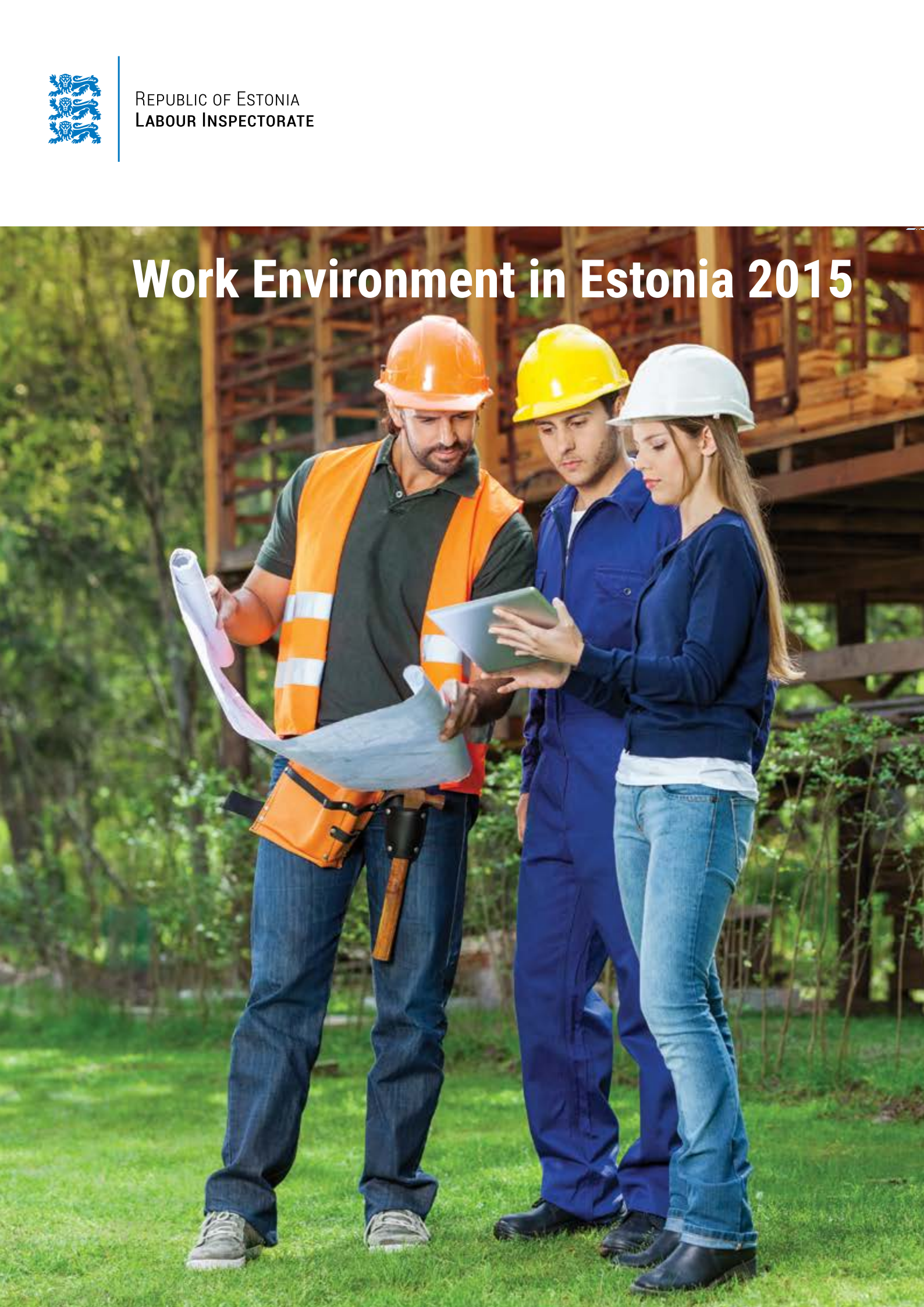
REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
LABOUR INSPECTORATE
Work Environment in Estonia 2015

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Contents

Foreword **3**

Introduction **4**

1. Work environment in Estonia **6**

1.1 Registered work accidents 7

1.2 Occupational and work-related diseases 19

2. State supervision **22**

2.1 Occupational safety supervision 23

2.2 Occupational health supervision 28

2.3 Supervision of labour relations 30

2.4 Supervision of working and rest time of drivers of motor vehicles 32

2.5 Misdemeanour proceedings, fines 35

3. Resolution of labour disputes **36**

4. Counselling **40**

4.1 Labour Inspectorate's advisory service 40

4.2 Labour Inspectorate information line 40

4.3 Counselling by e-mail 41

4.4 Counselling at office 41

4.5 Consultation 43

5. National prevention and information activities **45**

5.1 Conduction of prevention and information campaigns 45

5.2 Information days, morning briefings, round tables and other informational events 45

5.3 Information materials 47

5.4 International cooperation 49

6. Labour Inspectorate **50**

Work environment 2015 in numbers **51**

FOREWORD

Maret Maripuu
Director General of the Labour Inspectorate

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves began his address on the 98th anniversary of Estonian independence by stating, "The world, Europe and Estonia in Europe have again arrived at the threshold of change. And in places even crossed this threshold. The world is changing a lot, rapidly, and it is up to us to make sure it is for the better."

These reflections also serve as a good point of departure for an overview of last year's work environment situation. Estonian working environment has changed a lot over the years. Situations where a person retires from the same employer where they started working after graduating from school are becoming rare. People have several careers over their lifetime; they do not only switch jobs but also occupations, acquire new professions, develop their skills, found their own business. All this affects occupational relations and presents new challenges to legislation regulating working life. Not to mention occupational health and safety issues in a situation where the employees of a single company may be scattered all over the world and only see each other in Skype meetings, work on their laptops while waiting for their flight at airports, offer their services through a small business, carry mail as self-employed persons, etc.

Statistics show that working life was quite busy in Estonia last year. The number of employed persons increased by 16,000, which is slightly more than the entire population of the town of Rakvere. New companies were also founded. These figures, which reflect the good fortunes of Estonian economic life, also meant increased work volume for the Labour Inspectorate. The more employees and employers, the more subjects there are to monitor, and it may also result in a greater number of accidents. Looking back on the year, however, we can safely assure that the employees of the Inspectorate have performed their duties with real dedication, which is reflected in the increased number of inspections performed and the increased quality of work.

Last year, we also started providing a consultation service. Employers can invite our consultant to their enterprise to advise them on improving the working environment with the goal of ensuring the safety and maintaining the health of their employees. The service is free of charge for employers. Even though we have seen that working conditions tend to improve significantly after an inspector's visit, we would still like to see a situation where a safe working environment would be considered valuable even before the inspector's visit. A survey conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work last year showed that the majority of employers, 77% of Estonian enterprises, stated the desire to avoid being fined by the Labour Inspectorate as one of the reasons for conducting risk assessments. In the future, our enterprises will hopefully be motivated not only by the fear of fines but also by safe and healthy work.

I am, however, delighted to report that a number of Estonian enterprises have already begun to truly value occupational safety and maintaining the health of their employees. These enterprises are truly future-oriented. In October, we held the international conference "Occupational Health and Safety – An Irritating Obligation or a Part of Economic Success?" At the conference, we recognized two enterprises, AS Tallinna Vesi and OÜ Crystalsol, who have made safe work and protecting the health of their employees a priority in their everyday operations. The Good Work Environment award will be regularly awarded in the years to come; the judgement is based on information found in the databases of the Labour Inspectorate and the enterprises cannot nominate themselves for the award. I hope that competition for the Good Work Environment award will become even closer and Estonian occupational safety culture will thus undergo a significant improvement.

Enjoy the read and work safely!

INTRODUCTION

The number of employed persons increased by 16,000 last year. Employment rate was 69.4%, the highest after regaining independence. A significant number of new companies have also been founded. These facts show that the economy of Estonia is buzzing. The job of the Labour Inspectorate is to ensure that the work environment of all employees in all Estonian enterprises is safe and healthy. This goal is an ambitious one and good results can only be achieved through the cooperation of employees, employers, and the state.

The work of the Labour Inspectorate is divided into three fields – state supervision, counselling, and information. Our goal is to reach each and every enterprise through the joint effect of these three types of activities – be it through supervision, consultation, or distributing information on labour relations and the possibility of a better work environment. The number of registered work accidents has been steadily increasing over the last ten years. However, this does not mean that occupational safety has significantly deteriorated in Estonia compared to 1995. It is more likely a sign of increased awareness on the part of both employers and employees, as work-related accidents are no longer covered up or presented as everyday accidents. By the level of severity of damage to health in 2015, 79.6% of workplace accidents were registered as minor accidents.

The number of serious work accidents increased by 7% year-over-year. Tragically, 16 people lost their lives at work. Statistically, this number remained at the same level as in 2014, but even one life lost to a work-related accident is too many. The sad fact is that in many cases, a fatal result could have been avoided if more attention had been paid to occupational safety and employee instructions. Inexperience, but also routine work and wrong habits acquired over many years may prove fatal in an instant.

Significantly more serious or fatal work-related accidents were reported to the Labour Inspectorate last year. The law states that a work accident is an accident taking place with a person working under an employment contract. The picture of Estonian labour relations is, however, much more diverse. Contracts for services, authorization agreements, and working as a self-employed person or through one's own small business are very common. It is important to understand that only an employment contract can provide protection in case of a work accident. Last year, we witnessed several cases where a worker died from an unexpected health problem. These cases did not qualify as work-related deaths, even though in some cases, they could have been avoided by referring the employees to medical examination at a proper time.

35% of all work accidents take place with workers who have been employed for under a year. These are either young people who have just begun their working life or those who have switched jobs and have not yet completely acquired the skills required at the new job.

The most common problems Estonian companies face are related to the training and instruction of workers, organization of medical examination, and the selection and appointment of workers involved in occupational health and safety. All three of these activities are, however, crucial in order to avoid work accidents and damage to workers' health. Occupational health and safety inspections were conducted at 3,836 enterprises. A total of 17,611 violations of various legal acts were discovered; violations were detected at 91% of all inspected enterprises. This is significantly more than last year, even though the number of labour inspectors has remained unchanged. In addition to the number of visits, the quality of work has also increased – employers are informed of a larger number of problematic situations. The effectiveness of this work is demonstrated by the fact that the precepts made by inspectors are generally fulfilled in five days.

Labour relations were reviewed in 526 enterprises. The priorities for the supervision of labour relations in 2015 included monitoring working and rest time and the work conditions of minors. A total of 1,761 violations of the Employment Contracts Act were discovered in 2015. 2,691 petitions were filed with labour dispute committees.

The Labour Inspectorate has received exceedingly positive feedback on our advisory service. The service enables people to ask for advice either by phone or e-mail, or by visiting our offices. The lawyers' info line answered 29,448 calls last year – 2,000 more than the year prior. We also opened a separate Russian language line and 25% of all callers choose

Russian as the language of service. 5,586 people were advised over e-mail and there were 4,099 office visits.

Last year saw the launch of our work environment consultation service. Business operators can invite a Labour Inspectorate consultant to their enterprise to give advice on both the work environment and required documentation. The consultant can also be asked for a consultation related to a specific sphere of work environment (e.g. the use of personal protection equipment). The service is free of charge for employers. Last year, this opportunity was used by 61 enterprises. The workplaces of 2,395 people were made safer thanks to the consultation.

The Labour Inspectorate was also more visible last year thanks to two campaigns. We directed the attention of young workers and their employers to the necessity of training and instruction, and the importance of signing a written employment contract. The European campaign “Less Stress” called for cooperation between employees and employers to make their work environment friendlier and reduce psychosocial risks.

Last year, two international occupational health and safety conferences took place in Tallinn. In June, the concluding conference of the campaign “Slips, trips on the same level” held by the Senior Labour Inspectors’ Committee (SLIC) in 2014 took place with the participation of nearly 20 countries involved in the campaign. In October, the Labour Inspectorate organized an international occupational health and safety conference discussing issues related to occupational safety culture, health maintenance at work, and the ageing working population. At the conference, the Good Work Environment award was presented to enterprises valuing occupational safety and the health of their employees. Companies cannot nominate themselves for this award, as the candidate pool includes all Estonian enterprises. The judgement is based on information found in the Labour Inspectorate databases. In 2015, the award for large enterprises was given to AS Tallinna Vesi and the award for small enterprises, to Crystalsol OÜ.

2015 was a year of big changes for the Labour Inspectorate. The year saw a transfer to function-based management, which has completely justified itself. The results of both supervision and advisory activities in 2015 demonstrate that the agency as a whole operates smoothly and without any issues. The number of court actions has remained low and we have won our most important court cases, indicating that the rulings made by the Inspection in administrative and misdemeanour proceedings have been correct. The reliability indicators of the Labour Inspectorate have improved and the representatives of the Inspectorate are valued as competent specialists in the field of work environment. Work volume has increased, but the number of inspectors has remained constant. However, the budget for state supervision activities has remained largely unchanged for several years in a row, while employment rate and the number of enterprises have significantly increased.

1. WORK ENVIRONMENT IN ESTONIA

Employment rate in 2015

According to Statistics Estonia, the national unemployment rate in 2015 was 6.2%, employment rate 65.2% and activity rate 69.4%. Unemployment was significantly lower and employment and activity rates higher than in 2014. The number of employed persons has increased by 3%, or 16,000 persons, compared to 2014.

In 2015, unemployment rate saw a significant decrease compared to the previous year among both young people (aged 15–24) and those in the prime working age (aged 25–49). Meanwhile, the unemployment rate of older people (aged 50–74) remained basically unchanged. Youth unemployment rate was still the highest (13.1%), indicating that entering and staying in the labour market is still a significant problem for young people in Estonia.

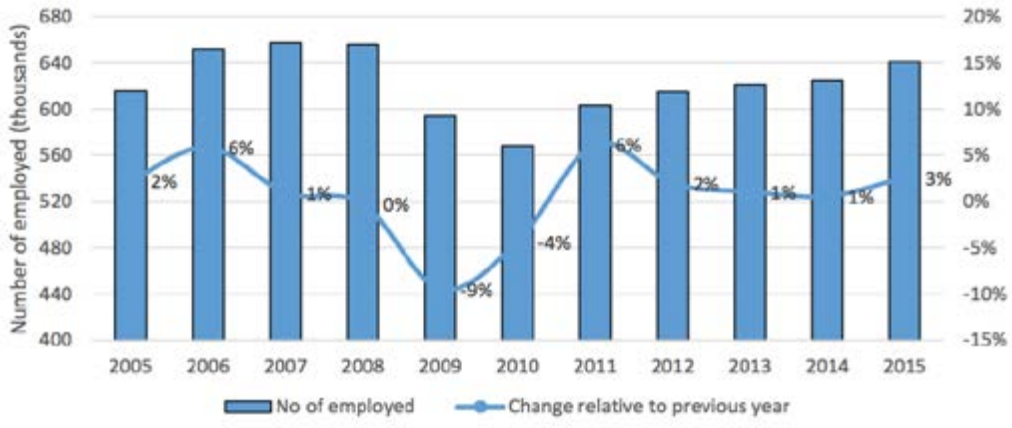
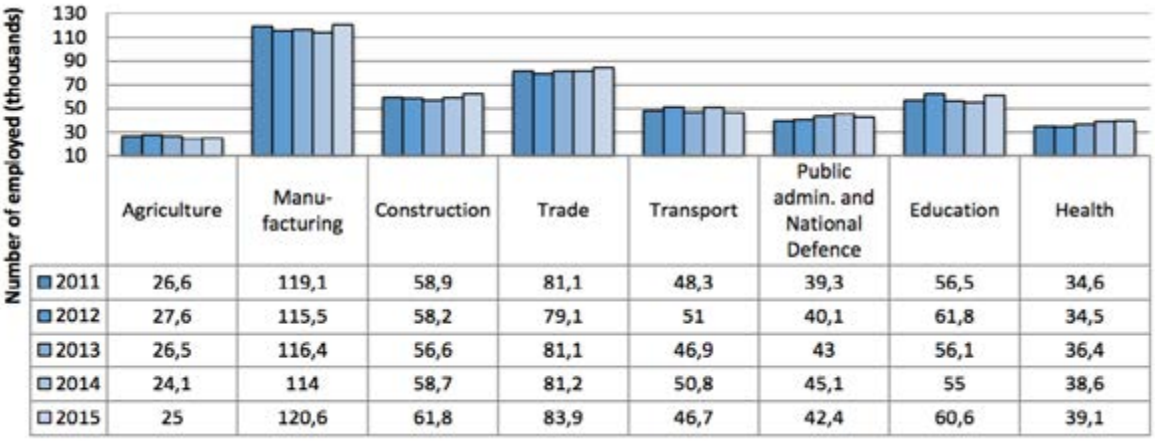


Figure 1. Number of employed persons (aged 15–74) and year-over-year change

Differences in place of residence, sex, age, and nationality still have a significant effect on labour market indicators. In 2015, the employment rate was the highest in Harju County (71%) and the difference with Põlva County, the region with the lowest employment rate (47.6%), was more than 20 percentage points. In addition to better employment opportunities, this result was also influenced by differences in the age structure. Unemployment was the lowest in Harju County (5.2%).

The improvement in labour market indicators year-over-year in 2015 may be attributed to the effect of the employment register on employment, economic growth seen in 2014, and the planned employment reform. However, the clearly reduced economic growth in 2015 has most likely already had a negative effect on 2015 Q4 labour market indicators.

Figure 2 shows the number of employed persons in larger fields of activity. Similar to the year prior, most people are employed in the sectors of manufacturing, trade, construction, and education. After having witnessed a long decline, manufacture has grown in 2015 thanks to textile and wood processing industry; the health sector is also undergoing a slight growth. The number of employed persons has increased the most compared to 2014 in education, construction, and trade (by 5,600; 3,100; and 2,700 employees, respectively).



	Agriculture	Manu-facturing	Construction	Trade	Transport	Public admin. and National Defence	Education	Health
2011	26,6	119,1	58,9	81,1	48,3	39,3	56,5	34,6
2012	27,6	115,5	58,2	79,1	51	40,1	61,8	34,5
2013	26,5	116,4	56,6	81,1	46,9	43	56,1	36,4
2014	24,1	114	58,7	81,2	50,8	45,1	55	38,6
2015	25	120,6	61,8	83,9	46,7	42,4	60,6	39,1

Figure 2. Number of employed persons in larger fields of activity

1.1 Registered work accidents

The Labour Inspectorate was reported of 4,774 work accidents in 2015, 3,800 of which were related to a minor bodily injury, 958 to a serious injury, and 16 of which proved fatal to the employee. The number of registered workplace accidents increased by 130 compared to 2014. The worrying part is that the number of work accidents resulting in minor and serious bodily injuries increased by nearly the same amount (67 more minor and 63 more serious incidents).

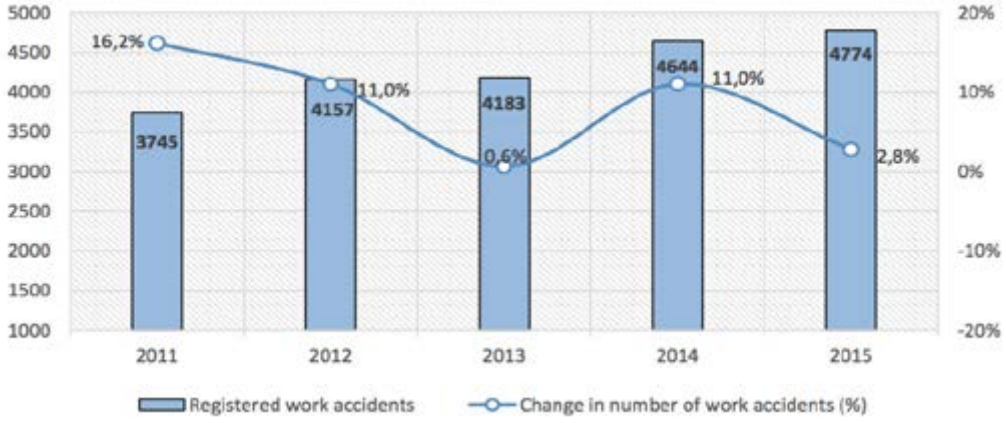


Figure 3. Registered work accidents and year-over-year change, 2011–2015.

The work accident statistics compiled by the Labour Inspectorate are based on workplace accident reports officially filed by employers. The number of reported work accidents is estimated to be slightly lower than the actual number of accidents. Thus, the Labour Inspectorate must continue increasing the awareness of both employers and employees of the importance of reporting work accidents. The data presented in Figure 4 indicate that the number of registered work accidents has steadily increased over the twenty years (with only a few exceptional years). This is not, however, an indication of the significant deterioration of the occupational safety situation in Estonian enterprises compared to 2015; it is more likely a sign of the improved awareness among both employers and employees and the fact that work-related accidents are no longer covered up or presented as everyday accidents.

