

International Labour Office

Social dialogue in the public emergency services  
in a changing environment  
(Bulgaria)

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**SECTORAL ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME**

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## Foreword

The ILO's Joint Meeting on Public Emergency Services: Social Dialogue in a Changing Environment (Geneva, 27-31 January 2003) reviewed emergency services issues such as trends in working conditions; safety and health; human resource planning; coordination structures; the state of social dialogue; and rights at work. The Meeting adopted the *Guidelines on social dialogue in public emergency services in a changing environment*, which were approved by the 288th Session of the Governing Body (November 2003) for promotion among ILO member States.

The Guidelines seek to recognize the vital role of public emergency services and their workers in contributing to safety and security of our society, while at the same time ensuring quality services in a rapidly changing environment. The basic thrust of the Guidelines is that emergency workers should be given proper means, tools and funds so as to be able to respond effectively to changing needs of communities and that efforts should be made to retain properly trained and experienced personnel to ensure quality service delivery. The Guidelines emphasize that an enhanced social dialogue mechanism is the optimal way to allow the participation of emergency workers and their representatives in improving their working conditions and ensuring quality services.

The Guidelines are not binding, unlike ILO Conventions which governments ratify. They are intended to provide guidance on how to achieve better public emergency services in a changing environment through social dialogue. All ILO tripartite constituents should make a good faith effort to use them. We are mindful of all the efforts put into the Guidelines by all parties concerned with a common objective to ensure quality emergency services delivered by competent and committed personnel, particularly at a time of heightened security considerations.

As a step towards promoting these Guidelines, we have commissioned national studies to examine gaps, if any, between what is contained in the Guidelines and actual practices in relation to public emergency services and how such gaps can be narrowed. This Bulgarian study is one of them. Studies such as this are intended to contribute to providing background information and can be used as a basis for discussion in national or regional forums.

ILO working papers are a vehicle for disseminating information on topics related to the world of work and the evolution of social and labour policies and practices. The opinions expressed are nevertheless those of the author and not necessarily those of ILO.

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to assess the situation in three Public Emergency Services (PES) in Bulgaria, in relation to the International Labour Office (ILO) Guidelines on social dialogue in public emergency services in a changing environment adopted at the Joint Meeting held in January 2003. The three services examined are the police, fire-fighting and the emergency medical services. The first two, the police and fire-fighting, fall under the same government department – the Ministry of the Interior – and their regulations, working conditions, remuneration, etc, are covered by the Ministry of the Interior Act. The emergency medical services fall under the Ministry of Health and their regulations are contained in the Medical Facilities Act and a number of secondary laws.

A two-pronged approach has been adopted. First, the relevant legislation, primary and secondary, was analysed to see whether the legal framework for the Bulgarian PES is in compliance with the ILO guidelines, and a review of the research studies of the three services was carried out. Second, interviews were conducted with the following: a Deputy Minister from the Ministry of the Interior, the Director of Finances in the Ministry of the Interior, the Chairman and Secretary of the National Police Union, a number of officers (from fire-fighting and the police), the Director of Emergency Medical Services in the Ministry of Health and four to five doctors working in the emergency medical services. The objective of these interviews was to assess the implementation of the respective laws and regulations in practice.

## General background

### The police

The National Police Service is a specialized operational, investigative and protective service of the Ministry of the Interior maintaining public order, and preventing and investigating crimes. The Ministry of the Interior Act and a number of secondary laws regulate its activities. The service carries out its duties independently, or in collaboration with other state bodies, organizations and citizens. Its main tasks are:

- maintaining public order;
- preventing and detecting crimes and other breaches of the peace;
- protecting the rights and liberties of citizens and helping citizens exercise those rights and liberties;
- protecting the property of private citizens, the state, communities and organizations;
- organizing and guaranteeing the security of buildings;
- organizing and enforcing traffic safety, roadworthiness tests and the registration of motor vehicles;
- enforcing passport regulations;
- tracing fugitives from justice, including escaped prisoners;
- searching for missing persons;

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- providing police escorts at home or abroad;
  - ensuring law enforcement;
  - carrying out research into, and analysis of, the incidence and causes of crime; and
  - gathering, processing, using and disseminating information on the maintenance of peace, the combating of crime and traffic safety.

The National Police Service is headed by a Director. There are three Deputy Directors, one in charge of operational-tracing activities, one handling security activities and one dealing with police staff and discipline. The Service consists of two general directorates and 11 divisions. The two general directorates are: the Directorate for Combating Crime against People and the Directorate for Combating Crime against Property. The National Police Service covers all 28 administrative districts in the country. Each district has a Regional Directorate of the Interior, headed by a Police Chief who is responsible for all police stations in the district.

## **The fire service**

The National Fire and Emergency Safety Service of the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for fire-fighting, fire prevention and providing emergency rescue help. It determines appropriate ways of fighting and preventing fires, drafts plans for coping with accidents, ensures rapid response to fire calls, rescues people and possessions, and provides first aid to the injured. In addition, the Service provides rescue help in cases of emergency, and collects, processes, uses and disseminates information concerning fire and emergency safety.

The Service records and reports on the fires, accidents and emergencies it has dealt with, analyses the data and works out measures for their prevention. It also conducts surveys on the condition of fire-fighting and rescue equipment, provides technical expertise for fires and emergencies, devises ways of coping with fires, develops equipment to enable it to carry out its duties, and provides scientific data and information useful for fire-fighting/prevention and emergency safety.

There is a Fire and Emergency Safety Unit in Sofia, responsible to the Ministry of the Interior's Capital Directorate, and a similar unit in each administrative district responsible to the appropriate Regional Directorate.

## **Emergency medical services**

Health-care reform in Bulgaria began in the early 1990s, in response to a rapid deterioration in the health-care system. Hospital beds were decommissioned and the number of personnel reduced. A new emphasis was placed on primary health care, general practice curricula were developed, and practising physicians were re-trained in Primary Health Care (PHC). By 1998, the health reform effort had resulted in some significant changes in the health-care system, including permission for the private practice of medicine, the emphasis on primary health care, the establishment of professional bodies, and the devolution to the municipal level of responsibility for a substantial portion of health-care expenditure. Since the 1998 National Health Insurance Act, substantial resources have been devoted to the establishment and development of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). The World Bank has been providing assistance to the Bulgarian Government through the initial Health Sector Restructuring Project (HSRP) Loan

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Agreement, which was signed in 1996 and covers Primary Health Care, Emergency Medical Services, Blood Transfusion, and Policy Analysis and Management.

As a result of the reforms, the status of the Emergency Medical Services has changed. According to article 24 of the Medical Facilities Act (MFA), a Centre for Emergency Medical Aid is a medical facility whose medical and other staff provide emergency assistance to sick or injured people at home, at accident scenes, or on their way to hospital.

