

Report on the State of Labour Rights in the Republic of Serbia in 2024

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Introduction

You are reading the seventh annual Report on the State of Labor Rights in the Republic of Serbia for the year 2024 (hereinafter: the Report) by the Center for Democracy Foundation (CDF). As previous reports, the goal of the Report is to contribute to the improvement of respect for labor rights in the Republic of Serbia, in accordance with international labor standards. The data used during the preparation of the Report covers the period from January 1 to December 31, 2024.


What can already be stated in this very introduction is that the progress regarding deficiencies both in the functioning of the labor market and in changes to the legislative and institutional framework in the Republic of Serbia in 2024 is not particularly visible, although some modest improvements do exist. A significant source for this assessment, as well as for the evaluation of labor and social rights themselves, is the European Commission (EC) Report published on October 30, 2024. Namely, according to the EC, the labor market has improved over the past years, with the overall unemployment rate falling to 8.2% in the second quarter of 2024. On the other hand, it has once again been emphasized that the amendments to the Labor Law from 2014 are still not fully aligned with the EU *acquis*, and that work on the draft of a new Labor Law has yet to begin, including provisions on posted foreign workers in accordance with EU legal standards, in order to avoid further delays in implementing the action plan for Chapter 19. In addition, the new Strike Law was not adopted in 2024 either, and changes to the legal framework remain necessary to strengthen bipartite and tripartite social dialogue at all levels. This is especially important given the assessment that social dialogue in Serbia is considered very weak, primarily in terms of the participation of social partners in the development of policies that are important to them.

Partial progress can be observed in determining the minimum wage, which was increased by 17.8% compared to the minimum wage in 2023 and was adopted in 2024 by the Social and Economic Council, considering that this practice had been absent in previous years when the minimum wage was determined by the Government.


In the area of freedom of movement for workers, limited progress was made, considering the earlier legislative amendments on the employment of foreigners from 2023 and the continued preparations for joining the European Employment Services network (EURES). It is commendable that significant progress was achieved through the adoption of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for the period 2023–2026 and the launch of the Youth Guarantee pilot project in January 2024, considering the Commission's recommendations from 2023. Problems that remain unresolved relate primarily to the need for a functional analysis of budget allocations for active labor market policies and the workload of counselors from the National Employment Service in the coming period to provide adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies, as well as to continue implementing the Youth Guarantee pilot project. The impact of inflation is evident, contributing to persistent fears of an increased poverty rate, so it is not surprising that the recommendation to improve the coverage and adequacy of social benefits for those living below the poverty line, including social assistance and child allowance, has been repeated.

When it comes to social security, the European Commission noted that, since no new bilateral agreements with EU member states on the coordination of social security systems have been concluded, last year's recommendations still apply, aimed at strengthening cooperation with EU member states on coordinating social security systems and initiating preparations for joining the European Labour Authority.

The first chapter of the Report provides an overview of relevant statistical data concerning earnings, total employment, as well as the unemployment rate and measures implemented to reduce it, along with a review of the number of foreign workers, the highest and lowest wages, and employment data from 2023. The second chapter is devoted to a summarized overview of the most significant legislative changes and public policy documents, while the third part focuses on events impacting the strengthening of social dialogue.



I Labor Market Statistics in the Republic of Serbia for 2024



1. Earnings

In the Republic of Serbia, the amount of earnings is determined by an employment contract, which cannot be lower than the minimum wage established by the decision of the Social and Economic Council for each year. Although the goal is to increase wages year after year, the method by which the decision on the wage amount is reached may be questionable if it is not the result of an agreement between social partners. In previous years, an unfavorable practice was that this decision was not made by the Social and Economic Council but rather by the Government. However, 2024 was significant because, after a long period, the Social and Economic Council determined the minimum wage, setting it at 271 RSD net per hour.¹ One of the key elements accompanying the increase in the minimum wage was also the increase of the non-taxable portion of wages for employers. For 2024, employers were entitled to a non-taxable portion of wages amounting to 25,000 dinars.

1 <http://www.socijalnoekonomskisavet.rs/cir/minimalna%20zarada%20cir.htm>, 20.2.2025.

