DOI: 10.5455/msm.2020.32.235-242

Received: APR 19 2020; Accepted: MAY 30, 2020

© 2020 Eleni Konstantinou, Kristina Grendova, Eleni Maragaki, Monika Klimešová, Lucie Ošmerová, Sakellari Evanthia

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

REVIEW

Mater Sociomed. 2020 Sep; 32(3): 235-242

Health and Safety Inspections in Workplaces: a Review Among Three European Countries

Eleni Konstantinou¹, Kristina Grendova², Eleni Maragaki³, Monika Klimešová⁴, Lucie Ošmerová⁴, Sakellari Evanthia¹

¹Department of Public and Community Health, School of Public Health, University of West Attica, Athens, Greece

²Department of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences and Social Work, Trnava University, Trnava, Slovak Republic

³Labor Inspectorate for Health and Safety at Work, Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity, Athens, Greece

⁴Department of Laboratory Diagnostics and Public Health, Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice, Czech Republic

Corresponding

author: Eleni Konstantinou, PhD student, Registered Health Visitor, Lecturer, Department of Public and Community Health, School of Public Health, University of West Attica, Alexandras Avenue 196, 11521, Athens, Greece. Phone: +30-213-2010151. E-mail: ekonstan@uniwa.gr. ORCID ID: <http://www.orcid.org/0000-0002-0313-2864>.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Labor Inspection is a public function of labor administration that ensures the application of labor legislation in the workplace. Its main role is to convince the social partners of the need to observe the law at the workplace and their mutual interest in this regard, through preventive, educational and, where necessary, enforcement measures. **Aim:** The aim of this paper is to describe the general framework of Health and Safety Inspections in workplaces as well as to identify the role of Labor Inspectors in Czech Republic, in Greece and in Slovak Republic. **Methods:** For the purposes of this paper, a literature review was conducted. **Results:** The review showed that Labor Inspectorates are similarly organized in Czech Republic, in Greece and in Slovak Republic. In all three countries, a Labor Inspector is a civil servant who carries out a civil service. Labor Inspectors monitor the implementation of labor legislation and their main goal is to ensure labor rights and the safety and health of employees. They perform either scheduled or random visits, day or night or during weekends, where they carry out checks on compliance with the relevant legislation and they lay down penalties for any breach. **Conclusion:** This review opens avenues for researchers in collaboration with Labor Inspectors to conduct comparison studies based on the available data in order to draw conclusions on the labor inspection successful practices.

Key words: health and safety inspections, health and safety inspectors, Labor Inspectorate, Labor Inspectors, workplace inspections.

labor legislation in the workplace. Its main role is to convince the social partners of the need to observe the law at the workplace and their mutual interest in this regard, through preventive, educational and, where necessary, enforcement measures (1).

Labor Inspectorates are in a position to influence the development of safe, healthy, fair and productive workplaces. International Association of Labor Inspection (IALI) recognizes that ethical practices and high professional standards are central to the ability of any Labor Inspectorate to provide the best possible services to the social partners and the wider community (2).

A Labor Inspectorate can play a significant role in improving Occupational Health and Safety (OSH). However, the Labor Inspectorate is not the only factor influencing OSH improvements at worker, enterprise and national levels. Through fair and consistent enforcement, education of workers and employers and the implementation of various other prevention programs, the Labor Inspectorate should be able to directly influence the OSH situation of workers and give positive outcomes. Examples include a reduction in the number of injuries and illnesses suffered by workers, an associated reduction in their cost to the enterprise and a more engaged and cooperative workforce, potentially increasing productivity and economic returns. Such positive outcomes for enterprises can also have an impact on society as a whole (3).

Through the work of Labor Inspectors, the inspectorates have access to a unique source of data that helps inform their strategic planning in three main areas: research, inspection and awareness-raising (3).

1. INTRODUCTION

Labor Inspection is a public function of labor administration that ensures the application of

Nevertheless, challenges remain in countries where Labor Inspection systems are underfunded and understaffed, and consequently unable to do their job. Some estimates indicate that in some developing countries less than 1% of the national budget is allocated to labor administration, of which Labor Inspection systems receive only a small fraction. Other studies show that the costs resulting from occupational accidents and illnesses, absenteeism, abuse of workers and labor conflict can be much higher. Labor Inspection can help prevent these problems and thereby enhance productivity and economic development (4).

2. AIM

The aim of this paper is to describe the general framework of Health and Safety Inspections in workplaces as well as to identify the role of Labor Inspectors in Czech Republic, in Greece and in Slovak Republic.

3. RESULTS

Labor Inspectorate

The Labor Inspectorate in the Czech Republic is under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. This inspectorate is governed by the Act No. 251/2005 Coll. on Labor Inspection (5). The Inspectors carry out inspections on compliance with the relevant legislation and place penalties for any breach. Inspectors also engage in educational and advisory activities (6). The State Labor Inspection Office enforces the compliance with occupational safety and labor conditions standards and it is responsible for enforcement of standards of health at work (7).

