise and their causes, as well as to involve employed persons, their representatives and trusted representatives in the investigation of these accidents, thus involving both the employed persons and their representatives and trusted representatives in the improvement of working environment of the enterprise. Exchange of information between an employer and employed persons shall be promoted, including, for example, after drawing up an accident statement, familiarising the victim and employed persons with the results of the investigation of the accident occurred and reasons detected. Besides, understanding of employers regarding risks in the working environment, their impact on the health of employed persons and efficiency, profit and sustainability of the enterprise should be promoted, and motivation of employers to be aware of significance of labour protection should be promoted. Non-understanding and unawareness do not provides any notion that poor/non-organised working environment is economically disadvantageous. Thus it is significant to also include studies of the economic side and awareness promotion issues in informative measures and studies, as well as issues of costs, which would be one of best motivators for employers. Practical exchange of experience and information among employers is also required, promoting implementation of the best practice.

Aid instruments of different typed for employers, consultations in the enterprise, educating, informing, training of employers and employed persons, potential employed persons (young people) and labour protection specialists, by promoting the change of attitude, understanding and development of skills, guidelines and easy to understand information of other type, taking into account the development of new technologies and communication methods, are a significant support and solution for practical implementation of the requirements. It is significant to offer such support and information for employers, which would be easy accessible and usable, for example, electronic working environment risk assessment exactly for hazardous sectors, electronic instruction regarding different risks of working environment and labour protection issues, establishment and introduction of an electronic training system for employed persons, establishment of a database for electronic labour protection instructions.

In accordance with the laws and regulations of labour protection, a labour protection specialist shall be assigned in each enterprise or an enterprise should attract a service provider — a competent authority or a competent specialist. This specialist shall practically carry out the working environment risk assessment and other labour protection measures, therefore safety and health protection of employed persons depend at large scale on his or her knowledge and skills. Accordingly, in the following period it is necessary to take measures for improvement of the level of knowledge and competence of labour protection specialists. In order to ensure that labour protection specialists receive qualitative education according to a unified education programme, methodological auxiliary aids of specialised training programmes (40 h) for performers of training shall be established.

Each year, in conformity with Section 13, Paragraph six of the Law On Compulsory Social Insurance in Respect of Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases Riga Stradins University Agency “Institute for Occupational Safety and Environmental Health” (hereinafter — IOSEH) shall implement preventive measures, by using the occupation accident special budget, but not more than 0.5% of the total amount of the funds of the occupation accident special budget laid down in the annual State Budget Law. Thus different informative materials shall be issued, video materials created, campaigns implemented, as well as seminars organised for labour protection specialists on different topical issues in both Riga and regions. Additionally, in the current situation public informing measures are partly financed also from the SLI budget, that is, however, insufficient for public informing activities in the required amounts. In accordance with Section 3 of the SLI Law, one of the tasks of the SLI is to provide free-of-charge consultations to employers and employees regarding the requirements of the laws and regulations of employment legal relations and labour protection, which is implemented in two consultation centres in Riga and by ensuring presence consultations in regions, and providing free-of-charge consultations by phone, e-mail and in social networks. Within the framework of the abovementioned measures, the information regarding the most current issues in the field of labour protection is provided, which in general does not ensure public awareness in the desirable amount, because, as demonstrated by the results of the study, public awareness is still insufficient to ensure practical implementation of labour protection at workplaces. Besides, the abovementioned measures are general and directed towards the whole society in general, purposefully not distinguishing and not paying special attention especially to small-sized and micro enterprises or hazardous sectors. Without changing the present situation and not providing additional measures and informing for improvement of working environment of enterprises of hazardous sectors and small-sized and micro enterprises, it is foreseen that safety level both at workplaces in general, and in small-sized and micro enterprises, as well as at workplaces of enterprises of hazardous sectors will continue to decrease, because if employers and employed persons do not understand the significance of labour protection, the situation, when sufficient attention is not paid to the improvement of working environment, when means are saved on complying with the labour protection requirements and labour protection requirements are not actually complied with or are complied with only formally, will continue to exist. Subsequently, if the activities directed towards the implementation of the labour protection requirements in practice, improvement of knowledge and awareness of employers and employed persons regarding labour protection issues and motivation of employers to comply with the labour protection requirements, especially in enterprises of hazardous sectors, as well as in small-sized and micro enterprises, are not carried out, the reduction of the number of accidents is not foreseen. Taking into account the tendency of increase in the number of accidents, especially serious and fatal, further increase in the number of accidents may be forecast, if purposeful activities for improvement of working environment, by paying special attention to those enterprises and those sectors, where there is the highest accident risk, are not implemented.

2.4. Assessment of the initial impact of the solution offered.

The results of the study demonstrate that although improvements in the compliance with the labour protection requirements are slow, a positive tendency is observed in general. Thus in 2013 the number of those enterprises, where working environment risk assessment is not carried out at all has decreased: from 54.8 % in 2006 to 48.5 % in 2013. Concurrently, it must be indicated that according to the data of the survey for 2013, it can be seen that by increase of the size of an enterprise, the number of those cases, when working environment risk assessment is not carried out at all, has decreased. Thus it can be concluded that by intending special activities for small-sized and micro enterprises for organising working environment, improvement of the situation is expected in compliance with the labour protection requirements and decrease of the number of accidents in general. Besides, by making acquisition of information easier, making information regarding labour protection requirements easier to understand and easy to access, for example, electronic tools regarding working environment risks, it is foreseen that a larger part of employers and employed persons will acquire such information and implement it in practice, realising that implementation of many requirements is not complicated and does not require large funds, but provides positive results and increase satisfaction of employed persons with working environment and productivity of the enterprise. Also free-of-charge accessibility to on-line interactive working environment assessment, electronic training system for employed persons, electronically accessible labour protection instructions and other similar activities will significantly improve possibilities of employers simply and by using investments with as little resources as possible to organise working environment in their enterprise, in order for it to be as safe and harmless to health of employed persons as possible.

Also by providing activities which are directed towards organising working environment, especially in enterprises of those sectors where there is the greatest number of accidents, including enterprises of hazardous sectors, improvement of compliance with the labour protection requirements and organisation of working environment are expected, as a result of which decrease of the number of accidents is expected. Subsequently, as it was already mentioned in the previous activity, a positive influence is expected on both entrepreneurship and the national economy in general.

**3. Facilitation of Health Protection of Employees and Prevention of Occupational Diseases**

3.1. Present situation

In solving labour protection issues in enterprises, traditionally more attention is paid to the safety aspect; however, health protection is not less significant, thus promoting qualitative and long working life. Diseases characteristic of certain categories of employees, the only and main cause of which is physical, chemical, biological, psychological and other factors of workplace, are called occupational diseases. The number of occupational diseases diagnosed for the first time, as well as the number of persons suffering from occupational diseases, is the second indicator, which traditionally characterises the situation of labour protection in enterprises.

In respect of occupational diseases **during the time period since 2012 an increase in the number of first-time confirmed patients suffering from occupational diseases is observed**, from 91.5 cases per 100 000 employed persons in 2012 to 138.0 cases per 100 000 employed persons in 2014. Since 2012, the number of persons suffering from occupational diseases has increased by 33.7 % in total. Taking into account the fact that during the last years persons with already enduring health problems apply to the medical commission for occupational diseases, accordingly several diseases are diagnosed for one person, as well as the total number of diagnosed diseases increases. Besides, the tendency of the last years shows that people of younger age apply to physicians with signs of occupational diseases, especially with muscular and skeleton diseases, which develop much faster than diseases caused by the traditional working environment risks.