Legislation provides that emergency medical services should be provided throughout Bulgaria on the basis of the needs of the population for accessible and prompt medical aid with each of the 28 administrative districts having an Emergency Medical Service. Their structure and activities are set out in detail in a Ministry of Health Regulation that also defines their specific functions. These are to provide: emergency medical aid to sick and injured people; specialized transport for patients, donors and organs, blood, blood products and equipment; transport for state and district medical consultants who are providing emergency medical aid, and the training of post-graduate students in emergency medicine.

It is worth noting that the Centres for Emergency Medical Aid are legal persons and exist independently of emergency wards in hospitals.

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# 1. Employment and human resource development

## General remarks

In general, employment conditions in Bulgaria are covered by two main laws: the Civil Service Act (which regulates the terms and conditions of civil servants) and the Labour Code (which deals with all categories of non-civil service employees). There are two types of public administration employee: those who are civil servants and those who are engaged under a contract in accordance with the Labour Code.

## Numbers employed

### *The police*

According to its first article, the Civil Service Act covers the engagement, conditions of employment and termination of service of all civil servants, unless otherwise provided in a special law. Although the National Police Service is part of the Interior Ministry, there is a special law regulating the working conditions of police employees – the Ministry of the Interior Act (MIA) – adopted in December 1997 and amended several times, the last amendment being in February 2003. Its articles are put into effect through Regulations of the Council of Ministers and a number of secondary laws which cover the different types of police personnel.

There are two main categories of employee in the National Police Service: firstly, civil servants, who may be officers, sergeants or civilian staff, and secondly, civilians working under contract, who are employed on the basis of the Labour Code (article 192, MIA), but whose terms and conditions are also regulated by the Ministry of the Interior Act and, where appropriate, by the Civil Service Act.

At present, 24,000 staff are employed in the National Police Service. According to senior officials in the Ministry of the Interior, about 11 per cent of positions are vacant.

Table I. Registered crimes in Bulgaria against individuals and property, 1998-2002

	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002	
	RC	G	RC	G	RC	G	RC	G	RC	G
Crimes against individuals (murder, injury, rape, etc.)	9 408	8 843	-6.0	6 752	-23.6	6 881	1.9	7 511	9.2	
Crimes against property (robbery, theft, fraud, etc.)	111 710	95 523	-14.5	99 045	3.7	96 507	-2.6	92 644	-4.0	
Generally dangerous crimes (arson; illegal manufacturing, possession and use of weapons; drug-related crimes, etc.)	20 356	20 118	-1.2	22 767	13.2	23 191	1.9	24 238	4.5	
Other crimes	8 058	8 413	4.4	8 437	0.3	8 541	1.2	9 591	12.3	
Total	149 532	132 897	-11.1	137 001	3.1	135 120	-1.4	122 984	-0.8	

Note: RC – registered crimes; G – percentage change on previous year

Source: Ministry of the Interior.

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The high growth of crime in Bulgaria poses a serious problem, both for the Government and for society. During the last two-three years, the Ministry has made many efforts to improve the working conditions of police officers and sergeants, including salaries, and to improve the standing of the profession. However, it seems that the Government, the legislature and the judiciary need to do a lot more to fight crime successfully.

### ***The fire service***

As the National Fire and Emergency Safety Service is part of the Ministry of the Interior, its employees are covered by the same regulations as the police. During the past 15 years, a trend has developed of fire service staff transferring to the police. However, the current Minister has stated that he would like to reverse this trend. In a recent statement, he indicated that, during the past year, 150 new jobs had been created in the fire service and that, in 2004, another 600 new posts would be available. According to official sources in the Ministry, there are about 11,000 firefighters in Bulgaria.

Providing the fire service with new equipment is also a problem, as one fire engine costs 600,000 leva, while the annual capital budget for the whole Interior Ministry is only 10 million leva.

The Research and Applied Science Institute of the National Fire and Emergency Safety Service has been set up to:

- carry out research on fire and emergency safety;
- develop and participate in the development of rules and standards for ensuring fire and emergency safety;
- study the reasons and conditions for the starting and spreading of fires and the occurrence of emergencies;
- develop procedures for the prevention and extinguishing of fires and the prevention and handling of emergencies;
- carry out expert studies of fires and emergencies;
- develop and test types of fire equipment, installations, devices, etc;
- produce documents setting out standards;
- test new technologies and new equipment and machines, from domestic and foreign manufacturers, to ensure they comply with fire and emergency standards; and
- carry out tests to determine the combustible character of goods, etc.

The Institute was established in 1964 and has been reorganized a few times over the years. It carries out various activities, including the issuing of expert reports on the safety of products and the installation of fire alarms and fire-extinguishing apparatus. The Institute provides an information service, and has a specialized library which collects scientific and research information in the field of fire and emergency safety. It publishes a quarterly internal bulletin containing references to the latest information in the field of fire safety. The Institute also publishes an annual collection of science and research results, articles and foreign experience in the field of fire and emergency safety. In 2003, a Test Centre, accredited by the Bulgarian Accreditation Office, an Executive Government Agency, was set up within the Institute. It carries out tests on building construction

methods and materials, ships, etc, products for interior design, textiles and other flooring materials, etc.

The Institute has the following departments: Flammability of Products; Fire Equipment and Fire Extinguishing Devices; Scientific and Expert Activities (comprising the Preventive Activities Group and the Group for Operational and Technical Activities), and the Information Department, consisting of the Group for Scientific and Technical Information and the Group for Information Management.

**Table II. Numbers and types of accident handled by Bulgarian firefighters, 1998-2002**

Accident	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
Fire	22 396	19 086	38 742	31 022	18 450	129 426
Rescue of persons	162	284	204	197	267	1 114
Rescue of livestock	8	11	39	40	22	120
Drainage	815	1 231	575	563	1 338	4 522
Failure/emergency	377	305	226	223	206	1 337
Explosion	20	30	38	48	37	173
Gas	59	98	96	140	117	510
Flood	37	110	124	97	272	640
Water supply	732	401	274	266	299	1 972
Accident	166	304	312	384	470	1 636
Earthquake			1	1		2
False alarm	2 467	2 096	2 677	2 371	2 080	11 691
Emergency landing by aeroplane	17	19	9	11	21	77
Removal of dangerous substances			34	152	230	416
Transport to hospital	1		17	54	44	115
Assistance to other services of the Ministry			100	279	427	806
Other	1 821	1 886	1 739	1 299	1 444	8 189

Source: The National Fire and Emergency Safety Service.