In addition, the Public Health Authority is responsible for workplace inspections which controls not only safety and health at workplace, but also in schools, in children's recreations, in restaurants, in health service providers, in potable water production, in the production and sale of cosmetics, bathing, body care services, anyone in contact with food. The Department's of Hygiene Labor of Public Health Authority primary task is to prevent the occurrence of occupational diseases or accidents, which lead to temporary or permanent disability from work (8). Since work-related injuries or accidents may occur, the employer should insure all employees (mostly social insurance). If an employer employs at least one and more employees, according to the law, they must be insured for the damage caused by occupational accidents and occupational diseases. The insurance company therefore pays the damages to the employee caused by an accident at work or an occupational disease (6).

One of the main Public Health Authority's activity is to carry out inspections after an incidence or on a request (8). Employees of the Public Health Authority are mainly governed by Act No. 258/2000 Coll. on the protection and promotion of public health and must act during an inspection according to Act. No. 552/1991 Coll., on State Control and Act. No 500/2004 Coll. and the Administrative Code (9-11). Occupational health surveillance applies to every business entity and the subject of control is, in particular, inspecting the requirements resulting from Government Decree No. 361/2007 Coll. on health and safety at workplace (12).

The inspectors' rights and duties are regulated by the Act No. 251/2005 Coll. (Sections 7, 8 and 9) on Labor Inspection.

Most inspections are not announced in advance, but there might be exceptions in certain cases (5). Labor Inspectors monitor compliance with legislation, among others, changing and terminating employment, working hours, rest periods, holidays, barriers to work, wages or salaries, compensation for wages or salaries, reimbursement of travel expenses, women and adolescents employment, contracts and internal regulations, including also regulations on the safety of operation of dedicated technical equipment (6,7).

The national authority for Labor Inspection in Greece, the Labor Inspectorate Body-S.E.P.E. was established in 1998 (13). It came into operation on 1 July 1999 and its organization was completed and it was officially inaugurated in December 2000. Its role is to enforce labor legislation in the private and public sectors, to protect the legal rights of the employees and to secure the health, safety and welfare of workers in Greece. S.E.P.E. reports directly to the Minister of Employment, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity and is under the supervision of a Special Secretary, appointed by the Government. S.E.P.E. is consisted of: the Central Labor Inspectorate, 96 Regional Social Labor Inspectorate Offices, and 52 Regional Labor Inspectorates for Health and Safety at work. The newest law that governs S.E.P.E. states the following (14):

- S.E.P.E. reports directly to the Ministry of Employment, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, in order to ensure a unified policy for monitoring the implementation of labor legislation,
- S.E.P.E. monitors illegal and uninsured employment,
- S.E.P.E staff should attend training on regular basis,
- regular audits take place in S.E.P.E. in order to make report for improving the work,
- S.E.P.E. arbitrages after an institute or workers union applies for it.

Two Directorates at the Ministry of Employment, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity are concerned with the Labor Inspectorate: A) The Centre for Health and Safety at Work which is responsible for providing technical, scientific and medical support, including sampling for environmental measurements and analysis at the workplace (14). B) A. The Directorate of Working Conditions which is responsible for developing actions in the fields of: a) Legislation; b) Administration; c) Information; and d) Research.

The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF) of the Slovak Republic is the central body of the State administration for safety and health at work and Labor Inspection. The MLSAF of the Slovak Republic controls the National Labor Inspectorate, 8 Labor Inspectorates with regional competence and the Institute for research on work and family. The National Labor Inspectorate manages and controls the Labor Inspectorates and implement tasks in the field of safety and health at work. The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic is the central authority for the protection of health at work. For example, for chemical, carcinogenic and mutagenic factors, noise and vibration. According to the law (Act no. 124/2006 Coll) Labor Inspector is a civil servant who has completed specialized theoretical and practical training and has acquired special

qualification prerequisites by successfully passing the professional examination (15).

The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic is the central state administration body and controls the chemicals placed on the market. The central mining office and the district mining offices, inter alia, to carry out the main mining supervision. The Office of Public Health and the Public Health regional offices virtually ensure the performance of the health sector and they are in the responsibility of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic.

Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic publishes statistics on accidents at work and occupational diseases in the Slovak Republic (16).

Labor Inspector's Duties

In Czech Republic, the employees of the Public Health Authority control whether employers are performing their duties, under the following inspections:

- * Preventive inspection. It includes the assessment of project documentation and the issuing of binding opinions (for new buildings or reconstruction of buildings, changes in the use of buildings, new technologies, trial operations, approval and assessment of non-ionizing radiation–lasers). This activity includes participation in endorsements. It is very often in cooperation with the local building authorities and other government authorities (8).