The number of occupational diseases can be interpreted taking into account the influence of different factors, for example, in the 90s the small number of first-time confirmed patients suffering from occupational diseases should be related not with the small number of occupational diseases, but with the fact that in those years occupational diseases were rarely detected and diagnosed. It must be admitted that starting from 1998, occupational diseases are diagnosed more often among women than among men, which may be explained by the fact, that women usually visit doctors more often and pay more attention to their health. Also in conformity with the SLI statistics for 2014, it can be seen that persons suffering from occupational diseases are mostly women in the age from 45 years, with the length of service more than 10 years and who continue working. By analysing statistical data it can be observed that in Latvia accidents occur more often with men, in its turn occupational diseases are more often detected among women. Concurrently it must be admitted that a larger proportion of men is traditionally employed in hazardous sectors, for example, in construction, woodworking, transport sector, etc.; therefore, attention should be paid to the prevention of occupational diseases both among men and women, taking into account specific working environment risks. to which these groups of employed persons are mostly exposed to (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Dynamics of the number of first-time confirmed patients suffering from occupational diseases in breakdown by gender from 1996 to 2014 (per 100 000 employed persons) in Latvia

From 2007 to 2009 in Latvia the number of first-time confirmed patients suffering from occupational diseases grew rapidly. Such growth can be explained by the fact that by worsening of the economic situation, many inhabitants desired to officially submit documents for approval of occupational disease because it was an opportunity to receive a compensation. From 2009 to 2012, the number of first-time confirmed patients suffering from occupational diseases decreased, which may be explained by improvement of the economic situation, as well as by improvement of diagnostics of occupational diseases and changes in the system of social guarantees of occupational diseases. However, starting from 2013 a rapid growth in the number of first-time confirmed patients suffering from occupational diseases, as well as the number of occupational diseases detected for the first time, was observed (see Figure 8); therefore, special attention should be paid to this issue in the future. Probably the awareness of people regarding social guarantees also makes influence on the growth of the number of occupational diseases, if an occupational disease is diagnosed, as well as the improved diagnostics of occupational diseases, which is also facilitated by the increasing number of mandatory health examinations for employed persons (in 2013 — 44 %, in 2010 — 25.2 % indicated that the employer ensured mandatory health examination). Concurrently, taking into account that the age range for detecting persons suffering from occupational diseases for the first time is between 45 years of age and 54 years of age (43.5 %) and between 55 years of age and 64 years of age (45.11 %), as well as that mostly occupational diseases are diagnosed already in the progressive stage, when the loss of ability to work is 25 % and more or even disability, it must be concluded that improvement in diagnostics of occupational diseases is insufficient, which is proven by late diagnostics of occupational diseases; it must also be concluded, that mandatory health examinations performed have not provided a real view of the health status of the employed person.

In addition to the data available to the SLI, it can be seen that occupational diseases are detected also among employed persons who are young. Thus in 2012, 10.3 % of persons suffering from occupational diseases detected for the first time were up to 44 years old; in its turn in 2013 they accounted for 9.1 %, but in 2014 — 8.8 %. In general it indicates to comparatively early development of occupational diseases as a result of influence of working environment.



Figure 8. Dynamics of the number of persons suffering from occupational diseases, registered for the first time from 1996 to 2014 (per 100 000 employed persons)

Source: The Occupation and Radiation Safety Centre

Persons suffering from occupational diseases most often are encountered in large enterprises, because according to the opinion of specialists, a tendency that if an occupational disease is detected for any of employees of the enterprise, the colleagues who work in similar conditions and who have similar health disorders undergo a commission of specialists. According to the SLI statistics, ergonomic (biomechanic) working environment risk factors causing diseases of nerve system and muscular, skeleton system are indicated as the most often cause of occupational diseases. By analysing the data of persons suffering from occupational diseases by type of economic activity (NACE Rev.2), it can be seen that persons employed in enterprises of hazardous sectors18are more often exposed to risk of development of occupational diseases (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. Proportion of the number of persons suffering from occupational diseases registered for the first time in enterprises of hazardous sectors. Source: SLI.

It must be also taken into account that occupational diseases do not characterise the situation in a particular moment, but outline the situation, which was 10-20 years ago, when the occupational disease developed, by working under the influence of working environment risk, because for health disorders to develop and be characterised as occupational disease in a chronic stage, in which such diseases mainly are diagnosed, the hazardous factor, which causes such health disorders should make influence for a longer period of time, i.e. for several years. By development of technologies, in general work processes have become safer than several decades ago; however, by using new technologies and new chemical substances, including biotechnologies, nano-technologies and nano-materials, their long-term influence on health of an employed person is not always known; therefore the structure of the most popular occupational diseases changes from time to time.

During the last years **the number of occupational diseases caused by physical overload has increased most rapidly**, which is related to the fact that such working places are dominant in Latvia where physical overloads or forced working positions are characteristic. According the data of the Central Statistical Bureau, wholesale trade and retail, car and motorcycle repair (14.6 % of all employed persons), manufacturing industry (13.6 %) and education (9.4 %) are the most topical fields of activity in Latvia in 2014, which indicates that employed persons are exposed to both forced positions and physical overloads at workplaces. (http://data.csb.gov.lv/pxweb/lv/Sociala/Sociala\_\_isterm\_\_nodarb/NB0061c.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=562c2205-ba57-4130-b63a-6991f49ab6fe). The increase in the number of occupational diseases caused by physical overloads may be explained not only by topicality of such types of works in the labour market of Latvia, but also by the fact that preventive activities in respect of such diseases are more complicated than classical labour protection methods (such as use of collective and personal protection means, use of less hazardous materials etc.). In its turn, the number of diseases, which may be avoided by relatively simple methods has decreased, for example, in order to reduce the number of diseases with occupational hearing impairment, it is necessary to use personal protection means for protection against noise, which can be implemented comparatively easily. Based on the abovementioned data, it is necessary to pay special attention to preventive measures of occupational diseases related to physical overloads and forced working positions.



Figure 10. Dynamics of the number of most common diseases between 1996-2012 per 100 000 employed persons.

Most commonly detected occupational diseases are closely related to the most wide-spread working environment risks. **In Latvia, as well as on average in the EU, stress is mentioned as the most commonly encountered working environment risk** (LV — 50 %, on average in the EU —51 %); it is followed by **ergonomic risk factors — repeated movements or painful body positions**(LV — 32%, on average in the EU — 28%) and **lifting, carrying or movement of loads on an everyday basis** (LV — 23%, on average in the EU — 25%)19.

It may also be concluded from the results of the studies carried out in Latvia that **psycho-emotional risk factors, ergonomic, as well as physical risk factors are the most common risk factors**. From traditional risk factors working environment micro climate and chemical substances may be regarded as a significant problem of working environment20. Also by analysing the dynamics of occupational diseases by group of diagnoses, it may be seen that during the last years the number of diseases of skeleton, muscular and connective tissues, the nervous system and sensory organs increases most rapidly. Spondylosis with radiculopathy — 51.6 cases per 100 000 employed persons, damages of soft tissues related to overload and pressure — 49.7 cases per 100 000 employed persons, carpal tunnel syndrome — 48.7 cases per 100 000 employed persons, influence of vibration — 17.8 cases per 100 000 employed persons, occupational hearing impairment — 13.9 cases per 100 000 employed persons, arthroses — 7.2 cases per 100 000 employed persons are detected as most common occupational diseases in Latvia in 2012 (see Figure 10).

