

General information on the Occupational Health and Safety System in the Czech Republic

The first steps in the transposition of *acquis communautaire* into the legal system of the Czech Republic were performed shortly after the political changes in 1989. The Labour code was amended in 1994 and transposed a great part of the framework directive 89/391; and in 2001 the whole *acquis communautaire* in the area of the jurisdiction of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) was transposed by other amendments of the Labour code and by the governmental decrees.

The issue of the occupational safety is divided between the MLSA-general safety at work and working conditions and the Ministry of Health (MH) – risks arising from the long-term impact of physical, chemical and biological agents. (Occupational diseases and hygienic requirements). It is a certain obstacle for creating the integrated inspection, as it is required by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

But the whole system of the labour inspection is prepared in order to enforce the transposed *acquis communautaire*. The great challenge for the Labour inspection system is to promote awareness and knowledge in the area of occupational health and safety (OSH), namely in small and medium enterprises.

Organization of the Labour inspection system

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for the legal framework and the conception of the OSH in the Czech Republic. The Czech Occupational Safety Office (COSO) executes and enforces the OSH regulations, and the chairman of COSO is responsible to the minister of Labour and Social Affairs.

The COSO economically and methodically controls 8 regional Occupational Safety Inspectorates (OSI) and the COSO is also the appealing body. The COSO can also, in specific cases, perform the inspection. OSIs employ 237 labour inspectors.

The basis for the planning of the inspections is the statistical data of the occupational accidents in the individual branches of industry, or the increase of external suggestions (for example complaints of employees). The inspection plan is annual, but if necessary, the plan can be drawn-up for a shorter or longer period. Another reason for the inspection executed by the OSI is the outcome of the tri-partite negotiations, changes in technologies, structural changes in industry, etc.

Besides the national targets of the inspection, each OSI executes its own targets based on the specific situation in occupational safety in the region.

The course of the inspection is stipulated by the act No. 174/1968 Coll., as amended, (notification, opening, course), the preparation of the protocol and conclusion of the inspection are executed according to the act No. 552/1991 Coll., on the state surveillance. The decision processes are executed according to the Act. No. 71/1967 Coll.

In most cases, the Meta Cube database serves for the selection of organisations and self-employed persons for the inspection. The sources of data for this database are the records and findings of the inspectors according to the protocols. It is possible to acquire the information for example on the previous inspection in the relevant organization, on the faults discovered, etc.

The problem of this database is the fact, that the Meta Cube database contains only the information on the inspected entities or entities with reported accident. This database does not contain the data on all organizations and self-employed persons in the region. Also, the database is not in all cases up-to-date in respect of the existing or inoperative or extinct entities, because there is no obligation to report the start of operation or the extinction of an organisation to the OSI.

The number of actions performed by the Occupational Safety Inspectorates

Performed actions (investigations and inspections)	1999	2000	2001
Inspections of the organizations and self-employed persons-COSO targets	5 654	3 653	3 276
Inspections of the organizations and self-employed persons-planned OSI targets	6 445	7 836	7 181
Inspections of the organizations and self-employed persons -other OSI targets	610	405	483
Investigation of the fatal accidents causes	152	133	140
Investigation of the serious accidents causes	350	273	267
Investigation of the mass accidents causes	16	10	5
Investigation of the other accidents causes	60	36	21
Investigations of industrial accidents (incidents) causes	21	29	18
Investigation of the causes of the breakdown of the technical equipment	3	3	0
Investigations and inspections	13 131	12 378	11 391

The occupational safety inspectorates provide free consulting in the field of occupational safety for employers and employees, free consulting how to comply with the regulations for the safety at work and technical equipment safety. This consulting is performed mainly in the OSI headquarters. Lately, the OSI starts to provide consulting at other consulting sites in the individual regions, mainly in the Employment offices. The reason is better availability of the consulting for local employers and employees. The provided consultations do not influence the executed inspections by OSI. Within the consultations, the most frequent issues are the requirements of the new regulations and the application thereof.

Technical equipment of OSI

In the field of the technical equipment of OSI, each inspectorate has 2-4 cars (depending on the size of the relevant region) available for the inspectors. But the inspectors largely use public transport (trains, buses).

The offices of the inspectors are equipped with computers, connected to the network. A part of the computers was provided within the framework of the PHARE programme. There are also notebooks (each OSI has 3-4) available for the inspectors to borrow.

In order to document the discovered deficiencies each OSI has got a digital camera for snapshots (2-3) and one video camera.

Information system

The collected data is stored and processed in databases named "IS-dozor" (in English "IS-surveillance") and "IS- Urazy" (in English "IS-accidents"). The "IS-dozor" database collects data from each inspection and investigation and enables to find data on inspected subjects (identification number, size, legal form, etc.), on the findings (number of protocol, description of fault, infringed regulation, cause of fault, etc.), on the decisions (i.e., order to put machines and technical equipment out of service, periods for remedy of the faults, fines, etc.), on the inspectors (who executed the investigation or inspection, what kind of inspection or investigation was executed, etc.). The "IS-accidents" database collects data from the reports on the accidents and enables to find data on the subject of accident (name, age, profession, and time of accident, type of accident, type of injury, cause of accident, etc.).

The education of inspectors

Applicants (candidates) for the position of an inspector are selected in public selection procedure, publicly announced by COSO. The OSI ensures the initial education and training for each new inspector. Institute for Occupational Safety Education provides the theoretical part of this education, and OSI provides the practical part (training in the field). This initial education lasts at least 6 months, and not later than within 12 months the applicant has to pass the final examination of knowledge, competence and skill. The precondition for this examination is the written, positive evaluation of the

applicant, issued by the senior labour inspector (director of OSI). The Institute for Occupational Safety Education ensures annual professional education of OSI inspectors, focused on the new regulations, new technical knowledge, unification of the inspection procedures, etc.

The supervision of the specified technical equipment

The technical equipment with higher rate of risk, such as boilers, electrical equipment, pressure vessels, gas equipment, and lifting equipment are supervised by the special body - Institute of technical inspection (ITI). ITI supervises safety of the above-mentioned equipment and the activities in the area of specified technical equipment, issues professional and binding statements, performs inspections, manages and evaluates tests, examines professional competence of organizations and self-employed persons and certifies them. The organizational scheme is similar to the scheme of COSO (regional inspectorates).

The research in the area of OSH

The Occupational Safety Research Institute (OSRI) provides research in the area of OSH in cooperation with COSO, OSI and MLSA, provides consulting and professional aid, and performs tests of personal protective equipment. The OSRI also ensures public awareness and knowledge in the area of OSH.