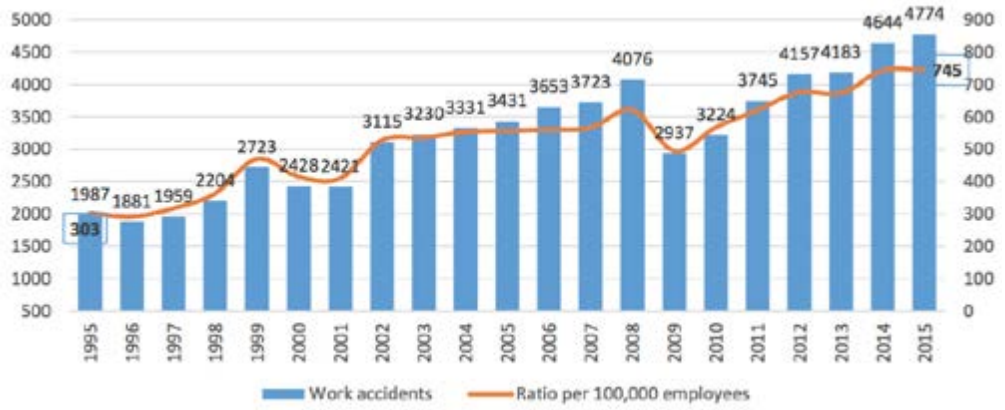


Figure 4. Registered work accidents and ratio of accidents per 100,000 employees, 1995–2015

79.6% of all work accidents were registered as minor accidents in 2015. The number of serious work accidents increased by 7% year-over-year. This is a positive development compared to the previous period when the number of serious workplace accidents increased by 15%. In part, this can be attributed to the increased volume and quality of supervision. The occurrence of fatal work accidents remained the same as in 2014. 16 incidents resulting in the death of an employee and qualifying as a workplace accident were registered in Estonia.[1] Workplace deaths do not include situations where an employee suddenly dies at their workplace due to a health problem. In some cases, however, the incident resulting in the death of a worker could have been avoided by referring the employee to medical examination at a proper time.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Minor work accidents	2928	3329	3388	3733	3800
Serious work accidents	798	813	775	895	958
Fatalities	19	15	20	16	16

Figure 5. Registered work accidents by severity

Figure 6 shows the number of fatal work accidents and their ratio per 100,000 over 21 years. The situation has improved considerably compared to 1995, but a country the size of Estonia cannot afford even a single employee death resulting from the employer or the worker themselves not following occupational safety requirements. The main priority of the Labour Inspectorate is to avoid fatal work accidents and to focus its activities on reaching this goal.

[1] A work accident in the meaning of the Occupational Health and Safety Act is damage to the health of an employee or death of an employee which occurred in the performance of a duty assigned by an employer or in other work performed with the employer's permission, during a break included in the working time, or during other activity in the interests of the employer. Damage to the health or death which occurred in the cases listed but which is not in a causal relation to the work of the employee or the work environment is not deemed to be a work accident. Accidents occurring in the performance of a contract of services, authorization agreement or other agreement made for rendering services under the law of obligations also do not qualify as work accidents..

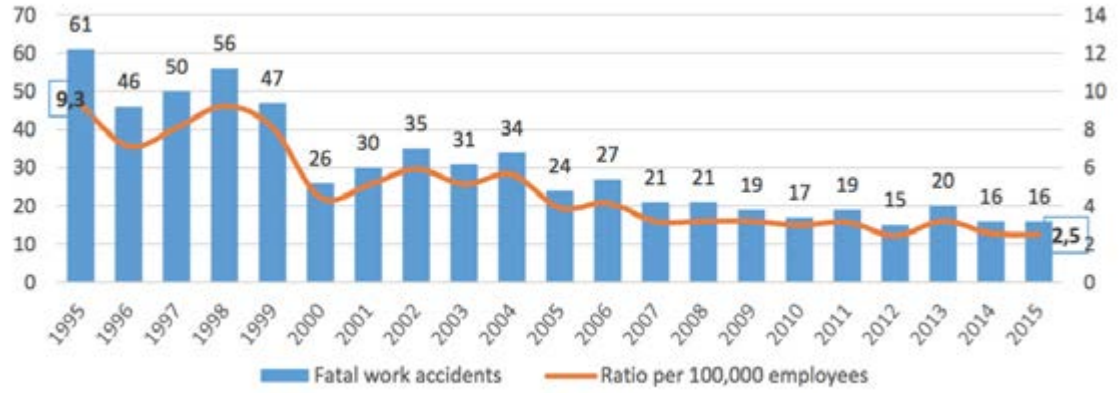


Figure 6. Fatal work accidents and ratio of fatal accidents per 100,000 employees, 1995–2015

The ratio of work accidents per 100,000 employees grew by 0.2% over the year. The ratio is related to the number of employed aged 15–74. In 2015, there were nearly 640,900 employed persons in Estonia (625,000 in 2014). Thus, 745 work accidents were registered per 100 000 employees. This figure shows that the probability of being injured in the working environment remained practically the same as in 2014. At the same time, special attention must be paid to new workers, as a significant number of workplace accidents occur to people who have been employed less than a year. Consequently, significantly more attention must be paid to the training and supervision of new employees.

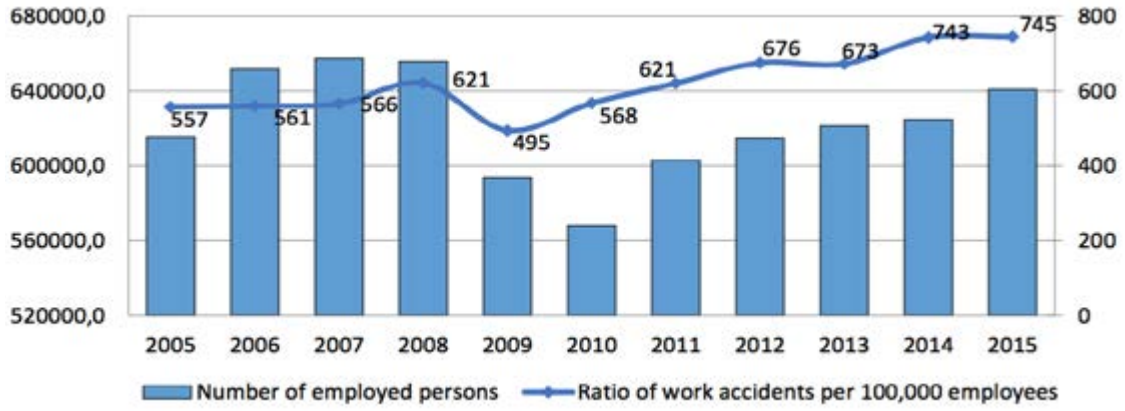


Figure 7. Number of employed (aged 15-74) and work accidents per 100,000 employees

The largest number of work accidents was registered in Tallinn, Harju County, and Tartu County. Comparing different counties, the number of registered work accidents has increased in seven and decreased in eight counties. In Lääne-Viru, Järva, and Hiiu Counties, the ratio of workplace accidents has increased compared to the year prior. A number of target inspections are thus planned in these counties in 2016.

Table 1. Number of registered work accidents in Estonia by county, 2011–2015

Work accidents in Estonia by county						
County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Trend
Tallinn	1063	1269	1209	1293	1292	
Harju	497	516	517	698	772	
Tartu	500	587	601	631	590	
Lääne-Viru	308	362	333	338	443	
Ida-Viru	275	246	272	285	314	
Pärnu	199	205	196	236	256	
Järva	141	115	154	152	201	
Viljandi	125	139	172	166	159	
Saare	111	158	126	133	105	
Jõgeva	102	81	67	105	92	
Rapla	51	68	54	77	78	
Võru	59	48	92	111	78	
Valga	45	52	51	86	71	
Lääne	57	49	55	70	64	
Põlva	49	65	60	69	60	
Hiiu	17	22	12	6	12	

*Excl. accidents occurring outside Estonia

Based on the ratio per 1,000 employees, Lääne-Viru County remains the county with the largest number of work accidents with a ratio of 16.3. One of the factors in the high ratio of workplace accidents in Lääne-Viru County may be the fact that the county is home to large food and wood processing undertakings where the number of work accidents unfortunately tends to be higher.

Compared to 2014, the number of work accidents per 100 000 employees has increased the most in Järva, Lääne-Viru, Hiiu, and Harju Counties. In the year prior, the number of accidents had gone up in Jõgeva, Valga, Rapla, and Lääne Counties. Thus, in 2015, more visits were made compared to the year before in Rapla, Valga, and Lääne Counties. In ten counties, fewer work accidents were registered in the previous year than in 2014.

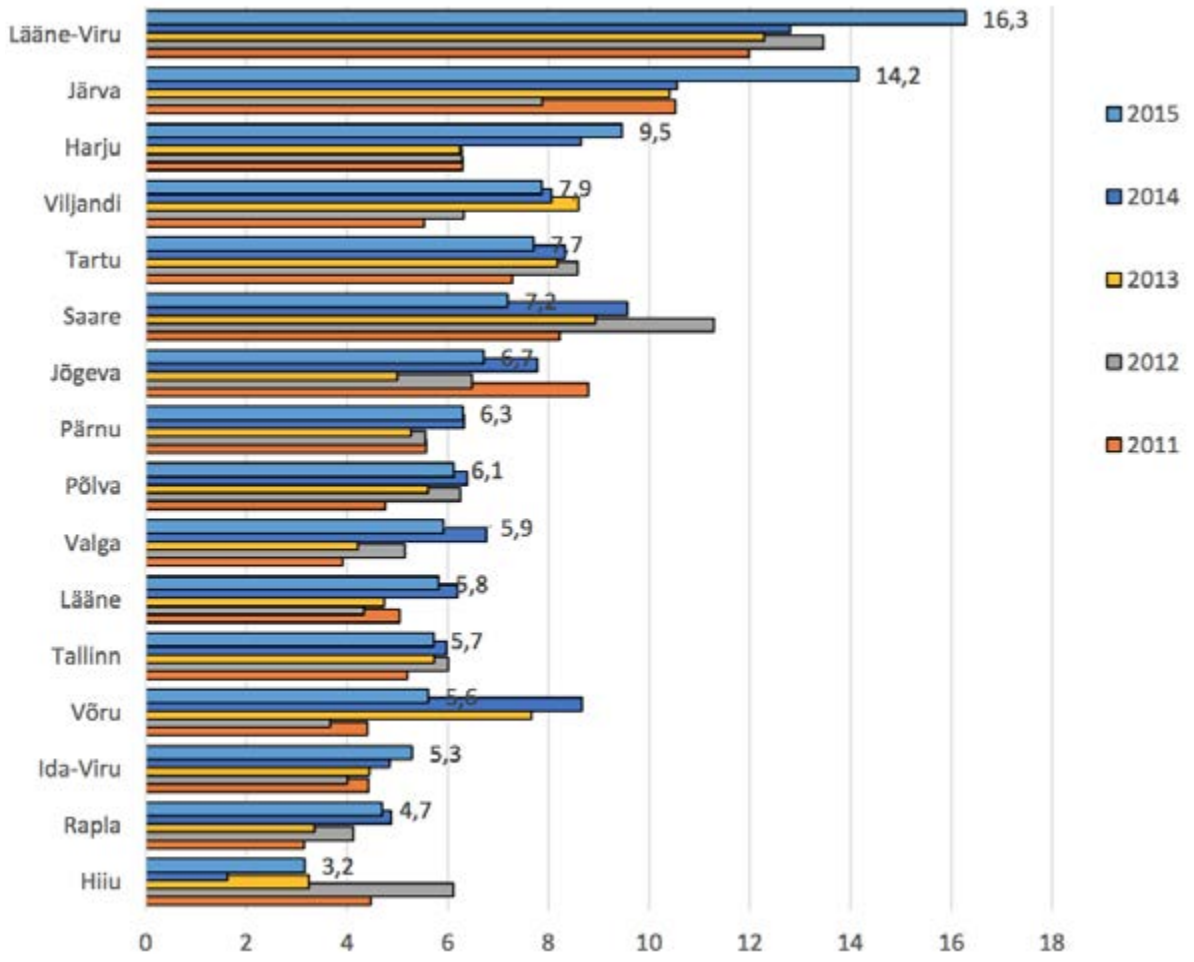


Figure 8. Ratio of work accidents per 1000 employees by county

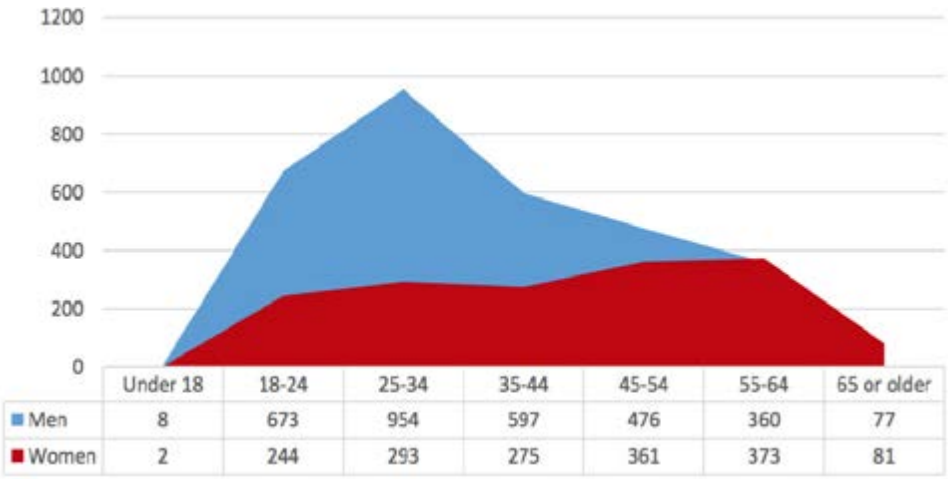
The number of work accidents involving Estonian workers occurring outside the Republic of Estonia remained nearly unchanged compared to the year before (respectively 184 and 181 accidents). No Estonian employees died in workplace accidents outside Estonia. Most work accidents occur to Estonian construction workers in Finland. The number of registered workplace accidents involving Estonian employees has sharply increased in Spain; this is mainly related to registered incidents involving members of Estonian Defence Forces in the course of a large NATO exercise.

Table 2. Registered work accidents involving Estonian employees outside the Republic of Estonia

Work accidents involving Estonian employees occurring outside Estonia					
Place	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Finland	69	64	87	80	90
Sweden	9	18	15	26	20
Latvia	7	16	14	27	19
Norway	10	3	11	8	12
Spain			1	2	10
Germany	11	3	8	4	10
Poland	2	3	3		4
Lithuania	4		2	4	3
Outside EU (country not specified)	22	54	62	22	3
France	2	5	5	2	3
Other EU	10	9	4	9	7
Total outside Estonia	**146**	**175**	**212**	**184**	**181**

Overview of other circumstances of work accidents

In 2015, 3,145 men and 1,629 women were injured in work accidents, which means that 66% of work accidents occurred to men (in 2014, 2,982 men and 1,653 women were injured, with 64% of accidents occurring to men). The number of workplace accidents was the highest in the group of men aged 25–34. As regards women, the number of work accidents was the highest in the 55–64 age group. Whereas in men, the main risk group has remained the same; in women, the number of work accidents was the highest in the 45–54 age group in 2014.



	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 or older
Men	8	673	954	597	476	360	77
Women	2	244	293	275	361	373	81

Figure 9. People injured in work accidents by sex and age, 2015

The Labour Inspectorate collects data on work accidents based on the methodology of the European Statistical Office (Eurostat). Work accidents are analysed based on the description of the circumstances which cause the accidents to happen. The important keywords here being: specific physical activity or the activities of the employee at the time of the accident; deviation – i.e. what went wrong, why the work accident happened, and contact – mode of injury through which the employee was injured.

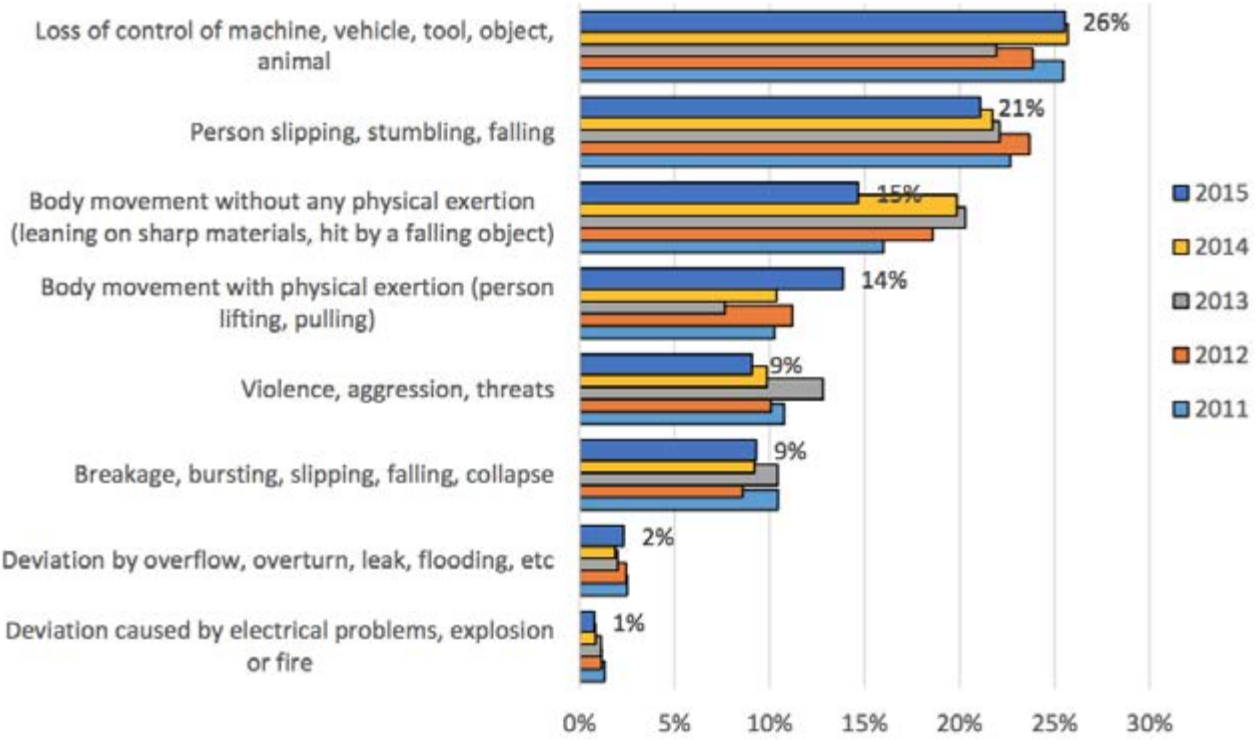


Figure 10. Deviation causing work accident, 2011–2015

In 2015, most work accidents were caused by loss of control over machinery, work equipment, means of transport or animals; 26% of all registered work accidents were caused by these factors. The second largest cause of work accidents include slips, trips, and falls. These types of accidents form 21% of the total number of work accidents; in the case of serious work accidents, this ratio increases to one-third. Compared to previous years, however, this year saw a decline in accidents where the employee was occupied with their work process and doing nothing wrong per se, but slipped on the working surface due to loss of concentration or leaning on an object with unstable support that hits the worker.

Figure 11 shows how different factors cause bodily injuries of different severity. For instance, the largest number of minor injuries is caused by contact with sharp objects. Serious injuries or death are mainly caused by falling, different objects falling and hitting the victim, or being crushed by an object.

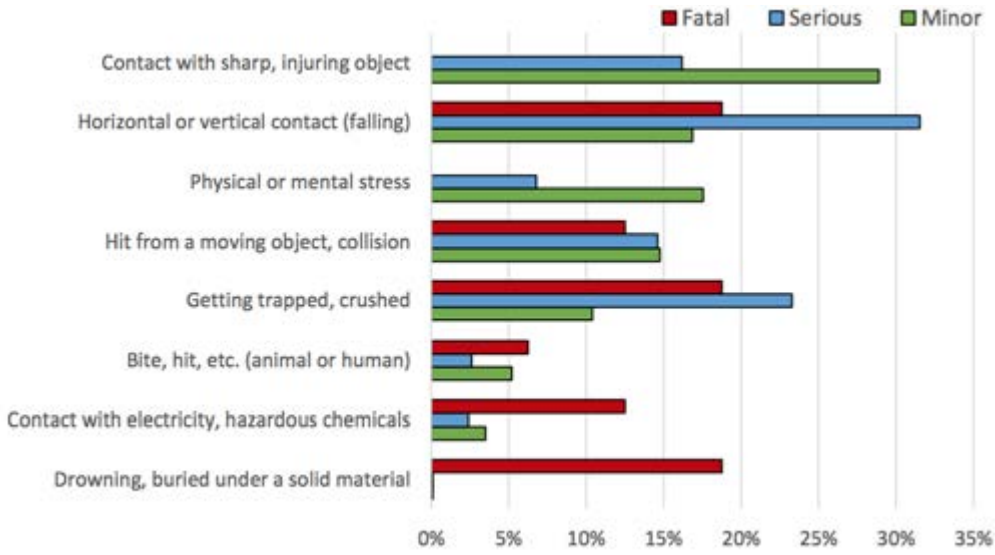


Figure 11. Types of contact causing injuries to workers (proportion by severity), 2015

Workdays lost due to workplace accidents

The Labour Inspectorate receives data on days of incapacity for work with a time lag, as a result of which we can only evaluate the data until the year 2014.