Such situation indicates that both the changes in the structure of occupational diseases in Latvia —the so called overload caused diseases (diseases of skeleton, muscles and connective tissues, diseases of the nervous system and sensory organs) increase more significantly, as well as that the fact that working environment risk factors change in working environment — the number of such workplaces, where exposition to high noise, dust, chemical substances is characteristic are decreasing, but the number of such workplaces where physical overloads or forced positions are characteristic — are increasing.

Besides, it must be admitted that in case of occupational diseases often capacity for work is limited, health disorders are serious and persons cannot continue to work, or employers have no possibilities to offer work to victims of occupational disease without exposition to a harmful factor. Victims of occupational disease receive social guarantees, disability is determined for them, serious and continuous medical treatment and rehabilitation are required, thus causing burden not only for the family, employer, but also for the State budget. The abovementioned is partly based also on belated diagnostics of occupational diseases, because acute occupational diseases are not diagnosed in Latvia and practically very rarely occupational diseases are diagnosed in early stages. Basically, upon diagnosing an occupational disease at least 25 % loss of capacity for work is already determined, often also disability, when health disorders are already irreversible. It is related to both the fact that employed persons with health disorders caused by working environment turn to a doctor belatedly, by continuing to work continuously even then they feel complaints regarding health, and that health disorders due to which a person has turned to a doctor often are not related to work because causal relationship has not been traced between influence of working environment and health disorders.

In conformity with the data of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia, 2012-2013”, 21 % of employed persons consider that the experienced health disorders were related to non-organised working environment and hazardous working environment conditions present therein. Unfortunately, in most cases, employed persons continue to work and suffer pain, cannot productively and fully perform their work, frequent breaks, probably, sick-leave certificates are necessary. Thus also in these cases non-organised working environment has influence on both health of employed persons, and employer's and State budget.

In accordance with the data of State Social Insurance Agency, in 2014 EUR 25 298 273.92 were disbursed in compensations for loss of capacity for work, loss of provider, compensation for damages and compensation for additional expenditure in relation to accident at work or occupational disease.

3.2. Problems identified

The large number of persons suffering from occupational diseases, occupational and work-related diseases, as well as development of occupational diseases among comparatively young people.

Late diagnostics of occupational diseases when health disorders are progressing and cannot be prevented, but require a long-term medical treatment and cause significant expenditure for both the victim of an occupational disease himself or herself and the employer, and the public in general.

Unhealthy and sedentary lifestyle of employees.

Changes in the structure of the most wide-spread occupational diseases, during the last years by the most rapid increase in the number of occupational diseases caused by physical overload.

Ergonomic risk factors — repeated movements or body positions causing pain (LV — 32 %, on average in the EU — 28 %) and lifting, carrying or moving of loads on an everyday basis (LV carrying or moving 23 %, on average in the EU carrying or moving 25 %)21.

Stress is mentioned as the working environment risk encountered most often in Latvia, as well as on average in the EU (LV — 50 %, on average in the EU — 51 %)22.

3.3. Solution to problems

In order **to solve** identified problems, specific information must be ensured, including about the most topical risk factors (psycho-emotional risk factors, ergonomic and physical risk factors) for employers, employed persons and labour protection specialists, as well as educating, training, change of understanding, acquisition of skills and facilitation of general health shall be ensured. Concurrently also improvement of professional knowledge of occupational health and physicians of occupational diseases, especially in respect of prevention, diagnostics and medical treatment of muscle, skeleton and connective tissues, shall be ensured. Besides, early diagnostics of occupational diseases should be promoted in order to prevent development of disability and loss of capacity for work due to occupational diseases, and in order for employed persons to be able to recover the quality of life and fully involve in the labour market after medical treatment. It must be also admitted that the age range for detecting persons suffering from occupational diseases for the first time is between 45 years of age and 54 years of age (43.5 %) and between 55 years of age and 64 years of age (45.11 %), thus solutions must be concurrently sought, by paying attention to the fact that in the most cases they are people of pre-retirement age, in order to recover these persons to active social life and labour market as soon as possible. Additional attention must be paid in order to reduce the number of persons suffering from occupational diseases who are young, by promoting such working environment conditions at workplace, which promote general health of employed persons and prevent development of health disorders caused by working environment. Without raising public awareness and understanding about health promotion at workplace and prevention of occupational diseases, further increase in the number of occupational diseases is forecast, by continuing the tendency, which has already commenced. Concurrently, if improvement of professional knowledge of occupational health and physicians of occupational diseases, as well as increase of the level of awareness of doctors of other specialities regarding current labour protection issues is not be ensured, occupational diseases will be diagnosed late also in the future, and the number of occupational diseases caused by wide-spread working environment risk factors will continue to increase, subsequently expenditure for medical treatment, rehabilitation and social benefits will continue to increase, and the quality of life of persons suffering from occupational diseases will concurrently continue to decline.

3.4. Assessment of the initial impact of the solution offered.

By increasing the knowledge of physicians of occupational health and occupational diseases and improving professional knowledge regarding current labour protection and occupational health issues, more efficient and faster diagnostics of occupational diseases is expected. Especially, by increasing knowledge regarding current occupational diseases, early diagnostics thereof and thus more efficient treatment are foreseen. By improving professional knowledge of doctors of different specialities regarding issues of occupational diseases and occupational health, it is possible to discover connection of health disorders with influence of harmful working environment factors, and thus carry out medical treatment more efficiently. It in its turn will promote early return of people to work. Besides, the earlier health orders are discovered, the smaller expenditure necessary for medical treatment will be, as well as expenditure for compensations and benefits will decrease, because a smaller percentage of loss of capacity for work and disability will develop.

Concurrently, by increasing the knowledge of employed persons regarding health promoting measures at workplace and by improving skills for complying with such measures, healthy lifestyle will be promoted in the society in general that subsequently will reflect as improvement of the quality of life and increase of the level of welfare of the society.

Subsequently, the quality of life of persons suffering from occupational diseases will also improve and they will be able to return in full-fledged life, expenditure of enterprises and State related to incapacity for work will decrease. Thus the action direction will have a positive influence on entrepreneurship, the national economy and the society in general.

**4. Supervision and Control of the Field of the Labour Protection**

4.1. Present situation

Supervision and control of compliance with the labour protection requirements is carried out by the SLI, which is a direct administration institution subordinated to the Minister for Welfare, the legal status, functions and tasks of which are determined by the State Labour Inspection Law.

In its annual report the SLI publishes statistical data and information on accidents, occupational diseases, inspections carried out, infringements detected, etc. The abovementioned information provides a notion regarding the situation in labour protection; however, it is insufficient for full monitoring of labour protection policy. **According to the statistical data available to the SLI regarding the total number of accidents, it is not possible to judge on the real situation and level of safety in enterprises**, because according to the ratio of the total number of accidents and fatal accidents it may be concluded that in Latvia a large part of accidents with minor consequences is hidden; however, in-depth investigation of this issue has not been carried out in Latvia.

**Necessity to improve monitoring data of labour protection policy and information regarding the current situation**is a significant challenge. Since 2006, it is possible to judge about the development of the situation in Latvia in the field of labour protection from the data of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia.”23. Such study was carried out for the first time in 2006, later in 2010 and 2013 repeated studies have been carried out within the framework of ESF project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” implemented by the ECL. Such studies provide significant information regarding the spread of different labour environment risks, changes of the situation in different sectors, the level of awareness of the society etc. In order to implement a qualitative and target-oriented policy in the field of labour rights and labour protection, as well as to be aware of the current situation, it is necessary to carry out such studies also in the future. Thus monitoring and identification of the current problems will be ensured, by carrying out different studies, which will promote supervision of implementation of the existing legal regulation and will be directed towards improvement of the legal regulation of labour relations and labour protection, by analysing possible solutions of current issues and influence thereof on the present situation.