- * Usual hygienic inspection. The Department of Hygiene of Labor inspects enterprises on their compliance with health protection requirements. The compliance are particular workplace requirements, lighting, ventilation, compliant microclimate conditions, adherence to hygiene limits for physical factors, chemical pollutants and dust in the work environment, physical workload limits, ergonomic requirements for the workplace, workplace facilities with sanitary and auxiliary equipment, supply of water on workplace and assurance of occupational health services (17). If there are any violations, the Public Health Authority may prohibit or restrict an activity or issue a fine. Most inspections are not notified in advance. The amount of the fine is defined by the law on public health protection and can rise up to 2 million Czech crowns, and in the event of health damage, origin or threat of an epidemic, up to 3 million Czech crowns, while if the violation repeated, the fine may raise up to ten times the original amount. The Public Health Authority may also suspend the activity until the defect is remedied, in some exceptional cases the facility may be closed down (18).

- * Labor Inspectors are permanent civil servants of Public Health Authority such as Medical Doctor specialized in occupational health, Public Health Specialists or Engineers with specialization on occupational health and safety (15).

Moreover, the Public Health Authority records the conditions of work-related illnesses for the purposes of occupational diseases assessment. The Public Health Authority staff also discuss the rules for handling hazardous chemicals and mixtures and make suggestions on operating rules of collection, purchase or disposal facilities (17). They also participate in inspections of operations under the Act of Prevention of Major Accidents Caused by Selected Dangerous Chemicals and Chemical Mixtures. They verify the fulfillment of the mandatory conditions permit

for protection against the effects of noise, vibrations and non-ionizing radiation. They inspect compliance with the provisions of the Chemical Act and related directly applicable EU health rules (17).

Furthermore, they inspect compliance with the provisions of the Biocides Act and related directly applicable EU regulations, control compliance with the rules of special protective disinfection, disinsectisation and deratization, establish measures for these activities if the companies use highly toxic preparations and are members of the commission for the examination of professional competence of workers in this field. They examine the professional competence of employees on dealing with highly toxic substances and mixtures and make suggestions on aviation applications for plant protection products (17).

The Public Health authority together with the employer carries out the work categorization, which is the basic risk assessment method (19). Work categorization is defined by § 37 of Act No. 258/2000 Coll. on the protection of Public Health. It is one of the important duties of the employer, which serves as a basis for the assignment of employees to the individual sections and the regular technical inspections performance (9). It also provides to employers important guidance of work categorizing for the Labor Inspectors and for the Public Health authorities and informs how risky the workplace is. Work categorization is included in the OSH documentation.

According to the occurrence rate, of risk factors the work is classified into 4 categories (9):

1. It includes work positions in which there is no risk of adverse health effects.
2. It includes work positions where the adverse effects on health can be expected only exceptionally, especially for persons with special sensitivity. This risk is determined by the Public Health authority. These are work positions which do not exceed the hygienic limits set by other legislation.
3. It includes work positions where the hygienic limits are exceeded and the exposure of the employees performing the work is not reliably reduced by technical measures below those levels. Therefore, it is necessary to use protective equipment, take organizational and other protective measures in order to ensure health protection of personal health. This category also includes work positions where occupational diseases occur often.
4. It includes work positions where there is a high risk of health threats that can not be excluded even when using available and applicable protective measures.

The criteria according to which the work positions are categorized are included in Decree No. 432/2003 Coll. (20). The employer is obliged to evaluate the work and categorize it. The employer on own expenses is obliged to request from an authorized/accredited laboratory to measure risk factors at the workplace. The resulting risk assessment must be reported at the Public Health authority within 30 calendar days from the beginning of a new employee (work contract) (9).

The occupational physician plays an important role in the work categorization by being a consultant in risk assessment and providing care to the employees (21). Employer must keep records of employees at risk work positions.

This record includes: the employee's personal information the number of work shifts in risk and the results of medical examinations (9). Public Health authorities must also keep records. They record data about the work categorization into the information system which is called "KaPr"-Kategorizácia prác (Work Categorization). The data can be sorted by the risk factor or address of the company. The data are analyzed to provide useful statistics which inform the state policy on health protection at work (22).

The Act no. 373/2011 Coll. (21), on Specific Medical Services describes the employers' obligations with regard to the Occupational Medical Service. Within the enterprise there should be cooperation between employees, employer, safety technician and occupational physician. The safety technician should provide consultation to employees, employer and occupational physician. The safety technician supervises work conditions, maintenance of the work instruments and the use of protective equipment and informs and guides the workers for occupational danger (23). The occupational physician offers consultation to employees, employer and safety technician and supervises work conditions and performs preventive inspections. According to Decree No. 73/2013 Coll. (24) on Occupational Health Services and Certain Kinds of Review Care, the occupational physician performs first aid, emergency, outpatient and subsequent preventive inspections in his consulting room and visits the workplaces every 2 years or every year for work categories 3 and 4 (18).

In the Czech Republic, the employees can undergo initial, periodic, extraordinary, final and follow-up medical examinations. The frequency of medical examinations depend on the work category, as follows (25):

- work category 1, once per 6 years or once per 4 years if the employees are 50 years old or older,
- work category 2, once in 5 years or once in 3 years, if the employees are 50 years old or older,
- work category 2, when there is a risk, once in 2 years,
- work category 3 once in 2 years and category 4 once a year.