The average number of days of incapacity for work caused by work accidents shows the change in their proportion over the years. In the case of minor workplace accidents, people either do not request a sick leave certificate or only get one for a very short period of time. Injuries like these formed 44% of all work accidents in 2014.

EU consolidated work accident statistics only include workplace accidents which resulted in more than four days of incapacity for work. Whereas in 2004 the proportion of such cases was 84% of the total registered number of accidents at work, then in 2014 it was 57%.
Serious workplace accidents or accidents with serious consequences are thus cases where the employee was on sick leave for more than 30 days. Cases like these formed 22% of all work accidents in 2014. This figure is the lowest in the last ten years.

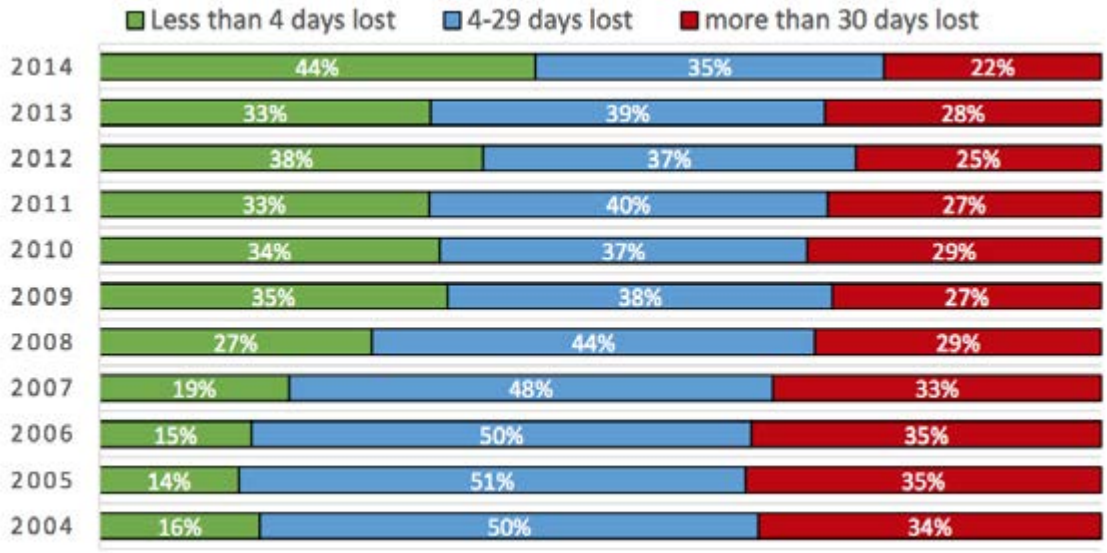
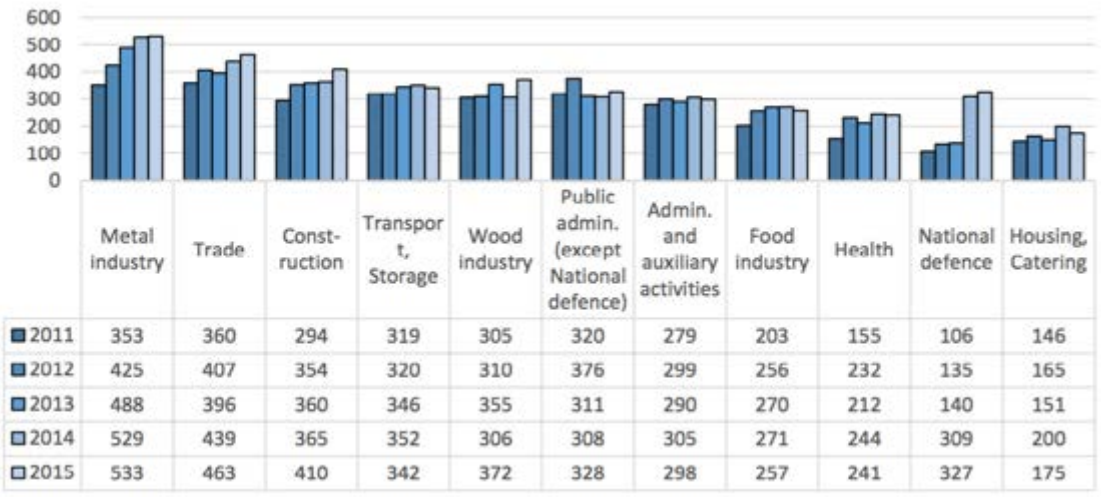


Figure 12. Proportion of days of incapacity for work, 2004–2014

The statistics of different areas of activity shows that most accidents were registered last year in the areas of metal processing (533), trade (463), and construction (410). In the area of national defence, the number of workplace accidents has nearly tripled compared to five years ago. In health, food processing, transport and storage, and administration and auxiliary activities, the number of work accidents has undergone a slight year-over-year decrease.

The largest percentage increase in work accidents compared to 2014 has taken place in wood processing (21%) and construction (12%).

In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate mainly investigated incidents related to injuries suffered while working on stationary equipment or falling from height. The majority of the investigated incidents were accidents related to work equipment: the safety devices of the equipment either did not meet the requirements, had been removed, or the control system of the work equipment was unsafe. The Inspectorate also investigated cases where the construction and location of safety guards did not allow adjusting them based on the material being processed or where the safety requirements presented by the manufacturer were consciously ignored. For instance, in one of the investigated incidents, an employee was cutting timber on swing saw. While cutting the material, the right hand of the worker moved into the work zone of the saw blade and caught the worker's sleeve while pulling the handle with the left hand. The worker injured their right hand. The accident was caused by the inability to adjust the blade guard, as it had been rigidly welded to the body. Another factor contributing to the accident were the unsuitable clothes worn by the worker – broad-sleeved work jacket.



	Metal industry	Trade	Const-ruction	Transport, Storage	Wood industry	Public admin. (except National defence)	Admin. and auxiliary activities	Food industry	Health	National defence	Housing, Catering
2011	353	360	294	319	305	320	279	203	155	106	146
2012	425	407	354	320	310	376	299	256	232	135	165
2013	488	396	360	346	355	311	290	270	212	140	151
2014	529	439	365	352	306	308	305	271	244	309	200
2015	533	463	410	342	372	328	298	257	241	327	175

Figure 13. Areas of activity with the largest number of work accidents in Estonia

958 serious accidents were registered in 2015; in 215 cases, the decision was made to investigate the accident. 10 cases were closed due to not qualifying as a workplace accident. In these cases, work had either been performed based on a contract under the law of obligations or the worker was not acting in the interests of the employer at the moment of the accident. The typical example here is the construction industry where contracts for services are commonly used. The Labour Inspectorate has begun re-evaluating contracts under the law of obligations as relationships based on an employment contract if the contract evinces the characteristics of an employment relationship.

One unfortunate incident did not qualify as a work accident. At the end of the workday, an employee was taking their pills in the rest room. By accident, they washed these down with drain cleaner, rather than water. The employee suffered serious damage to their health. In this case, the employee was found to have not been acting in the interests of their employer; the employer, meanwhile, was held responsible for violating the rules of storing dangerous substances.

In 2015, the largest number of serious work accidents took place in construction (119), metal processing (100), forestry (96), transportation and storage (86), and public administration and national defence (80). Whereas in the field of public administration and national defence, serious work accidents are generally related to trips and falls resulting in broken bones, the causes of serious workplace accidents tend to vary more in other fields.

The number of serious work accidents in the construction industry has been growing steadily in spite of the Labour Inspectorate significantly increasing inspections of construction enterprises in 2015. We are thus forced to admit that Labour Inspectorate supervision alone is insufficient for avoiding workplace accidents – both the employers and employees must constantly contribute to the safety of the work environment.

Incidents related to falling make up one-third of serious work accidents. The second most common type of accidents include incidents where the worker is either injured as a result of the actions of another employee or is hit by a falling object. The third most common type of accidents is related to using machinery and handling processed materials, where the employee loses control of the processed material.

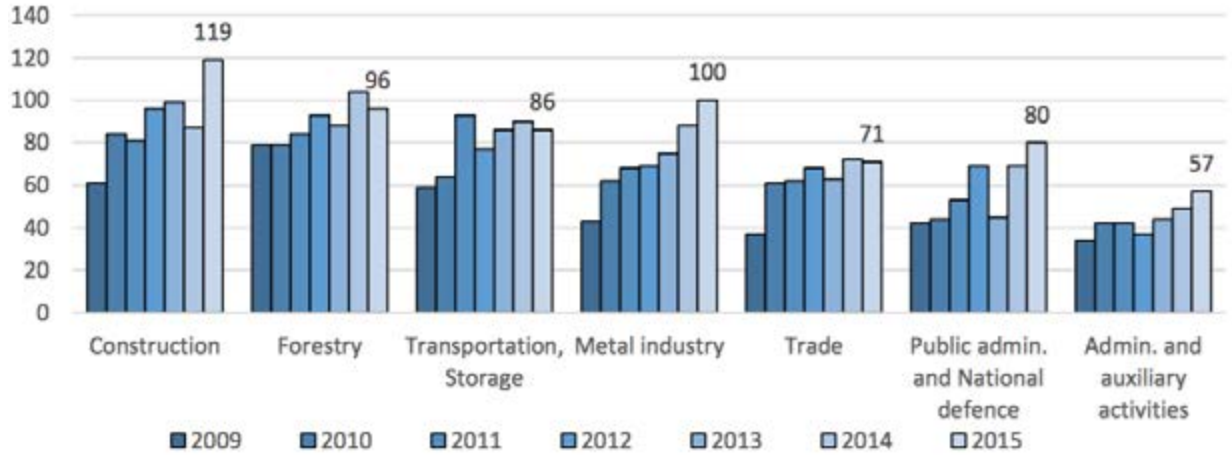


Figure 14. Areas of activity with largest number of serious work accidents

The worker was producing car parts on a self-built stamping press. On the day of the accident, the worker placed a part on the bed of the stamping press, pressed the start button on the control panel and placed their left hand on the tool of the stamping press, which moved inside the machine under the acrylic guard along with the worker's hand. The worker was using their hand to hold a part while the machine was working and, unfortunately, the press crushed three fingers on their hand. Even though the press was designed for two-handed operation, the switches did not require constant pressing. This allowed the forming process to continue even after the finger was removed from the switch, creating the preconditions for the accident.

The first rule of safety requirements is that safety guards or safety devices must be used for blocking danger zones, or the principle of the control system has to be changed. To avoid accidents, both the employer and the employee must make sure that the safety devices of the work equipment are in their proper location and properly adjusted. The manufacturer had a reason for adding them to the equipment. The claims of employees that safety guards hinder and slow down their work are no excuse for ignoring their existence. Safety requirements have often been established at the price of injuries, meaning that somewhere in the world, someone has been injured due to the lack of protective devices.

Work accidents related to falling from heights often take place during roof works due to missing or not used safety equipment. Many work accidents also take place while working on a ladder due to the ladder being unsuited for this kind of work. Ladders are to be used for climbing to the necessary height; they are not designed for work of longer duration. Incidents where the ladder slips away from under a person or falls over are quite frequent. Instances of the frame of the ladder breaking are not rare, either. Ladders should be used for working only when work equipment with a more secure support cannot be used – for instance, due to a lack of room. In such cases, the ladder will have no room for slipping or falling.

The worker was working on a ladder, at a height of about 2 m, when the ladder, which had been supported against a wall, started slipping on slippery concrete and fell on the ground along with the worker. The worker injured their foot.
The worker was drilling out a rivet with a hand held drill while standing on a ladder. When the rivet fell out, the loose metal sheet started to slide downwards. To stop the part from falling, the worker reached out a hand to catch the part, but lost their balance and fell on the floor, injuring their right shoulder.

When the employee has to work in a high place, they must be provided with safety equipment and instructed on using it. Safety equipment must be worn from the beginning of the dangerous task until its completion. Starting from heights over two metres, additional safety measures must be taken. This height counts as temporary work at height. In addition to a thorough initial and in-service training, such accidents can also be prevented through changes in work organization, which allow avoiding routine, fatigue, and distractions. It is also important to have regular breaks in order to avoid accidents at work.

A better overview of the work environment situation is provided by the ratio of work accidents per 100,000 employees.

Based on 2015 data, the most hazardous areas of activity were wood processing, food processing, administration and auxiliary activities, and public administration and national defence. Even though in the majority of the fields, the number of workplace accidents per 100,000 employees has remained the same or decreased, a significant increase has taken place in the field of public administration and national defence, in arts and entertainment, and in real estate.

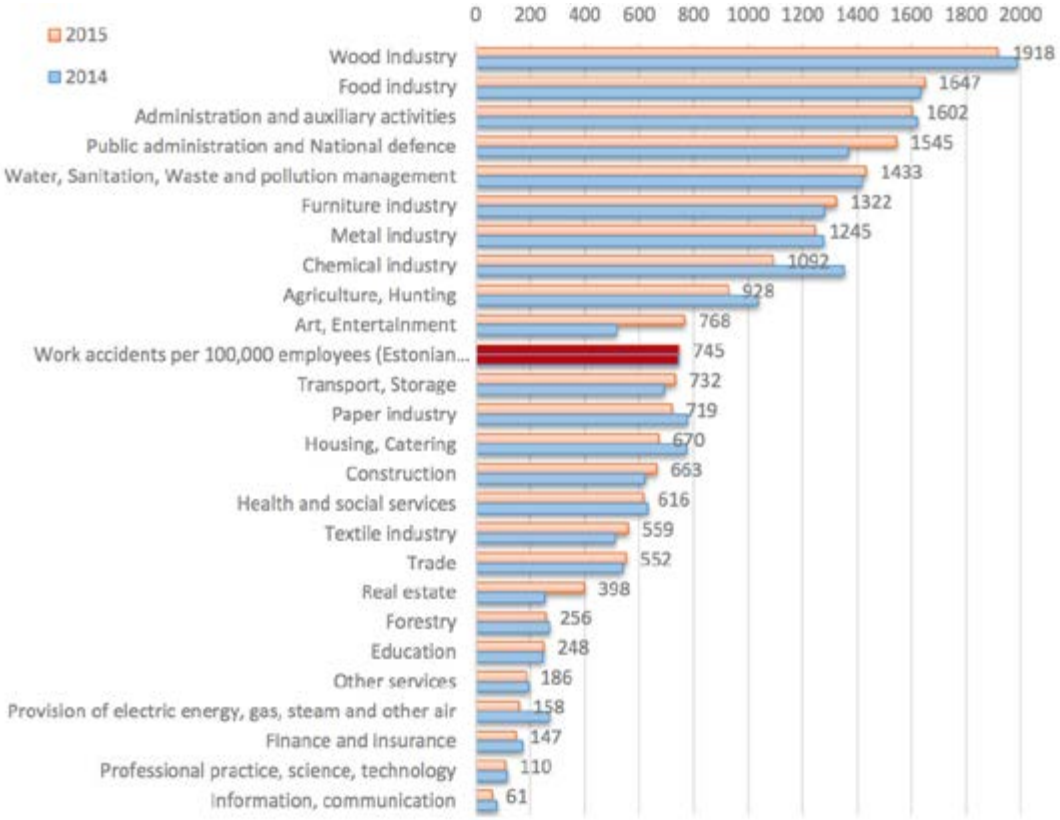


Figure 15. Ratio of work accidents per 100,000 employees by area of activity (2014 vs. 2015)

The ratio is also significantly affected by changes in the number of people employed in the field. The smaller the number of employees in the industry, the more each work accident affects the ratio of workplace accidents in this field.

In several manufacturing industries – wood processing, metal industry, chemical industry, and paper industry – the ratio of work accidents per 100,000 employees has somewhat decreased compared to 2014. The number of people employed in manufacturing industries has decreased compared to the previous period. Even though the number of work accidents in the construction industry is high, their ratio per 100,000 employees is below the Estonian average of 745.

16 fatal work accidents occurred in 2015, for a ratio of 2.5 per 100,000 employees (in 2014, these numbers were 16 and 2.6, respectively). A total of 36 fatal incidents were registered by the Labour Inspectorate. In 19 cases, the investigation was terminated due to the incident not qualifying as a work accident within the meaning of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

No single cause can be highlighted in fatal accidents. In many cases, the human factor played a significant role, making it difficult for the employer to foresee the work accident. In these cases, the employee made an impulsive decision with tragic consequences. At the same time, in many cases, a dangerous situation could have been avoided through the timely interruption of the employer.

A work accident with one of the largest numbers of victims in the history of the Labour Inspectorate took place in 2015. A failure in the ash removal system occurred at the construction site of the Auvere power plant, resulting in the expulsion of a large amount of ash. 9 people were injured in the accident, with 6 suffering serious injuries and

3 minor injuries. Fortunately, nobody was killed in this major accident.

Fatal accidents that took place last year:
- A worker was hit by a forklift truck working in the premises of a manufacturing plant;
- A worker not officially employed fell from a height at a construction site;
- A heavy object fell out of a container, hitting a worker;
- A worker fell down a steep flight of stairs;
- A rescue worker died from allergic reaction after getting stung by a wasp;
- A worker was hit by an assembly of a milling machine;
- A worker was hit by a falling metal structure;
- A worker was pinned between a crane and a vessel on a floating dock;
- A member of the board died in a road accident;
- A dump truck driver was pinned between the truck and an excavator;
- A worker fell into a gas shaft;
- A boom loader hit a high voltage line and the driver received a shock;
- A person drowned as a result of gangway collapse;
- A bus driver was hit by a moving bus in the garage;
- Two miners died from poisoning underground.

The causes of work accidents, including fatal work accidents, can generally be classified into two types. In half of the cases, the employer has not sufficiently ensured the correspondence of the workplace or the work equipment to safety requirements and the enterprise lacks systematic organization of internal work environment supervision or occupational health and safety management. On the other hand, however, employees themselves are responsible for the prevention of accidents at work and must adhere to the safety requirements or refuse to perform actions that could endanger their health. The important factor here is cooperation between employees and employers. Safety requirements must be constantly monitored. Work environment risks must be evaluated and internal work environment supervision must be functional, ensuring, inter alia, that adequate measures are taken if occupational safety requirements are found to be violated. It is of utmost importance that workers receive appropriate training and instruction before they start work and, if necessary, at regular intervals.

The worker had worked as a welder in this enterprise for 18 years. He lifted a square tube truss section up on supports to weld it. The total length of the truss section was 11.3 m, height 1.3 m and weight, about 700 kg. The worker only used small clamps for securing the truss section to the supports like the older and more experienced employees were accustomed to do. Unfortunately, the clamps gave out and the steel truss section weighing nearly 700 kg fell on the welder. The trainee standing next to them managed to escape at the last moment. The welder suffered fatal injuries. Unfortunately, the "experienced" were violating safety requirements and also taught incorrect work methods to the young trainee. The young worker was probably saved by not trusting the stability of the truss section and the words of their instructor.

1.2 Occupational and work-related diseases

An occupational disease is a disease caused by a work environment risk factor enumerated in the list of occupational diseases or the nature of the work. The list of occupational diseases is established by Regulation No. 66 of the Minister of Social Affairs of 09 May 2005.

A work-related disease is a disease caused by a work environment risk factor that is not considered an occupational disease.

In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate registered 50 new cases of occupational disease. In 34 of these cases, an occupational disease investigation was conducted. In 16 cases, proceedings were not initiated based on the rules of procedure for investigating occupational diseases established at the Labour Inspectorate.[2] 17 men and 33 women were diagnosed with an occupational disease. 128 notifications of work-related diseases were registered.

The shortest time for developing an occupational disease has been less than one year; the longest period is 41 years. The youngest person having an occupational disease is aged 28, the oldest, aged 64.

The main cause of occupational disease is still physiological risk factors; five cases were caused by a chemical risk factor and four cases by a physical risk factor. No occupational diseases caused by biological risk factors were diagnosed in 2015.

[2] The law establishes that a labour inspector shall investigate all fatal occupational accidents and, if necessary, cases of occupational disease and other occupational accidents. The necessity of initiating an investigation is established based on the circumstances of the case and whether the investigation can yield recommendations for preventing similar cases of occupational disease in the future.