During recent years, the number of accidents has grown rapidly. The Minister of the Interior has responded by increasing the number of fire-fighting posts. In addition, recent legislation has strengthened the framework for regulation and enforcement. The fire prevention measures required for the opening of a store, factory, etc, have become stricter and the powers of the District Fire Departments have been strengthened; they can now close down business premises if they are not properly equipped and do not comply with the fire-prevention regulations.

### ***Emergency medical services***

According to the Public Health Act, the Centres for Emergency Medical Aid (CEMAs) are public medical facilities and thus are financed from the State Budget. Each CEMA is headed by a Director who must be a medical doctor with a Master's degree. The contracts of the Directors of the 28 CEMAs are concluded with the Minister, while emergency medical service staff are covered by the Labour Code.

According to the 2003 State Budget, there are 6,731 employees in the 28 CEMAs, but this figure includes only permanent staff. In addition, a number of national and district

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consultants have to make themselves available according to a previously approved schedule.

The structure of each centre, and the number of staff it employs, are determined by its Director after consultation with the Ministry of Health. The Regulations on the Structure and Activities of Centres for Emergency Medical Aid (issued by the Minister of Health on 12 November 1999) stipulate that each centre should comprise the following: an Administrative Section; a District Coordination Office; Divisions for Emergency Medical Aid in the district, and an Emergency Ward and Emergency Section.

A centre's activities are carried out by the following teams:

- the team of the District Coordination Office comprises a medical doctor (as shift-leader) and one or more paramedics;
- the resuscitation team comprises a doctor, a paramedic and a driver;
- the medical team comprises a doctor (head of the team) and a driver;
- the pre-medical team comprises a paramedic (head of the team) and a driver; and
- the transport team comprises a driver (head of the team) and an attendant.

There are 390 teams in the 28 CEMAs. The number of teams in each CEMA depends on the population and area of the district served. Each team caters for, on average, between 20,000-30,000 people.

## **Composition of staff**

### ***The police***

There are no legal restrictions on employment based on gender, ethnic or other grounds. According to article 193 of the Ministry of the Interior Act, which covers the civil servants in the National Police Service, men and women who meet the general and specific requirements of age, education, psycho-physiological ability and professional training are accepted. The general restrictions on employment in the civil service category of the police are also set out in law. The following are not eligible: men who have not completed their compulsory military service are not eligible for the rank of sergeant and above; people sentenced or prosecuted for felony; close relatives of the commanding and control staff in the respective unit; partners, managers, agents, etc, of commercial companies; members of Parliament or mayors. People engaged on contract cannot form part of the civil service section, unless they are university professors. The law provides that people with first, or higher, degrees may be hired in managerial positions.

The employment of women in the police service has been increasing recently. Although there are no official statistics, unofficial figures indicate that about 20 per cent of officers and sergeants are women. In general, however, the service remains a male profession. There are few women in senior positions and those who deal mainly with public relations and international police cooperation.

The National Police Service is making efforts to establish a network to monitor the respect for human rights and protection against discrimination in the Service. At the centre, a Specialized Commission on Human Rights has been set up, headed by the Deputy Director of the National Police Service. It is responsible for creating the necessary conditions and structures to ensure the non-violation of human rights, including the rights

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of people from ethnic minorities, especially the Roma (gypsy) minority. There is a regional coordinator for each Regional Directorate of the Interior, whose job it is to maintain relations with the specialized commission and to organize training and campaigns on human rights-related issues at a local level. In March 2003, training for all the regional coordinators was conducted by lecturers from human rights organizations.

In September 2002, a permanent working group on human rights was established in the Interior Ministry, headed by a deputy-minister and comprising representatives from the relevant directorates and national services. The goal of the group is to create a structure for solving the complex problems identified in the reports on Bulgaria by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, as well as dealing with other human rights issues.

Data from October 2002 indicate there are 158 individuals from the Roma minority working in the Ministry of the Interior, of whom four are officers and 89 are sergeants working in the Security Police. These figures represent a relatively low proportion of the police workforce. The most recent census conducted in 2001 by the National Statistical Institute indicates that those defining themselves as Roma number 370,908, or 4.68 per cent of the total population.

The scope of the Work of the Police with Ethnic Minorities project, which is being carried out within a British Know-How Fund programme, in cooperation with the National Police Service and the Ministry of the Interior, is being widened to the national level. The project has run nine training courses on ethnic issues for Security Police staff in the Police Departments of the Plovdiv, Sliven, Pazardzhik, Montana, and Sofia districts. The training aims to acquaint the participants with the history, traditions, customs and religious beliefs of the various ethnic minorities, in particular of the Roma population, with a view to improving communication between the police and the minorities they work among. Representatives from the London police participated in the final phases of the training. In the Plovdiv Stolipinovo neighbourhood, a Training Centre for Police Officers has been built and equipped with the support of the Know-How Fund.

In 2002, the Phare Integration of the Roma Population project, whose main beneficiary is the Police Academy, ran two two-week courses for police sergeants and cadets from the academy (mainly Roma), a two-week course for police officers and a seminar with heads of regional and district police departments. These courses aimed to improve the participants' work skills in a multicultural environment by enhancing the effectiveness of the police in the non-violation of contemporary standards of human rights.

In 2002, two one-week courses on Police Activities in a Multi-ethnic Society were held at the Police Academy for over 40 officers from the Ministry of the Interior with lecturers from Spain.

The Police Code of Ethics, which is in line with recommendation 2001/10 of the Committee of Ministers and accompanying Explanatory Memorandum, is still being worked on.

The civil servants (officers, sergeants and civilians) in the Police Service have official positions as well as ranks. The Law specifically identifies the people responsible for conferring ranks and for promotions in rank, namely: the chiefs who have hired them are responsible for non-commissioned officers; the Minister of the Interior deals with line and senior officers, and the President of the Republic selects and promotes senior command officers, on the recommendation of the Minister. The ranks corresponding to the respective positions and the length of service for each rank are determined by the Minister. Promotion in rank is carried out every three years on the basis of an evaluation of the individual's work, and in accordance with a procedure set out by the Minister. When officers are reassigned to managerial positions, they may be promoted in rank before the three years

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are up, but this can happen only once during their service. Proposals to promote officers to command positions are prepared by the Regional Directors of the Interior, in collaboration with the Director of the National Police Service.

Instruction No. I-41 of 25 March 2003, regarding the activities of district police inspectors, sets out in detail the functions, structures, tasks, management, control and reporting of the district police service. Annexe 4 contains a very detailed list of the criteria and indicators for the assessment of the work of district inspectors. There are four main categories:

- protecting the rights and freedoms of the citizens; cooperating with and providing assistance to government bodies, local authorities, NGOs and citizens and bringing the police services closer to the public;
- maintaining public order and enforcing traffic safety;
- preventing and investigating violations of the law, and
- exercising administrative control of personal identification and migration documents, enforcing regulations on work involving dangerous substances, and regulating the activities of private security personnel.