Finally, the Czech Mining Authority, which is an independent office, enforces the compliance with occupational health and safety standards at the mining industry, performs top-level supervision of all mining and mining activities. It also conducts inspections in the area of safety and traffic safety for mining organizations and organizations using and producing explosives, investigates major mining accidents, authorizes the putting explosives into circulation and issues certificates of professional competence (26).

The Greek Labor Inspectors are permanent civil servants. Labor Inspectors cannot be employees with a temporary contract. A Labor Inspector can be engineer, mechanical engineer, chemist, occupational physician, health visitor, health inspector, etc. The role of the Labor Inspector is to control all workplaces in private and public sector, carry out inspections in order to assess if companies comply with labor legislation, examine the requests and complaints of the workers, issue fines or press charges in case of non-compliance, arbitrate between employers and employees in order to resolve disputes on labor issues and to provide information about industrial relations and

labor legislation. Moreover, the Labor Inspector for Health and Safety at work conducts investigations on the cause of death or serious work accidents (27).

Labor Inspectors for Health and Safety at work duties are (28):

- to inspect and examine workplaces, using all appropriate means, in any private or public area used for work or business operations or area in which workers are assumed to be employed, unless specific provisions stipulate otherwise,
- to monitor compliance with the law of labor, especially on working terms and conditions, working hours, payments or other benefits/allowances, employees health and safety as well as specific working terms and conditions for vulnerable groups and specific categories of employees, the terms of all types of collective agreements, provisions of insurance legislation relating to insurance cover and undeclared work,
- to investigate, identify and prosecute persons in breach of the legislation,
- to record, evaluate and report shortcomings or omissions not covered by current legislation and any problems which arise during the application of insurance law to the Minister of Employment, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity and to advise the competent departments of the ministry accordingly,
- to enter workplaces at any time, without giving any notice to the employer and to access any of the records, registers, documents and files and any other company information kept, to take copies and to access the structure of the production process; to take and analyze samples from the workplace, to take photographs or recordings and to measure harmful physical, chemical and biological agents in the work environment, to identify new and nascent dangers caused by the introduction of new technologies and changes to how work is organized,
- to investigate the causes and the working conditions at the time of major and fatal work-related accidents and occupational illnesses, to propose measures to prevent them, to draft the relevant reports in which note is made of the infringements of labor legislation involved in them and relating to the health and safety of workers in order to prevent such accidents and illnesses from reoccurring, and to file charges against those liable,
- to examine all complaints and charges filed with the Inspectorate and to intervene immediately in the workplace,
- to develop actions as part of the effort to design and implement e-government projects at the Ministry of Employment, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, taking account of the needs of disabled persons, so as to update its functions, efficiently support its work and make it easier for employers and employees to deal with the Labor Inspectorate,
- to indicate occupational danger in work places or posts and suggest measures against it,
- to monitor compliance of Occupational Physician, providing suggestions to employers, employees and

their representative.

Additionally, Labor Inspectors for Health and Safety at work inspects Occupational Physician's duties on the following:

- informing employees about the dangers at work and their prevention (29-32)
- provide a suggestion on first work assignment and work position change for health reasons temporarily or permanently (29-33)
- integrating persons with special needs in the production procedure (34)
- carrying out employees medical examination in relation to their workplace after recruitment, after work position change, as well as periodical medical examination (29-33)
- arranging employees' medical exams, evaluating and registering the results of the exams and accessing the competence of employees for a certain task (29-33)
- issuing affirmation on the above evaluations taking into account medical privacy (29-33)
- assessing the causes of diseases due to work, analyzing and assessing these results in order to propose measures for prevention (29-33)
- providing urgent treatment in case of accident or sudden illness (29)
- supervising employee's conformity to OSH rules (29,35)
- organizing vaccination programs for the employees (33)
- notifying the Labor Inspectorate about diseases which are due to work (30-33)
- keeping personal medical record for each employee (29-33)
- informing the enterprise about the introduction of new production processes, machinery, tools and materials of the operation of new installations, as long as these affect the occupational health and safety conditions (29,36)
- taking every necessary measure in order to protect employees and third parties in the workplaces from any danger which may threaten their health and safety (29)
- enforcing every notice of OSH inspectors and facilitate their mission inside the enterprise (13)
- inspecting work posts regularly checking issues relevant to work health and safety (37, 38)
- reporting to the employer any omissions regarding work health and safety issues, proposing measures for conformity and supervising their implementation (37, 38)
- supervising the personal protective equipment's right application (36)
- participating in the constitution and implementation of worker's training programs concerning health and safety at work (29)

Labor Inspectors can perform either scheduled visits after a complaint is filed or random visits. They carry out inspections without prior notification and whenever needed, day or night or during weekends. These visits are always held by two Labor Inspectors. Depending on the

incident, they may carry out inspections with inspectors from another body (e.g. Fire Brigade, Police, Financial Inspectors) (14).

