

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

TO IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF WORKERS
IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR WORK
2022-2027



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Action plan of the Minister of Employment in cooperation with the social partners
of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work

MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT
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INTRODUCTION

2021 can be considered a pivotal year for the well-being of workers in the performance of their work. Not only did the Act of 4 August 1996 on the well-being of workers in the performance of their work celebrate its 25th anniversary, but the EU Commission also announced a new strategic framework on health and safety at work for 2021 - 2027¹. The coronavirus pandemic that continues to sweep across the world and our country requires special prevention measures in the workplace. This shakes up traditional forms of work organisation and work experience and leads to new challenges for the well-being of workers. But the great flexibility of workers and employers to adapt and cope with the COVID-19 pandemic together, also in the performance of their work, is of an unprecedented scale and gives courage to tackle other, perhaps less visible, collective challenges of well-being at work together.

The social partners of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work jointly drafted a memorandum setting out an important number of priorities and emphases for corporate well-being policy in the coming years². This is the ultimate proof that social dialogue works and is the optimal way to move forward together, because the involvement of the social partners is necessary to help define the policy lines for the coming years.

*On the basis of these findings and documents, I, as the Minister of Employment, am launching a national action plan to improve the well-being of workers in the performance of their work for 2022-2027. This plan, which defines the **objectives** we wish to achieve in terms of well-being at work in the coming years, has an evolutionary nature and will be discussed annually with the social partners of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. This allows the national action plan to be adjusted to take into account new challenges and unforeseen circumstances.*

Thus, this plan includes the transposition into Belgian-level law of the EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027, and the implementation of, on the one hand, the Coalition Agreement of 30 September 2020 and, on the other hand, the joint priorities document of the social partners of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. With this priorities document, the social partners made a significant contribution to the creation of this plan, which should make it possible for all parties to feel closely involved in its implementation.

The national action plan is divided into two chapters. The first chapter discusses the content topics that must be addressed to improve well-being at work for all workers. In the second chapter, the framework necessary at the scientific, administrative and legal levels to make this well-being policy a reality is discussed in more detail. These are the policy support functions,

1. Communication from the Commission of 28 June 2021 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work 2021-2027 - Occupational safety and health in a changing world of work - COM/2021/323 (hereinafter cited as EU Framework)

2. Joint priorities document of the social partners of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work 2020-2024 (hereinafter cited as HCPPW Document)

which also include cooperation with the stakeholders represented in the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work, the various Belgian authorities and European and international bodies.

The administration plays an important role in the (timely) implementation of the actions included in this action plan. It is therefore necessary for it to have the necessary financial, logistical and human resources to adequately fulfil this mission. Hence, we strive to make these resources available to the administration, taking into account the requirements of budgetary control.

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CHAPTER I: THEMATIC OBJECTIVES

Section 1. Prevention of risks associated with the work

A first important objective of this national plan is to prevent and combat health problems associated with the performance of work. Workers face a host of risks that can compromise their health. In the coming years, we want to give special attention to the following risks.

1. The challenge of the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic that has been going on for two years now has taught us how fragile humans are, but also how resilient they can be to a challenge of an unprecedented scale. The end of this pandemic is still not in sight and further action is needed to guide employers and workers through these difficult times in the best possible way. Therefore, the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (hereinafter cited as FPS) will continue to answer the questions of all interested parties and make the answers available to the public through the FAQs. It will continue to disseminate knowledge on appropriate workplace ventilation. It will continue to pay attention to the role that health and safety services should take in the management of this pandemic, without compromising their main mission, i.e. advising employers and workers on the health and safety measures needed to control the risks resulting from the work.

The pandemic has also shown us the importance of cooperation between the administration and social partners. The generic guide to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and the derived sector guides have allowed companies to continue to operate or to restart in as safe a manner as possible after a lockdown, combined with periods of recommended or mandatory telework. This guide has been continually updated to reflect changing circumstances.

Meanwhile, a new guide has been developed, which can also serve for any future epidemics/pandemics. This guide is divided into three levels of control, each with special prevention measures, taking into account the evolution of the epidemic or pandemic at a given time. This guide has now been structurally embedded in the code on well-being at work and should allow for a faster and more proactive response in the event of a (future) epidemic or pandemic by ensuring that employers and workers are better prepared and know what to expect.