Each category details the indicators for the assessment of the work of the inspectors.

### ***The fire service***

As part of the Ministry of the Interior, the National Fire and Emergency Safety Service is covered by the same rules for employment diversity as the National Police Service.

However, it should be pointed out that, judging from the numbers of the recruits admitted to the Police Faculty and Fire Safety Faculty of the Police Academy (see below), the number of men in the Fire Service is significantly higher than the number of women.

### ***Emergency medical services***

Employees in the CEMAs are employed under the Labour Code. According to amendments since 2001: "In the exercise of labour rights and duties, no direct or indirect discrimination, privileges or restrictions shall be allowed on grounds of ethnicity, origin, sex, race, skin colour, age, political and religious convictions, affiliation to a trade union and other public organizations and movements, family, social and property status and disability."

The requirements for employment in a CEMA are the general ones for medical doctors and paramedics. A specialism in emergency medicine is an advantage.

The Ministry of Health was unable to provide any statistics on gender issues and minorities employed in the CEMAs.

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## **Training**

### ***The police***

The education and vocational training of police officers is carried out in the Ministry of the Interior's own academic facilities, in military academies and schools and in civilian education establishments (article 215, MIA). The specialist training of experts is carried out in the Science and Research Institute for Crime and Criminology. The Minister approves a list of positions for which initial training is not compulsory.

The Ministry's academic facilities are the Higher Police Academy (renamed the Academy of the Ministry of the Interior in 2002) and centres for specialization and professional training. The Higher Police Academy provides higher education for officers; carries out the professional training of newly appointed officers, non-commissioned officers and civilians, and improves the qualifications of Ministry staff, including police staff. Graduates of the Academy must serve in the Ministry of the Interior for at least ten years after graduation.

The Higher Police Academy also provides short-term courses (of one-three days) for police officers in fields such as respect for human rights.

The training system in the Police Service seeks to improve the qualifications of police officers and also to provide basic education. Under the guidance of the Higher Police Academy, different centres of specialization carry out basic police training for sergeants (in Sofia, Varna and Kazanlak). In addition, in collaboration with the Police Academy, the Service provides decentralized training in specific topics for command staff, officers and sergeants.

In 2003/2004, the Academy's Police Faculty admitted 100 students for full-time education (80 men and 20 women) and enrolled 50 serving officers on extramural courses (40 men and ten women). All have registered to study for a Bachelor's degree. A further 15 extra-mural students are working towards a Master's degree and ten towards their PhD.

During their studies at the Police Academy, students are entitled to scholarships worth between 40-60 per cent of a police officer's minimum salary.

### ***The fire service***

The Higher Police Academy also has a Faculty of Fire Safety providing a five-year course leading to qualifications in water and sewage engineering. For 2003/2004, the Faculty admitted 25 students for full-time education (20 men and five women) and enrolled 15 extramural students (12 men and three women). All are studying for a Bachelor's degree in engineering. The Faculty also admitted 15 Master's and five PhD students. During their studies, these students in the Police Academy are also entitled to scholarships worth between 40-60 per cent of a police officer's minimum salary.

### ***Emergency medical services***

The Medical Facilities Act provides for practical training in emergency medicine to be conducted in the medical facilities for primary health care, and allows for post-graduate training in the CEMAs. The criteria, conditions, procedure and ways of financing training and qualifications are set out in the Ministry of Health Regulation No. 31, 28 July 2001, according to which physicians working in the CEMAs can only have training financed by the State in the following specialisms: emergency medicine, general medicine and medicine in emergency situations. CEMA Directors may receive additional training in

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social medicine, health management or health economics. Physicians with specialisms such as anaesthetics, intensive care, internal diseases, surgery, etc, who work in the CEMAs, may be given a short course in emergency medicine.

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## **2. Working conditions**

### **The police**

#### ***Working hours***

Hours of working are set by the Ministry of the Interior Act and are the same as those under the Labour Code. The working week comprises five eight-hour days totalling 40 hours. Police Service civil servants who work in dangerous or difficult conditions work shorter hours. Work time is calculated in eight-hour work days aggregated over three months.

Police civil servants who do not work shifts or in dangerous conditions receive time off in lieu (up to 12 days per year) for overtime worked on normal working days and are paid time-and-a-half for work at weekends or on official holidays. Those on shift work receive time-and-a-half for overtime. If they work over 50 hours overtime in a particular period, they also receive time off in lieu for the hours worked in excess of 50.

The National Police Union has stated that working hours and other legal requirements are observed in all police precincts. However, it has noted that, previously, although officers and sergeants were getting time off for overtime, they were not getting their legal entitlement of overtime pay. This was because the Ministry of the Interior did not have sufficient funds in its budget to make such payments. The Union referred the matter to the Social Partnership Council (a consultative body within the Ministry, see below) and agreement was reached with the Ministry for time off in lieu for overtime on normal working days and paid overtime for holidays. This system is currently applied and, according to the Union, is fully observed by the Ministry and the police precincts.

#### ***Shift work***

In general, some police officers and sergeants work regular day shifts – from 8:30-17:30 with a one-hour lunch break – while others are organized into “squads on duty” and work 24 hours on, followed by 72 hours off. Both groups are guaranteed two rest days per week, which was confirmed by the National Police Union.

#### ***Leave***

Police civil servants are entitled to the following types of leave:

1. paid annual leave of 30 working days (normal paid annual leave under the Labour Code is 20 days);
2. additional paid annual leave of one day per year of service, up to a maximum of ten working days;
3. unpaid leave of up to six months – once during the employee’s service;
4. unpaid leave to participate in international missions; and
5. unpaid leave to participate in representative organizations, i.e. professional organizations of Ministry employees, represented at the national level by the National Police Union (article 267, MIA).

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Time spent on such leave is taken into account when calculating the employee's length of service. In addition, under the MIA, police civil servants are entitled to the following leave provided for by the Labour Code:

- a maximum of five days for work under unhealthy conditions;
- time off for the performance of public duties;
- temporary disability leave;
- leave for pregnancy, birth and adoption (135 days for each child, 45 days of which should be taken before the birth);
- time off for raising a child (after the leave for pregnancy, childbirth or adoption has been used up, a female employee is entitled to additional leave for raising the first, second, and third child until they reach two years of age, and, for the fourth and subsequent child, until they are six months old);
- paid leave for breast-feeding until the child reaches eight months – one hour twice a day, or, with her consent, two hours together;
- leave for the death, or severe illness, of a parent or spouse;
- additional paid leave for two or more surviving children (for two surviving children under the age of 18, two working days per year, for three or more surviving children under the age of 18, four working days per year);
- paid leave for studies or to sit an entrance examination for an educational institution; and
- all unpaid leave provided for in the Code.