In 2024, the minimum wage ranged from a low of 45,528 RSD in February and April to a high of 49,864 RSD in March, May, August, and October. At the beginning of the year, i.e., the average (gross) salary calculated for January 2024, amounted to 132,372 dinars, while the average salary without taxes and contributions (net) amounted to 95,836 dinars. Compared to January 2023, the average net salary calculated for January 2024 was nominally higher by 15.8%, and in real terms by 8.8%.² The end of the year was marked by growth, with the average (gross) salary calculated for December 2024 amounting to 148,428 dinars, while the average net salary amounted to 108,312 dinars. It is significant to point out that, according to SORS data, 608,000 out of two million employed persons in Serbia received a salary of 100,738 dinars or more in November 2024. At the same time, 86,000 employees received a monthly salary of no more than 45,528 dinars. From this number, less than a third of employed citizens in Serbia have a salary that reaches or exceeds the official average of 100,738 dinars, as calculated by Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) for November 2024.³ The growth of gross salaries in the period January–December 2024, compared to the same period last year, was 14.2% nominally and 9.2% in real terms, while the average net salary increased by 14.1% nominally and 9.1% in real terms. Compared to the same month of the previous year, the average gross salary for December 2024 was nominally higher by 13.8% and in real terms by 9.1%, while the average net salary was nominally higher by 13.9%, or 9.2% in real terms. The real wage growth in the private sector amounted to 9.2%, driven primarily by wage increases in the manufacturing industry and trade. At the same time, a real increase in wages in the public sector of 9.3% was recorded, influenced by the Government's decision to increase salaries by 10% from January 2024, as well as a decision to increase salaries for education and part of healthcare workers by 5.5% from October 2023.⁴ The median net salary on average for 2024 amounted to 79,624 dinars, meaning that 50% of employees earned up to this amount. On the other

2 Available on the website of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 24.2.2025.

3 Available on the website of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 24.2.2025.

4 <https://www.mfin.gov.rs/sr/dokumenti2-1/program-ekonomskih-reformi-erp-1>, 6.2.2025.

hand, half of the employees out of a total of 2.07 million could not exceed this monthly amount. Official statistics show that about 948,000 employees, or 46% of the total workforce, earned a net salary higher than the minimum but still less than the median, which in November 2024 amounted to 77,830 dinars. More than the median salary but still less than the average was earned by just over one in five employees – about 426,000 workers. A net salary equal to or higher than the average of 100,738 dinars was earned by about 608,000 employees, or about 29 percent of the total number of citizens who received a salary in November 2024.⁵ Additionally, by sector, the highest real wage growth in 2024 compared to 2023 was achieved in education (11.3%), accommodation and food services (11.2%), and manufacturing (11.0%). In terms of regional distribution, the highest average net salary in 2024 was recorded in the Belgrade region (124,010 dinars), followed by the Vojvodina region (92,725 dinars), Southern and Eastern Serbia (84,083 dinars), while the lowest average salary was in Šumadija and Western Serbia (82,433 dinars).⁶ It is evident that the increase in the minimum wage aims to mitigate the effects of inflation and rising living costs, providing additional social security to employees with the lowest earnings. However, the question remains whether this increase is sufficient to cover rising living costs, considering the inflation rate and the increase in prices of basic goods and services. According to estimates by the National Bank of Serbia, average inflation stood at 4.6%, while 3.5% is projected for 2025.⁷ The increase in the minimum wage may contribute to the growth of workers' purchasing power, but at the same time, it represents a challenge for employers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, which must adjust their costs to new obligations. The increase in the minimum wage may also have broader economic consequences. On the one hand, higher incomes can stimulate domestic consumption growth, which positively affects the economy through increased retail sales and value-added tax rev-

5 <https://www.paragraf.rs/dnevne-vesti/050225/050225-vest13.html>, 22.12.2024.

6 <https://www.cekos.rs/prosecne-bruto-zarade-plate-decembar-2024-godine>, 11.3.2025.

7 <https://www.nbs.rs/sr/scripts/showcontent/index.html?id=20278>, 11.3.2025.

enues. On the other hand, increased labor costs may lead to rising prices of goods and services, potentially affecting inflation. Also, one of the key unresolved problems inherited from the previous period is the lack of data on the total number of people working for the minimum wage, which should be updated annually to provide insight into progress in this area.