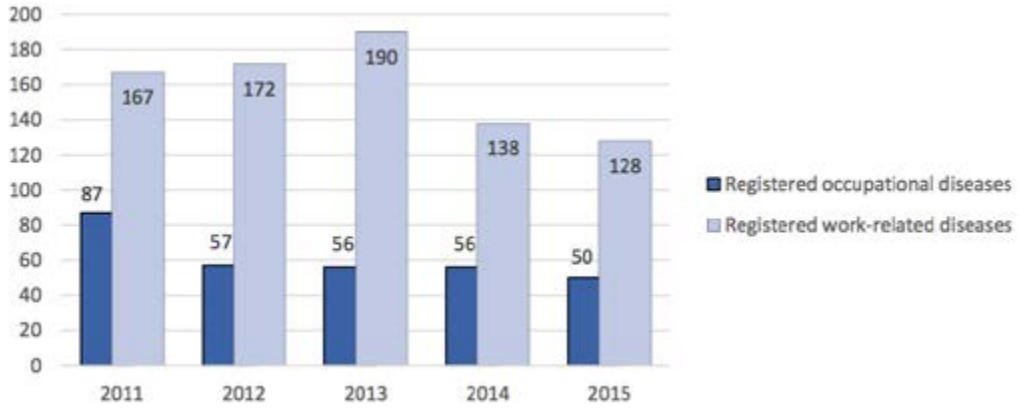


Figure 16. Registered cases of occupational disease and work-related disease, 2011–2015

The number of diagnosed cases of occupational disease has declined somewhat compared to 2014. Unfortunately, this cannot be considered to have resulted from an improvement in the work environment. Causes should rather be searched from procedures related to diagnosis of occupational diseases, and the lenient attitude of occupational health physicians towards allowing a person with health damage back to work is also somewhat problematic. The number of work-related diseases (WRD), which can in most cases, although not always, serve as an early diagnosis for an occupational disease, has, however, gone down. WRDs are mostly diagnosed in the course of regular medical examinations that the employers are required to organize based on the procedure for the medical examination of employees. The occurrence of WRDs is, thus, a warning sign showing that work-related diseases are nowhere near disappearing from the society.

The statistics on different areas of activity show that the risk of work-related damage to health is the greatest for workers in trade, metal processing, wood processing, agriculture, textile industry, and food industry.

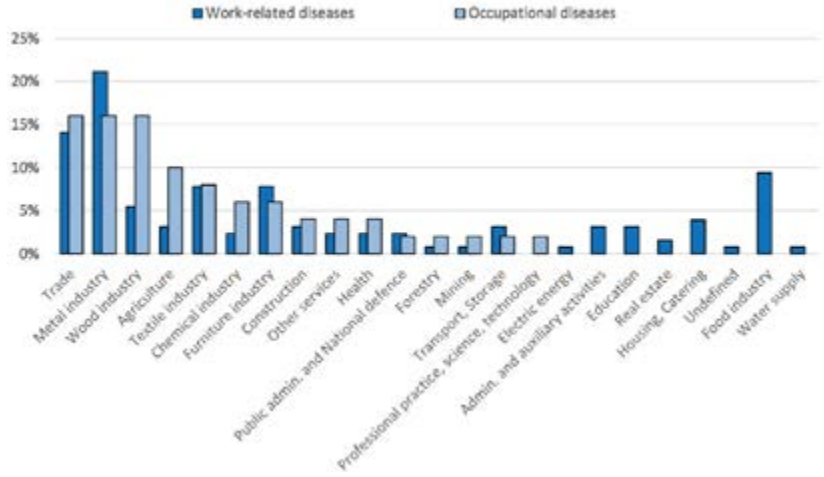


Figure 17. Proportion of people with WRDs by area of activity (2015)

The conclusions of occupational disease investigations show that employers fail to evaluate properly the effect on work environment risk factors on people's health. Health risks are usually underestimated. The biggest problem continues to be physical overexertion at work. Unfortunately, sufficient attention is still not paid to workplace risk factors whose effect is not visible immediately but only after a certain period of time.

Another problem area alongside the lack of risk assessment or underestimation of risks is the lack of an action plan or the insufficiency of measures taken for removing risk factors. This shows that the employer has not associated work environment risk assessment with establishing an action plan and is unable to perceive the usefulness of the information gained from risk assessment.

It is extremely important to follow the requirement for the medical examination of employees. While medical examination does not allow avoiding damage to health, it facilitates quicker detection of work-related health

risks. Measures for avoiding the development or worsening of damage to employees' health can be planned in cooperation with an occupational health physician and the enterprise's work environment specialist.

The last problem we should highlight here are the deficiencies in instructing employees. Employees often admit that they have not been shown a safety manual containing instructions for avoiding health disorders that may result from physical overexertion. In some cases, the instructions are not appropriate to the circumstances and contain excessive unrelated information. In other cases, the manual is available but the worker has forgotten the requirements presented therein. A single instruction session is clearly insufficient and the employer should hold more frequent trainings where the employees are informed of the effect of work environment risk factors on health and the necessary measures and means that can be used for preventing or reducing the effect of risk factors.

To reduce the number of disease cases, the workload of employees should be evaluated to judge whether all tasks can be performed by the current number of employees. The workload may be too high because of an insufficient number of employees. Breaks and relaxation exercises will not be enough if the workload is too high. Thus, managing occupational health and safety in the work environment is a complex task requiring an in-depth analysis where all the aspects of work are objectively analysed and evaluated.

Main work environment risk factors resulting in occupational diseases still include repetitive stereotypical operations and wrong work posture. Unfortunately, the employees fail to understand that repetitive operations or unsuitable working position can have a negative effect on health. They often fail to see the connection between physical overexertion and the resulting health disorders. Instead, they tend to associate back or neck pain with age, rather than working conditions. This despite the fact that the main cause of diseases related to physical overexertion is excessive workload and incorrect work practices.

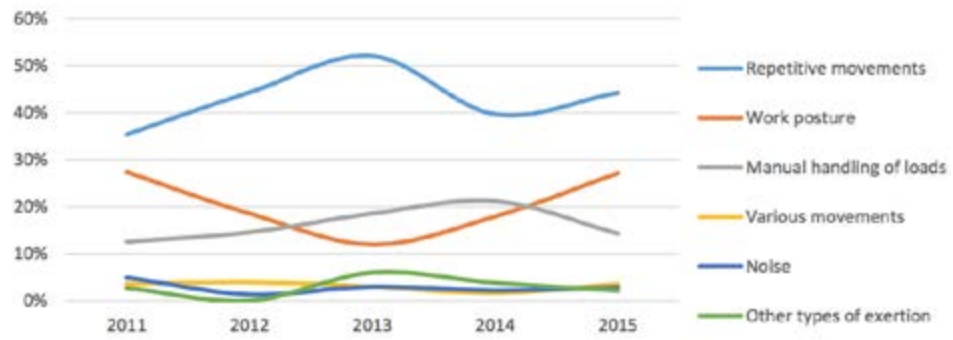


Figure 18. Main work environment risk factors causing occupational diseases

The diagnoses of work-related diseases show that workers' health is affected the most by physiological risk factors: repetitive stereotypical operations and forced postures leading to exhaustion. On the positive side, we can see that the manual handling of loads, the main risk factor causing occupational diseases, has undergone a significant decline compared to 2014.

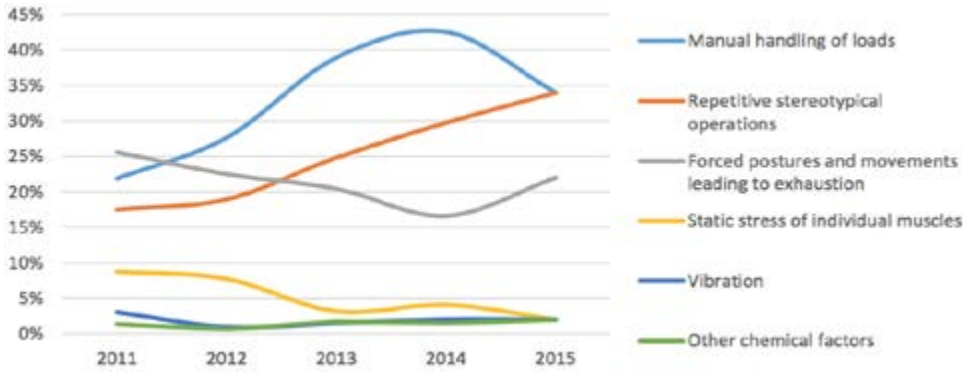


Figure 19. Main work environment risk factors causing work-related diseases

Five years ago, occupational diseases were diagnosed most frequently in workers from the 45–54 age group. From 2013 on, however, the occurrence of occupational diseases has been the highest in the 55–64 age group. This indicates that the average age of employed persons has increased, but also shows that the occupational health awareness of this age group needs to be improved.

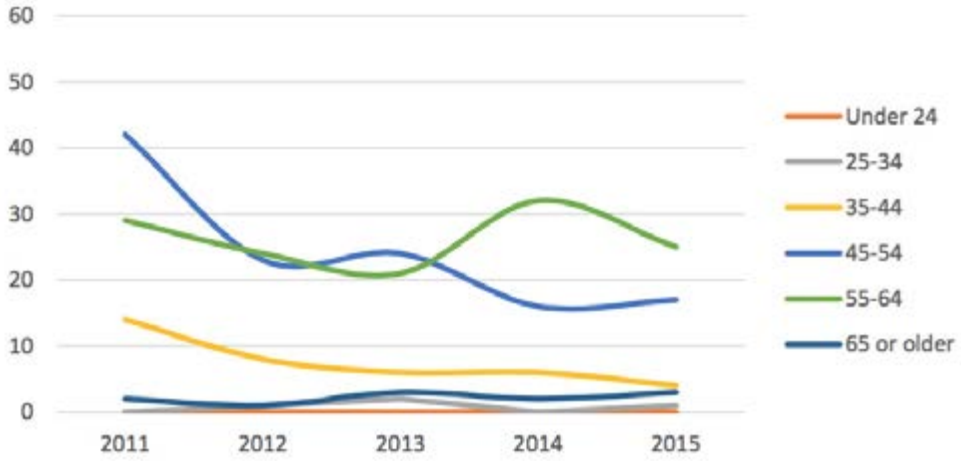


Figure 20. Number of employees suffering from occupational diseases by age group

Last year, the largest number of work-related diseases was diagnosed in the 45–54 age group. Although the number of older workers suffering from WRDs has decreased over the last two years, their ratio has not. A worrying fact is that the occurrence of work-related diseases has significantly increased in the 25–34 age group compared to 2014.

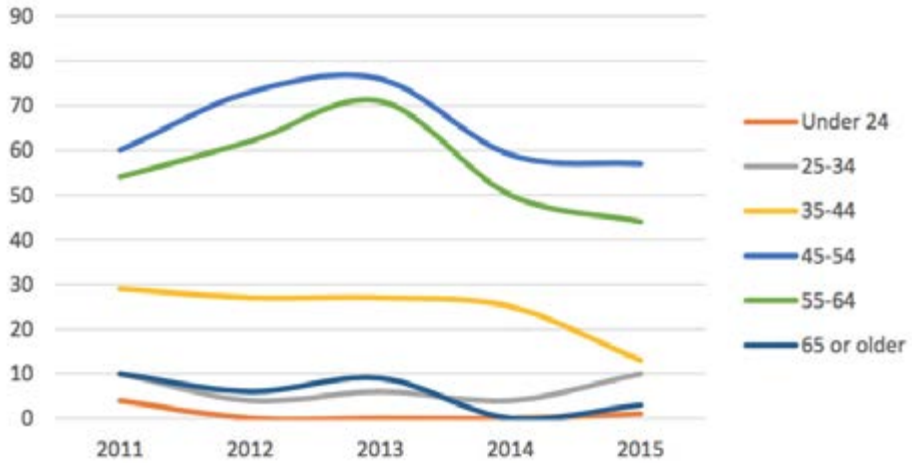


Figure 21. Number of employees suffering from WRDs by age group

The gender statistics of work-related diseases show that women are more likely to be diagnosed with an occupational or work-related disease at a younger age than men are. Women either undergo medical examination earlier or take their health problems more seriously and are not afraid to discuss them with the person doing the medical examination.

As of 2011, more detailed overviews of different types of occupational and work-related diseases have been published by the Estonian Health Board. Summaries of work-related disease statistics can be found at: http://terviseamet.ee/tervishoid/toeoetervishoid/aruanded.html

2. STATE SUPERVISION

The number of employed people increased in 2015 in relation to the previous years; the number of enterprises also increased. The Labour Inspectorate itself was also more visible in 2015 than the year prior – the number of inspections increased and thematic target inspections were performed, which allowed focussing on more problematic areas. Even though a larger number of violations were detected in the course of state supervision, the number of enterprises inspected also increased (5,347 visits took place in 2015, compared to 4,805 in 2014.)

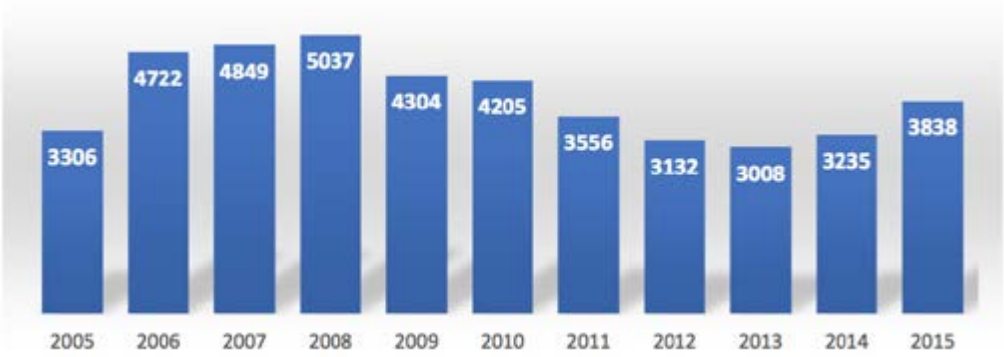


Figure 22. Number of enterprises subject to OH and OS inspections, 2005–2015

Violations were detected at 91% of all enterprises subject to state supervision. The most common problems Estonian enterprises face are training and instruction of workers, organization of medical examination, and selection and appointment of workers involved in occupational health and safety. All three of these activities are, however, crucial for avoiding work accidents and damage to workers' health. There are still problems with movement paths and handling of hazardous chemicals. In some sectors, improvements have taken place in the manual handling of loads, but this risk factor still exists in agriculture and food industry.

Labour inspectors find that a significant number of employers tend to contribute nothing to the work environment before the labour inspector's visit. On the plus side, it can be noted that the work environment in most enterprises is significantly improved after the inspector's visit. In 2015, 88% of labour inspector's notices were complied with on time, and thus the need for the implementation of sanctions has diminished.

Comparing different counties, compliance with occupational health and safety and labour relation requirements was verified, work accidents and cases of occupational disease were investigated, and target inspections were conducted most often in enterprises and institutions operating in Harju County (1,578 visits in total). Inspection volume increased compared to 2014 in Harju, Pärnu, Rapla, Tartu, Järva, Lääne, Valga, and Hiiu Counties.

The number of complaints related to work environment has increased (199 visits following a complaint, compared to 159 in 2014). This means that both workers and fellow citizens are no longer likely to leave problems in the work environment unreported. This increase in awareness and highlighting problems will, in the long run, improve the work environment as a whole and shape the society's opinion of safety culture. The increased number of complaints and tips show that the awareness of the general population of the existence of the Labour Inspectorate and its role in work environment supervision has increased. The general population's trust in us has increased and they believe turning to the Labour Inspectorate helps make their work environment better and safer.

Based on 2015 state supervision results, sectors requiring more attention are:

- Based on violations – construction, trade, accommodation and catering, and transport;
- Based on number of work accidents – metal processing, trade, construction, transport, and wood processing;
- Based on work-related diseases – metal processing, wood processing, agriculture, and food processing;
- Based on labour disputes – construction, trade, and transport.

2.1 Occupational safety supervision

The main priority of the Labour Inspectorate for 2015 was the reduction of the number of serious or fatal work accidents. For this purpose, an increase in the volume of state supervision and an improvement in the efficiency, or quality, of supervision were envisioned.

Work environment inspections are conducted based on the risk rate of the enterprise. Risk rate is calculated based on the risk level attributed to the area of activity of the enterprise, the time of the last visit, the results of previous inspections, the number of employees, and the number of work accidents, occupational diseases and work-related diseases. Each enterprise has an individual risk rate and the enterprises and institutions with the highest risk rate are chosen for inspection.

3,836 enterprises were inspected in the course of the supervision of compliance with occupational health and safety requirements. Occupational health and safety supervision volume increased by 14% over 2014, even though the number of labour inspectors was the same as last year. In addition to enterprises inspected based on their risk rate, we also started to carry out inspections based on random sampling. Based on the random sample, each active enterprise registered with the Commercial Register had an equal and independent chance to become one of the inspected enterprises. 486 enterprises inspected based on random sampling were picked from 53,422 enterprises.

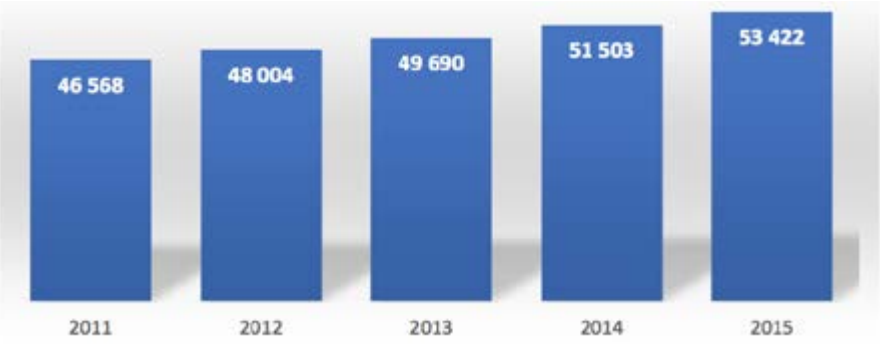
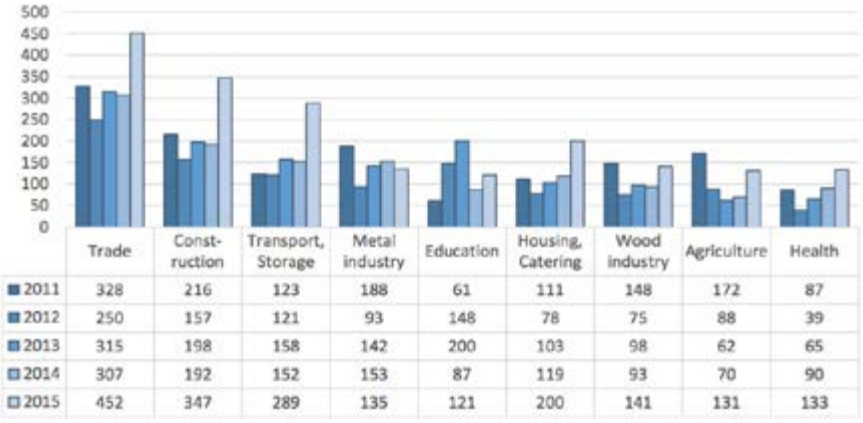


Figure 23. Number of enterprises subject to supervision in the LI database

Looking at different areas of activity, enterprises from the sectors of trade (452), construction (347), and transport and warehousing (289) were inspected most often in 2015. Figure 24 shows that inspection volume also increased in these areas of activity compared to previous years; this mainly resulted from the risk assessment attributed to these areas.



	Trade	Const-ruction	Transport, Storage	Metal industry	Education	Housing, Catering	Wood industry	Agriculture	Health
2011	328	216	123	188	61	111	148	172	87
2012	250	157	121	93	148	78	75	88	39
2013	315	198	158	142	200	103	98	62	65
2014	307	192	152	153	87	119	93	70	90
2015	452	347	289	135	121	200	141	131	133

Figure 24. Areas of activity most frequently subject to work environment inspections, 2011–2015

Assessments given during work environment inspections

In 2015, labour inspectors inspecting Estonian enterprises gave a 'good' grade to 63% of work environment activities during the initial visit. This is a 4% improvement compared to 2014. However, this improvement did not come from enterprises whose work environment factors had been assessed as bad or rather bad in the previous period. The situation actually deteriorated rather significantly (5%) in enterprises that had previously been solid upper-mid of the pack.

Table 3. Assessments given to work environment risk factors and employers' activities during work environment inspections

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Good	59%	58%	61%	59%	63%
Rather good	22%	23%	20%	21%	16%
Rather bad	11%	9%	10%	11%	13%
Bad	7%	10%	9%	9%	8%

The majority of employers are interested in creating a safer work environment independent of inspections. Unfortunately, there are still some employers who tend to neglect occupational safety until the labour inspector's intervention. Employers list lack of knowledge in this area as the main reason for ignoring occupational health and safety issues. Another reason often cited is the lack of time.

Assessments of risk factors present in the work environment of Estonian enterprises are relatively similar to previous years. The percentages shown in Figure 25 are calculated based on the number of assessed enterprises where this risk factor was present. Areas that have previously posed the biggest problem were still the most problematic in 2015; these include handling of hazardous chemicals, risk of exposure to moving parts of equipment, risk of falling from height, and problems concerning movement paths. Compared to 2014, there have been some improvements in the last two risk factors. At the same time, the situation has worsened in relation to vibration, dust, and the manual handling of loads.