An additional incentive provided is that the Police Service pays the travelling expenses of its employees once a year when they are going on paid leave within the country.

## **Remuneration**

The monthly remuneration of officers and sergeants consists of the salary for the position held (see table III), plus an allowance for their military rank (see table IV). Salary levels are set by the Council of Ministers, on the recommendation of the Ministry of the Interior. The basic salary is fixed by reference to National Statistical Institute estimates of the average monthly salary in the public sector: the monthly salary of a police officer must be at least twice the public-sector average. Thus, the public-sector average monthly salary in the third quarter of 2003 was 289 leva, so the monthly salary for police officers should be at least 578 leva. The monthly salary for a sergeant should be at least 1.3 times the public-sector average monthly salary. The monthly salaries of civilians in the police are set in a similar way: for positions requiring a specialism, Bachelor's, Master's or PhD degree, at least twice the public-sector monthly average, while, for positions requiring secondary education, the monthly salary is at least 1.3 the public-sector monthly average. Additional benefits are added to the basic remuneration of civilian employees.

The average gross monthly salary for the civil servants – officers, sergeants and civilians – in the Ministry at 1 July 2003 was 642.55 leva. The average gross monthly salary for the civilians working under a Labour Contract in the Ministry was 322.96 leva.

**Table III. Monthly salary for officers and sergeants working under the Ministry of the Interior Act, 1 July 2003**

Position	Salary (leva)
National Service (Police and Fire Service)	
Officers	
Director	631
Deputy Director	575
Chief of Department	545
Deputy Chief of Department	538
Chief of Sector	534
Senior Expert	502
Chief of Group	459
Expert	439
Chief Inspector	409
Senior Inspector	391
Inspector	374
Intelligence Officer Level 2	343
Intelligence Officer Level 1	335
Sofia Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior	
Director	609
Deputy Director	571
Chief of Police Service/Fire Service	553
Chief of District Police Station/District Fire Service	543
Chief of Police Station	459
Regional Directorates	
Chief of Police/Fire Service:	
1st Degree	543
2nd Degree	538
3rd Degree	534
Chief of District Police Station/District Fire Service:	
1st Degree	502
2nd Degree	486
3rd Degree	477
Chief of Sector in District Police Station	453
Chief of Police Station: group	431
Sergeants	
Senior Police Officer	274
Police Officer	267

Source: Council of Ministers Decree No. 69, 20 March 2003.

Table IV. Monthly allowance for military rank for officers and sergeants working under the Ministry of the Interior Act, 1 July 2003

Military Rank	Allowance (leva)
Generals	
Colonel-General	308
Lieutenant-General	295
Major-General	281
Officers	
Colonel	236
Lieutenant-Colonel	222
Major	205
Captain	184
First Lieutenant	172
Lieutenant	164
Second Lieutenant	159
Sergeants	
Senior Sergeant	130
Junior Sergeant	117
Sergeant	112

Source: Council of Ministers Decree No. 69, 20 March 2003.

The maximum monthly salary for civilian civil servants in the Ministry of the Interior with secondary education is:

- V junior – 188 leva;
- IV junior – 201 leva; and
- III junior – 213 leva.

Police officers and sergeants are paid an additional monthly allowance based on length of service. This is calculated at two per cent of the basic monthly salary for each year of service up to a maximum of 40 per cent. Police officers and sergeants are also paid additional allowances for abnormal working conditions (specified by the Minister) and for unhealthy working conditions (specified by the Council of Ministers). The gross remuneration of police officers and sergeants includes the basic monthly salary, plus all additional allowances, and is the basis for the payment of benefits provided for by law. Police officers and sergeants also receive tax-free food allowances.

Civil servants in the police are provided with food, or its equivalent in leva, and free working clothes or uniforms which are tax free. Officers, sergeants and civilians who are employed in unhealthy activities are provided with free preventive medicines and antidotes. When transferred to other cities or towns, the civil servants (officers, sergeants and civilians) receive a one-off cash grant and the transport costs for relocation are paid by the Ministry. It reimburses civil servants in private rented accommodation for the rent they pay, while officers and sergeants also travel free on public transport. The families of police officers who have died on duty receive financial assistance as specified by the Minister, who updates all the benefits listed above annually.

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Compulsory health insurance for civil servants (officers, sergeants and civilians) is borne by the state budget. The work of civil servants in the police is rated first category work (the highest category), and their retirement and pensions are regulated by law. Retirement contributions are also borne by the State Budget.

All employees of the Ministry, including police officers and sergeants, are compulsorily insured against accident (paid from the State Budget), but they may take out additional insurance as well.

Recreation facilities and sanatoria belonging to the Ministry are available to officers and sergeants for their vacations. Accommodation and food in these facilities are subsidized by a special social fund, which is also used to subsidize the Ministry's canteens. Officers and sergeants also enjoy free health care. The Ministry has a special hospital and each Regional Directorate has a medical facility.

## **Benefits**

On termination of employment, officers, sergeants and civilians receive a one-off lump sum equal to their final gross monthly salary multiplied by their years of service, up to a maximum of 20 multiplied by 1.45: an officer with 25 years of service, on a gross monthly salary of 600 leva at the time of termination, would thus receive a lump sum equal to  $600 \times 20 \times 1.45$ .

Officers with ten, or more, years of service, whose employment is terminated on health grounds, receive a lump sum payment equal to at least their final gross monthly salary multiplied by 15 multiplied by 1.45. Officers with fewer than ten years service receive a lump sum equal to their final gross monthly salary multiplied by ten multiplied by 1.45. The gross monthly salary used in such calculations includes the basic monthly salary plus all allowances.

Officers dismissed on disciplinary grounds do not receive the above lump-sum payments.

Officers seriously injured on duty receive a lump sum equal to ten gross monthly salaries, while those receiving less severe injuries are paid a sum equal to six gross monthly salaries. The spouses, children and parents of police officers killed on duty receive a one-off lump-sum payment equal to 12 gross monthly salaries, plus the normal amounts paid on the termination of employment. All such benefits are tax free.

## **The fire service**

As the Fire Service also falls under the Ministry of the Interior, hours, leave, remuneration and benefits are the same as in the Police Service.

## **Emergency medical services**

## **Working hours**

According to the Labour Code, the normal working week should comprise five eight-hour working days, totalling 40 hours. Any extension to these hours must be in accordance with the special cases and procedure provided for in the Code.