2. Poverty in Serbia and Insufficient Consumer Power – A Continuing Trend

In 2024, the average and minimum consumer baskets in Serbia showed monthly variations, reflecting economic trends and inflationary pressures. According to data from the Ministry of Internal and External Trade, the average consumer basket in Serbia is based on the monthly consumption of a three-member household. The largest portion of the consumer basket consists of expenses for basic food items, housing, and utility bills, primarily electricity and gas costs. Thus, in April 2024, the average consumer basket amounted to 103,097.40 dinars, while the minimum consumer basket was 53,370.62 dinars. In May of the same year, the average consumer basket rose to 103,409.38 dinars, an increase of 312 dinars compared to April. The minimum consumer basket for May amounted to 53,517.55 dinars, recording a growth of 147 dinars compared to the previous month.

In June 2024, the minimum consumer basket experienced a slight decline to 53,457 dinars, while the average consumer basket was 103,384 dinars. In August 2024, the average consumer basket amounted to 104,330 dinars, while the minimum basket was 53,967 dinars. The most

recent recorded value of the average consumer basket was 105,765.28 dinars, while the minimum basket stood at 54,871.70 dinars.⁸ These figures indicate a continuous increase in the cost of living throughout 2024, with average wages following this trend but still being insufficient to cover the average consumer basket. For example, in April 2024, the average net salary was 96,614 dinars, covering about 93.7% of the average consumer basket for that month, with similar values observed for other months in 2024. The minimum wage, on the other hand, did not reach the amount of the minimum consumer basket, indicating a significant deficit for those with the lowest incomes.⁹

If we look more specifically at the prices of essential goods, consumer prices on average increased by about 5% compared to the same month in 2023, and by 1.1% compared to December 2023. The prices of goods and services for personal consumption, for illustration, in March 2024 compared to February 2024, were on average 0.3% higher. Observing by main groups of goods and services classified by consumption purpose, in March 2024 compared to the previous month, price increases were recorded in the groups of communication (2.9%), restaurants and hotels (0.6%), health (0.5%), alcoholic beverages and tobacco and housing equipment and routine maintenance (0.3% each), transport (0.2%), and in the groups housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels and education (0.1% each).¹⁰ This trend continued until the end of the year with slight oscillations.

The situation characterized by insufficient income for citizens to cover the cost of the consumer basket strongly highlights the need for further wage increases and inflation control to improve purchasing power and enable coverage of basic living costs, which clearly affects the level of poverty in Serbia. Namely, according to the latest data from SORS, the at-risk-of-poverty threshold—which represents the percentage of

8 <https://must.gov.rs/tekst/8037/kupovna-moc-stanovnistva-potrosacka-korpa-2024.php>, 16.2.2025.

9 <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/statisticalrelease/?p=15328&a=01&s=0102?s=0102>, 10.2.2025.

10 <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/potrosnja-prihodi-i-uslovi-zivota/>, 13.2.2025.

people whose disposable equivalent income is below the poverty risk threshold—was 29,100 dinars average monthly for a single-person household in 2023. On the other hand, the poverty risk threshold for a household with two adults and one child under 14 years of age was 52,380 dinars, while for a four-member household with two adults and two children under 14 years it was 61,110 dinars.¹¹

Viewed by age, persons aged 65 and over were most at risk of poverty – 23.5%, as well as those aged 55 to 64 – 23.0%. The lowest poverty risk rate was among persons aged 25 to 54 – 16.8%. By household type, the highest poverty risk rate was recorded in households consisting of two adults with three or more dependent children – 34.7%, while the lowest rate was in households of three or more adults – 13.3%. Additionally, the geographic distribution of poverty in Serbia shows significant differences between regions, with the poverty risk rate ranging from 4.8% in the municipality of Novi Beograd to 66.1% in Tutin.¹²

The poverty risk rate by most frequent activity status for individuals aged 18 and over shows that 50.9% of unemployed people were at risk of poverty. Self-employed people had a higher poverty risk rate than those employed by an employer, 12.9% compared to 4.9%. For pensioners, this rate was 20.3%¹³

According to World Bank data, the absolute poverty rate in Serbia was estimated at 6.9% in both 2024 and 2023, meaning it remained unchanged from the rate recorded in 2022.¹⁴

11 <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/statisticalrelease/?p=15328&a=01&s=0102?s=0102,10.2.2025>.

