

Labour Inspection Structure and organization

Name of institution that manager work issues

[The Ministry of Social Affairs](#) is the competent authority on labour and employment issues.

Department(s) responsible for Labour Inspection

[The Labour Inspectorate](#) is a government agency operating within the Ministry of Social Affairs responsible for enforcing labour legislation. The Labour Inspectorate is divided into four departments Work Environment, Labour Relations, Communications, Finance and Administration Department. The Work Environment Department is responsible for occupational health and safety issues and the Labour Relations Department is responsible for inspections in the area of labour relations.

In addition to the Labour Inspectorate, other state supervisory bodies are involved with supervision of the work environment within a narrower sphere of competence. The most important bodies are the Estonian Technical Surveillance Authority, the Estonian Rescue Board, the Health Protection Inspectorate, the Radiation Protection Centre, the Plant Production Inspectorate, the Maritime Administration and the Civil Aviation Administration.

Law that covers organization and functional composition

- Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1999
- Employments Contract Act, 2008
- Statutes of the Labour Inspectorate, Regulation No. 26 of the Minister of Social Affairs of 17 October 2007

Scope of labour inspection

The main functions of the Labour Inspectorate is the supervision of compliance with legislation regulating occupational health and safety and labour relations, informing general public, workers and employers of the dangers in the work environment and resolving of individual labour disputes. The provisions of the OSH Act and Employment Contract Act apply to work performed by employees under employment contract and to public servants.

Local divisions

Four local inspectorates are operating.

Programming and communication

The central office develops an annual work plan based on inspection results of previous years and the analysis of occupational accidents and diseases. This plan in turn serves as a basis for preparation of a work plan by individual labour inspectors, in dialogue with the head of the regional unit. Inspectors' work is monitored through internal information systems and planning meetings are held every quarter. Central Offices also plan two or three target inspection campaigns a year.

Human Resources and career development

Permanency of inspectors

Labour inspectors are civil servants.

Selection process

Labour inspectors are selected through public competitions, where their educational background, professional experience, proficiency of languages and other qualifications are assessed. New inspectors participate in a 6-month training program, which also serves as a probation period. Mentors are assigned to all new inspectors and they start working under their supervision during six months. No grading system for inspectors has been established. Different trainings have been organized within the framework of the ESF Programme "Improvement of the Quality of Work Life" and under the auspices of the European Commission.

Background required

Most of the general inspectors are not specialised in any specific field of activity. Very few collaborators are trained as engineers, chemist or medical doctor. Some of the labour inspectors are lawyers.

Visits and functions

Types of visits

Inspectors may carry out five different types of inspection visits: (i) general inspections, where compliance of the legislation regarding occupational health and safety, work environment and organization and working time is verified; (ii) target inspections, where occupational safety and health regulations are verified in specific sectors determined by heads of local labour inspectorates; (iii) inspection of a new or reconstructed buildings; (iv) market control of personal protective equipment which takes place at manufacturers and vendors of PPE; and (v) follow-up inspection to verify that the required corrections have been made. Visits

are usually notified, except for those inspections of construction sites and in cases when a complaint has been filed at the Labour Inspectorate. Market supervision of PPE is also conducted without previous notice.

Role of preventive measures

Target inspections and safety campaigns, directed to improving of conditions of work of employees and ensuring safety in enterprises with some more hazardous field of activity, have played an essential part in enhancing efficiency of inspection. The Communication Department coordinates information for workers and employers on the implementation of legal acts regulating occupational safety and health and labour relations. Information seminars on occupational safety and health are organised frequently.

Programming

Central offices decide on half of the total enterprises to visit annually, while individual inspectors plan the other half of their visits based on local knowledge of particular problems, accident experience, complaints, or long latency since a previous inspection visit. Enterprises are also divided into categories to determine the frequency of inspection visits.

Registries and reporting of accidents/diseases at work

A central database has been created and is proving to be a helpful tool to keep records of enterprises, inspections, infringements, investigated accidents, etc.

Employers must report occupational accidents and diseases to the Labour Inspectorate. However, the inspectorate is often informed of occupational accidents through the hospitals where people are being treated.

Sanction and administrative processes

In case of infringement of legal acts, inspectors may issue improvement notices with or without an economic fine. If an accident at work results with serious health damage or death of the person, a labour inspector can initiate criminal procedure.

Labour inspectors may stop or suspend work which is endangering the life of workers or that of other persons and prohibit the use of life-threatening work equipment.

Social dialogue and labour inspection

Worker representatives often participate in inspection activities and there is a close communication between the unions and the Labour Inspectorate.

ILO Conventions ratified

Estonia ratified both Conventions No. 81 and 129 in 2005.