In the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” it is necessary to assess different issues related to working conditions, including paying special attention to compliance with the requirements of laws and regulations, working environment risk factors and prevention thereof, social dialogue, satisfaction of employed persons with working conditions. Concurrently, this study shall ensure comparison of data with the situation in the previous periods when similar studies have been carried out. Additionally, regular questionnaires and/or small studies shall also be carried out at least 2 times a year (in total 12) regarding certain current tendencies of the development of labour rights and labour protection sector and current issues during the project lifetime.

Taking into account the large number of hidden accidents in Latvia, by carrying out a special study, it is necessary to review and analyse databases of the largest hospitals with a view to identify potential accidents at work and compare them with the number of accidents registered by the SLI. Thus the difference between the real situation and the statistical data would be clarified, by finding out the causes, assessing situations, as well as planning further measures for change of action and attitude towards notifying accidents occurred at work. In carrying out the relevant study, the norms of the Law on the Rights of Patients and requirements of Cabinet Regulation No. 446 of 4 August 2015, Procedures for Using the Patient Data in a Specific Research, shall be taken into account.

Taking into account the limited State budget means, it is possible to carry out such large-scale studies by using ESF funds.

In order to supervise compliance with the labour protection requirements, the SLI has a significant role, which ensures supervision and control in respect of both the compliance with the employment legal relations and labour protection requirements. The capacity of the SLI and provision of resources enable it to carry out 10 000-11 000 inspections per year, by surveying approximately 10 % of the enterprises registered in the State. These inspections include both the inspections in the field of labour protection and in relation to non-registered employment and compliance with the labour rights. The SLI carries out extraordinary activities in the field of labour protection (for example, investigation of accidents at work, drawing up of hygiene characterisations of workplaces, response to submissions), as well as planned preventive activities (implementation of thematic inspections in the field of labour protection in enterprises of particular hazardous sectors).

It must be admitted, that in 2015 it is planned to significantly increase the number of preventive inspections of labour protection, which is to be regarded as a positive tendency. In carrying out preventive inspections, it is possible to make sure regarding working environment in enterprises and provide information to employers regarding permanent infringements and give advice through the implementation of which protection of employed persons may be ensured and accidents at work and occupational diseases may be prevented. In order to ensure qualitative and efficient activity of the SLI, experience, knowledge and skills of officials in applying their knowledge in practice have invaluable importance. However, the **high turnover of the SLI employees** must be mentioned here (26 % of all employees in 2014). Comparatively **non-competitive remuneration** is one of the main factors for the high turnover of personnel. In accordance with the level for the relevant group of monthly salaries and category laid down in Cabinet Regulation No. 66 of 29 January 2013,Regulations Regarding Work Remuneration of Officials and Employees of State and Local Government Authorities, and Procedures for Determination Thereof, the range of the monthly salary for the inspector shall be within the range between EUR 569 to EUR 874, but in accordance with the financing available for the SLI, the minimum monthly salary for inspectors is EUR 550, but the maximum — EUR 750, as opposed to the high level of requirements, which are defined for the inspectors of the SLI and load present in this work. According to the results of the questionnaire of the SLI employees for 2013-2014 it can be seen that the employees have assessed the remuneration received with 4.91 points of 10 maximum points on average.

Competitions to vacant posts of SLI inspectors are organised continuously in order to fill the vacancies of officials who have terminated civil service relations; however, despite this, in 2014 the vacant posts of inspectors have not been fully completed in any month. It is very problematic to complete vacant posits especially in Riga regional SLI, because comparing to the rest of the labour market in both the public and private sector, the remuneration of regional officials of the SLI is not competitive, also taking into account the high level of requirements, duty and responsibility to be carried out by SLI inspectors.

Although the level of remuneration for SLI officials and especially for positions of inspectors are constantly increased during the last years for several times by reviewing the internal remuneration system of the institution and using additional financing provided by the government in the SLI budget base and funds for increase of remuneration especially for low-paid officials, the level of remuneration is the main reason for the high turnover of employees in the SLI and difficulties to attract new candidates complying with the requirements of the SLI (since the inspector is a position of a civil servant, the candidate must have higher education; however, taking into account the duties of the inspector, it is essential for the SLI that the higher education is acquired especially in law science or labour protection).

In respect of social guarantees, all those benefits are ensured in the State Labour Inspectorate which are laid down as mandatory in the Law On Remuneration of Officials and Employees of State and Local Government Authorities (for example, in the case of death of officials (employees), in relation to death of a family member or dependent, etc.). However, in general these benefits are not those due to which employed persons are stimulated to commence their service in the State Labour Inspectorate.

The State Labour Inspectorate may, within the framework of financial means granted to it, intend only the following additional measures related to remuneration for motivation of employees:

1) shortening of the duration of working day for more than one hour before public holidays;

2) one paid holiday on the first day of a school-year in relation to commencement of school by a child in class 1-4;

3) not more than three paid holidays in relation to entering into marriage;

4) one paid holiday on the day of graduation ceremony for the official (employee) or his or her child upon graduating from an educational institution.

It must be concluded that within the framework of the present budget of the institution, increase of salary fund is not possible. At the same time the low and **non-competitive remuneration for inspectors significantly hinders filling of vacant positions of inspectors with employees, who are competent and complying with the requirements, especially in Riga regional SLI**. Remuneration factor is the main, which hinders to retain experienced employees, as well as new employees, after having worked a short period of time in the SLI, having acquired experience, are able to quickly find a better-paid work in other State institution or private structure.

Although the experience, which is characteristic of a certain profession and/or certain institution does not characterise all experience obtained by an employed person, it is regarded that experience accumulated in a particular workplace causes additional influence not only to remuneration for work of the employed person, but also productivity — the longer an employed person works in the workplace, the better he or she adapts to particular work duties, as well as better amalgamates with other colleagues, as a result creating additional productivity.

Unfortunately, in the State Labour Inspectorate **it is very hard to attract those employed persons who are performers of basic functions as an inspector for a long time**, because especially the low remuneration is the main reason why civil service relations are terminated with the State Labour Inspectorate.

**The high turnover of employees (~25 % per year) causes significant burden for efficient functioning of the institution**, because training of new employees and introduction into work cause additional burden and demand of resources for both organising the training (new inspectors of the SLI acquires a specialised training module of five weeks) and additional load of experienced colleagues, who in addition to their direct duties must also help new employees with advice, practical participation in inspections, correction of drawn-up documents and performance of other introduction into work measures.

It must be mentioned that while a new employee acquires experience (at least during the first 6 months) his or her contribution to the performance of the work as an inspector is significantly smaller than contribution of an experienced inspector in terms of both the amount of work (the number of inspections carried out) and quality (the drawn-up documents which are more often to be corrected by co-ordinators and mentors). In total it makes direct influence on the capacity of the SLI in performance of inspections that is one of the main tools of operation of the institution in ensuring prevention and compliance with legal norms, where quantitative and qualitative indicators are laid down for the institution (determined number of inspection, which shall be implemented during a year, as well as the number of effective surveys of non-registered employment).