12 See last year's report on the state of labor rights, available at: www.centaronline.org/publik-acije/FCD-lzvestaj-o-stanju-radnih-prava-u-Republici-Srbiji-2023.pdf

13 <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/statisticalrelease/?p=15328&a=01&s=0102?s=0102,10.2.2025>.

14 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/serbia/overview>, 19.2.2025.

3. Employment

The creation of new jobs, thereby increasing the possibility of employment and income generation, is, among other things, a burden that falls on states to ensure an adequate number of jobs for citizens in accordance with labor market needs and the mutual relationship of labor supply and demand, so that individuals may have the opportunity to gain employment. However, in securing new jobs, states often, in an effort to attract foreign capital, reduce workers' rights, particularly concerning the level of wages, thus directly undermining one segment of the second strategic goal of decent work – the right to adequate remuneration. This should not be understood to mean that everyone has a guaranteed right to employment, but rather to the opportunity to secure a livelihood through freely chosen work. Therefore, it is not the obligation of states to achieve full employment, but to pursue policies and create conditions/environments for its achievement (while respecting all principles of decent work). The same is provided by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, according to which signatory states are not obligated to ensure full employment and jobs for all but to take the necessary measures to reduce unemployment, while the attainment of full employment should be the goal of their policy.¹⁵

In recent years, the employment rate has been steadily increasing, while the unemployment rate has been declining, indicating growing opportunities for employment and professional development of the population. According to the Central Registry of Compulsory Social Insurance (CRO-SO), in the period from January to September 2024, the average number of employed people was 0.5% higher compared to the same period of the previous year, primarily due to an increase of 9,500 employed in the private sector, while in the public sector employment increased by 2,400 persons. During this period, the strongest sectoral contributions to employment growth came from healthcare and scientific-technical activi-

15 See last year's Report on the State of Labor Rights, available at: www.centaronline.org/publikacije/ECD-Izvestaj-o-stanju-radnih-prava-u-Republici-Srbiji-2023.pdf

ties, with positive contributions also from the ICT, tourism, construction, and entertainment and recreation sectors. According to the National Employment Service, in the same period, the number of job seekers decreased by 8.4%.

Regarding the specific state of employment in Serbia, in the first quarter of 2024 the number of employed persons was 2,871,700, the number of unemployed was 299,100, while the number of people outside the labor force stood at 2,475,700. Significantly, the number of employees increased by 61,600 compared to the same period the previous year, while the number of unemployed and those outside the labor force decreased by 14,500 and 76,700 respectively. The employment rate (50.9%) rose by 1.4%, while the unemployment rate (9.4%) and the rate of the population outside the labor force (43.8%) decreased by 0.6% and 1.2% respectively.¹⁶

In the fourth quarter of 2024, the number of employed people was 2,894,900, the number of unemployed was 273,100, and the number of persons outside the labor force stood at 2,462,200. When comparing these figures to those from the same quarter in 2023, it can be observed that the number of employed increased by 50,700, the number of unemployed decreased by 11,600, and the number of people outside the labor force decreased by 65,300. The employment rate increased by 1.1% to 51.4%, while the unemployment rate dropped by 0.5% to 8.6%. The rate of the population outside the labor force was 43.7%, a decrease of 1%. Additionally, it is worth noting that compared to the third quarter of 2024, there was a decrease in the number of employed persons by 28,600, while the number of unemployed increased by 16,000 and the number of people outside the labor force rose by 6,300. Thus, at the end of 2024, the employment rate was 0.5% lower, while the unemployment and inactivity rates were 0.5% and 0.1% higher, respectively.¹⁷

These figures support the opinion that the issue of unemployment is significant considering the total number of citizens in the Republic of Serbia – 6,623,183 in 2023.¹⁸ Also, the annually unresolved issue re-

16 <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2024/Html/G20241142.html>, 22.2.2025.

17 <https://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2024/Html/G20241142.html>, 22.2.2025.