Establishing such a structural framework is also in line with the EU Framework, which, as one of its three key priorities, focuses on increasing preparedness to respond to current and future health crises ³.

Depending on the further course of this health crisis, and based on input from the inspection services, the internal and external health and safety services and the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work, we will **evaluate** its **approach** from the point of view of well-being in the workplace and draw the necessary conclusions for the future from this evaluation.

2. *Exposure to hazardous chemical agents*

Workers are still too often exposed to hazardous chemical agents in the performance of their work. While the replacement of hazardous substances with substances that are not or less hazardous should be the goal, it is not always possible to achieve this goal. Therefore, exposure to these substances cannot always be avoided, but every effort should be made to keep exposure as low as possible.

Establishing binding exposure limit values is a very important measure in this regard, although the existence of such a limit value does not necessarily mean that there are no longer any health risks in case of exposure to the substance below this threshold. There will still be residual risks that must be managed. In line with the EU Framework and the HCPPW Document, limit values will continue to be set, for instance for free crystalline silicon ⁴.

The **Belgian procedure** for setting limit values will be reviewed, taking into account the procedures applied at the European level, in order to obtain the maximum balance ⁵.

Attention will also be paid to the development of appropriate measurement strategies and methods, and efforts will be made to ensure that actual **measurements** are carried out at the workplace ⁶. The exchange of information and best practices, as is taking place in the context of the «**roadmap on carcinogens**», therefore has our full support. The purpose of all this is to give workers the protection to which they are entitled ⁷.

Several workers, especially in the health sector, are exposed to **dangerous medicines**. We will closely follow the work at the European level on this specific category of hazardous substances ⁸.

For the purpose of health protection, it is also important to have **good air quality** in every workplace where workers are present. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure that the workplace is properly ventilated by opening windows or by having a good mechanical ventilation system with fresh air supply. By measuring the CO₂ concentration, one can determine if additional prevention measures, such as limiting the number of workers in a workplace, are necessary. Air exchange and ventilation in the workplace not only constitute an important aspect in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, but also deserve full attention in the context of creating a healthy and pleasant work environment by reducing exposure to (other) biological and chemical agents.

³ EU Framework, p. 17

⁴ EU Framework, p. 10 and pp. 15-16; HCPPW Document, p. 13

⁵ HCPPW Document, p. 13

⁶ HCPPW Document, p. 13

⁷ EU Framework, p. 12

⁸ EU Framework, pp. 16-17

3. *Psychosocial risks*

Psychosocial risks are a source of much human suffering. That is why it is important to participate in the federal mental health plan⁹. In 2022, we want to commit to «**mental well-being at work**», including collaboration with social security institutions.

A federal plan for mental well-being and the fight against stress and all work-related psychosocial risks will be set up with the various competent ministers, with the social partners, including in the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work (HCPPW), and with various actors in the field of mental health and working conditions.

Under this plan, the media campaign launched in November 2021 and conducted in close cooperation with the FPS Social Security will continue in 2022. In addition, in 2022 and 2023, grants will be awarded to sectoral primary prevention projects to develop specialised expertise on psychosocial risks by focusing more on specific work-related risks in various sectors particularly affected by the pandemic.

Health and care workers have given their best in these past years. However, they increasingly suffer from stress and poor mental well-being. We therefore support any sectoral agreement for the reduction of work pressure and will pay specific attention to this group in our actions regarding psychosocial risks¹⁰.

The administration is following very closely how the legislation related to psychosocial risks that was introduced in 2014 is being applied in practice. To this end, there are networking sessions of health and safety advisors on psychosocial aspects and of persons of trust, case law is being collected and analysed, interferences with anti-discrimination legislation are being examined, and the ILO Convention No. 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work (2019) will be ratified.

The **pilot projects for burnout prevention** initiated by the National Labour Council also play an important role in combating psychosocial risks¹¹. In addition, **pilot projects for innovative work organisation** are being rolled out.

4. *The prevention of skeletal and muscular disorders*

Skeletal and muscular disorders are one of the most common work-related health problems. We will continue to closely follow the European initiatives, in accordance with the priorities document of the social partners of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. Belgium has a lot of awareness materials, best practices, instruments and tools to address these conditions. Nevertheless, this does not seem sufficient to bring about a change in attitudes in the field. In 2022, a working group will be set up within the FPS to examine, in parallel with the work at the European level, how a **concrete legal framework** can be established in Belgium¹². In addition, we will continue to participate in the EU-OSHA 2020-2022 campaign 'Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load'.