SLI employees are ensured with office equipment and devices; however, a part of them are depreciated and need to be replaced by new. By working with depreciated office equipment and devices, provision of services for clients is burdened, work efficiency is reduced and costs for repair of devices are increased. Also IS provision no longer complies with the newest tendencies of equipment development. In order to ensure efficient work of SLI inspectors, it is necessary to improve IS provision and to develop IS application of the SLI, so that IS could be used remotely also at objects while performing surveys and data verification/entering could take place operatively and on site by using a tablet computer.

In order to ensure efficient work in regional inspections, it is necessary to purchase at least 5 medium capacity copying devices and 10 copying devices of a smaller capacity (for regional offices of the SLI, as well as for work of certain inspectors). It is also necessary to take care of appropriate technical provision for performance of inspector duties complying with the development of technologies, thus promoting faster and more efficient performance of the duties of inspectors. Office duties of SLI employees are related to performance of inspection in different places, for example, forests and constructions sites. In order for an employee to be able to fully carry out his or her duties, documenting the surveyed place must be carried out. It requires cameras and dictating machines. Currently there are 98 cameras, 72 dictating machines at the disposal of the SLI; however, the total number of inspectors, senior inspectors, heads of the sector and chief State inspectors is 124. In order to improve technical provision of inspectors, each inspector needs a service camera and dictating machine for recording of evidence.

In addition to that, inspectors need specialised and technically complicated knowledge regarding different (including hazardous) sectors, the activities of which are governed by specific laws and regulations. Nowadays, the use of specific technologies and equipment rapidly changes, having a good knowledge of which is essential for both the investigation of complicated serious and fatal accidents and performance of preventive inspections of enterprises; therefore, although several training modules are developed, they should be**renewed on a regular basis, by supplementing the content of training modules with the most significant development tendencies of the sector, current statistics, changes in causes of accidents**. Concurrently, taking into account the development of new technologies and new knowledge regarding different labour protection issues, changes of the situation in respect of sectors where the number of accidents increases, it is necessary to develop new training modules about topical themes.

Acquisition of knowledge included in modules allows carrying out inspections of enterprises more professionally and with greater competence. Until now, module B for training of the officials and new employees of the SLU regarding 3 training themes was developed within the framework of the ESF project “Improvement of Supervision of Employment Legal Relations and Labour Safety System”: “Construction”, “Metalworking” and “Food Production”. In order to continue the specialisation of inspectors commenced in 2009, the abovementioned modules were updated by the support of the ESF project “Improvement of the Capacity of the State Employment Agency” and now module B is supplemented with several new training themes (for example, “Woodworking”, “Agriculture”, “Forest Exploitation”, “Transport and Logistics”). Employees, who are trained in any specialised sector, for example, forest exploitation, may carry out professional and deepened inspections in this sector (in this case — in forest exploitation). Implementation of specialisation in practice (inspections of enterprises of a certain hazardous sector are carried out by inspectors, who have acquired training of the specialised module) has been commenced starting from 2014. **In order to ensure performance of efficient control, further training of inspectors is necessary by foreseeing attraction of qualified lecturers.**

In 2011, the Committee of Senior Labour Inspectors (CSLI) organised assessment of the SLI, by providing a range of recommendations for making activities of the SLI more efficient. Amongst other it was indicated in the assessment document that **it is necessary to introduce new working methods in practice**. Inspectors should pay more attention to practical evaluation of hazardousness in inspections, not only inspection of the documentation. Thus it is necessary to improve analytical skills of inspectors for inspection of workplaces and selection of “high hazardousness” enterprises and implementation of target-oriented preventive inspections in “the most hazardous enterprises”. In order to improve efficiency of the activities of the SLU, exchange of experience with labour inspections of other countries is significant. Exchange of cross-border experience allows getting familiar with working methods, priorities of activities of corresponding control and supervision authorities of other countries, fine and advice systems implemented thereby, as well as to improve co-operation in solving labour protection and labour rights issues (for example, sent employees, investigation of accidents with foreign employees or employees of Latvian enterprises who have suffered in accidents abroad, control of such problematic enterprises and co-ordination thereof that operate in several countries).

4.2. Problems identified

Necessity to obtain wider, deepened information regarding situation in enterprises, compliance with labour protection requirements and current labour protection issues.

Non-sufficient knowledge and skills of SLI officials for preventive and deepened inspection of hazardous sectors, which is determined by the fast technological development and high turnover of SLI officials.

Non-competitive remuneration, which hinders filling of vacant posts of inspectors with employees, who are competent and compliant with the requirements.

Non-sufficiency of technological provision at the disposal of the SLI and depreciation of the present technologies, thus non-conformity with practical needs, as well as lack of IS application of the SLI for remote work. By working with depreciated office equipment and devices, provision of services for clients is burdened, work efficiency is reduced and costs for repair of devices are increased.

Further training of inspectors, by attracting qualified lecturers, is required; the necessity to introduce new working methods in practice and pay more attention to preventive work.

4.3. Solution to problems

In order to address the abovementioned problems and implement qualitative and target-oriented policy in the field of labour rights and labour protection, as well as to identify the current situation, it is intended to continue monitoring of the situation and identification of causes of current problems, by carrying out different studies, which would support supervision of introduction of current legal regulation or would be directed towards improvement of legal regulation of labour relations and labour protection, by analysing possible solutions to the topical issues and influence thereof on the present situation. In order to ensure an opportunity to carry out such studies, it is intended to attract ESF funds because the State budget does not provide funds for such activities.

Thus it could be possible not only to continue the commenced monitoring, but also to find out the current situation in enterprises in particular target groups and to carry out deepened clarification of certain problematic issues in order to find more efficient solutions. As a result of the study, practical recommendations would be developed regarding the necessary changes in the laws and regulations, as well as regarding other measures to be carried out (preventive, informing, inspecting, punishing etc.), in order to promote improvement of working conditions in enterprises, by demonstrating also those aspects of labour protection and labour relations, which are related to new forms of employment and new labour environment risk factors, as well as more efficient settlement of labour disputes. Since different parameters topical for social partners (for example, representation of employees, impact of “shadow” economy on working conditions) would be analysed in studies, the results of the study would allow not only planning of further activities for the State sector, but also for organisations of employers and employees. The abovementioned activities have been laid down in Cabinet Order No. 244 of 12 May 2015“Regarding Guidelines for Inclusive Employment for 2015-2020”.

By attracting ESF funds as a solution, it is necessary to continue and promote improvement of knowledge and skills of SLI inspectors for more efficient performance and organisation of work. Measures directed towards strengthening of the capacity and development of competence of the SLI are foreseen. Thus training of inspectors will be implemented for performance of preventive work, improvement of analytical skills by developing new and updating the existing training modules, and by implementing training in the developed modules. Improvement of the knowledge of inspectors and acquisition of training modules on a regular basis are important in provision of qualitative service in inspecting work and educating employers, thus promoting preventive culture in the society in respect of safety and health protection. In the previous period several training modules were developed, which have been implemented, but taking into account the technology used in hazardous sectors and progress of development of working methods, new labour protection opinions, innovations, studies, it is necessary to review and improve the modules. It is also intended to develop new modules the subject and content of which are yet to be decided. Most current issues of present include the current case law in the labour protection and labour law issues, up-to-date work forms and possibilities for control and supervision thereof (for example, remote or teleworking, sending of employees etc.).

Promotion and maintenance of co-operation network of the Baltic States, which would include different exchange of experience measures among inspectorates of the Baltic States, are intended as a significant support and investment in the strengthening of inspector capacity, thus strengthening mutual co-operation and improving work performance methods and inspecting quality. Besides, exchange of experience of inspectors also with inspectors of other countries is intended in order to become familiar with experience of other countries and best practice in both the survey of enterprises and preventive work. Exchange of experience would be implemented by both the exchange visits and joint conferences with representatives of labour inspectorates or working environment experts of other countries.