When non compliance with the labor legislation is observed during inspection in an enterprise, a five-day timeframe is given to the owner or the legal representative to prepare a document explaining the reasons for the observed offences, attached with any other documents which might help his/her position. If labor Inspectors do not find his/her explanation adequate, they impose fines. The fines range from 500 euro to 50.000 euro depending on the importance of the offence and the size of the company. There is no list to specify the exact amount of fine for each offence and it is decided by the Labor Inspectors in cooperation with their Director. The final decision is made by the Director. The documents are sent to the Directorate which forwards them to the Treasury. When the Treasury informs the offenders about the imposed fine, they must proceed to the Treasury office in order to pay it. The Directorate has the right to increase or decrease the size of the fine but it does not usually happen. Offenders have the right to appeal to the court within 60 days. If they chose to appeal, they must pay 20% of the fine in advance. Then, it depends on the court's decision whether they have to pay the fine or not. Apart from imposing fines, inspectors have the authority to sue the offenders to the penal court in case of serious offences. However, due to delays of the court system in examining cases, Labor Inspectors prefer to simply impose fines (14).

There are checklists available to Labor Inspectors for carrying out informational visits and inspections and they have a range of available tools which help in improving the quality, effectiveness as well as consistency of each visit/inspection (14). In addition, Labor Inspectors have to inform small enterprises about the Online Interactive Risk Assessment, which is a digital platform that enables the creation of sectoral risk assessment tools in any language in an easy and standardized way. It is developed and maintained by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (Eu-OSHA) (3).

In the Slovak Republic, Safety Inspectors are responsible for safety and health at work. To ensure occupational health and safety at work, inspectors apply the following principles (39):

- prevention of accidents at work and occupational diseases shall take precedence over compensation for occupational accidents and occupational diseases and pre-occupational rehabilitation for the rehabilitation of working capacity after an occupational accident or occupational disease
- occupational rehabilitation takes precedence over early dismissal of employees from the work process due to health incapacity to work
- promotion of active involvement of employees in improving health and safety at work, especially in the assessment, prevention and management of risks to health
- paying attention to the working conditions of older workers to support measures that will help them to maintain their safety, health and ability to work in

the long term

- giving increased attention to school graduates to provide them with the professional information necessary for the effective application of health and safety measures at work in their workplaces with a focus on the prevention of occupational injuries

Labor Inspection according to Act no. 124/2006 Coll. includes

a) Supervision:

- of compliance of governing labor relations, their creation, change and termination, wage and working conditions of employees, including the working conditions of women, minors, domestic workers, people with disabilities and persons who have not reached the age of 15, and collective bargaining
- legislation governing state-employment relations
- legislation and other regulations to ensure safety and health at work including regulations governing working environment factors
- legislation on the prohibition of undeclared work and illegal employment
- special regulation, which regulates the internal incentive system, the employer
- a special regulation by an employer which provides for the posting of employees for the performance of works in the provision of services, taking responsibility for breaches of the rules referred to in point and for breaching obligations under collective agreements, providing free counseling to employers, natural persons who are entrepreneurs and not employers and employees to the extent of basic professional information and advice on how best to comply with the rules laid down in point

b) Inspection of work is carried out in all workplaces of employers and natural persons who are entrepreneurs and are not employers, including workplaces located on private land and in the dwellings of natural persons, in all premises where a domestic employee carries out the agreed work and in which the employee carries out work under a contract for work performed outside the employment relationship

c) Inspection of work in the workplaces of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Police Force, Fire and Rescue Corps, Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic, Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, Prison and Judicial Guards Corps and Financial Administration are carried out by their Labor Inspection Bodies. Labor Inspection under this Act is not carried out in the Military Intelligence, the Slovak Information Service and the National Security Office; in protected areas of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, in the workplace of a natural person and a legal person enjoying diplomatic privileges and immunity (15).

The State Health Surveillance supervises the observance of the provisions of the Act 355/2007 Coll., the generally binding legal regulations issued for its implementation and other generally binding legislation regulating the protection of public health. The State Health Surveillance is performed by the Public Health Service staff, the regional public health authorities staff who in the exercise of State Health Surveillance, demonstrate a service card.

State Health surveillance in issues about physical security and object safety should be carried out only after statutory body's and by inspectors holding a valid certificate for disclosing classified information at least Confidential (40).

The Public Health authorities in the exercise of state health surveillance on healthy working conditions coordinate their activities with the state administration bodies in the field of Labor Inspection (40).