A positive development worthy of highlighting is the improved situation in internal climate, noise, and forced postures and movements. This improvement is the result of target inspections and information campaigns related to occupational health. In the recent years, both the Labour Inspectorate and our social partners have been very vocal on bone and muscle disorders and their causes. In addition, various instructional materials have been distributed to Estonian enterprises in the course of the Inspectorate's information campaigns; the subject has also been brought to the attention of employers and employees in the course of inspections and consultations.

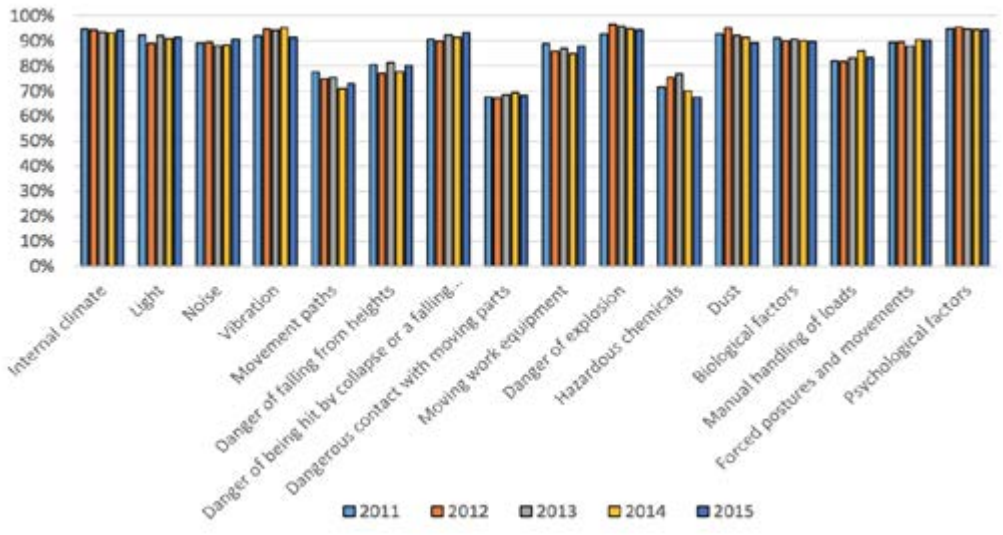


Figure 25. Assessments of risk factors present in work environment (positive assessment – % of enterprises assessed)

Labour inspectors continue to identify many problems related to movement paths and the danger of falling from heights. In a significant number of enterprises, guardrails are lacking, loose openings are not properly labelled or protective covers are missing, movement paths are not properly marked and maintained, etc. Violations are also found where wires, cables or other objects are located in movement paths or raw materials or products have temporarily been stored there. All these obstruct the movement of employees and may cause work accidents related to trips and falls.

Problematic aspects and activities highlighted in the assessments of employers' activities (Figure 26) have also remained unchanged. Employers' actions related to the training and instruction of employees were most often assessed as bad or rather bad by labour inspectors. More than half the enterprises evaluated in 2015 received a negative assessment; the situation has further deteriorated compared to the year prior. At the same time, insufficient instruction of employees is one of the main reasons of work accidents.

There is also reason for dissatisfaction with the referral of employees to medical examination and issuing personal protective equipment to employees. In the last two years, inspections have helped uncover a significantly increased number of enterprises with no identified first aid provider or with deficiencies in the organization of first aid. The number of enterprises and institutions with no work environment specialist established or with deficiencies in the organization of working time has also gone up.

A young man aged 20 commenced work at a warehouse on 12 August. Barely a week later, on 21 August, he had a work accident where a forklift truck was used for transporting a 500 kg stack of steel. While fixing the load to the fork of the truck, the sling gave way and the load fell on the victim's foot, causing a serious injury. The employer had not instructed the warehouse worker nor given him special training on working with lifting equipment; the employee had also not been issued protective footwear despite the risk of heavy objects falling on the foot and safety footwear being mandatory for warehouse workers while located in the warehouse. This accident is more proof of the conclusion drawn from work accident statistics regarding new employees being a risk group. Based on the statistics, a significant part of work accidents take place with male employees who have been employed for less than a year. Thus, employers should pay special attention to young men who have been hired straight from school or who have limited work experience.

Most aspects evaluated in the activities of employers have unfortunately received a worse assessment than in the year prior. On the one hand, it is true that supervision has become more thorough; on the other hand, however, this change is also related to the fact that thanks to assigning risk rates to enterprises, enterprises with a larger number of problems are visited at an increasing rate. From 2014 on, the number of micro and small companies has increased among the inspected enterprises. This group of enterprises lists the lack of funds and time as the reason for not following occupational health and safety requirements.

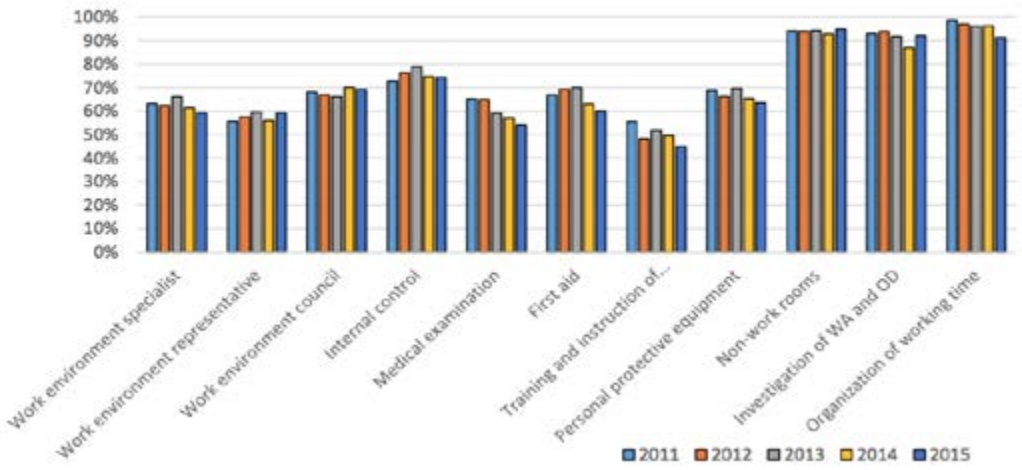


Figure 26. Assessments of employers' activity (positive assessment – % of evaluated enterprises)

Occupational health and safety violations

Violations of different legal acts were identified in the course of inspection 17,611 times, 53% of which were registered in precepts. The number of identified violations has significantly increased compared to 2014; however, the number of inspected enterprises has also gone up, while the number of precepts has decreased (65% in 2014 and 53% in 2015). This indicates that compared to the year prior, inspections uncovered more violations that the employer could mitigate in five days. Violations were detected at 91% of all visited enterprises (84% in 2014). No violations were detected in 321 enterprises (in 2014, no deficiencies were identified in 16.5% of all inspected enterprises.) On average, 5.7 violations per enterprise were identified during visits, which is similar to the results of last three years.

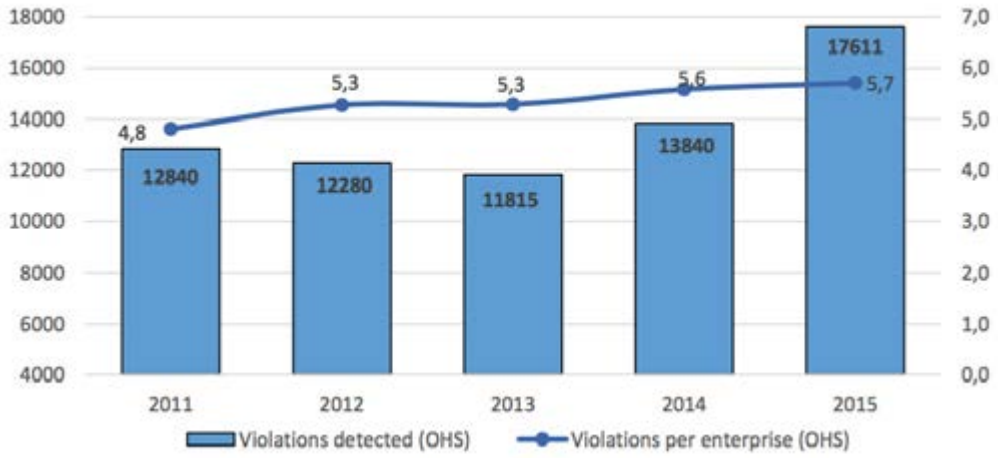


Figure 27. Number of identified OHS violations and average number of violations per enterprise

Violations by legal acts

The table below lists the most commonly violated laws and regulations and the number of violations over the last five years.

Table 4. Most common violations by legal acts

Legal act	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Occupational Health and Safety Act	3979	3534	3353	3630	5143
Procedure for Training Regarding Occupational Health and Safety	1662	1483	1589	1668	2875
Occupational Health and Safety Requirements for Workplaces	1220	1195	1048	1736	1642
Occupational Health and Safety Requirements for Use of Work Equipment	1264	1723	1571	1635	1633
Procedure for Selection of Personal Protective Equipment	984	777	741	1051	1238
Occupational Health and Safety Requirements at Construction Sites	734	989	908	952	1056
Procedure for Medical Examination	558	458	527	548	914
Procedure for First Aid	554	309	375	464	892
Requirements for Use of Safety Signals	711	582	559	872	791
Occupational Health and Safety Requirements for Work with Display Screen Equipment	289	304	234	199	322

The analysis of violations by legal acts shows that in 2015, the number of violations directly related to the Occupational Health and Safety Act underwent a sharp increase (compared to the decline in the prior three years.) The number of violations of the regulation concerning the procedure for training and in-service training regarding

occupational health and safety has also increased significantly. There was also a slight increase in violations related to regulations on the procedure for medical examination and the organization of first aid in enterprises. The results regarding compliance with the requirements of other legal acts have been mostly positive in 2015.

A closer look at the violations of legal acts reveals that problems related to the organization of work environment risk assessment are still the most common. The number of such violations underwent a sharp increase in 2015. Risk assessment is either completely lacking, is not properly organized or needs to be updated, as it no longer corresponds to the changed work environment. Violations of this kind were identified in 1,296 enterprises. The Labour Inspectorate would like to remind employers that a work environment risk assessment is not just a one-time written document but it must be in line with the development and evolution of the enterprise. Its benefits are the greatest when the assessment is done by specialists inside the enterprise. To simplify the preparation of enterprise risk assessments, the state has created the free environment Tööbik (www.toobik.ee).

The figure below reveals the most common OSH violations regardless of which legal act they are based on. The figure shows a significant increase in 2015 in the number of violations related to nearly all criteria. This may be caused by both the increased number of inspected enterprises and a certain improvement in the quality of supervision. The numbers were also affected by the fact that the sample pool contained more enterprises that were inspected for the first time. In 2014, the scope of supervision was increased, as the Inspectorate started inspecting all active enterprises with at least one employee (previously, inspections were conducted only at enterprises with at least five employees).

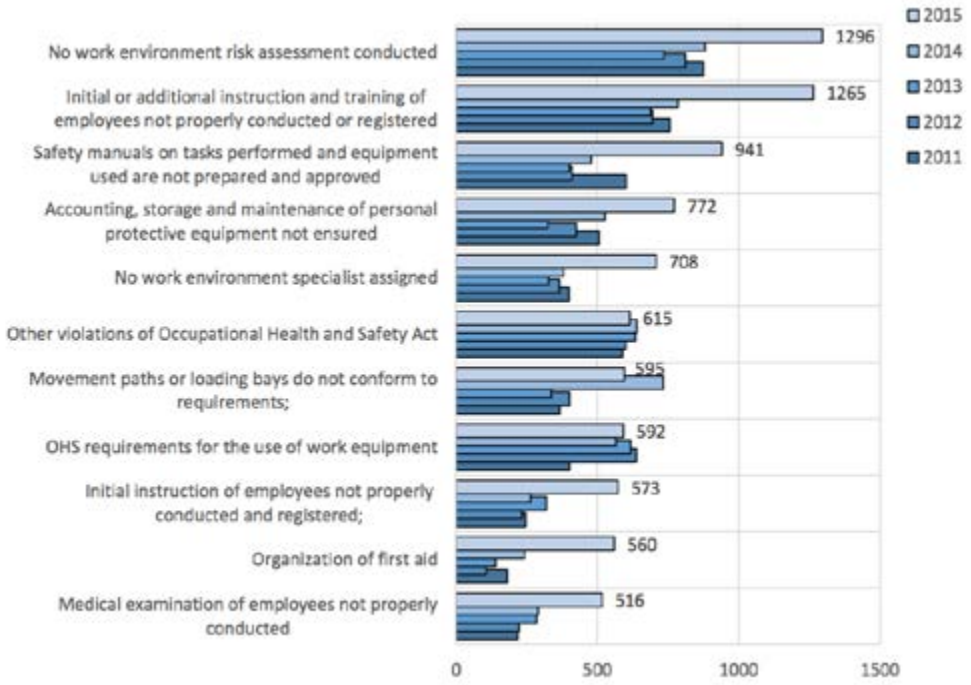


Figure 28. Most frequent OHS violations

To eliminate violations, work was suspended in 149 in cases and the use of work equipment was forbidden in 270 cases (in 2014 – 235 and 420 times, respectively). The use of work equipment was most frequently forbidden in cases where the devices ensuring the safety of the equipment, lifting devices, or equipment meant for temporary work at heights did not conform to the requirements or broken power tools were used for work.

The fact that the number of cases where work had to be suspended has slightly decreased compared to the previous years is encouraging. This was somewhat affected by the sample pool of inspected enterprises – trade enterprises were inspected more frequently than in 2014 and the suspension of work or forbidding the use of work equipment are extremely uncommon in such companies. Work was most frequently suspended at construction works due to insufficient safety measures while working at heights or the lack of personal protective equipment.

In other fields of activity, work was suspended most often due to the safety devices (protective covers) of work equipment not meeting requirements or being removed.

Warnings of penalty payment for non-compliance with the requirements were imposed 475 times (in 2014, 395 times) and the penalty payment was enforced 38 times, in the amount of 7.940 euros (in 2014, 22 times in the amount of 5.600 euros). The need to enforce penalty payment has significantly decreased, as compliance with precepts issued by labour inspectors has improved.

2.2 Occupational health supervision

In 2015, 297 inspections were conducted for monitoring compliance with occupational health requirements, in the course of which, 1,028 violations were identified and 119 precepts issued. Occupational health target inspections focussed on four areas of activity: dental services, store chain-based trade, nightclubs, and media enterprises. In addition, two occupational health inspectors conducted target inspections in their regions. In the West region, the focus was on physical overexertion caused by wrong work posture. In the East region, the inspections targeted problems related to manual handling of loads in agricultural enterprises.

The target inspections show that focussing on a single area of activity provides a relatively good means for managing occupational health and safety in a specific field. The inspections resulted in improved employer awareness, but also increased responsibility in improving the work conditions of employees and preventing work-related health risks.

The aim of occupational health-related target inspections was to change the mind-sets of both the employers and the employees at the inspected enterprises. Different tasks must be conducted in such a fashion that an employee is still healthy a decade later; it is also important to recognize that physical overexertion usually appears without notice. Once your health has deteriorated, it may not be possible to restore it.

The change in mind-set was the most visible in preparing and carrying out dental medicine target inspections. The Estonian Dental Association added occupational health and safety to the programme of their training day and many enterprises providing dental services had begun focussing on work environment issues even before the expected visit of the labour inspector.

Dental medicine target inspections

Target inspections conducted in enterprises resulted in increased awareness in the employers in this field of the necessity of managing occupational health and safety. Companies in this field turned insufficient attention to occupational health and safety requirements. They tended to be under the misconception that the management of occupational health and safety is mainly the duty of industrial enterprises.

The main problem is that the owners of dentist's offices as employers tend to lack knowledge in this field.

Professional associations should provide their members with advice related to the work environment or at least information on finding such advice. As one suggestion, the websites of professional associations should have direct links to the websites of the Labour Inspectorate and the Tööelu portal. After all, the members of many professional associations are also employers in their field and it may be easier for them to navigate to websites offering information on the work environment from the association's website.

Target inspections of store chains

In the course of this target inspection campaign, stores of the Selver chain were visited in 2015. 31 of 44 stores were inspected.

The target inspections highlighted three significant problems. The company did have an assigned work environment specialist, but their place of work was in Tallinn. Actual occupational health and safety management in individual stores was the task of store managers. Several store managers conceded that they were unaware of occupational health and safety requirements and were discovered to receive insufficient support from the company's main office

in the sphere of occupational health and safety.

The second problem to highlight is the excessively long workdays of the store employees and the insufficient number of breaks. Not enough attention has been paid to the body's recovery and the maintenance of the capacity for work. The employer has not managed the working time of their employees in the best possible manner by considering the changes in the employees' capacity for work, exhaustion, and other factors contributing to work-related diseases. Occupational health physicians have recommended many workers to take shorts breaks every hour, but these recommendations have not been taken into account in the organization of working time.

The third problem triggered a debate that has not yet concluded. In brief, the employer had not accounted for the fact that for the store workers working on their feet all day, constantly working upright is an additional burden to their muscular and skeletal system. Work footwear is provided to the employees, but only 50% of its price is compensated to the employee.

Occupational health labour inspectors recommend that if an employee is given the obligation and responsibility for compliance with occupational health and safety requirements, they should also be provided with the necessary training. Good cooperation should also be ensured between the different units of the enterprise (in Selver's case, between the main office and the stores.) Employees whose work is mentally or physically taxing should not work longer shifts than eight hours. Employees should definitely be provided with long and frequent enough breaks during the workday to ensure better recovery of the body during the workday.

Target inspection of night work

A target inspection of night work was conducted in Pärnu. The inspection targeted nightclubs, bars, casinos, and pubs. The focus was on the management of the occupational health and safety of employees working in the night-time. The employer is obliged to ensure compliance with occupational health and safety requirements in any work-related situation, including during night-time.

Despite the low number of inspections (15 enterprises were inspected in total), the number of detected violations was high, with an average 5.2 violations per enterprise.

During the target inspections, many dangerous places or omissions were found in the work environment causing risk of injury for the employees with first aid not guaranteed. Certain deficiencies, however, can even result in a sudden death of the employee under a combination of unfavourable circumstances.

Based on the results of the night work target inspection, the Labour Inspectorate will increase the inspection of enterprises that either work in multiple shifts or are mainly open in evenings and night-time.

Target inspection of media enterprises

In the course of the target inspection of media enterprises, occupational health labour inspectors visited television and radio companies and newspaper offices (for a total of 20 visits). An average of 5.8 violations were identified per visit, which is not a good result.

It must be said that the violations uncovered during the target inspection were largely similar to those found in enterprises from other areas of activity, meaning that it is not possible to highlight anything specific to media companies. The main risk specific to media enterprises – the large number of wires on sets or in studio – was very well managed, but ordinary office work was neglected.

The target inspection highlighted three main problems: assigning a work environment specialist and filling this role, familiarizing employees with the safety manual, and the use of laptop computers.

The competency of the work environment specialist is extremely important for managing work environment issues. Unfortunately, in many cases, the work environment specialist's position is strictly formal and they lack the requisite knowledge.

The safety manual may be well or very well prepared, but it will be useless if the employees are not familiarized

with it and the employer does not ensure that the employee has understood it.

A laptop is a good tool for temporary work only. If it is used as the main workstation, the laptop should be provided with a separate keyboard and display. This allows the employee to find a suitable working posture that preserves their health and does not fatigue the skeletal and muscular system.

2.3 Supervision of labour relations

2015. The year 2015 brought changes to the organization of work at the Labour Relations Department, with an internal division taking place. Some labour inspector-lawyers began fulfilling tasks related to counselling; the supervision of labour relations was left on the shoulders of nine labour inspector-lawyers and one labour inspector of maritime work. While this resulted in a decrease in the number of enterprises subject to the inspection of labour relations, it also led to a significant increase in the number of detected violations, as the labour inspectors tasked with supervisory duties were able to focus completely on their main obligations. At the same time, the number of consultations also increased, meaning that the division of duties resulted in better work efficiency.

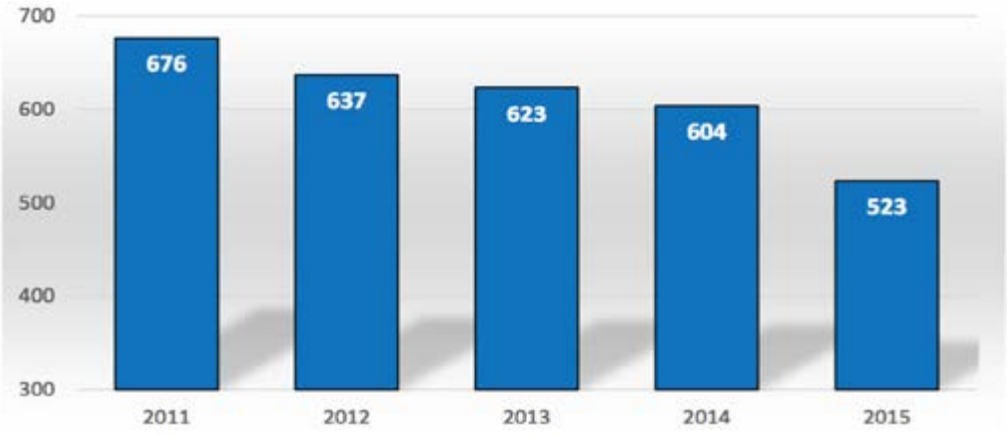


Figure 29. Number of enterprises subject to supervision of labour relations

In 2015, the priority for the supervision of labour relations was monitoring working and rest time and the work conditions of minors; the department also continued monitoring notification of the data listed in Section 5 (1) of Employment Contracts Act.