5. *Vision Zero for workplace accidents*

Workplace accidents are still one of the leading causes of death and disability as a result of the work performed. Even though there has been a shift in the work context, with psychosocial risks and musculoskeletal disorders gaining in importance, it remains important to pay attention to and address the causes of workplace accidents. In this context, ‘traditional’ occupational safety must not be neglected, and the evolution in this area must be monitored.

As part of this action plan, the administration will update the legislation relating to the **use of work equipment**. . Initially, the focus will be on the procedure for the purchase of work equipment as well as the maintenance and inspection of work equipment. Furthermore, the provisions relating to lifting equipment, which are still part of the General Regulations on Health and Safety at Work (RGPT-ARAB), will be modernised and adapted to technological developments so that they can be included in the code on well-being at work.

Further updating of legislation relating to **fire prevention**. is also necessary. The preventive component of this was developed with the Royal Decree of 28 March 2015, which now constitutes Book III, Title 3 of the Code on Well-being at Work. It is important to now also establish the component relating to construction requirements for buildings in which workers are employed in close consultation with the FPS Interior.

In the construction industry, the number of workplace accidents remains high, often with serious consequences. To increase safety at temporary or mobile construction sites, work will be done in collaboration with the industry and with Fedris for the prevention of workplace accidents on construction sites. Particular attention will be paid to sites where workers speak different languages and communication is often difficult. A project will also be launched to encourage workers to engage in safe behaviour through the **nudging** technique.

To build a good health and safety policy, lessons must also be learned from accidents and incidents that have occurred in the workplace in the past. The administration will continue to explore ways to optimise regulations to prevent **serious workplace accidents**. Based on this, proposals will be developed that better meet the realities of the field.

9 RegA, pp. 16 and 18; EU Framework, pp. 10-11 and pp. 15-16

10 EU Framework, pp. 16 and 17; RegA, p. 15

11 RegA, p. 40 and HCPPW Document, p. 15

12 EU Framework, pp. 10 and 16; HCPPW Document, pp. 10 and 12-13

6. *Protection of domestic workers*

In line with the HCPPW Document, in addition to the developed OiRa tool, we will establish a regulatory framework with a workable solution for the protection of the well-being at work of domestic workers. This regulatory framework will also specify the role of external health and safety services. This will allow the ILO Convention No. 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (2011) to have full effect ¹³.

Section 2. Specific challenges to well-being at work

1. *Remote working*

For the past year and a half, our country, like the rest of the world, has been engulfed by the coronavirus pandemic. This pandemic is having a huge impact on the way businesses operate. For example, remote working has become an important form of work organisation that is now part of socio-economic life. The social partners in the National Labour Council were therefore invited to clarify and refine the **legal framework for remote working**. This interprofessional framework will have to take into account, among other things, the reconciliation of work and private life, the need to disconnect, the adaptation of the workplace design to the individual worker, and psychosocial risks, such as those due to isolation¹⁴. The administration will follow up on these discussions between the social partners and, in addition, the Directorate-General for the Humanization of Work will continue to make information, tools and best practices available to companies through the appropriate online communication channels (beswic, werk.belgie.be).

2. *Reintegration of incapacitated workers*

Preventing risks is and will remain important. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that people become ill and sometimes suffer from (chronic) health problems for many years, leading to long absences from work. These health problems can be a consequence of the work or the work context (exposure to certain agents, high workload, conflicts at work, etc.), but can also be influenced by societal factors (e.g. the coronavirus pandemic) and personal factors (disability, age, general health status, etc.). Those who have a health problem are not necessarily fully 'incapacitated' and would often like to go back to work themselves in an adapted job. It is therefore of utmost importance to keep working for the reintegration of incapacitated workers. To this end, the opinions of the social partners will be implemented (Opinion No. 2099 of the National Labour Council of 25 September 2018 and Opinion No. 219 of the HCPPW of 22 February 2019), and the adjustments will also take into account the results of the study on reintegration of KU Leuven and ULB commissioned by the FPS, as well

¹³ HCPPW Document, p. 12 and p. 15

¹⁴ EU Framework, p. 11; RegA, p. 40; HCPPW Document, p. 15

as the recommendations of the Court of Audit. Due attention will also be paid to more and better coordination between all actors and policy levels involved, and to the collection of the necessary numerical data to enable better monitoring¹⁵. In addition, we will closely follow the discussions between the social partners on the elaboration of guidance for the improvement of the collective reintegration policy in companies.