Furthermore, the Department of Preventive Occupational Medicine at the Regional Public Health Authorities in the field of Labor Inspection monitors the conditions of work of selected groups of employees, workers at risk, juveniles, women and people with changed working capacity. It investigates, analyzes and evaluates the causes of health damage by specific and non-specific factors of work and the working environment, and applies the knowledge gained in enforcing measures to eliminate or reduce the incidence of occupational diseases, supervises compliance with the criteria of healthy working conditions and limit values of work and working environment. It monitors adherence to legislative changes to protect human health at work, monitors working conditions and assesses health risks (including assessment of risk assessments and operational orders prepared by employers), identifies hazardous work, keeps records of supervising compliance with health protection measures at work with specific with emphasis on poisonous and very toxic substances and preparations, biological factors, carcinogenic and mutagenic factors, including asbestos and asbestos-containing materials, use repressive measures to detect health threats. It also provides noise, vibration and light measurement (41).

The employer is legally obliged to keep records of employees according to the categories of work and to keep medical reports on the health capability of the employee for hazardous work. The public health authority decides on the inclusion and removal of the work to the hazardous work. Proposals for categorizing of work for the employer are prepared by the workplace health service.

4. DISCUSSION

The Labor Inspectorate plays a central, indispensable and critical role by enforcing the law, stimulating improvements and working in partnership with others in the expectation that enduring initiatives should result ². Nowadays, Labor Inspectorates perform their duties in a challenging environment involving important changes in the economic and social context, in industrial developments; in the organization of labor and employment relationship; in the social and political expectations, and in technology and in the nature of work hazards (1).

Most countries in the European Union have ratified the principles of International Labour Organization (ILO), concerning the structure and functions of national inspection systems (42). Despite the acceptance of such common principles, the structure and functions of different national inspectorates, as well as their position in the legal system, vary considerably between different EU countries (43).

The present paper reviewed the framework of Health and Safety Inspections in workplaces and described the role of Labor Inspectors in three European countries.

The Ministry of Labor is the central body of the State administration for workplace Labor Inspection on safety and health in all three countries. Moreover, there are the labor inspectors that perform inspections in different settings, sharing similar duties in all three countries.

Their aim is to monitor the implementation of labor legislation on labor rights and the safety and health of employees. A Labor Inspector is a civil servant who carries out a civil service. In Greece, the Labor Inspector can have the specialty of engineer, chemist, occupational physician, health visitor, health inspector, etc. In Czech and Slovak Republic every employee of Public Health Authority can be a Labor Inspector such as public health specialists, medical doctor specialized in occupational health or engineers who are specialized on occupational health and safety.

Labor Inspectors perform either scheduled or random visits, day or night or during weekends, where they carry out checks on compliance with the relevant legislation and shall lay down penalties for any breach. They also investigate the occupational accidents of both public and private sector. Statistical Office of Czech and Slovak Republic publishes statistics on accidents at work and occupational diseases while in Greece S.E.P.E. and National Statistical Authority draws up and publishes the statistics.

A remarkable difference between the Czechs and Slovaks Labor Inspectors and the Greeks concerns the categorization of the work which is part of the risk assessment. While Czechs and Slovaks employers categorize each work position and keep these records for every employee, in Greece the employer is only obliged to carry out the risk assessment and to demonstrate it during the inspection. The Labor Inspectorate does not keep records about the risk assessment of every workplace and also there is not a relevant national information system. The lack of these records in Greece can be improved since the piece of information provides valuable data for implications into every day practice and strategies development. Nevertheless, the systematic collection and analysis of data to monitor health and safety performance and to identify emerging risks is critical for the effective functioning of the Labor Inspectorate (43).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be seen that all three European countries have similar Labor Inspecting systems since they follow the ILO's principles. It is suggested that researchers in collaboration with Labor Inspectors will conduct comparison studies based on the available data in order to draw conclusions on what practices are successful with Labor inspections. For example, what are the approaches that are used in every day practice in order to ensure safety and health at work.

- **Author's contribution:** All authors were included in all steps of preparation this article. Final proof reading was made by the first and the last author.
- **Conflict of interest:** None declared.
- **Financial support and sponsorship:** Nil