1,761 violations of the requirements of Employment Contracts Act were detected in 2015, compared to the 1,437 detected the year prior. Persons working without a legal written contract were found in 14 enterprises. All enterprises where people were working without a contract and without an entry in the employment register belonged to catering and construction.

Among other companies, labour inspectors visited a sushi restaurant with two locations in Tallinn: one in the centre and one in Pirita. An employee working without a contract was found in the restaurant located in the centre, and a meeting was held with a member of the company's board. Among other things, the member of the board was asked whether the other restaurant also had employees working without a contract. The member of the board claimed that everything was in order in the other restaurant and all employees had employment contracts. The labour inspector did not tell the member of the board about the planned visit to the other location of the chain in the same day. When the labour inspectors arrived at the Pirita restaurant, however, they found a "closed" sign on the door. When they inquired about it from the store next-door, they were told that something happened at the sushi restaurant and they had to close it down in a hurry. The inspectors visited the Pirita sushi restaurant again the following day and naturally discovered that their employees also lacked employment contracts.
The employer had thus learned nothing from the first visit and was hoping that the Labour Inspectorate would not return for a second visit. At the same time, they also failed to understand why signing a written employment contract could be beneficial to them.

Supervision of working and rest time

Since the supervision of compliance with working and rest time requirements was one of the priorities, this was monitored throughout the year. In total, labour inspectors detected 523 violations related to working and rest time last year. In September and October, particular attention was paid to summer period working and rest time in road construction enterprises. Violations of working and rest time were detected in 9 of the inspected road construction enterprises and 6 misdemeanour procedures were initiated. The physical persons responsible for the management of working and rest time were penalized with a fine of 25–30 fine units or 100 to 120 euros.

In October, particular attention was paid to the management of the working time of night workers. From 1 to 30 October, night work target inspections were conducted in entertainment and catering establishments in Tartu. Target inspections were conducted at six enterprises; violations were detected in all cases. A total of 19 violations were found. The most common problem was that the employers had not conducted a work environment risk assessment, and even if it had been performed, night work issues were missing from the assessment, meaning that no evaluation had been carried out regarding how work environment risk factors affect the employees' health when working in the night-time. Night employees had not been referred to medical examination by an occupational health physician, even though this is actually separately foreseen by the law.

Some employers also seemed to be under the impression that if an employee is doing night work, they will be unable to leave the establishment anyway and they neglect to provide the employees with a break during the working hours (30 minutes per every 6 hours worked pursuant to the law). Restrictions on night work stipulated in Section 50 of Employment Contracts Act and exceptions for over 13-hour workdays stipulated in Section 51 of the same act had also not been taken into account. In other words, night workers had been allowed excessively long days and no agreement in this matter had been signed either in the employment contract or in the collective pay agreement.

Even though one of the goals of state supervision is increasing the awareness of the employer and the employee of matters related to the work environment, expectations to labour inspectors can be different. As an example, while conducting an inspection, a labour inspector-lawyer discovered that an employer had not informed their employees of working time and the organization of working time – in other words, the start and end of the workday and the use of rest time during the workday. The employer was explained the investigation procedure, informing them that they would be submitted records of the inspection which they would be able to comment or contest within 5 workdays, and that no precept would be issued if the violations were mitigated within 5 workdays. They were also explained the possibilities of mandating a penalty payment. After all these explanations, however, the employer informed the labour inspector that the latter could just as well "fine" them and get it over, as they had no time for such nonsense.

The working and rest time requirements stipulated in the Employment Contracts Act continue to come as a surprise to both employers and employees and it is clear that the awareness of the employees of these matters increases as a result of supervision, as they learn to manage working time better after meeting a labour inspector.

Supervision of the working conditions of minors

For several years in a row now, target inspections of the working conditions of minors have taken place between 1 June and 31 August. 29 enterprises were visited in the course of the target inspections and 92 violations were discovered. Four of these resulted in a misdemeanour procedure. The target inspections focussed mainly on whether under 18 year old employees have a parent's or other legal representative's permission for working, whether under 15 year old employees have a labour inspector's permission for working, how the working time of the young employee is organized, and whether a written employment contract has been signed.

The biggest problem, however, were contracts for services and authorization agreements made under the law of obligations. It is sad to see that parents give their permission for signing contracts that they themselves do not understand; the only thing that matters is the promised amount of pay. Children are also allowed to perform work which they are not actually allowed to do, as it causes a significant risk to their health. For instance, children were allowed to work with paints that contained carcinogenic substances and which could only be used with a

mask, gloves, and protective clothing; such personal protective equipment was, of course, not provided to the children. One cannot count on children realizing that the paint used may be hazardous to them.

When the labour inspector requested the employer to inform a minor working under a contract for services of the requirements for employment contracts listed in Section 5 (1) of Employment Contracts Act, several employers stated that it was impossible. The main reasons for this were stated to be the low accountability of the youths, lack of interest in contractual labour relations, too high wages that have to be paid in the case of a concluded employment contract, and young people working for several employers if they are not given enough work. Target inspections of the work conditions of minors and the proceedings conducted as a result of the inspections led to the representatives of youth organizations and enterprises from certain fields turning to the Ministry of Social Affairs with proposals for reviewing and changing the requirements for the work conditions of children. Amendments to the law are being prepared.

In a number of enterprises, a minor had been hired for more than half of their summer holiday, i.e. Section 8 (2) of Employment Contracts Act was violated. In these cases, the enterprise was required to terminate the employment contract. Several parents then asked whether the child could work in another enterprise for the rest of the summer holiday, but the law does not allow this, either. In the case of children working in hotels, it turned out that they had been allowed to work before 6 AM and after 8 PM, which is not permitted under Section 49 of Employment Contracts Act. In addition, several violations of breaks during the workday and daily and weekly rest were discovered. For instance, a 14-year old employee had not been ensured 20 hour consecutive rest, meaning that they had finished work 2 PM and started the new working day already 8 AM the next morning.

Supervision of maritime work

On 1 July 2014, the new Seafarers Employment Act entered into force, replacing the old Seafarers Act. Whereas in 2014, the main task of the maritime employment labour inspector was spreading information about the new law and consulting employers, in 2015, they could also begin conducting real inspection work.

A total of 153 violations related to seafarers' contracts of employment were identified in 50 companies inspected.

Employers' awareness of the new Seafarers Employment Act is still low; changes brought on by the new law have gone unnoticed. There are problems with the submission of data on seafarers' contracts of employment, as well as the organization of working and rest time.

Employees and passengers were complaining about the work environment on a ferry brought to Estonian waters. For instance, live electric wires were lying on the floor, the interior of the ship was badly lit and places where there was a risk of tripping and/or falling had not been marked. While preparing for an inspection, it turned out that the labour inspector lacked competence for inspecting the work environment on the ship, as the ship was running under another country's flag.
To solve the situation, the Inspectorate cooperated with international maritime safety inspectors who visited the ship and listed the deficiencies they had discovered in their report. The maritime work labour inspector could then go and conduct an inspection at the Estonian enterprise whose workers were working on the ship and thus contribute to the improvement of work environment situation on the ship.
The supervision resulted in the improvement of the occupational safety of employees working on the ship.

2.4 Supervision of working and rest time of drivers of motor vehicles

The aim of the inspection activity is to learn how the working and rest time of drivers is organized by enterprises and whether the established driving and rest periods are observed to ensure traffic safety on roads. Organization of working time, drivers' daily driving hours and rest periods, breaks and weekly working, driving and rest time, biweekly driving time limits, conformity of data recorded by tachographs with requirements, and compliance of remuneration with the collective pay agreement is monitored at enterprises.

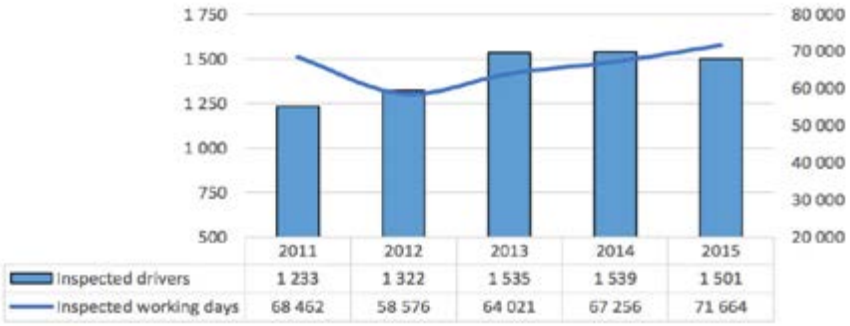


Figure 30. Number of drivers of motor vehicles inspected and their workdays, 2011–2015

By type of transportation, goods transporters were most frequently inspected in 2015, with 997 drivers inspected, totalling 48,563 workdays.

Table 5. Number of drivers of motor vehicles and workdays inspected by type of transportation, 2015

Type of transportation	Number of inspected drivers	No of inspected work days
Passenger transport	504	23,101
Transport of goods	997	48,563
Total	**1501**	**71,664**

Use of tachographs and storage and copying of data

The number of violations of requirements for the storage and copying of data is still high in transport enterprises. Based on the relevant regulation and the Traffic Act, data must be stored for 365 days. Downloading data from vehicles equipped with digital tachographs and presenting the data to the inspector is a major problem. The Traffic Act stipulates that data must be copied from the driver card at least every 28 days and at least every 90 days from the vehicle.

Rest time of drivers of motor vehicles

Main violations related to daily rest time result from the carrier's inability to plan the drivers' workday. Their workdays often tend to last over 13 or even 15 hours. However, drivers of motor vehicles must have 11 hours of resting time inside a 24-hour period; as an exemption, a maximum of three reduced daily rest periods of at least 9 hours can be taken between two weekly rest periods.

Many daily rest period violations result from the interruption of rest time on ferries. As an exemption, a driver accompanying a vehicle transported on a ferry may interrupt their regular daily rest period with other activities no more than twice for a total of maximum one hour. During this regular daily rest period, the driver shall have access to a bunk or couchette.

After a 4.5-hour driving period, the driver must have an at least 45 minute uninterrupted break. This break may be substituted with at least a 15-minute break followed by at least a 30-minute break.

In the transport enterprises inspected in 2015, the daily rest time of drivers of motor vehicles is often shorter than 11 hours with interruptions, or rest time was interrupted three times instead of the maximum twice, or the total duration of other activities exceeded 1 hour. The 45-minute rule is also violated or the driver's second break is shorter than 30 minutes.

Weekly rest time

Between any two consecutive weeks, the driver must use at least two regular weekly rest periods or one regular weekly rest period and one reduced (at least 24-hour) weekly rest period.

Drivers most often violate the 45-hour rest time requirement. There were also cases where the driver began their

weekly rest period too late, i.e. 144 hours after the beginning of their workweek. For instance, if the driver of a motor vehicle begins their workweek at 8 AM Monday morning, then they are required to begin their weekly rest period no later than 8 AM Sunday morning.

The main reason why transport enterprises violate working and rest time requirements is "on demand transportation", meaning that the driver is given strict orders by a logistics company or the carrier to deliver the goods by a certain time, neglecting working and rest time restrictions. Drivers' actions and the resulting violations are also affected by the desire to get on a specific ferry and the desire to spend their daily or weekly rest time at home. Another reason is the drivers' insufficient acquaintance with Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 of the European Parliament and Council.

Table 6. Violations of inspected drivers of motor vehicles, 2011–2015

Violation	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Carriage of goods:					
- violation of daily rest period	315	253	226	332	238
- shorter breaks	127	173	106	92	90
- violation of daily driving period	119	117	81	122	127
- no breaks	123	95	62	75	104
- violation of weekly rest period	102	77	78	229	133
- violation of requirements of registering work and rest time	24	48	21	32	23
- violation of data storage and accessibility for inspectors	38	24	35	42	38
- violation of weekly driving period	8	7	6	16	33
- violation of consecutive weekly driving period	15	4	35	42	28
Passenger transport:					
- violation of daily rest period	34	15	17	14	126
- violation of weekly rest period	2	14	6	12	25
- shorter breaks	1	8	17	0	0
- no breaks	92	6	7	6	43
- violation of daily driving period	25	4	0	0	16
- violation of requirements of registering work and rest time	30	3	4	7	48
- violation of work schedule requirements	0	3	0	0	0
- deficiencies in submitted work schedule	4	2	0	0	0
- violation of data storage and accessibility for inspectors	16	0	7	6	2
- violation of weekly driving period	0	0	0	0	1
- violation of driving time in consecutive weeks	0	0	0	3	0
Type of transport not defined:					
- violation of record sheet usage requirements	37	15	2	7	10
- violation of record sheet data entry requirements	76	15	7	5	12
- replacement of dirty or damaged record sheet	3	0	0	1	0
Total violations	**1191**	**883**	**717**	**1028**	**1097**

To reduce the number of violations, transport enterprises should acknowledge that everything starts from gathering and storing drivers' working and rest time data. Today's technological advances enable carriers to download drivers' digital working and rest time data over the air using a fleet system. Analogue tachographs should definitely be collected every 28 days. Cooperation between the carrier and the driver is also extremely important. Carriers and, most of all, transport managers, should themselves regularly monitor the drivers' compliance with working and rest time requirements, and monitor and analyse the use of analogue tachographs or driver cards. From 2016, carriers have access to the results of inspections of drivers on the road as well as the inspections of enterprises through the traffic supervision information system.

2.5 Misdemeanour proceedings, fines

In 2015, misdemeanour proceedings were initiated 156 times in the course of the supervision of occupational health, occupational safety, and labour relations. 150 fines were issued in 2015 totalling 43,575 euros, of which 84 were issued to legal persons for a total of 31,140 euros and 66 issued to natural persons for a total of 12,435 euros. The number of fines issued to legal persons has increased compared to the previous years, while the number of fines issued to natural persons has significantly decreased.

The largest number of fines was issued for violations of occupational health and safety requirements, and for violations of requirements for copying digital tachograph or driver card data discovered during inspections of drivers of motor vehicles. The largest fine imposed to a legal person for a violation of occupational health and safety requirements was 700 euros and to a natural person, 125 fine units or 500 euros.

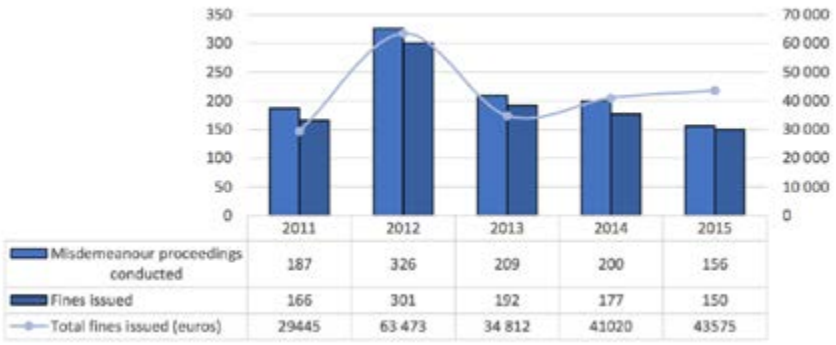


Figure 31. Number of misdemeanour proceedings and fines

The largest number of misdemeanour proceedings was initiated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act – 84 times in all (106 in 2014). As a result of violations of occupational health and safety requirements, penalties were imposed primarily for three types of violations:

- Failure to comply with occupational health and safety requirements for workplaces;
- Failure of the employer to comply with occupational health and safety requirements;
- Unprotected dangerous exposure to moving parts of work equipment or inappropriate work equipment provided for the performance of work.

Misdemeanour cases resulting from the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) were heard 37 times (57 in 2014). Misdemeanour cases related to violations of the Employment Contracts Act were most frequently heard under:

- Sections 126 and 127 (1) of Employment Contracts Act, i.e. for violations of daily or weekly rest time requirements;
- Section 128 (1) of Employment Contracts Act, i.e. failure by an employer to perform the obligation to inform and consult upon collective cancellation of employment contracts.

Table 7. Misdemeanour cases by legal acts

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Employment Contracts Act	81	52	57	37
Occupational Health and Safety Act	221	120	106	84
Employees' Trustee Act	3	2	2	1
Penal Code	3	1	0	0
Traffic Act	18	30	32	33
Trade Unions Act	0	3	1	1
Code of Misdemeanour Procedure	0	1	1	0
Chemicals Act	0	0	1	0
Total number of misdemeanour proceedings conducted	326	209	200	156

3. RESOLUTION OF LABOUR DISPUTES

2015 labour disputes statistics are substantially similar to the year prior. The number of labour disputes has also not fluctuated significantly in the last five years. Year-over-year, their number has increased slightly, by 14%, but the number of labour disputes in 2014 was the lowest in the last ten years.

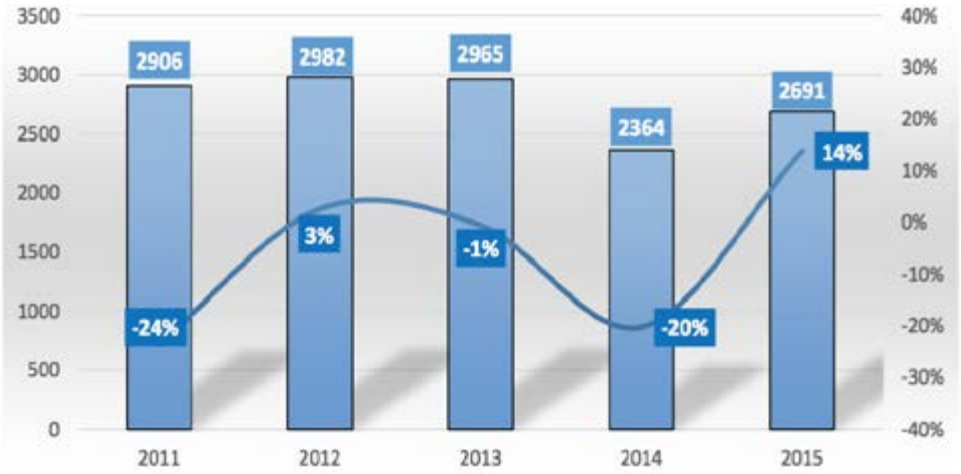


Figure 32. Number of labour dispute petitions received, 2011–2015

Table 8. Number of labour dispute petitions by counties, 2011–2015

County	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change vs. 2014
Tallinn and Harju	1467	1532	1800	1321	1527	206
Tartu	374	455	328	266	332	66
Ida-Viru	411	295	222	234	280	46
Pärnu	180	164	151	129	160	31
Lääne-Viru	87	99	76	71	70	-1
Rapla	36	39	41	33	47	14
Jõgeva	38	55	39	41	41	0
Saare	95	152	102	64	37	-27
Järva	28	30	58	36	36	0
Valga	21	34	26	16	36	20
Viljandi	87	49	41	63	33	-30
Põlva	12	14	18	30	31	1
Võru	35	28	41	22	27	5
Lääne	23	22	17	22	25	3
Hiiu	12	14	5	16	9	-7
Total	**2906**	**2982**	**2965**	**2364**	**2691**	**327**

Labour dispute committees (LDC) are still hardly used for resolving disputes related to ongoing labour relations. The majority of labour disputes heard by LDCs are heard after the termination of the labour relationship.

Parties to disputes are observed to simultaneously file an increasing number of different claims. For instance, an increasing number of claims for the compensation of non-patrimonial, i.e. moral, damage is filed along with other claims.

Claims made by employees have not changed much over the years. They continue to turn to LDCs to claim unreceived wages (about 30% of all cases), including compensation for overtime work.

Employers submitted a total of 312 petitions containing 454 claims, most of these related to:

1) Contesting the cancellation of an employment contract due to a fundamental breach of the employer's obligation under Section 91 (2) of Employment Contracts Act (129 claims);

2) Claims for compensation related to an employee cancelling their employment contract under Section 74 (3) and 100 (5) of Employment Contracts Act (114 claims);
3) Claims for compensation of damage to property caused by the employee (other than Section 74 (3) of Employment Contracts Act) (90 claims);
4) Other claims related to contesting the cancellation of an employment contract (28 claims);
5) Contractual penalty and claims for compensation of damage exceeding the amount of the contractual penalty (24 claims);
6) Other claims (69 claims).