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The law defines night work as work performed between 10.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. For employees working nights, the normal working week is five seven-hour shifts. The employer is required to provide employees with warm food, refreshments and other facilities to maximize the effectiveness of the night work.

According to the Code, where the nature of the production process requires it, work should be organized in two or more shifts. A shift is considered mixed when it includes day and night work; however, a mixed shift with four or more hours of night work is deemed a night shift and should have the duration of a night shift, while a mixed shift with fewer than four hours of night work is deemed a day shift and should have the duration of a day shift. The rotation of shifts is determined by the rules of the particular work place, but the law prohibits employees from working consecutive shifts. For continuous processes, an employee is not to stop work before the arrival of his/her replacement on the next shift without the permission of his/her immediate superior. In such cases, the immediate superior is required to take the necessary steps to find a substitute.

Working hours are calculated in work days. The employer may calculate working hours on a weekly or monthly basis, or for any other calendar period of less than four months. The maximum duration of a shift is 12 hours and, for employees working reduced hours, it can be up to one hour in excess of their normal hours.

### **Shift work**

According to the Ministry of Health Regulation, CEMAs are medical facilities working 24 hours a day. Work is organized in 12-hour shifts, as follows:

- Day shift, 8 a.m.-8 p.m., followed by 24 hours off.
- Night shift, 8 p.m.-8 a.m., followed by 48 hours off.

### **Leave**

Emergency medical service employees are entitled to all the leave provided for by the Labour Code. Each employee with more than eight months service has the right to annual paid leave. Basic annual paid leave is no fewer than 20 working days, while employees doing special work are entitled to more. The categories of such employees, and the minimum amount of such leave, is specified by the Council of Ministers. Employees entitled to at least five additional days of paid leave per year are those who work under unhealthy or special conditions, or who are employed on open-ended working hours.

CEMA employees, may, on request, take unpaid leave, irrespective of whether they have used up their annual paid leave or not, and irrespective of their length of service. Unpaid leave of up to 30 working days each calendar year is included in the calculations of length of service. Unpaid leave of over 30 days may be recognized only if it is provided for in the Code, any other law, or an act of the Council of Ministers. Employees may be allowed paid, or unpaid, official or creative leave (e.g. to write a book) under terms and procedures set out in a collective agreement or in an agreement between the parties to the employment relationship. In the absence of a provision to the contrary in a collective agreement, paid elected trade union officials are deemed to be on unpaid leave for the time during which they hold their union position.

CEMA employees are also entitled to temporary disability leave for a general or occupational disease, occupational injury, sanatorium treatment, urgent medical examinations or tests, quarantine, suspension from work prescribed by the medical authorities, or to care for a sick or quarantined family member, to accompany a sick family

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member to a medical check-up, test or treatment, and to take care of a healthy child dismissed from a child-care facility because of quarantine imposed on that facility or child. Permission for such leave is given by the medical authorities and the employee receives cash compensation for the time off.

Employees are also entitled to leave for pregnancy, birth and adoption under the same conditions as women in the Police Service, i.e. 135 days for each child, 45 days of which may be taken before the birth. In case of a still-born baby, or infant death, or if the child is given up to a State child-care establishment or for adoption, the mother is entitled to 42 days paid leave after the birth. If they find the mother's ability to work has not been fully restored at the end of this period, the medical authorities may extend it until she is completely recovered. They will also take into consideration the mother's surviving children, both natural and adopted. The terms and level of all these benefits are set out in a separate law. The time spent on such leave is accounted for in calculations of length of service.

Other leave entitlements are:

- leave for raising a child up to the age of two years (additional leave for raising a child up to the age of three must be requested);
- time off for breast-feeding and feeding a young child;
- leave for the death or severe illness of a parent;
- additional leave for two or more surviving children; and
- paid leave for studies, or taking entrance examinations at educational establishments.

### ***Remuneration and retirement***

The remuneration of emergency medical service employees is covered by the provisions of the Labour Code.

According to the Ministry of Health, the current average gross monthly salary of emergency medical staff (including doctors, paramedics, etc) is 278 leva. On 1 July 2003, the salaries of CEMA doctors and paramedics were increased by ten per cent (compared with a 3.5 per cent increase for other health-sector workers) in order, according to the Government, to reduce the wage gap between CEMA employees and staff in the medical facilities financed by the National Health Fund. However, emergency medical service staff are still paid considerably less than, for example, general practitioners, who are paid through the National Health Fund and who, according to various publications, receive an average monthly income of about 1,500 leva. Although general practitioners have expenses, such as a nurse, their monthly income is three-four times higher than that of CEMA doctors.

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### 3. Occupational safety and health

In December 1997, the Safety and Health at Work (SHW) Act was adopted. It set out the rights and duties of the State, employers, employees, the self-employed, other organizations and legal persons with regard to the provision of occupational safety and health. According to article 2, the Act covers all places where work or training is carried out, regardless of the organizational form, type of ownership or legal grounds involved. The Act also covers Ministry of Defence military personnel, and Ministry of Interior personnel and Civil Defence staff involved in national defence and national security, insofar as it does not conflict with the special laws regulating these activities.

The Ministry of the Interior Act does not contain any specific provisions on occupational safety and health. It contains only provisions concerning retirement, termination and benefits related to health matters (see above under Working Conditions). Therefore, the police and fire services, which fall under the Ministry of the Interior, must fulfil the requirements of the general law. Because emergency medical services are not regulated by a special law, their occupational safety and health is covered by the general law.

article 26 of the SHW Act makes the employer responsible for consulting employees, or their representatives, on occupational safety and health (OSH) measures, in determining which employees are to be involved in OSH activities, and in the planning and organizing of the OSH education of employees.

The law also stipulates that OSH committees should be established in organizations with more than 50 employees, and OSH groups set up in organizations with fewer than 50 employees. Employers and employees are equally represented in these committees/groups, which have the right of access to information concerning working conditions, the right to require employers to take necessary measures and the right to call in, and participate in the work of, OSH inspectors.

The Ministry of the Interior has an Institute of Psychology, which is a national centre for psychological research, psychological selection and re-selection, psychological expertise and the training of Ministry staff. The Institute's basic activity is the psychometric testing of prospective Ministry employees, including police and firefighters. The Institute tests 8,000 candidates annually. It also carries out psychometric testing of staff who are being reassigned to new activities and those who are experiencing difficulties and problems in their work. In general, however, because of its limited resources, the Institute only tests police officers and sergeants when they are hired or reassigned – each Regional Police Directorate employs psychologists who, among their other duties, are responsible for monitoring the day-to-day psychological condition of officers and sergeants.