REFERENCES

1. International Labour Office (ILO), Labour Administration and Inspection Programme (LAB/ADMIN). A Guide for workers: Labour Inspection: What it is and What it does? 2010. Available: https://www.ilo.org/labadmin/info/inst/WCMS_141403/lang-en/index.htm/ (Accessed 15 June 2019).
2. International Association of Labour Inspection (IALI). Measuring Performance of the Occupational Safety and Health Function: A Handbook for Labour Inspectorates 2009. Available: <http://www.iali-aiit.org/resources/performance-measurement-handbook.pdf/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
3. European Agency for Safety and Health at work. European Risk Observatory. Working Paper Labour Inspectorates' strategic planning on safety and health at work: results of a questionnaire survey to EU-OSH-'s Focal Points 2009. Available: https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/reports/TE-80-09-641-EN-N_labour_inspectorates/ (Accessed 15 June 2019).
4. Ilo.org. Geneva: International Labour Office; c1996-2018. Available: https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/labour-inspection/lang-en/index.htm#P15_3566/ (Accessed 15 June 2019).
5. Work inspection Act of 2005, Pub.L. No.251. 2005). Zákon č. 251/2005 Sb. ze dne 3. května 2005, o inspekci práce. Available: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2005-251/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
6. Dvořáková Z. Management of Human Resources, Beck's edition of economy, C.H. Beck, Prague= Řízení lidských zdrojů. Praha: C.H. Beck. Beckova edice ekonomie= ISBN 978-807-4003-479, 2012.
7. Suip.cz. Praha: State Labor Inspection Office: Competence of Labor Inspectorate; c2018=Státní úřad inspekce práce: Kompetence orgánů inspekce práce=Available: <http://www.suip.cz/pracovnepravni-vztahy/kompetence-organu-inspekce-prace/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
8. Klingerová A. Public Health Authority of Central Bohemia based in Prague=Krajská hygienická stanice Středočeského kraje se sídlem v Praze=KHS 2016. Available: <http://www.khsstc.cz/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
9. Protection of public health Act of 2000=Zákon č. 258/2000 Sb. ze dne 14. července 2000, o ochraně veřejného zdraví=Pub.L.2000; 258 (Jul). Available: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2000-258/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
10. Act. No. 552/1991 Coll., on State Control, as amended.
11. Act. No 500/2004 Coll., Code of Administrative Procedure 2004; 7(24).
12. Laying down the conditions for the protection of health at work. Government Regulation of 2007; 361 (Dec 12)=Nařízení vlády č. 361/2007 Sb. ze dne 12. prosince 2007, kterým se stanoví podmínky ochrany zdraví při práci.
13. Promotion of employment and working time Law 2639=Πρόσμη εργασιακών σχέσεων, σύσταση Σώματος Επιθεώρησης Εργασίας και άλλες διατάξεις. Νόμος 2639=1998;9(2).
14. Reform of Labor Inspectorate, regulation of social security matters and other provisions Law 3996=Αναμόρφωση του Σώματος Επιθεωρητών Εργασίας, ρυθμίσεις θεμάτων Κοινωνικής Ασφάλισης και άλλες διατάξεις Νόμος 3996=2011;8(5).
15. Safety and Health at Work and on Amendments to Certain Act of 2006. Pub.L. No 124=Zákon č. 124/2006 Z. z. o bezpečnosti a ochrane zdravia pri práci ao zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov=Available: <http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2006-124/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
16. Employment.gov.sk/sk/ Bratislava: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic: Safety and Health at Work 2018=Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny Slovenskej republiky: Bezpečnosť a zdravie pri práci=Available: <https://www.employ->