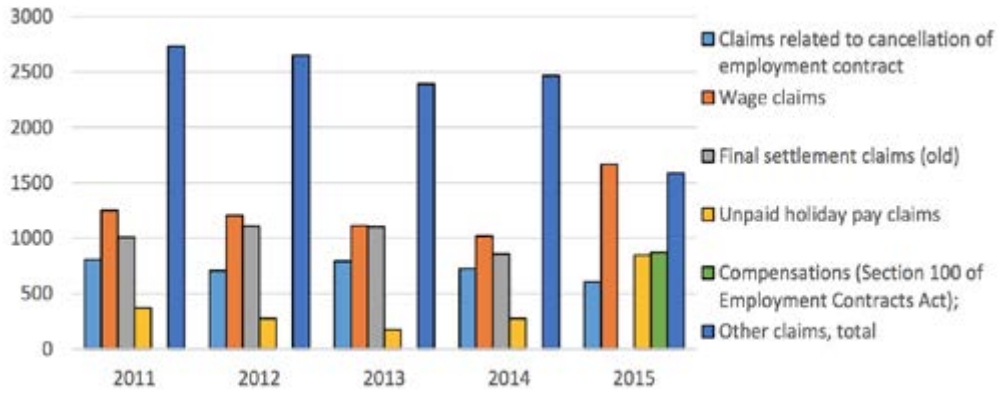


Figure 33. Claims filed by employees

The limit for resolution of disputes over financial claims in the Individual Labour Dispute Resolution Act has remained substantially unchanged for six years. It may be necessary to increase this limit. The amounts of wage claims have increased. The increase in the number of claims exceeding 3,200 euros has been noticeable. This can be explained by both increased wages and claiming several months' wages at once. In many situations, the wage agreement found in the employment contract (or declared with the Tax and Customs Board) is also different from the actual agreement that the parties are attempting to establish at the labour dispute resolution body. If the employer does not respond to the labour dispute committee and does not turn up at the hearing, the labour dispute resolution body has used Statistics Estonia data on average wage in the industry in the relevant quarter.

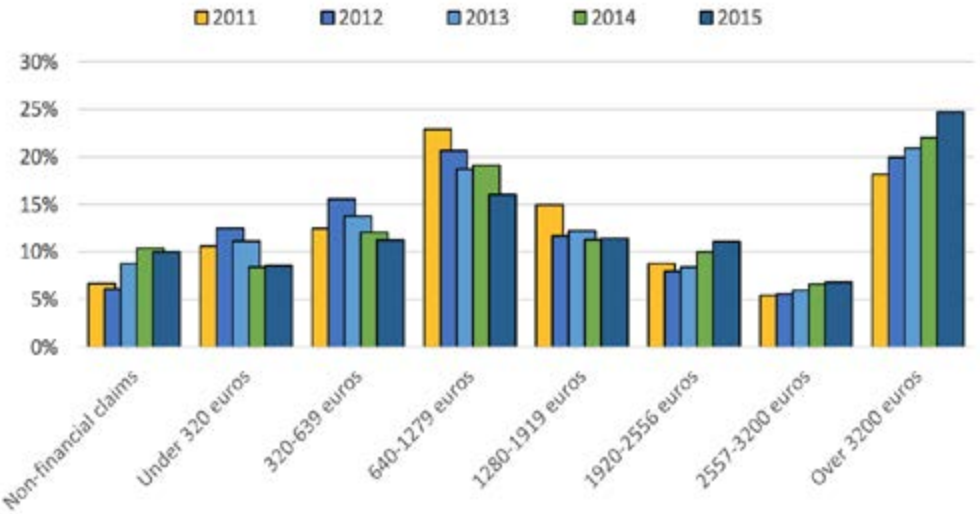


Figure 34. Division of claims filed by amount of money

The number of wage claims has also increased in so-called occasional work disputes. Thus, written employment contracts and, in many cases, data on the employer tend to be missing. The problem here is proving the wage amount, as wages are paid in cash and are not declared. The employee can have a valid employment contract record in the employment register, but in reality, they may be working for another employer.

There have been disputes where an enterprise performing construction work all over Estonia has lost its subcontractor status, as a result of which, their employees have not received several months' wages. In such cases, employment contracts are usually also not properly terminated. The relevant record is missing from the employment register, meaning that in addition to being denied their wages and compensations, the workers also cannot properly register themselves with the Unemployment Insurance Fund, as they are still in a valid formal labour relationship. The delivery of labour dispute committee summons as well as decisions may be difficult in such situations, as the employer may have changed their official address. The address used may have no real connection to the employer and procedural documents may be returned unopened.

Labour disputes related to claims arising from the termination of employment contracts make up 16% of all disputes. Holiday pay claims also continue to be heard by LDCs, forming 15% of all labour disputes.

When reviewing claims related to establishing the voidness of the cancellation of the employment contract made by either the employee (under Section 88 (1) of Employment Contracts Act) or the employer (under Section 91 (2) of Employment Contracts Act), the labour dispute committees must compare the basis for the termination of the employment contract and the date in the employment register. In cases related to loss of trust, the justifications made by the employers have noticeably often been considered overly general by the labour dispute committee. The number of employers who are not aware that the cancellation of an employment contract under Section 91 of Employment Contracts Act must be contested if they do not agree with the declaration of cancellation made by the employee, is lower.

Even if the cancellation is being disputed in a labour dispute resolution body, the employer must still submit a notice based on the declaration of cancellation to the employment register. If the basis and/or date of the cancellation are changed in the course of the dispute, the labour dispute resolution body will itself submit the relevant record related to the claim.

A number of petitions have been submitted by employees requesting the LDC to establish the extraordinary cancellation of an employment contract under Section 91 (2) of Employment Contracts Act and/or order the payment of three months' wages under Section 100 (4) of Employment Contracts Act. Petitions such as these result from the impertinence or unawareness of the employer. In spite of the employee's clear expression of will in relation to the basis for the termination of the employment contract, the employer finds that there was no basis for its termination and submits a record to the employment register stating that the employment contract was terminated by agreement of the parties or by ordinary cancellation instead of contesting the cancellation in due course.

Discrimination disputes have become common among labour disputes, but it is still evident from their resolutions that employees do not always understand what constitutes impermissible unequal treatment of an employee. Pregnancy and family responsibilities are claimed as the main basis of discrimination. The number of discrimination disputes has not changed significantly.

One interesting dispute was related to the appearance of contractual obligations during pre-contractual negotiations. The petitioner found that since the conclusion of an employment contract was agreed during the negotiations, they were in a contractual employment relationship with the opposing party and all the rights arising therefrom regardless of the written formalization of the contract or the person commencing work (i.e. the specifications for entering into an employment contract established in Section 4 (2) of Employment Contracts Act.) The labour dispute committee did not satisfy the claim, referring to the principles for entering into contracts established in Section 11 of Law of Obligations Act and Section 4 (2) of Employment Contracts Act. Interestingly, the company being the other party to the dispute had given the petitioner express confirmation that they had been selected from among the candidates and even assigned a date for signing the employment contract.

Employees request the establishment of both the existence of labour relations (3% of all claims) and their termination (5% of all claims). In spite of the registration requirement in the employment register, a written employment contract is still missing in some labour disputes. This is especially frequent in construction and servicing. In some cases, people performing works are requesting for contracts under the law of obligations to be deemed employment contracts giving employees more rights, such as the right for vacation and restrictions on

cancelling the contract.

Unfortunately, the number of labour dispute petitions not duly submitted is still high. The submitted petitions are frequently loosely worded and lack supporting evidence or amounts claimed. To process such petitions, the labour dispute resolution body has to request for the mitigation of significant deficiencies.

Counterclaims were often made by the other party to a labour dispute in 2015. This was especially the case for employers, meaning that a counterclaim for compensating damages was filed against an employee's claim. While the two labour dispute cases are discussed at the same hearing, the cases are not merged, as such a possibility is not foreseen by the Individual Labour Dispute Resolution Act.

About 10% of all labour dispute cases continue to be heard again in court. New statements and new evidence can be presented there that could affect the resolution of the labour dispute. Not infrequently, however, the resolution of the labour dispute committee will substantially stand in cour

4. COUNSELLING

4.1 Labour Inspectorate's advisory service

Alongside state supervision and informational activities, the Labour Inspectorate's advisory service plays an important role in increasing the safety and quality of working life. The advisory service is directed to all parties of labour relations (hereinafter also called clients) who mainly include employees, employers, and professional associations. Labour Inspectorate's advisory service includes advice given over the information line (640 6000), responding to clarification requests received on the e-mail address jurist@ti.ee, face-to-face counselling sessions at 25 locations over Estonia, and counselling at enterprises or their places of activity. The counsellors mainly include counselling lawyers and work environment specialists, or labour inspectors and labour inspector-lawyers giving advice at the office.

The purpose of the advisory service is to enable parties to labour relations to act consciously in compliance with legal acts regulating labour relations and occupational health and safety; to promote law-abiding behaviour in labour relations and thus prevent the violation of legal acts, damage to health, and labour disputes. Another goal is the maintenance and improvement of work capacity in working-age employees, including supporting employer in developing the work environment, increasing the participation in the labour market of persons with reduced work capacity and preventing early retirement, and ensuring the sustainability of work capacity support measures.

The advisory service provided by the Labour Inspectorate is, above all, accessible and professional, and the counsellors are ethical. Each year, the satisfaction of clients with the quality of the advisory service is surveyed to facilitate maintaining or improving the quality of the service. In 2015, 1,724 clients using the service participated in the survey.

To ensure the quality of the advisory service, regular internal quality control is conducted by the Inspectorate.

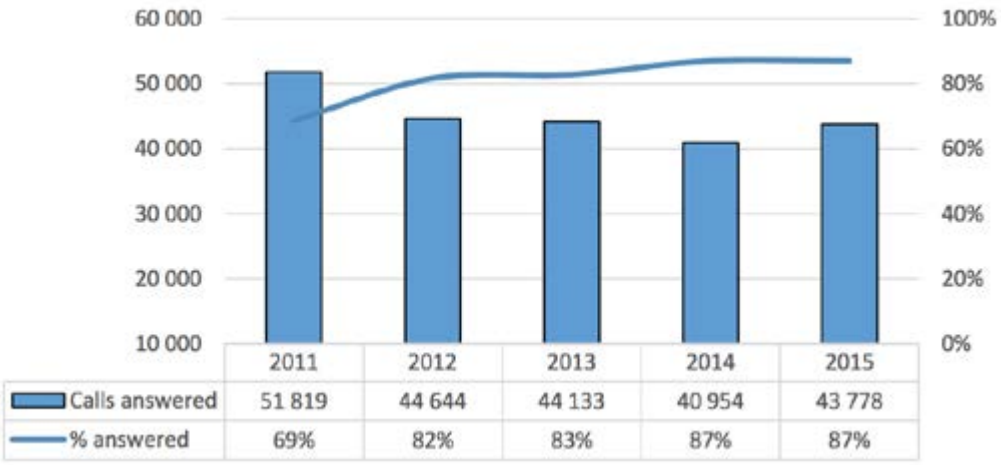
4.2 Labour Inspectorate information line

In autumn 2015, the Labour Inspectorate switched to a single information line at 640 6000 (formerly known as the lawyer's info line). Whereas clients previously had to call the lawyer's info line for matters related to labour legislation, a labour inspector or a work environment consultant for matters related to the work environment, and a separate secretary's number could also be found on the website, all the necessary information is now available from the Labour Inspectorate information line at 640 6000. Counselling lawyers answer the information line every business day from nine to half past four, directing the call to a labour environment consultant or a secretary, if necessary. Statistically, 95% of all calls are related to the application of the Employment Contracts Act, but more and more calls are also made concerning occupational health and safety.

The ability to choose languages has also proven useful. From autumn 2014, callers can choose between Estonian and Russian. In statistical terms, a quarter of all calls are made in Russian. According to the client satisfaction survey, Russian-speaking clients are pleased with the information line service.

The information line has been operating for eight years and the demand for the service is continuously high. Over the last four years, the number of calls made to the information line has decreased slightly year-by-year; however, a slight increase took place in 2015. Whereas in 2014, 40,954 calls were made to the information line, in 2015, the number of calls reached 43,778. 2,930 calls were made to the information line outside business hours. 40,848 calls reached the call queue and 35,423 (86.8%) were answered. The rest were terminated while waiting in queue.

The Labour Inspectorate information line is mainly called in matters related to the cancellation of a labour relationship. Parties to labour relations ask about the bases for cancellation and terms for advance notice, as well as preparation of the declaration of cancellation and compensations. Questions related to vacation are more frequent at the start of the year when vacation schedules are prepared, and questions related to study leave are common in spring and autumn. Questions related to the employment of minors are also commonly asked in spring. Before the national holiday and public holidays, people ask about working during holidays (incl. compensation), as



	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Calls answered	51 819	44 644	44 133	40 954	43 778
% answered	69%	82%	83%	87%	87%

Figure 35. Number of calls to information line and percentage of calls answered

well as shortened workdays. Otherwise, the issues tend to be quite similar day-to-day, regardless of the season. On the side of work environment, clients are generally concerned with matters related to work accidents.

The client satisfaction shows that the evaluations of clients calling the information line have improved compared to last year. The friendliness and helpfulness of the service received especially high marks.

4.3 Counselling by e-mail

For four years now, people have been able to write the Labour Inspectorate and ask for advice by e-mail at jurist@ti.ee. The same address can also be used for occupational health and safety advice from a work environment consultant. Similar to the information line, a single e-mail address can be used for information on all aspects of working life.

In contrast to the information line, the number of e-mails received has constantly increased in recent years. The client satisfaction survey also shows that clients prefer counselling by e-mail.

Starting from the end of 2014, the Labour Inspectorate can be e-mailed directly from the homepage of the Labour Inspectorate website, www.ti.ee, giving the client a quick and easy way to contact us. Statistically, e-mails sent via the homepage make up 40% of all e-mails.

When answering e-mails, the main goal of the Labour Inspectorate is to ensure the speed and clarity of replies. Clarification requests are generally answered in seven calendar days, but no later than 30 calendar days from registering the e-mail. On a positive note, 96.3% of all e-mails receive an answer in seven calendar days, nearly half of these (41%) as fast as in one calendar day. To improve customer-friendliness, we began answering to e-mails in Russian in 2015.

The Inspectorate's counsellors answered to 5,586 e-mails in 2015, 16% more than in the year prior. 5% of all e-mails were related to occupational health and safety issues; the rest concerned labour relations. The information e-mail address is also mostly used for asking about the cancellation of labour relations (18%), (incl. unpaid) wages (12%), and working and rest time (10%). As regards work environment, the most frequent issues again were work accidents, as well as the temperature at the workplace, compensation for glasses, working abroad, and breaks. We see, then, that the issues that require advice tend to be the same; in addition, many clients also use two or three parallel channels for advice – e-mail, information line, and/or counselling at office.

4.4 Counselling at office

Those seeking to receive direct information on labour relations or occupational health and safety can receive counselling at our offices. The reception takes place in regional offices and counselling offices in the following towns (25 total): Avinurme, Haapsalu, Jõgeva, Jõhvi, Karksi-Nuia, Kilingi-Nõmme, Kuressaare, Kärdla (occupational health and safety advice only), Märjamaa, Narva, Paide, Paldiski, Põltsamaa, Põlva, Pärnu, Rakvere, Rapla, Räpina,

Tallinn, Tapa, Tartu, Valga, Viljandi, Võru, and Vändra.

There was a slight increase in office visits last year: whereas in 2014, clients were received by lawyers 3,931 times, this number increased by 4% in 2015. Occupational health and safety advice was given 45 times. People generally turn to us in matters related to labour relations.

This opportunity is generally used by those with problematic labour relations, the circumstances of which are too complicated to explain over the information or in an e-mail. The main reasons for seeking face-to-face advice are various financial claims or the cancellation of labour relations and the possible disputation thereof. Clients often come to the office in the hope that the lawyer will help them prepare a petition to the labour dispute committee. This, however, is something the lawyers cannot do. The lawyers of the Labour Inspectorate do not provide legal counselling, which includes preparing petitions to a labour dispute resolution body, and do not give advice in matters related to contracts for services and authorization agreements or other legal issues. The lawyers provide information on the Employment Contracts Act and other legal acts enacted based on this act.

> An elderly Russian-speaking man had a counselling session with a lawyer. He wanted to know what he should do, as his employer had not paid him for the work he had done and did not allow him to work, either. For two years, he had occasionally performed electrical works upon request. When the lawyer asked him what kind of an agreement they had concerning wages, the man said that he was supposed to be paid when the work was finished, but the work would always be unfinished. No financial or other compensation had been specifically agreed upon. What kind of a contract it was, the electrician did not know.
>
> Whereas the employee can generally turn to a labour dispute committee with an employment contract, bank balances and other evidence, in this case, the employee did not even know who their employer was or what the amount of the claim should be. The lawyer did tell him, however, that presuming that he was in a labour relationship, the employer would be required to pay him at least the minimum wage, the employer would be required to provide him with work, etc. In this case, however, the employee could not even prove the existence of a contractual relationship, not to mention the performance of work, which had taken place at irregular intervals upon verbal agreement. The electrician could only list objects where he had performed work and specific walls where he had installed lines. There were ostensibly some witnesses, but none of the employees would testify against their employer in front a labour dispute committee for the fear of losing their job.
>
> This example is a good illustration of situations where verbal agreements do not hold water; when there is lack of evidence, it may not always be possible for a labour dispute committee to resolve the situation. It is not clear how this situation was resolved, but it serves as a great example of how not to behave in a labour relationship. This is also a good place to point out situations where the language skills, or lack thereof, are exploited in working life. Specifically, non-Estonian speakers are often made to sign contracts written in Estonian (if they sign one at all), the terms of which do not correspond to the verbal agreement.

While cases related to the disputation of unlawful cancellation or claims for wages not paid on the pay day stipulated in the employment contract are easily resolved by labour dispute committees, in practice, we often witness situations where the employee is working without an employment contract, is paid under the table, or is employed under a contract that does not ensure them sufficient rights. If someone is itching to work and looking for fast money, it is difficult to convince them to sign a written employment contract to receive better protection. When problems appear (the employer is no longer giving any work, not paying wages or taxes, etc.), however, they will turn to the Labour Inspectorate for help. In these situations, it is difficult to explain the worker that while they can indeed turn to a labour dispute resolution boy, they must be able to support all their claims.

> In one example, it was payday and the phones of the employees started beeping while they were on site working – they received messages showing that their wages had been transferred. Two employees, however, did not receive a message. Not thinking twice, they started calling the bookkeeper and abusing them using strong language. After the workers had vented their anger, it turned out that the wages had been paid but because inter-bank transfers take time to process, the wages of these workers were transferred to their bank accounts in due time, on the same day, except an hour or two later. In this case, the labour relationship with these particular employees was terminated.

If the main problem for employees is the employer not giving them work or not paying wages, the employers, in turn, must deal with irresponsible or ill-mannered employees. The most frequent problems concern employees missing work or leaving the job without notice, but there have also been threats, abuse, etc.

The Labour Inspectorate would thus like to remind everyone that a functional labour relationship is based

on soundness, acting in good faith, and accounting for the interests of the other party. It is important to remember the necessity of negotiations before entering into an employment contract, i.e. what each party expects from the other party. Even when the essential terms have been agreed upon, it may not be enough to merely begin following verbal agreements; the agreements should always be recorded in writing. In case of any problems or questions, it is always a good idea to turn to the Labour Inspectorate for advice.

This suggestion is also supported by the client satisfaction survey conducted in 2015, which showed that our customers were usually very pleased with the service. As many as 86% of all users of the service would recommend it to other employees or employers.

4.5 Consultation

The central goal for 2015 was the development of the principles of the work environment consultation service and launching the service.

61 enterprises were consulted in 2015. Since the service was new and the consultants still in training, several consultations took place with the participation of more than one consultant. The consultations mainly took place upon an employer's request. In about a third of the cases, the consultant would contact the employer themselves and offer the consultation service. The work environments of a total of 2395 workers were covered by the consultations. Employers were submitted 479 proposals for complying with the requirements of occupational health and safety regulations. In 199 cases, employers were also given recommendations for improving the work environment and occupational health and safety management. The recommendations were based on the consultants' experience and the example of other enterprises, and enabled the employers to do more than required in legislation.

The goal of the consultations is to develop safety culture at the enterprise, rather than search for violations. During consultation taking place at an enterprise, the consultant, along with the representatives of the enterprise, must account for both the demands of the enterprise and the expectations of the society for complying with occupational health and safety requirements. The goal of consultations is to give recommendations for creating a functional occupational health and safety management system or improving an existing one.

One of the employers' responsibilities most frequently discussed during consultations is occupational health and safety management, which enables the employer to approach systematically the work environment and to implement in real life work organization principles that often only exist on paper, as well as highlight the importance of the management's role in safety culture. Advice was given on organizing risk assessment, training employees, and the preparation of safety manuals. Risk factors most frequently discussed during consultations that could directly cause work accidents or work-related diseases include hazardous chemicals, risk of falling from heights, work equipment, and choice and use of personal protective equipment.