Once the new legislation is in place, investments will be made in a communication and awareness campaign about the individual pathway with the specific employer and the collective policy in companies.

3. *A changing world and labour market*

Our society today is evolving. We face the challenge of climate change, which will have both direct and indirect impacts on the well-being of workers in the performance of their work. On the one hand, climate change manifests itself in large fluctuations in the weather, with periods of extreme heat and cold. Working at very high and very low temperatures requires adjustments to technical preventive measures (including ventilation and heating), in the organisation of work and in the personal protective equipment provided. This climate change is already being addressed by the development of new forms of energy generation. Examples are wind farms and the installation of solar panels. In the field of mobility, too, we are seeing a shift from gasoline-powered cars to electric cars that are also increasingly equipped with technical gadgets. In other words, new production patterns are emerging and new products are being brought to the market. These changes in the production process have an impact on the well-being of workers in the performance of their work, as new risks arise for which appropriate preventive measures must be developed.

Our labour market is also changing. More and more atypical forms of employment are emerging, where it is no longer clear whether individuals have worker status (e.g. the platform economy) or where workers increasingly work outside the sphere of influence of the employer (e.g. the service voucher sector). Retailers want to be able to react quickly when consumers purchase their products, such as through e-commerce. It is important that the persons involved in this process have a favourable status and that the work is organised in such a way that it is possible to alternate periods of intense work with sufficiently long periods of rest or lighter work. Only then will workers be able to sustain this type of work.

We will follow the above developments very closely by setting up studies on these topics or by collaborating in them and by communicating the results of these studies through study days and other communication channels. It is indeed of utmost importance to be proactive in dealing with these new developments.

Section 3. Well-being policy actors at the enterprise level

The implementation of a well-being policy at the enterprise level involves several actors: the employer, the internal and external health and safety services, the worker representatives and, of course, the workers themselves. In this section, we will discuss the actions necessary for each of these actors.

1. *The employer*

The employer bears ultimate responsibility for the well-being policy conducted in the company. In order to give shape to this responsibility, employers must have the necessary support. A **multidisciplinary use** of health and safety advisors from the various disciplines ¹⁶ is paramount for this purpose. When these health and safety advisors **visit companies**, they can provide concrete guidance to the employer in identifying the risks and determining the preventive measures ¹⁷.

The provision of risk analysis **tools** and the development and provision of **best practices** in cooperation with experts and the inspection services (e.g. for silica and the use of ladders) remain important for the employer to be able to implement an appropriate well-being policy ¹⁸. We will therefore continue to work in collaboration with the FPS to make OiRAs ¹⁹ and concrete information and awareness-raising instruments or tools (guides, films, brochures, leaflets, etc.) available through study days and through the FPS ²⁰ and BeSwic ²¹ websites. In doing so, we would like to pay specific attention to small and medium-sized enterprises, which, due to a lack of financial and human resources and the necessary expertise, find it much more difficult to know and comply with the regulations. The new regulations on company visits and policy advice should be able to provide additional support to these employers in this area, and we will monitor if this is indeed the case.

15 EU Framework, p. 16; RegA, pp. 38-39; HCPPW Document pp. 4-5.

16 These relate to occupational safety, occupational medicine, occupational hygiene, ergonomics and psychosocial aspects of work.