18 <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/oblasti/stanovnistvo/procene-stanovnistva>, 22.2.2025.

mains the shortage of workers in certain sectors, while others experience a disproportionately inverse relationship between labor supply and demand. For example, according to the website *Poslovi Infostud*, the labor market in Serbia in 2024 was marked by stability, with a total of 73,732 job advertisements published, which is only a 0.7% increase compared to 2023. This slight growth indicates a lack of major changes but also continuity in demand for workers. The highest demand was observed in the sectors of Trade/Sales, Production, Service industry and crafts, Hospitality, and IT.¹⁹

The most sought-after positions during the year reflected the fact that employers mostly looked for workers with secondary education. Among them were administrative staff, cleaners, sales agents, waiters, warehouse workers, cooks, salespeople, production workers, call center operators, and drivers. These positions highlight the importance of sectors that support everyday business activities and ensure their smooth execution.

Regarding the most in-demand positions, employers in 2024 offered wages that varied significantly depending on the job and sector. The highest average salary was earned by sheet metal workers, with 176,000 dinars, placing them at the top of the list. On the other hand, drivers were offered an average salary of 120,000 dinars, also placing them among the higher-paid occupations. Sales agents could expect salaries of 110,000 dinars, while cooks earned an average of 105,000 dinars. The labor shortage continued to affect the craft sector, where there was a particularly high demand for hairdressers, bricklayers, auto body repairers, sheet metal workers, steel fixers, bakers, metal turners, butchers, beauticians, plumbers, and cooks.²⁰

In the area of equal opportunities for women and men in employment and social policy, the position of women in the labor market in Serbia remains unfavorable compared to men. The 87% employment rate of men (aged 20–64) is 12.5% higher, and their activity rate is 12.8 percentage points higher than that of women. The gender pay gap is 8.8%, while the

19 https://poslovi.infostud.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=25, 20.3.2025.

20 <https://www.blic.rs/biznis/moj-novcanik/ovo-je-pet-najtrazenijih-poslova-u-2024-godini-u-srbiji/qd06w7g>, 20.3.2025.

pension gap is 17%. A total of 93.7% of women working part-time cited “caring for children or persons with disabilities” as the reason for working reduced hours.²¹ In March 2024, Serbia adopted a Rulebook on the methodology for calculating unpaid household work. Although the law provides for maternity leave and leave for fathers, gender-based stereotypes persist, whereby women are seen as primarily responsible for childcare and household duties. The rights to maternity leave, paternity leave, and parental leave in the legislation are not aligned with the legal acquis of the European Union, including the Work-Life Balance Directive.

3.1. Measures to Reduce Unemployment

To reduce the number of unemployed persons, Serbia adopted the Employment Strategy for the period 2021–2026, based on international employment policy guidelines set by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the International Labour Organization, and the European Union. The key strategic document in the economic dialogue with the European Commission and EU member states is the Economic Reform Program (ERP), which includes a medium-term framework for macroeconomic and fiscal policy, as well as structural reforms aimed at improving competitiveness, economic growth, employment, and the standard of living. The Minister of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Nikola Selaković, and the Director of the National Employment Service, Zoran Martinović, signed a Performance Agreement for the National Employment Service for 2024, which will enable the implementation of active employment policy measures, for which the Republic of Serbia allocated 7.75 billion dinars from the 2024 budget.²²

An important piece of information is that on October 3, 2024, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the “Reform Agenda of the

21 <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-latn/vesti/statisticalrelease?p=15328&a=01&s=0102?s=0102>, 10.2.2025.

22 <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/aktuelnosti/vesti/selakovic-za-mere-aktivne-politike-zaposljavanje-u-ovoj-godini-775-milijardi-dinara>, 27.2.2025.