In order to achieve that highly qualified, fair and loyal employees are employed with the SLI, it is necessary to solve the issue of increase of the level of remuneration, taking into account that it is necessary to reduce turnover of personnel and ensure improvement of sustainable professional capacity of the SLI in the field of labour relations and labour protection.

Appropriate technical provision is also necessary for the implementation of qualitative and efficient supervision and control function. Thus purchase of appropriate, qualitative equipment in sufficient amount, renovation and maintenance of the existing equipment must be ensured. Taking into account rapid development of IT systems, appropriate provisions must be ensured also in this field, in order for SLI inspectors be able to efficiently, quickly and qualitatively carry out their work in conformity with the development of technique.

If performance of studies is not supported in the field of labour protection, it will lead to a situation when the available data, which characterise the situation in enterprises, are limited to the statistics of accidents and occupational diseases compiled by the SLI. These data are an indicator, which demonstrates the result of compliance or failing to comply with the labour protection requirements. In its turn, in order to judge about the situation in enterprises, current problems in implementing labour protection requirements and the necessary changes in any particular issue, wider and deeper data are necessary that cannot be ensured by the SLI from the compiled statistical data of accidents and occupational diseases. Thus, without carrying out any studies, there are no updated data and information that enable quick and efficient response in order to prevent deficiencies preventively in the introduction of labour protection requirements or to make the necessary changes and improvements to the legislation in a timely manner, promoting improvement of the situation in the field of labour protection.

If further improvement of the knowledge and skills of SLI inspectors is not ensured at the desirable level, decline in supervision and control efficiency is expected in the field of labour rights and labour protection, which will subsequently cause lowering of compliance with the labour protection requirements in enterprises, promoting increase in the number of infringements of labour protection requirements and thus also increase in the number of accidents. If the remuneration level is not increased for SLI inspectors, it is expected that very high turnover of personnel will remain high, because the SLI will not be able to compete in this respect with the private sector; subsequently, educated and qualified personnel will continue to leave work in the SLI, in order to work elsewhere, where more competitive remuneration is offered. Also absence of appropriate, qualitative technical and IT provision will prevent implementation of efficient and qualitative supervision and control, by making the work of inspectors time-consuming, by additionally spending the existing resources, in order to cover shortage, and subsequently the performance of the functions of the SLI will be ineffective. By failing to ensure sustainability and further development of improvement of professional capacities of the SLI, it is foreseen that as a result of SLI personnel turnover, additional funds will be necessary also in the future for training of new SLI inspectors.

4.4. Assessment of the initial impact of the solution offered.

Studies regarding different labour protection themes, deepened studies on the situation in labour protection, including studies on working conditions and risks in Latvia, updating the data obtained in previous studies of such type, will provide an opportunity to asses influence, implementation and further progress of the labour protection policy, current labour protection situation in enterprises, as well as will reveal current problems and allow assessing the actual implementation of the labour protection policy at workplaces. Subsequently it will provide an opportunity to respond to identified problems in a timely manner, by carrying out suitable activities for the improvement of labour protection situation and elimination of detected problems. Concurrently the information obtained from studies will provide an opportunity to discover new and current aspects in the field of labour protection or implementation of requirements and find appropriate solution in order to promote improvement of the situation and subsequently reduction of the number of accidents, by already preventively preventing development of such situations where there is a risk of accidents, or risk for development of occupational diseases.

By increasing the capacity and competence of the SLI, by introducing new working methods and paying more attention to preventive work, more rapid detection and prevention of infringements of labour protection requirements are expected, subsequently promoting improvement of working environment quality and preventing deficiencies and infringements in a timely manner, also reduction of the number of accidents and occupational diseases, since the situation in the working environment that potentially may be a reason for accident or occupational diseases, will be prevented already in the very beginning. By paying attention to hazardous sectors, as well as to enterprises where the number of infringements of labour rights and labour protection requirements is higher, as well as by improving knowledge and professionalism in particular hazardous fields and sectors, it is foreseen that inspectors will be able to carry out inspections more qualitatively and recommend better and more efficient solutions to entrepreneurs for organising working environment. Concurrently, in ensuring sustainability of professionalism of the SLI, increase in remuneration of SLI inspectors and employees is important, foreseeing it at a competitive level. Also strengthening of the capacity of the SLI, ensuring of appropriate technical equipment and IT solutions will promote qualitative and efficient supervision and control in the field of labour protection, as well as sustainability of services provided by the SLI.

Thus, in general the action direction is directed towards improvement of working environment and will subsequently promote prevention of accidents and occupational diseases. By improvement of the quality of working environment and reduction of the number of accidents and occupational diseases, expenditure related to accidents or occupational diseases will also decrease for all parties involved. The action direction will give a positive contribution to entrepreneurship and the national economy, since as already reported, in accordance with the latest estimations, contributions in labour protection preventative measures promote welfare of employed persons and pay off in a long-term.

**5. Ensuring of safe working environment within the framework of non-standard forms of employment, as well as in the work of self-employed persons**

5.1. Present situation

**Non-standard forms of employment**

The concept of non-standard forms of employment means all forms of employment, which differ from traditional forms of employment, for example, standard working hours, which means an 8-hour working day, not exceeding a 40-hour working week (working week — 5 working days).

Non-standard work is a work, which is performed in accordance with an employment contract for an indefinite period of time, including seasonal works, contracts on part-time working time etc. Other types of contracts are also encountered at the EU level, for example, “zero time” or on-call contracts (usually in trade, as well as in some parts of public and care sector).

During the last years, teleworking has been used intensively and become popular in Latvia, as well as in other European Union Member States (Czech Republic, Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands). Teleworking is working outside a workplace, mostly at home; however, during the last years also in especially equipped remote work centres (for the time being such are operating only in Riga), by using a computer, phone and other information and communication technologies. The interest is in teleworking is equally high in cities and in rural territories; however, studies indicate that especially younger employees are those who would be ready to use the option of teleworking. In carrying out a questionnaire regarding the attitude of the inhabitants of Latvia (1335 respondents) towards teleworking24, it was found that respondents assess very positively the opportunity to work remotely. 81 % claim: if the opportunity to work remotely, without being at the workplace was provided, they would use it, for 11 % of respondents such opportunity is not topical, but 7 % would not use such opportunity. It must be admitted that the largest part of respondents (82 %) could use teleworking in practice, because they assess their skills to use information and communication technologies as appropriate. Thus a significant part of the surveyed inhabitants wants and can use teleworking, taking into account the nature of work.

Personal benefits, for example, an opportunity to spend more time with the family, flexible working time are considered as the most significant benefits of teleworking (also applicable to all employed persons of non-standard form). Economic benefits — an opportunity to save expenditure for transport and time spend for travelling to work etc., social and economic aspects are also important. In the case of teleworking, an opportunity to work even from a large distance is also signification, providing an opportunity to work, for example, also for those rural inhabitants who due to a distance cannot travel to a city every day. There are also risks an opportunity loss of loyalty, discipline, deterioration of communication quality, feeling of isolation etc. However, within the context of labour protection, the largest challenge is arrangement of workplaces and conformity thereof with the requirements of laws and regulations, as well as working environment risk assessment and prevention.