17 HCPPW Document, p.11

18 EU Framework, p. 16; HCPPW Document, pp. 15-16

19 Online interactive Risk Assessment tool

20 www.employment.belgium.be

21 Belgian Safe Work Information Center www.beswic.be

2. *The health and safety services*

Internal and external health and safety services provide expert support to employers and workers with a view to implementing appropriate well-being policies. However, the operation of these services can be further optimised. More specifically, this refers to the following aspects:

- The **training of health and safety advisors** must be modernised to adequately address today's challenges. Work on this has already been started within the administration and the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. This work will continue ²².
- There is a major **shortage of occupational physicians**, which forces them to focus solely on conducting medical examinations. This implies that they almost never come to the shop floor anymore for a workstation analysis. They are also being entrusted with an increasing number of tasks, including due to the introduction of the reintegration process for incapacitated workers and the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, ways to eliminate the shortage of occupational physicians will be explored. This will be done in consultation with the Minister of Health and with the Ministers of the Communities responsible for education. A similar exercise will be done for (the training of) company nurses ²³.
- Finally, initiatives will also be taken to improve the **functioning of external health and safety services**. These include the establishment of better monitoring of the quality of the output of the external services for the companies using them, the monitoring of the rates applied for the respective services, an adjustment of the reporting on the activities of the external health and safety services, an improved functioning of the advisory committees, and a modernisation of the accreditation procedures. Opinion No. 215 of 31 July 2018 of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work on the rates and services of external health and safety services provides guidance in this regard and will therefore continue to be implemented ²⁴.
- Also, we want to support all these health and safety advisors by providing tools and materials that will facilitate their task in companies..

3. *The social dialogue*

Good social dialogue on well-being at work is essential for a good well-being policy at the enterprise level. In principle, this dialogue takes place in the health and safety committee. In companies where no such committee exists, its tasks are entrusted to the trade union representatives. The social partners in the National Labour Council are invited to elaborate a **set of minimum rules**, to enable the **trade union representatives** to carry out this mission effectively and correctly ²⁵.

We also have the ambition to give full support to the social dialogue in companies. We wish to achieve this by making tools and instruments related to the various areas of well-being available to the health and safety committee, to enable its members to provide informed advice on the issues presented to them, which are often complex in nature.

We can also note that it is increasingly common for **several workers from different employers to be present at a workplace at the same time**. In this context, it is necessary to consider how worker representatives in the respective health and safety committees of different employers can cooperate and be consulted in order to prevent and, if necessary, manage issues concerning well-being at work that arise from a lack of coordination in the workplace. This can be developed by analogy with the coordination structure set up on large temporary or mobile construction sites or by analogy with the special consultation committees that exist in the public sector ²⁶.

4. The workers

The workers themselves play an equally important role in reducing workplace risks and applying prevention measures consistently. This does presuppose that they know these risks and preventive measures and are able to apply them. In the temporary employment sector, a workstation sheet is used to describe the risks and preventive measures associated with a particular workstation or job. This is a very useful tool for welcoming and informing temporary workers. We will evaluate the use of this workstation sheet in practice and, depending on the results of this evaluation, examine whether the use of such a workstation sheet can/should be extended to all workers, and how this could be done ²⁷.

22 HCPPW Document, p. 5
23 HCPPW Document, p. 7
24 HCPPW Document, pp. 7-10
25 HCPPW Document, p. 14
26 HCPPW Document, p. 14
27 HCPPW Document, p. 14

CHAPTER II: POLICY SUPPORT OBJECTIVES

Section 1. Introduction

Chapter I set out a series of objectives aimed at improving the well-being of workers in the performance of their work. To be able to achieve these objectives, the government must have data that will allow it to determine which measures are most appropriate. A government policy on well-being at work must be 'evidence-based', which means that scientific research is indispensable. The government must be able to determine the most appropriate approach to the specific problems related to well-being at work based on the results of such (solid) scientific research and the practical problems identified in the field by the labour inspectorate and the social partners. This approach consists of a range of possible actions: the development of legislation, of awareness campaigns and of inspection campaigns. The commitment of employer and worker organisations and all health and safety experts to achieve the objectives of this action plan is crucial in this regard. Cooperation with the federal and regional Ministers responsible for matters that may affect well-being at work is also receiving our full attention. Last but not least, what happens at the European and international level must also be taken into account. Therefore, in this chapter we will describe a number of objectives relating to these policy support functions.