A large manufacturing enterprise sought a consultant's help for improving the inspection of work equipment in the course of internal control. The enterprise had work environment structures in place and the desire to focus on safety, as well as an established procedure for notifying of deficiencies. In spite of all this, the enterprise had witnessed work accidents and the consultant noticed a number of machines at the enterprise with severe safety issues. The consultant explained the principles of occupational health and safety and the necessity of focussing on it on all management levels at the enterprise. Thus far, the burden of inspecting the equipment had been on employees who did not use these devices in their everyday work and were thus not intimately familiar with the work done on them. As a result, the employee was unable to notice numerous dangerous situations in the course of internal control. The consultant and the representatives of the enterprise discussed the possibility of involving workers more acquainted with the use of the equipment in inspecting work equipment. In addition, the consultant gave the employees to be involved in inspecting work equipment practical advice on improving internal control and on what to focus on when working on equipment and machinery, and explained the necessity of the work of employees responsible for safety. They also discussed the availability and adjustment of protective covers, work practices, and the use of personal protective equipment.

Consultations have enabled addressing both the general and large-scale activities of the enterprise as well as the problems of individual employees.

In addition to seeking a consultant's aid and implementing their proposals and recommendations, the commitment

An employee had a problem with flour dust. A consultant noticed flour dust in the air at a workplace and approached the employee working there. It turned out that the employee had developed an irritation in the airways while working at the workplace, but they had not directly connected this to flour dust or discussed this with their employer. Upon the recommendation of the consultant, the employer will have the employee undergo medical examination where a doctor will evaluate the health of the employee and the suitability of the work environment for the worker, as well as make proposals for preventing the progression of damage to health.

of both the employers and the employees to improving safety culture is also decisive. Safety can be ensured and damage to health prevented even without a large financial cost with a simple change in attitude. A good place to start is sharing information and acting if something is done incorrectly. An uninformed employer may not be aware of the employees' problems and an uninstructed employee does not know how to work without endangering their own and co-workers' lives. An employee performing dangerous work may not even be aware of this fact.

5. NATIONAL PREVENTION AND INFORMATION ACTIVITIES

One of the main tasks of the Labour Inspectorate, in addition to supervision and counselling, is carrying out prevention and information activities related to occupational health and safety and labour relations in order to make the work environment safer and to enhance the quality of working life.

Prevention and information activities include:

- Organization of media relations and informing the public and target groups of the dangers of and best practices in the work environment;
- Organization of days for information, seminars, trainings, and many other events;
- Managing the Labour Inspectorate website, the Tööelu portal, and social media channels;
- Cooperation with the European Commission and external partners, including coordinating information exchange with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA).

Information and prevention activities were financed in 2015 from the European Social Fund (ESF) programme "Reduction of work-related health risks and improvement of labour relations 2010–2014", and the conditions for granting support "Developing a work environment facilitating maintenance and sustenance of work capacity 2014–2020" Information events were also carried out under the "Less Stress" campaign of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA).

5.1 Conduction of prevention and information campaigns

Know Your Rights – Young Employee

In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate conducted the social campaign "Know your rights – Young employee". The goal of the campaign was to increase the awareness of work environment and work relations in young people (persons aged 18–25 about to start their first job), so that more youths would acknowledge the risks related to the work environment and know to request the employer to provide a safe work environment and the required personal protective equipment, and to give the youths basic knowledge of work relations enabling them to know their rights and obligations and to ensure that their work conditions conform to the requirements established in the Employment Contracts Act. The slogan of the campaign was, "Work smart", and the focus was on issues, such as instruction and training, safe work, trial days, and written employment contracts.

The Healthy Workplaces campaign of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work "Less Stress"

The two-year campaign "Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress" conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), calling enterprises and organizations all over Europe to actively battle psychosocial stress at workplaces, continued in 2015. The goal of the campaign was to raise awareness of work stress and psychosocial risks at workplace, and to encourage employers and employees to cooperate in reducing these risks. In Estonia, the campaign was coordinated by the Labour Inspectorate and the focus was mainly on workplace violence.

In the course of the campaign, hands-on seminars on workplace harassment were conducted in different towns. A work-environment film night was held with a viewing of "Vendanges" ("Harvest"), the winner of the Healthy Workplaces Film Award at the Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film in 2014. This was followed by a discussion of the film and how the psychosocial situations seen in the film could have been avoided or mitigated. The campaign concluded on Occupational Health Day, now a tradition in Estonia and held for the seventeenth time in 2015. In addition, the three winners of the Best Practice 2015 award were announced on Occupational Health Day.

5.2 Information days, morning briefings, round tables and other informational events

Information days for vocational schools – "Know Your Rights, Young Employee"

In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate held 29 "Know Your Rights, Young Employee" information events seeking to increase the awareness in young people of the work environment and labour relations and provide basic knowledge to people entering working life. The target group for the information days were youths aged 18+ studying in

vocational schools all over Estonia. These hour-and-a-half events covered subjects related to both labour relations and the work environment, and young people had the opportunity to ask questions from a lawyer and a consultant. "Young Employee's Guide" booklets were distributed to the participants of the information days. The information days were held in both Estonian and Russian, with a total of 1,652 students participating all over Estonia.

Round tables on medical examination

In 2015, round tables on medical examination were conducted in four regions (three in Estonian and one in Russian). The purpose of the round tables was to cover all aspects of organizing the medical examination of employees. The round tables focused on requirements for medical examination. Information was provided by labour inspectors, occupational health physicians, and employees of the Estonian Health Board tasked with supervision. Employers also shared their experiences in this field.

Morning briefings on labour relations and work environment

For several years now, the most popular information events of the Labour Inspectorate have been the morning briefings on labour relations where a lawyer explains certain legal requirements and answers questions from the audience in the course of the two-hour event. The main subjects for morning briefings included working and rest time, vacations, concluding and terminating employment contracts, issues most frequently giving rise to disputes concerning the cancellation of employment contracts, etc.

In 2015, in addition to the morning briefings on labour relations, similar events were also held on the causes of work accidents. At the morning briefings, work environment consultants discussed the main causes of work accidents, investigating work accidents and avoiding similar situations.

Napo and exhibitions of children's drawings

On 28 April, the World Day of Safety and Health at Work, the Labour Inspectorate sent to Estonian kindergartens nearly 500 Napo educational DVDs with animated characters. Napo, the main character of short films produced by the European Agency of Health and Safety at Work, and his friends encounter different dangers in different situations at work and learn to recognize and avoid these.

The Labour Inspectorate invited kindergarten children to draw pictures of dangers they are familiar with and, most importantly, of how to safely deal with these dangerous situations. All the pictures received – 75 in total – were collected into an exhibit shown in several places all over Estonia, such as Haapsalu Children's Library, Viljandi Town Library, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The exhibit will continue to circulate in 2016.

The Labour Inspectorate also received a Napo costume from the European Agency of Health and Safety at Work, which was used for informational activities at kindergartens. In autumn 2015, four classes for children aged 4–7 were held with Napo's participation in order to teach the children to think of the occurrence of potential dangerous situations in the kindergarten and at home, but also in the street. Children also had to solve dangerous situations: how to avoid falling if wires or toys are lying on the ground or if water is spilled on the floor, making it wet. At the end of the activity, the children received a gift from Napo: a Napo DVD and a hanging reflector. Napo classes were held at two kindergartens and two libraries (along with opening the exhibit of children's drawings.)

Participation in fairs

In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate participated in 27 fairs. Nearly 7,000 people visited our booth orstand at the fairs. We have participated in major fairs on construction, education, and agriculture, as well as in smaller information fairs in county centres and job fairs organized by the Unemployment Insurance Fund. At all the fairs it was possible to ask for advice at the Labour Inspectorate booth or stand, take along publications of the Labour Inspectorate, and join the newsletter. At nine fairs, a specialist from the Labour Inspectorate also held a lecture and a Q&A session. In summer, for the first time, the Labour Inspectorate also participated in outdoor events, where advice and information materials were available in a tent, instead of a booth.

Conferences

On 18 June, the concluding conference of the campaign "Slips, trips on the same level" held by the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee (SLIC) in 2014 took place in Tallinn with the participation of nearly 20 countries involved in the campaign. At the conference, representatives of the Labour Inspectorate presented a summary of the results of supervision and information activities in Europe and Estonia; campaign experiences were also shared by Croatian, Romanian, Swedish, and Portuguese participants. A representative of Kunda Nordic Tsement shared their experience in preventing trips and slips in daily work; expert knowledge in this sphere was also shared by a representative of the UK Health and Safety Laboratory.

On 21–22 October, the Labour Inspectorate held an international conference on occupational health and safety discussing problems related to occupational safety culture, health maintenance at work, and ageing working population. At the conference, the Good Work Environment award was presented to enterprises valuing occupational safety and the health of their employees. In 2015, the award for large enterprises was given to AS Tallinna Vesi and the award for small enterprises, to Crystalsol OÜ. Issues debated at the conference included whether Europe is ready to account for changes caused by ageing working population. Experts led discussions of the importance of and possibilities for promoting preventive occupational health and safety culture. The conference also focussed on whether healthy workplaces are actually possible and what would encourage enterprises to turn greater attention to safe and healthy working practices. The conference had 200 participants from different Estonian enterprises and organizations.

5.3 Information materials

Publications

New publications of the Labour Inspectorate in 2015 included the dos-à-dos booklet "Young Employee's Guide: What to Consider When Starting Work/Employer's Guide: What to Consider When Employing a Young Employee", "Occupational Safety in Wood and Furniture Industry", "Temporary Agency Work" and the leaflet "Occupational Disease: Information and Investigation". Three new posters were added to our popular range of posters: "New-found energy! Exercises for people with a desk job", "New-found energy! Exercises for people with a standing job", "Safe work with hazardous chemicals". Information found in the following previously published booklets was brought up to date: "Financial Claims in Labour Relations", "Official Travel and Posting Employees", "Personal Protective Equipment: An Investment into Future", "Management for Drivers: Working, Driving, and Rest Time: a Guide", "Ask for an Employment Contract", and "Termination of an Employment Contract", as well as in the booklet on the work of the Labour Inspectorate: "Labour Inspectorate – Making Working Life Better!"

All these publications are available on the Labour Inspectorate website, as well as in the Tööelu portal. To reach the younger age group, the Labour Inspectorate published advertisements on subjects related to working life in formula booklets meant for school-age youths (biology, history, and geography, 31,000 copies in total) and a freely distributed economics workbook (7,000 copies). These publications are available on the Labour Inspectorate website.

Newsletter for start-up enterprises

The purpose of the newsletter for start-up enterprises is first and foremost to help employersunderstand the need for the management of work environment and to guide their activities in establishing safe and healthy working conditions and proper labour relations. The newsletter is distributed electronically on a quarterly basis to new enterprises registered in Estonia. In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate distributed the newsletter to 19,034 enterprises. The newsletter for start-up enterprises is available on the Labour Inspectorate website in both Estonian and Russian, as well as in the form of a booklet.

Newsletter of the Labour Inspectorate

The electronic newsletter of the Labour Inspectorate, published six times a year, discusses currently important issues and news directed at both the employers and the employees. It includes a variety of articles, advice on labour relations and work environment, and news related to current work environment campaigns and other informational events.

All past newsletters are available on the Labour Inspectorate website, where it is also possible to subscribe to the newsletter.

Collection of best work environment practices

One of the best traditions of the Labour Inspectorate is to collect best work environment practices from enterprises, which in turn can be shared with other companies. In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate was submitted 18 best practice examples; in total, 261 best practice examples have been collected in the framework of the programme, all of which have been also translated into Russian.

For the sixth time, the Labour Inspectorate organised a competition for best practice examples collected during the year with awards for the top three. On November 11, the Occupational Health Day, the three winners received awards from the Labour Inspectorate:

- Rescue Board – Psychological counselling service
- AS Omniva – Exercise ladders in distribution centres and production
- AllePal OÜ – Lying prone

In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate published a collection of best practices, which includes all best practice examples collected in 2010–2015.

Labour Inspectorate in social medial

Social media has become an increasingly important communication channel for the Labour Inspectorate. In 2015, the Labour Inspectorate administered four social media channels: Facebook account for the Tööelu portal and Labour Inspectorate Facebook accounts (in Estonian and Russian), as well as the Labour Inspectorate Twitter account.

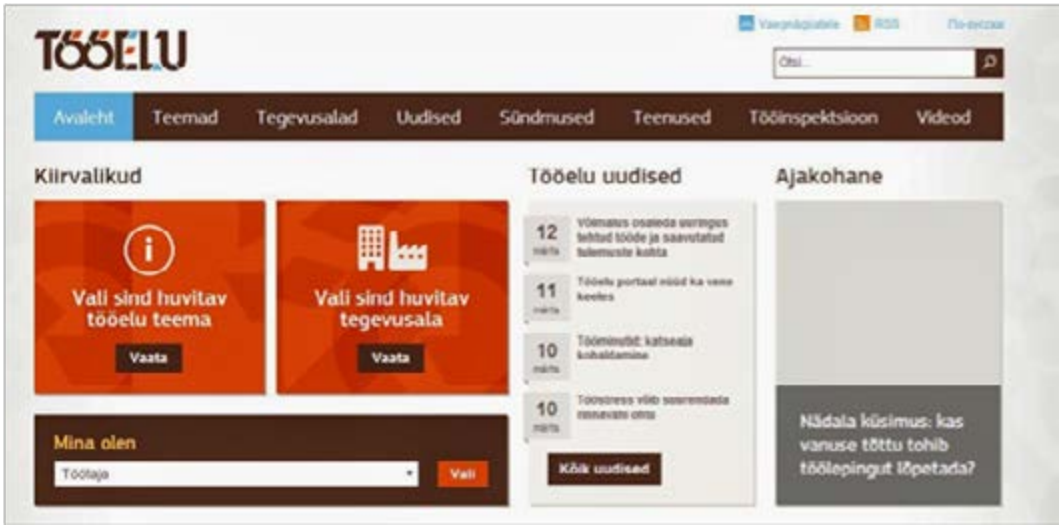
By the end of 2015, the number of followers of the Estonian Facebook account had reached 2,904, i.e. the number of followers increased by 700 over the year. Facebook has also become one of the channels for submitting questions related to the work environment and labour relations.

The Labour Inspectorate website and the Tööelu portal

The Labour Inspectorate website was visited 259,280 times in 2015 (total number of visits for Estonian, Russian, and English versions). The Labour Inspectorate website provides all the necessary information on the activities and operation of the Labour Inspectorate, from the office hours of labour inspectors to submitting petitions. Other information materials, such as instructions, educational videos, information sheets, etc. will be available in the Tööelu portal.

In 2015, the Tööelu portal was visited 358,468 times, with an average visit duration of 2:04 minutes. The increase in the number of visitors mainly resulted from the young employee campaign held from September to November,

the promotion of major events (e.g. the Occupational Health Day) in the portal and advertisements for the portal published in county newspapers at the end of the year, and negatively affected by the loss of data in December. The portal has also begun to receive more referrals from the Labour Inspectorate's partners.



Various thematic pages receive the most hits; most popular of these are articles on termination of employment contract at the employer's initiative, questions and answers related to the termination of an employment contract, news, information on the dates of seminars, training courses and information days, as well as contact information of service providers, etc.

5.4 International cooperation

The priorities for our international cooperation are related to Estonia's membership in the European Union, in the European Committee of Senior Labour Inspectors, and the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work. In the frames of the above, as well as other forms of international cooperation, the Inspectorate has held practical meetings, participated in projects, and exchanged information with other member states. International cooperation mainly involves cooperation with Estonia's neighbours, as well as EU member states and organizations, established by and based on agreements between different countries and organizations.

2015 saw the continuation of the cooperation between Baltic inspection bodies initiated in 2007. In the frames of this cooperation, an annual meeting took place, along with training visits for inspectors and exchange of knowledge and information in the fields of occupational health, occupational safety, and labour relations.

On 3 December 2014, Estonian Labour Inspectorate and the regional Labour Inspectorate of Southern Finland signed a cooperation agreement to exchange information related to posted employees, develop the supervision of posted employees conducted by Estonian inspectors, and raise the awareness of Estonian workers posted to Finland of the legislation applying to posted employees.

Employees of the Labour Inspectorate participate as experts in numerous international and national working groups. For instance, they participate in several projects and working groups related to posted employees (the INTEPF project "Learning by Doing", the SLIC WG Cross-Border Enforcement working group, the European Commission's expert committee on posted employees, the European Commission's working group "Transposition of the Enforcement Directive of the Posting of Workers Directive 2014/67/EU (TREND)"). They actively participate in different SLIC working groups and the EU-OSHA network. The exchange of information on the international level takes place e.g. through the European Commission's Internal Market Information System (IMI) and individual queries, as well as the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee information system, KSS. The queries are mainly related to the law applied in the Republic of Estonia.

6. LABOUR INSPECTORATE

As at the end of 2015, the Labour Inspectorate has 116.5 employee positions. State supervision of occupational health and safety and labour relations is conducted by 46 inspectors. Work environment consultations are performed by 3 consultants and 7 counselling lawyers respond to the queries of employees and employers at the advisory service. 6 labour inspector-investigators are tasked with investigating work accidents. Labour dispute committees have a total of 17 officials and employees.

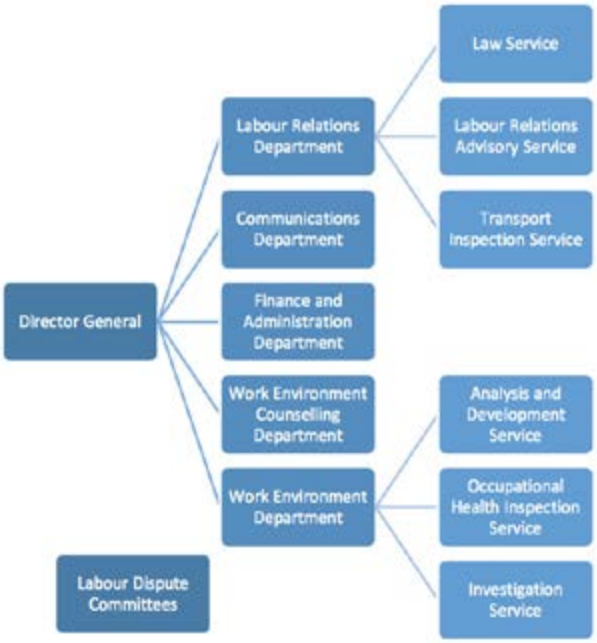
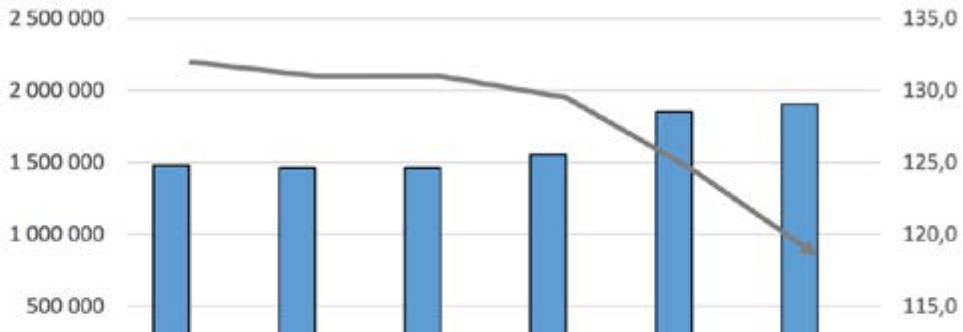


Figure 36. Structure of the Labour Inspectorate in 2015

The Labour Inspectorate's personnel and administration expenses have significantly increased compared to five years prior; unfortunately, this increase has mainly come from EU funds and is related to the implementation of ESF projects. In the 2015 budget, ESF made up 20% and ESF conditions for granting support 3.8% of total expenses. The budget for conducting state supervision has largely remained unchanged, while the employment rate and the number of enterprises have increased significantly.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Personnel expenses	1 476 762	1 461 712	1 461 712	1 553 840	1 850 093	1 905 192
Administration expenses	239 635	217 520	239 596	242 019	261 530	222 090
Employee positions	132,0	131,0	131,0	129,5	124,5	118,5

Figure 37. Budget and personnel of the Labour Inspectorate, 2010–2015

WORK ENVIRONMENT 2015 IN NUMBERS

Employed persons:	640,900 (16,000 more than in 2014)
Unemployment rate:	6.2%
Number of enterprises* with at least one employee:	53,442 (nearly 2,000 more than in 2014)
* In the Labour Inspectorate's database, based on Tax and Customs Board data	
Registered work accidents:	4,774
Minor:	3,800
Serious:	958
Fatal:	16
Total number of enterprises inspected in 2015:	3,838 (nearly 600 more than in 2014)
Occupational health and safety violations detected:	17,611
Number of enterprises where labour relations were inspected:	523
Violations of the Employment Contracts Act:	17,611
Lawyers of the Labour Inspectorate gave advice:	
By phone:	29,488 times
By e-mail:	5,586 times
At office:	4,099 times
Companies counselled by a work environment consultant:	61
Petitions to labour dispute committees:	2,691
Occupational health and safety and labour relations inspectors:	46
Consultants:	3
Counselling lawyers:	7
Work accident inspectors-investigators:	6
Labour dispute committees (LDC):	8

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May 2016