Table V. Accidents and deaths among firefighters, 1995-2002

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Accidents	5	8	13	12	30	40	27	16
Deaths	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0

Source: The National Fire and Emergency Safety Service.

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Accidents by type are:

- fractures 18.71 per cent
- burns 15.79 per cent
- respiratory injuries 8.77 per cent
- stab wounds 12.28 per cent
- contusions 22.22 per cent
- thermal stroke, etc. 22.23 per cent

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## 4. Social dialogue and rights at work: The content and structure of social dialogue

### The police

The law allows police officers to organize themselves to advance and protect their professional, social and economic rights and interests, provided that they do not interfere with the functioning of the service. Officers and sergeants may not join other trade unions, nor may they allow employees from outside the Ministry into their own organizations, which must not join or participate in other trade unions.

Officers and sergeants may hold meetings while not on duty, in uniform, on premises belonging to the Ministry and made available by their commanding officers who specify the conditions for their use. These premises must be closed to outsiders. Officers and sergeants may also convene meetings during working hours, the time and place of such meetings being determined by the commanding officer. A maximum of ten hours per year is allowed for such work-time meetings.

Officers and sergeants elected to senior posts in the national police organization are expected to take unpaid leave in order to carry out their duties. This time is accounted for in the calculation of their length of service.

The Council for Social Partnership has been established in the Ministry of the Interior and discusses and concludes agreements for guaranteeing the rights of Ministry employees. It is chaired by the Minister, or someone authorized by him. Delegates of the national organization of police officers and sergeants participate in the Council.

Currently, three organizations participate in the Council – the National Police Union, the National Ogneboretz Union (firefighters) and the Union of Civilian Administrators (whose members are employees working on contract in the Ministry, including those working in the police and fire service).

The Council has its own Rules of Procedure:

- Decisions are taken by consensus and are put into effect by orders issued by the Minister.
- Meetings are held once a week, if necessary more than once.
- Meetings are convened by the Secretary at the request of the Minister or union representatives.
- The unions may request an extraordinary meeting by submitting a written notice containing the agenda for the meeting 14 days in advance.

The National Police Union was established in 1990 and has 8,000 civil service (officer, sergeant and civilian) members. Its most recent Congress was held in 2001. It became a member of the European Council of Police Unions in 1992.

In March 1998, the Bulgarian section of the European Network of Policewomen (ENP) was registered. At present, it comprises three branches, one in the Directorate of the National Police Service, one in the Sofia City Police Service and one in the Sofia Regional Police Service.

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Working as an NGO, the organization is, among other activities, engaged in:

- Developing an information bank with legislative and operational data concerning the equal opportunities policy and interaction with institutions, NGOs and different police departments.
- Developing and carrying out an educational programme, including conducting a cycle of lectures on the personal and social consequences of drug addiction, AIDS prevention, and crime prevention.
- Working with Roma NGOs to identify young members of the Roma minority who might be interested in a career in the Service.

The work of ENP-Bulgaria is promising. It has obtained positions in the police service for two police widows; established contact with policewomen in Romania, Greece, Macedonia and Switzerland; investigated the personal preferences of female cadets in the police academy and consulted them on what they considered the most suitable positions to take up after graduation; set up a call centre for policewomen for the preliminary investigation of cases of sexual harassment or sexism at work, and established contact with NGOs working in areas of joint concern – violence in the work place and family, child abuse, drug addiction, prostitution, etc. ENP-Bulgaria has frame agreements for cooperation on these issues with the ANIMUS Foundation, NADYA-DE Foundation, the SEGA Foundation and ROMANI-DEI-BULGARIA.

## **The fire service**

The National Ogneboretz Union has 4,000 members and is a member of the Council of Social Partnership in the Ministry of the Interior. Firefighters enjoy the same rights as police officers and sergeants, as described above.

## **Emergency medical services**

The Union of Bulgarian Medical Doctors and Dentists concludes a National Framework Agreement with the Government (represented by the National Health Fund) every year. The Agreement provides the general framework for, inter alia, the remuneration and working conditions of doctors and dentists, but does not cover CEMA staff, who are paid from the State Budget.

For CEMA employees, social dialogue is conducted within the general legal framework. The term “social dialogue” was introduced for the first time in the 2001 amendments to the Labour Code. Article 3 of the Code provides that the State regulates labour relations, social security matters and living-standard issues, and must do so in cooperation, and after consultation, with employee and employer representative organizations.

This cooperation and consultation is carried out at national level by the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, which is made up of two representatives from each of the following: the Council of Ministers, employee and employer representative organizations. Each organization appoints its representatives in accordance with its Articles of Association. The Council is chaired by a Deputy Prime Minister.

The National Council for Tripartite Cooperation discusses and offers opinions on bills, drafts of secondary legislation and decisions of the Council of Ministers concerning article 3 of the Labour Code. The opinions of the National Council may be requested by

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the President of the Republic, the Chairperson of the National Assembly, Chairpersons of National Assembly standing committees, and the Prime Minister.

The National Council for Tripartite Cooperation has permanent Commissions dealing with the following issues at the national level:

- the labour force – employment, unemployment, vocational training, incomes, prices and living standards;
- collective labour disputes;
- social security and social support;
- international labour legislation and connections with the ILO;
- safety and health at work;
- privatization and structural reform;
- financial-credit and tax relations; and
- specific problems of public-sector employees.

The national set-up is duplicated at lower levels with industry, branch and municipal councils for tripartite cooperation. These industry, branch and municipal councils comprise two representatives from the relevant ministry, another department or municipal administration, employee representative organizations and employer representative organizations.

The industry, branch and municipal councils for tripartite cooperation discuss and offer opinions on the settlement of specific issues under article 3, concerning the relevant industry, branch or municipality. Their opinions may be requested by the relevant government body, or be provided on their own initiative.

The meetings of the councils are convened by their chairpersons, who draw up the agenda, or may be requested by the representatives of each of the employee or employer organizations, who put forward proposals for the agenda of the meeting.

The chairperson chairs meetings, organizes and guides the work of the council in a spirit of cooperation, mutual compromise and respect for the interests of each of the parties. A quorum for a council meeting is two-thirds of the members, including representatives of all three of the participating parties. Decisions are taken by consensus and are submitted to the relevant bodies as follows:

- decisions of the National Council – to the Prime Minister or the relevant Minister or head of department;
- decisions of industry and branch councils – to the relevant Minister or head of department; and
- decisions of municipal councils – to the Mayor of the relevant municipality or the Chairperson of the municipal council, according to their competence for taking action on the issue discussed.

Once Government and municipal bodies have received opinions from councils for tripartite cooperation, they are obliged to consider them in their decision-making.