Section 2. Collecting available exposure data

The complex society we live in today results in workers being exposed to numerous risks at work. While there is a great deal of data on these risks, this data is scattered across different bodies, each of which has its own system for collecting data. For example, Fedris has data on occupational accidents and illnesses, the Inspectorate for supervision of well-being at work has data on its findings, and each external health and safety service has its own system for monitoring health surveillance and the risks that give rise to it. This dispersion and fragmentation of data means that it is very difficult to collect the right data, compare it and thus draw unambiguous conclusions on the basis of which a policy can be designed. Therefore, in a fragmented landscape, scientific research is very difficult. Consequently, we have set a goal to **streamline this data** and bring it together in **a centralised database that will be managed by the FPS**. More specifically, reference is made to the European data mining project that aims to collect all Belgian data on occupational risks and working conditions and to digitise the reporting on this data. This project will be funded by the European Union from 2022 to 2026 under the Recovery and Resilience Facility²⁸. In line with the European Strategic Framework, the creation of this database will also include data on psychosocial risks²⁹ and cardiovascular diseases³⁰.

Only in this way will it be possible to have accurate information about the risks present in the workplace and their nature, frequency and extent. If we have exposure data that has been collected in a uniform way and can be easily accessed, it will be possible to determine risk profiles, among other things. This database will also be an important source for scientific research and will allow us to uncover the pain points for which priority actions should be taken, and what these actions should consist of. This will enable an evidence-based policy ³¹.

We will also participate in the European Working Conditions Survey conducted by Eurofound and analyse the Belgian data included in this survey.

Section 3. Quality regulations

The Belgian regulations relating to well-being at work consist mainly of the Act of 4 August 1996 on Well-being at Work, the Code on Well-being at Work, the Royal Decree on Temporary or Mobile Construction Sites, and also a series of provisions in the General Regulations on Health and Safety at Work (RGPT-ARAB). In order to achieve the objectives stated in Chapter I, it is necessary to make certain adjustments to these regulations.

This legislation must comply with the principles described in the priorities document of the social partners of the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. Legislation must be sufficiently flexible to meet future challenges, yet it must also be sufficiently clear and precise so that it can be applied in practice and is enforceable. Furthermore, administrative obligations need to be better aligned and, where necessary and possible, simplified so that the actors involved in workplace well-being policy know their rights and obligations ³².

A key challenge in this context is to achieve **simpler and more accessible accreditation procedures** ³³. In addition, our focus should be on modernising the regulations relating to work equipment, fire safety and temporary or mobile construction sites, so that **the remaining provisions of RGPT-ARAB** after appropriate integration into the Code on Well-being at Work, can be eliminated. Finally, forms and models should be made available to users **in a digital and user-friendly way**, and the **provision of information to the government** should be able to take place electronically as much as possible and conform to the Once-Only Principle.

28 EU Framework, p. 11; HCPPW Document, p. 6 and pp. 8-9

29 EU Framework, p. 11

30 EU Framework, p. 16

31 RegA, pp. 14 and 25

32 HCPPW Document, pp. 11-13

33 HCPPW Document, pp. 9-10

Section 4. Optimising the operation of the administration

Developing coherent legislation based on scientific research and then making it known to all stakeholders is only possible if the administration has sufficient resources. Therefore, we strive to make more staff and financial resources available to the Directorate-General for the Humanization of Work to develop the established policy at the regulatory level, facilitate the social dialogue, promote the regulations, and conduct information and awareness campaigns. We also aim to invest more financial, technical and human resources in the Directorate for research on the improvement of working conditions (DIRACT-DIOVA) to improve epidemiological knowledge about risk factors in the working environment ³⁴.

The success of legislation depends on its enforcement. It is therefore crucial that efficient monitoring of compliance is carried out. That is why we are striving to gradually bring the number of inspectors at the Inspectorate for supervision of well-being at work in line with ILO standards ³⁵.

Section 5. Stakeholder collaboration on well-being at work

Well-being at work is a challenge for the government, but it is equally so for the social partners and health and safety services. Employers, workers and health and safety advisors work together to shape the company's well-being policy.

The employer bears ultimate responsibility for the well-being policy to be conducted in the company. Employers can only achieve this with the support of the employers' organisations represented in the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. It is therefore of utmost importance that the various employers' federations participate constructively in the policy being developed at the macro level and that they increase awareness among their members on well-being at work, inform them about the tools and instruments available and give them a clear signal that well-being at work is in the interest of every company, including SMEs.

The workers themselves play an equally important role in reducing workplace risks by applying prevention measures consistently. The worker representatives in the health and safety committee play an exemplary role in this. They are supported in this by the workers' organisations represented in the High Council for Prevention and Protection at Work. These organisations also play a fundamental role in the development of well-being policy at the macro level and in increasing awareness, informing and educating their members.