The Labour Protection Law and other laws and regulations of labour protection and requirements thereof apply also to non-standard forms of work. But, **taking into account the nature and volatility of such works and workplaces, problems are possible in respect of occupational safety and health, taking into account that sufficient attention is not paid to safety of working environment while at home or under non-standard working conditions**. There is a lack of due assessment of working conditions, because there are different non-standard forms of employment, for example, the environment of persons employed under home conditions is different from the working environment on a construction site, where employed persons work for a definite short-time period. Also the temporary nature of non-typical contractual relations and higher non-safety and uncertainty regarding the future, thus inability to plan own time and activities, could cause psychological influence and stress non-characteristic in the case of traditional work forms and which could adversely affect health of employees.

**Self-employed persons**

Explanation of a self-employed person is regulated in the legal acts of Latvia only in conformity with the Law On State Social Insurance. It is concretely defined in this law that, for example, persons who carry out individual work or sworn attorneys etc. according to their income (or revenue) shall be regarded as self-employed persons.

According to the data of the Central Statistics Bureau, in 2014, the number of self-employed persons reached 102.2 thousand; of them 62 % are men, and 38 % — women. As shown by the statistical data of previous years (in 2011 — 97.7 (thsd. inh.); in 2012 — 99.5 (thsd. inh.); in 2013 — 103.4 (thosd. inh.)), the number of self-employed persons increases, but proportion of men is larger expressed as a percentage. Amongst tendencies it should be mentioned that the largest part of self-employed persons are engaged in agricultural and hunting sector (in 2013 — 37.7 %), construction (6.9 %), wholesale, retail trade, repair of cars and motorcycles (6.3 %).

The Labour Protection Law lays down that a self-employed person has a duty to take care of his or her safety and health at work, as well as of safety and health of those persons who are influenced or may be influenced by his or her work. Specific labour protection requirements in respect of self-employed persons are referred to only in the following Cabinet regulations:

• Cabinet Regulation No. 310 of 2 May 2012 "Labour Protection Requirements in Forestry";

• Cabinet Regulation No. 92 of 25 February 2003 "Labour Protection Requirements in Performing Construction Work".

In accordance with the results of the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia”25**only 14.8 % of self-employed respondents consider that the Labour Protection Law and Regulations are applicable to self-employed persons**, which is the smallest amount of respondents, comparing to previous studies.

The questionnaires of self-employed persons of 2013 showed to what extent self-employed persons comply with the labour protection requirements (for example, use of personal protective equipment (headphones, gloves and similar), by providing a reply in a 10-point scale, where 10 means “complies with completely”, but 1 means that “does not comply at all”. The average number for self-employed persons (8.3) indicates that in accordance with the opinion of self-employed persons the conformity with the labour protection requirements continued to improve in 2013 (as a subjective assessment of self-employed persons) compared to the data of the questionnaire carried out during the previous study (in 2010 — 8.1, in 2006 — 7.8). **Failing to purchase different auxiliary means and support means, for example first aid kits, as well as fire-fighting means and maintenance thereof, may be indicated as a problem in respect of self-employed persons,** because it requires additional means, which seem non-significant and non-topical, while an emergency situation has not occurred, and thus due attention is not paid to it**. However, non-existence of such means may become a significant deficiency in emergency situations, because as a result first aid cannot be provided, while non-existence of fire-fighting devices may have even more significant consequences in the case of a fire. It may influence not only safety of self-employed persons themselves, but also safety of other persons in the vicinity**. Such problems as **improvement of accommodation conditions at workplace** should be additionally mentioned, for example, construction or repair of showers, rest rooms, toilets and purchase of work clothes and personal protective equipment.

Another significant health protection problem in work of self-employed persons is **ensuring of non-sufficient rest time** (rest time means a period of time that lasts longer than 1 week). A significant number of self-employed persons — 68.7 % do not use rest time. In cases, when persons do not use such longer rest times, they do not rest, tiredness accumulates, and thus accident risk and risk of certain occupation diseases gradually increases.

As far as accidents at work are concerned, in 2013, 5.1 % of self-employed persons mentioned that accidents had occurred with them. More often self-employed men (6.3 %) than women (3.6 %) have suffered in accidents. Mandatory social insurance contributions against accidents at work and occupational diseases are made by 9.0 % of self-employed persons, which is more than in previous studies. In its turn, 47.1 % of respondents do not make any contributions. **The number of those self-employed persons, who consider that mandatory social insurance contributions against accidents at work and occupational diseases should be determined as a mandatory requirement in laws and regulations, has also decreased.** There is a small increase in the number of respondents who consider that this amount of contributions should depend on the type of activity of a person.

By compiling the data of self-employed persons and comparing them with the data of employed persons, **self-employed persons comply less with the labour protection requirements than employees who work in an enterprise or institution**. However, if in 2010 significant differences in respect of changes in the level of labour protection were not observed between employed persons and self-employed persons, in 2013 differences are significant — the situation in labour protection has improved less among employed persons then among self-employed persons. Also the interest of self-employed persons regarding receipt of information regarding labour protection issues has remained, moreover 40.1 % of self-employed persons search for information on the Internet, 17.3 % — attend seminars, but 10.4 % — visit information consultation centres. It must be admitted that the resources available on the Internet regarding labour protection issues are wide, and their quality is quite different. Unfortunately, **specialised resources, specific and compiled information regarding labour protection issues, which would be applicable especially to the work of self-employed persons, are not available.** Although information regarding labour protection issues is available in sufficient amount, it must be searched separately by subject, and a person himself or herself must analyse and apply to particular working conditions, but self-employed persons often have no time and other resources for that.

5.2. Problems identified

There is greater insecurity in respect to safety and health at work in non-standard forms of employment.

Low awareness of self-employed persons and interest in labour protection issues (14.8 %).

Lack of first aid kits and other aid in work of self-employed persons, because they are not purchased at all, their purchase is delayed or their due maintenance is not carried out.

Problems with improvement of accommodation conditions at workplaces of self-employed persons, for example, construction or repair of showers, rest rooms, toilets and purchase of work clothes and personal protective equipment.

Self-employed persons by failing to pay sufficient attention to their safety and health protection at work, do not pay sufficient attention to ensuring of rest time either.

Concurrently, specific information regarding labour protection issues at work of self-employed persons is not compiled and is not easy accessible.

5.3. Solution to problems

A significant issue in respect of non-standard forms of employment and in relation to evolution of forms of employment is **balancing of flexibility and security**, which is covered by a term “flexicurity”, in order to achieve an optimal balance between flexibility of the labour market and protection of employees.

Taking into account the fact that self-employed persons in conformity with the requirements of laws and regulations are responsible for their own safety and health and as well as for safety and health of those persons who are influenced or may be influenced by their work, as well as that understanding of such persons about the necessity of labour protection measures is assessed as non-sufficient, it would be necessary to implement different activities in relation to informing and educating self-employed persons in labour protection issues, in order to also promote safety and health protection of such persons. Taking into account that self-employed persons search information regarding labour protection mainly on the Internet, quick access should be ensured to electronic, concise and comprehensive significant information regarding labour protection requirements applicable to self-employed persons.

5.4. Assessment of the initial impact of the solution offered.

As it was already described, in general, public awareness raising measures have provided positive results and there is tendency for the situation of public awareness of labour protection to improve. By improving of public awareness in general, also the level of awareness of labour protection issues among self-employed persons will improve. By continuing to work in the direction of informing the public, it is foreseen that public awareness level will increase. Concurrently, by ensuring an opportunity to easily and quickly find concise, appropriate electronic information, as well as purposefully directing awareness raising measures towards self-employed persons, by increasing their knowledge about the significance of compliance with labour protection requirements, firstly, in respect of their own safety and health, it is foreseen that knowledge and awareness of self-employed persons regarding labour protection issues will significantly increase. Subsequently, by increase of the level of compliance with the safety requirements, the number of accidents among self-employed persons, as well as the number of cases of occupational diseases will decrease.