- ment.gov.sk/sk/praca-zamestnanost/bezpecnost-ochrana-zdravia-pri-praci/osobitna-bozpz.html/ (Accessed 15 June 2019).
17. Švábová K. Selected chapters in: Occupational medicine=Vybrané kapitoly z pracovného lékařství=Institute of Postgraduate Education in Health Care, 90. Prague: ISBN 978-80-87023-32-7, 2015.
 18. Velikovsky Z, Řepová R Surveillance methods. Metody surveillance= České Budějovice: University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice=Faculty of Health and Social Studies: ISBN 978-80-7040-943-5, 2007.
 19. Tuček M, Cikrt M, Pelclová D. Occupational Medicine for Practice: Recommended Standards Guide=Pracovní lékařství pro praxi: příručka s doporučenými standardy= Grada, Praha: ISBN 80247-0927-9 (327) 2005.
 20. Laying down the conditions for classifying works, the limit values for biological exposure test pointers, the conditions for the collection of biological material for the performance of biological exposure tests and the need to report work on asbestos and biological agents =Výhláška č. 432/2003 Sb. ze dne 4. prosince 2003, kterou se stanoví podmínky pro zařazování prací do kategorií, limitní hodnoty ukazatelů biologických expozičních testů, podmínky odběru biologického materiálu pro provádění biologických expozičních testů a náležitosti hlášení prací s azbestem a biologickými činiteli=Decree of 2003;12(4).
 21. Specific health services Act of 2011, Pub.L. 2011;373 (Nov 6)=Zákon č. 373/2011 Sb. ze dne 6. listopadu 2011, o specifických zdravotních službách=Available: <https://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/2011-373/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 22. Šamánek J, Bečvářová L Categorization of work. The National Institute of Public Health, Prague=Kategorizace prací. Praha: Státní zdravotní ústav, Datum vydání=2011;10(19). Available: <http://www.szu.cz/tema/pracovni-prostredi/kategorizace-praci?lang=1/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 23. Tuček M, Slámová A. Hygiene and Epidemiology for Bachelors=Hygiena a epidemiologie pro bakaláře= Karolinum, Praha: ISBN 978-80-246-2136-4 (216) 2012.
 24. Decree No. 73/2013 Coll. on Occupational Health Services and Certain Kinds of Review Care.
 25. The Implementation of Certain Provisions of Act No. 373/2011 Coll. On Specific Health Services Decree of 2013. No 79=Výhláška č. 79/2013 Sb. O provedení některých ustanovení zákona č. 373/2011 Sb. O specifických zdravotních službách= 2013;4(3).
 26. cbusbs.cz. Praha: The State Mining Administration: Information for the public; c2012=Státní báňská správa: Informace pro veřejnost=2014. Available: <http://www.cbusbs.cz/cs/uhrady/zakladni-informace-4/v-praze-5/itemlist/category/26-statni-banska-sprava/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 27. Organization chart of the Ministry of Labor, Social Security and Social Solidarity Presidential Decree of 2017, (134) 2017;11(6). Available: <http://www.elinyae.gr/ethniki-nomothesia/pd-1342017-fek-168a-6112017/> (Accessed 30 June 2019).
 28. Reform of Labor Inspectorate, regulation of social security matters and other provisions Law of 2011, (3996) 2011;6(5). Available: <http://elinyae.gr/ethniki-nomothesia/n-39962011-fek-170a-582011/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 29. Ratification of the Code of Laws on the health and safety of workers Law 3850=Κύρωση του κώδικα νόμων για την υγεία και την ασφάλεια των εργαζομένων=(3850) 2010;6(24).
 30. Presidential Decree 90. On the adoption of exposure limit values and maximum exposure limit values for certain chemical agents and modification and completion of PD 307/1986 in accordance with Directives 91/322/EEC and 96/94/EC, 1999.
 31. Presidential Decree 149. On the minimum health and safety requirements regarding the exposure of workers to the risks arising from physical agents (noise), 2006.
 32. Presidential Decree 212. On the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work, in accordance with Directive 83/477/EEC as modified by Directive 91/382/EEC and Directive 2003/18/EC, 2006.
 33. Presidential Decree 186. On the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to biological agents at work, in accordance with Directive 90/679/EEC and 93/88/EEC, 1995.
 34. Law 2643. Caring for the employment of persons of special categories and other provisions, 1998.
 35. On the minimum requirements for improving the safety and health protection of workers potentially at risk from explosive atmospheres Presidential Decree 42=Σχετικά με τις ελάχιστες απαιτήσεις για τη βελτίωση της προστασίας της υγείας και της ασφάλειας των εργαζομένων οι οποίοι είναι δυνατόν να εκτεθούν σε κίνδυνο από εκρηκτικές ατμόσφαιρες=(42)2003;2(21).
 36. Minimum health and safety requirements for the manual handling of loads where there is a risk particularly of back injury to workers Presidential Decree 397=Ελάχιστες προδιαγραφές ασφάλειας και υγείας κατά την χειρωνακτική διακίνηση φορτίων που συνεπάγεται κίνδυνο ιδίως για τη ράχη και την οσφυϊκή χώρα των εργαζομένων σε συμμόρφωση προς την οδηγία του Συμβουλίου 90/269/EOK=(397)1994;12(19).
 37. Safety requirements for the workplace implements Council Directive 89/654/EEC and provides for minimum requirements of workplaces to safeguard the health and safety of employees Presidential Decree 16=Ελάχιστες προδιαγραφές ασφάλειας και υγείας στους χώρους εργασίας σε συμμόρφωση με την οδηγία 89/654/EOK=(16)1996;1(18).
 38. Measures for the Improvement of Health and Safety of Workers at Work Presidential Decree 17=Μέτρα για την βελτίωση της ασφάλειας και της υγείας των εργαζομένων κατά την εργασία=(17)1996;1(18).
 39. ip.gov.sk. Bratislava: National Labor Inspectorate: OSH Strategy=Národný inšpektorát práce: Stratégia BOZP=(c2017)2018. Available: <https://www.ip.gov.sk/bozpz/strategia-bozpz/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 40. The Protection, Promotion and Development of Public Health and on Amendments to Certain Acts, Act of 2007, Pub.L. 2007;355=Zákon č. 355/2007 Z. z. o ochrane, podpore a rozvoji verejného zdravia a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov=. Available: <https://www.slovlex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2007/355/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 41. Kristiánová S. Preventive Occupational Medicine RPHA. Regional Public Health Authorities. Department of Preventive Occupational Medicine=Odbor Preventívneho Pracovného Lekárstva. Regionálny úrad verejného zdravotníctva=2018. Available: <http://www.ruvzba.sk/kontakty.html> (Accessed 15 June 2019).
 42. Labor Inspection Convention. No 81. Convention concerning Labor Inspection in Industry and Commerce (Entry into force: 07 Apr 1950). Adoption: Geneva: 30th ILC session, 1947;7(11). Status: Up-to-date instrument (Governance (Priority) Convention). Convention may be denounced: 2021;4(7).
 43. David W. Labor inspection and health and safety in the EU, autumn-winter 2016/Hesamag#14. Special report 3/34, 2016. Available: <https://www.etui.org/topics/health-safety-working-conditions/hesamag/labour-inspection-a-public-service-in-crisis/> (Accessed 15 June 2019).