The health and safety advisors of the internal and external health and safety services have great expertise in the areas of occupational safety, occupational medicine, occupational hygiene, ergonomics and psychosocial aspects of work. They are invited to share this expertise with all actors active at the macro level to develop the national action plan and make it concrete.

Only through the initiatives and actions of, and intense collaboration between, all actors involved in well-being at work will it be possible to develop a quality action plan on well-being at work and apply it in practice.

Section 6. Synergy between well-being at work and other aspects falling within the competence of other authorities

The past year and a half has taught us much about human fragility. We need to be able to quickly and accurately anticipate and respond to a health crisis. The pandemic has been a catalyst in the evolution of remote working and in the digital transition. We face the challenges of climate change, which, as the floods of summer 2021 demonstrated, can and will turn people's daily lives upside down. Attention to climate change requires serious reflection on how we consume. Sustainability in production, the use of new energy sources and the protection of the environment make it necessary to develop new technologies that will in turn affect the labour market and the way we work. Indeed, well-being at work is an important issue, but it cannot be separated from other matters that fall within the competence of other federal ministers. After all, well-being at work has common ground with the marketing of safe products (Minister of Economy) and safe substances (Minister of Health and Environment), social security (Minister of Social Affairs), the fight against discrimination (Secretary of State for Gender Equality, Equal Opportunities and Diversity), etc. The coronavirus pandemic has also demonstrated interfaces with public health in general and preventive health care for the population (the latter being a competence of the Communities) ³⁶.

Thorough consultation with all these authorities will be necessary, including to avoid diverting the people and resources that should be used for occupational safety and health to other objectives ³⁷.

In addition, there should also be consultation with the Ministers of the Communities responsible for education, with a view to strengthening the training of all health and safety advisors ³⁸. Moreover, we will examine with the Ministers responsible for French-speaking education how we can conclude a covenant, as already exists with education in the Flemish Community ³⁹. Indeed, such a covenant is an important tool to promote the health and safety

34 RegA, p. 24 and HCPPW Document, p. 7

35 EU Framework, p. 18; RegA, p. 21; HCPPW Document, p. 17

36 EU Framework, p. 19

37 HCPPW Document, p. 17

38 HCPPW Document, p. 11

39 HCPPW Document, p. 17

culture in educational institutions and to integrate well-being at work into education. After all, tomorrow's workers are in school today.

The saying that 'you are never too young to learn' also applies to well-being at work: those who learn to work safely and healthily at school will acquire an attitude that they will carry with them throughout their careers. Such an attitude will eventually have a beneficial effect on the number and nature of work-related accidents and illnesses. It also supports the conclusions of the employment conference that took place on 7-8 September 2021. Attention to well-being at work should be a common thread throughout one's career and is fundamental to providing people with quality careers that give positive energy and avoid health problems ⁴⁰.

Section 7. European and international cooperation

Belgium has always presented itself as a supporter of Europe. That is why we will closely follow and fully support the actions taken at the European level. This implies that we are committed to participate constructively in the elaboration of the European directives and other instruments that are being developed at the European level ⁴¹. It also means that we transpose the directives issued by Europe in relation to occupational health and safety into Belgian law in a timely and correct manner ⁴². Of course, all our attention must also go to our role as President of the Council of the European Union, which Belgium will assume in 2024 ⁴³.

At the level of the International Labour Organization, we are not only striving for the ratification of the Conventions relevant to health and safety and their concrete application. We will also continue to work to integrate health and safety into the core labour standards ⁴⁴.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

This plan sets the stage for the development of a consistent policy on well-being at work for a period of six years. The challenge now is to determine concrete, realistic and achievable actions for each year that will demonstrably contribute to greater well-being at work. I invite all stakeholders to take up their responsibility in this area. And I am confident that we will succeed, if we work at it TOGETHER.

LE MINISTRE DU TRAVAIL
Pierre-Yves DERMAGNE

40 RegA, p. 21

41 EU Framework, pp. 10-11, 15-17 and 19; RegA, p. 89

42 RegA, p. 88

43 RegA, p. 89

44 EU Framework, p. 20; RegA, p. 88