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The organization and activities of the councils for tripartite cooperation are governed by rules adopted by the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation and published in June 2001. The costs of the councils are borne by the relevant government and municipal bodies.

In addition, there are other national councils for social dialogue, all under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, which deal with issues similar to those handled by the Commissions of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, but at a branch or municipal level. These are:

- the National Council for Unemployment Protection and Employment Promotion;
- the National Council for Vocational Training;
- the National Council for Safety and Health at Work;
- the National Council for the Ratification of the European Social Charter;
- the National Occupational Health and Safety Council; and
- the National Council on Social Support.

Although Bulgaria has ratified the Council of Europe's revised European Social Charter, which includes articles concerning social dialogue, social dialogue is still weak in the country. This is particularly the case in the area of collective bargaining in the private sector, but the situation does not seem to be much better in the public sector. The establishment of mechanisms for consultation is gaining speed, though the mechanisms themselves still need to prove their effectiveness. There are regular complaints about the lack of social dialogue in the public sector, including health.

In March 2003, efforts to improve social dialogue were made with the conclusion of a Cooperation Agreement between the Government, the national employers' organizations and the trade unions. Among its priorities are:

- the development of social dialogue;
- improving national labour and social insurance legislation;
- better enforcement of labour and social insurance legislation;
- greater cooperation in retraining, and guaranteeing health and safety at work; and
- improving the systems for social protection, health care and education.

CEMA employees enjoy freedom of association, and both the main trade unions – Podkrepa and the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria – have organizations in CEMA. The Director for CEMAs in the Ministry of Health has claimed that the social dialogue with CEMAs is carried out through the branch council on a regular basis. CEMA employees are represented by the above trade unions' health sections, although the Ministry has also been approached by the drivers' trade union with a request to discuss the problems of ambulance drivers.

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## 5. Coordination in the public emergency services

The prevention and reduction of non-military risks and crises and the handling of their consequences is organized, supervised and coordinated mainly by the Council of Ministers, various ministries, agencies, local authorities and local administrations. Overall management is carried out by the Government through the Standing Commission for the Protection of the Population in Natural Calamities, Disasters and Catastrophes. The Commission is chaired by a Minister and consists of representatives of the central government administration. Its decisions are binding on all civil and military structures.

Similar commissions are being established in the individual ministries, agencies, regional administrations and municipalities, with the aim of protecting the population from natural calamities and industrial disasters. They operate out of temporary emergency headquarters.

Civil structures act in partnership with the Civil Protection Agency, a specialized unit under the Council of Ministers, whose remit is to deal with the consequences of natural calamities, disasters and catastrophes, and to carry out rescue and emergency disaster relief operations.

The doctor in charge of the District Coordination Office in each CEMA at the time is responsible for ensuring coordination between the CEMA, police, fire service and civil protection bodies in the event of natural calamities, disasters and catastrophes. He/she also coordinates with neighbouring CEMAs and immediately informs the District Health Centre and the Ministry of Health.

A National System for Emergency Signals is currently being developed to improve the links between the various bodies responsible for providing a timely and adequate response to incidents and managing the activities to deal with them. In principle, the system will centralize, record and send out signals to the Civil Protection Agency, the National Police Service, the Emergency Medical Services and the National Fire and Emergency Safety Service.

## Conclusions

In general, the current situation of the Public Emergency Services in Bulgaria corresponds with the ILO Guidelines adopted at the Joint Meeting of January 2003.

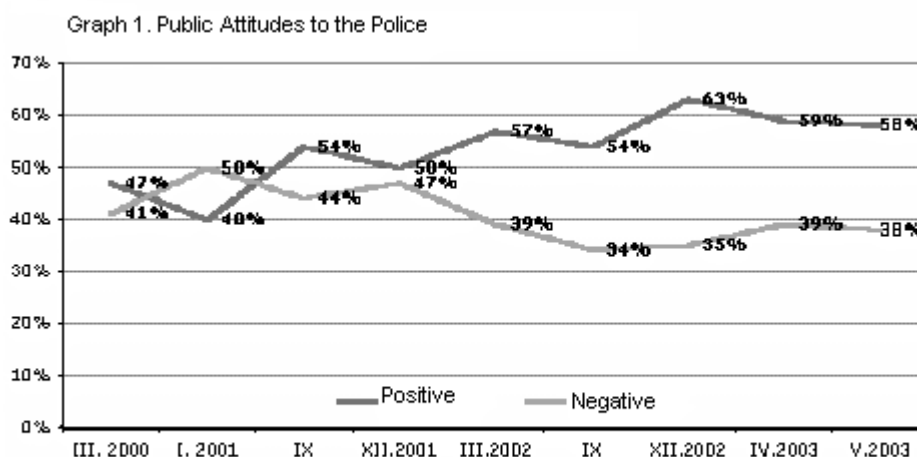
For the police and fire service, appropriate legislation appears to be in place as far as employment, gender issues, overtime work, remuneration, organization of work, occupational safety and health conditions, and social dialogue are concerned. However, emergency medical services work in far less favourable conditions (remuneration, retirement, etc), and it appears that the importance of their work is underestimated.

In order to narrow the gap between current Bulgarian legislation and the Guidelines, the following recommendations are made:

- Greater attention should be paid to the Emergency Medical Services and the working conditions of their employees. First, their remuneration should be increased considerably, conditions for retirement should be more favourable, and occupational safety and health conditions should be improved significantly (especially in view of the stress under which they work). This requires major amendments to the legislation that would adequately reflect the work of the staff. Second, social dialogue at the

sector level should be improved and strengthened, and the social partners (both the Government and CEMA representatives) should take it upon themselves, at the very least, to raise awareness of the importance of the services, and initiate a general review of the working conditions of staff, so that the emergency medical profession takes the place it deserves in society.

- It seems that the high vacancy rate in the police – about 11 per cent – is due to the fact that the profession is not held in high regard. According to the Alpha Research Institute findings, published in May 2003, public trust in the police has improved in recent years, with positive attitudes increasing from 47 per cent in 2000 to 58 per cent in 2003, but obviously it is still low. The low status of the police is not a result of low remuneration or lack of benefits. Apparently, further efforts are needed by the Ministry of the Interior and the National Police Service to enhance the public image of the profession.



Source: Alpha Research Institute, May 2003.

- Further efforts are also needed to improve the composition of the police force. For example, the low number of women and Roma officers requires special attention.
- Given the stressful conditions in which police officers and firefighters work, significant efforts are needed to reduce the effects of stress, including the establishment of adequate stress management and counselling programmes. This is relevant also for emergency medical service workers, whose work is, in addition, undervalued.
- In general, additional efforts are needed to improve the enforcement of existing laws, particularly those concerning occupational safety and health and social dialogue.