With the reduction of the number of accidents in general, expenditure related to accidents and consequences thereof will also decrease. Concurrently, by reduction of the number of persons who have suffered in serious and fatal accidents, there will be fewer persons who cannot be completely involved in the labour market and provide their contribution in the development of the national economy due to consequences of the accident. The abovementioned activities will provide a positive investment in both entrepreneurship and the national economy in general.

**Influence on macro-economical environment**

Implementation of the measures laid down in the Strategy will not directly influence macro-economic environment; however, it will have positive influence on it, because working environment will become more organised, safer for employed persons who will be able to stay in the labour market for a longer period of time. There will be fewer possibilities for accidents, and accordingly smaller costs for the State and entrepreneurs, which are incurred in relation to accidents at work and health disorders, occupational diseases due to non-organised working environment.

**Influence on the entrepreneurial environment**

Implementation of the activities of the Strategy will have positive influence on the entrepreneurial environment, especially on the small-sized and micro enterprises of hazardous sectors, a large part of which will have organised their working environment in conformity with the labour protection requirements as expected. If working environment is organised in enterprises in conformity with the requirements of laws and regulations, if there are competent and trained employers, employees who take care of their own health and safety at work and of health and safety of their colleagues, the enterprise is more competitive in the labour market. Moreover, more qualified workforce is available for employers.

Different studies carried out at the EU level and in the world attest that investment in preventive labour protection measures facilitates welfare of employed persons and is cost-effective also financially in a long-term. As it was already mentioned in accordance with the most recent estimations investments in this field may create 2.2 profit coefficient on average26. Thus taking into account the planned activities of the project, it is foreseen that enterprises, especially enterprises of hazardous sectors, by organising working environment, will also reduce indirect and direct costs due to failing to comply with the requirements of labour protection and labour rights (absence of employed persons, illness, downtime of equipment, foregone profit, costs for sick-leave certificates etc.).

Implementation of the measure will promote improvement of the quality of life, psychological and health condition not only for the target group but also for their family members.

**Influence on administrative procedures and costs thereof (in respect of performers of economic activities and natural persons, and organisations of non-governmental sector and in respect of authorities financed from the budget)**

Implementation of measures intended in the Strategy will not cause additional administrative costs in addition to the costs necessary for compliance with the requirements laid down in the legislation.

**Social influence**

Implementation of measures intended in the Strategy will also indirectly positively influence the social environment. Improvement of the working environment will provide social benefits — safer environment, higher participation of the public and target groups, reduce the number of young people not prepared for working life. Taking into account provision of safe working environment, human resource will be used more efficiently and employed persons will also improve their work productivity, since they will not need to worry about the influence of the working environment on their safety and health. Safe working environment is a preconditions for qualitative workplaces.

**Environmental impact**

The measures provided for in the Strategy are not planned to have direct impact on the environment; however, they could have indirect positive impact. Taking into account awareness raising and educating activities, the public attitude and responsibility towards health and safety, including environment, will change. Besides, it must be taken into account, that the labour protection principle to replace the hazardous with a less hazardous will also positively influence the environment, where hazardous chemical substances will not be discharged; besides, by arranging workplaces, they will be made safer for both the employee and the environment.

**Fiscal influence on the State budget and budgets of local governments**

Implementation of the Strategy may have a long-term positive influence on the State budget and budgets of local governments. Budget costs for accidents will decrease, as well as budget costs for compensations paid due to development of health disorders related to non-organised working environment, when people become sick more often or become disabled and cannot return to the labour market. Concurrently, State budget costs may increase, because the society becomes more informed about the opportunities to receive social guarantees.

**Influence on the legal norm system in force and international liabilities of the Republic of Latvia**

By implementing the measures laid down in the Strategy, there will be a positive influence on the practical introduction of the legislation of the field of labour protection and labour rights, thus promoting implementation of better legislation approach. Taking into account a study intended in the project regarding improvement of settlement of disputes, legislation initiatives are possible; however, other activities of the project will not require amendments to the related legal acts.

**Influence on functions of State administrative institutions and human resources.**

Taking into account that the activities of the Strategy are directed towards strengthening of the capacity of the SLI, positive influence on the functions of the inspection will be observed, because investments in improvement of skills and competences of inspectors will help to make the work of inspectors more efficient. The implementation of the activities of the Strategy will also facilitate performance of the functions of the SLI, because if there are more organised enterprises (incl., a smaller number of serious and fatal accidents and occupational diseases), employees of the SLI will be able to pay more attention to preventive work, which in long term will reduce the number of accidents occurred at work and occupational diseases even more.

**Influence on State and local government information systems and additional financing related thereto, which is necessary for ensuring changes to the information systems**

Implementation of the Strategy will not influence State and local government information systems and thus additional financing will not be necessary for ensuring changes in the information systems.

**Influence on health**

Implementation of the Strategy will have a positive influence on health, because the intended measures are also directed towards health protection, by informing employed persons about the influence of working environment and preventive measures on health protection and health promotion.

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1The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405)

2 The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405)

3 Cabinet Regulation No. 723 of 8 September 2008, Regulations Regarding the Requirements for Competent Authorities and Competent Specialists in Labour Protection Issues and the Procedures for Evaluating Competence

4 State Labour Inspection Law http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=177910

5Eurobarometer survey “Working Conditions in the European Union”

6The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405)

7. Annual report of the State Labour Inspectorate for 2014

7. Annual report of the State Labour Inspectorate for 2014

9 EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014-2020

10The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405).

11 11Annual report of the State Labour Inspectorate for 2014

12Operation report of the State Labour Inspectorate for 2013

13The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405).

14Data source: the website of the Central Statistical Bureau; Statistical data 2013.

15Annual report of the State Labour Inspectorate for 2014

17Cabinet Regulation No. 99 of 8 February 2005, Regulations regarding the Types of Commercial Activities in which an Employer shall Involve a Competent Authority

18In the demonstration of data, the total number of persons suffering from occupational diseases in enterprises is used in breakdown by group of economic activity where persons suffering from occupational diseases are detected most often (major groups: A — agriculture, forestry and fishery, C — manufacturing industry, F — construction, G — wholesale and retail trade; repair of cars and motorcycles, H — transport and storage).

19Eurobarometer survey “Working Conditions in the European Union”

20The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405).

21Eurobarometer survey “Working Conditions in the European Union”

22Eurobarometer survey “Working Conditions in the European Union”

23The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2010 and 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL; the study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2006 within the framework of the project “Studies of the Ministry of Welfare” of the National Programme “Studies of the Labour market” co-financed by the ESF. (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405)

24Vītola, A., Baltiņa, I., Ādamsone, L., Judrupa, I., Šenfelde, M. *Latvijas lauku attīstība, izmantojot teledarbu* https://ortus.rtu.lv/science/en/publications/17601;jsessionid=73626BAC4C4AB399DF94A81AF16F34F8/fulltext.pdf

25The study “Working Conditions and Risks in Latvia” carried out in 2013 within the framework of the project “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” of Sub-activity 1.3.1.3.2 “Practical Application of Laws and Regulations Regarding Employment Relations and Labour Safety in Sectors and Enterprises” to supplement of the ESF operational programme “Human Resources and Employment” implemented by the ECL (available at http://www.lm.gov.lv/text/405)

26EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2014 - 2020

Minister for Welfare Uldis Augulis