Republic of Serbia 2024–2027 in accordance with the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans,” which contains a limited number of key structural reforms and investment priorities, indicators showing progress in reform implementation, and deadlines in the areas of: business environment and private sector development, green and digital transition, human capital, and fundamentals.²³

In December 2024, the Economic Reform Program for the period 2025–2027 was adopted. One of the key objectives sets was to improve living standards and reduce poverty through economic growth and support for vulnerable groups. To this end, the labor market reform is focused on improving youth employability through adequate financial and institutional resources, as well as strengthening the capacity for activation in the field of employment and social policy. The main goals of the reform also include improving the legal framework for internship programs to facilitate the transition of young people from education to employment, and strengthening the “Youth Guarantee” program to increase the availability of subsidized job offers, training, and internships within four months of formal registration. By the end of 2027, the reform aims to include 30% of NEET youth (not in employment, education, or training), of which at least 50% should be women, and for 30% of program participants to continue with employment, education, training, or internships within four months. The reform is expected to contribute, along with reducing skills mismatches in the labor market, to the creation of around 17,000 new jobs and an increase in total employment by 0.6%.²⁴

The Action Plan for the period 2024–2026 for the implementation of the Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia (2021–2026) foresees three main areas of action.²⁵ The first is improving conditions for the development of a quality workforce, which includes increasing the profitability and quality of work, encouraging the creation of new jobs, including social welfare beneficiaries in the labor market, and strengthening local employment policies. The second area is improving the position of unemployed

23 <https://www.mfin.gov.rs/sr/dokumenti2-1/program-ekonomskih-reformi-erp-1>, 22.3.2025.

24 ERP 2025–2027: <https://www.mfin.gov.rs/sr/dokumenti2-1/program-ekonomskih-reformi-erp-1>, p. 73

25 Official Gazette RS, no. 22/2024

persons in the labor market through the implementation and design of new active employment policy measures, improving the monitoring of the effects of these measures, as well as focusing specifically on women, youth, persons with disabilities, and members of the Roma community. The third area relates to strengthening the institutional framework for implementing employment policy, which implies improving legislation and strengthening the capacities of institutions dealing with employment, as well as better coordination and cooperation among them.

Specifically, the measures include: improving conditions for developing a quality workforce; increasing the profitability and quality of work; encouraging job creation; integrating social welfare service users into the labor market; strengthening local employment policy; implementing active employment policy measures; improving implementation and creating new active employment policy measures; enhancing labor market monitoring systems and systems for evaluating the outcomes and impacts of active employment policy measures; improving the position of women in the labor market; improving the position of youth; improving the position of persons with disabilities; improving the position of unemployed Roma men and women; strengthening the institutional framework for employment policy through legal improvements and capacity building of employment service providers; and enhancing coordinated action and dialogue in employment policy.²⁶ The projected coverage of unemployed persons with financial active employment policy measures is 25,280 persons in 2024, 25,210 in 2025, and 25,740 in 2026.²⁷

This Action Plan continues the implementation of the project "Implementation of Innovative Active Employment Measures and Approaches to Increase the Integration of the Long-term Unemployed, Youth, Women, Persons with Disabilities, and Hard-to-employ Groups into the Labor Market," financed from the IPA 2020 program cycle, through the piloting of services and active employment policy measures for the long-term unemployed in selected branches of the National Employment Service.

26 Official Gazette RS, no. 22/2024, Section III

27 <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/aktuelnosti/vesti/usvojen-akcioni-plan-za-period-od-2024-do-2026-godine-za-sprovodjenje-strategije-zaposljavanja-u-r-srbiji-za-period-od-2021-do-2026-godine> 13.2.2025.

When it comes to the employment of youth as a specific group of workers, the Action Plan for the period 2024–2026 includes the participation of 2,000 unemployed persons each year in programs supporting youth employment: “My First Salary” – intended for young people up to 30 years old with at least a secondary education and no work experience, to prepare for independent work; and Youth Internship – involving professional training for independent work in a profession requiring at least secondary education, to complete an internship and acquire conditions for a professional exam, if required by law or regulation, along with the establishment of an employment relationship.

The National Employment Service announced eight public calls within the Youth Guarantee Program in 2024, through which, by direct financial support to employers and unemployed people, more than 450 young people will be included in active employment policy measures starting in 2025. For these purposes, 200 million dinars were allocated from the Republic of Serbia’s budget, and the branches implementing this pilot project in 2025 are Niš, Kruševac, and Sremska Mitrovica.²⁸

In this context, the European Commission noted in its 2024 annual report that Serbia achieved limited progress, especially through the adoption of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan for 2023–2026 and the launch of the Youth Guarantee pilot project in January 2024. Accordingly, the Commission’s previous recommendations remain in force, pointing to the need for a functional analysis of budget allocations for active labor market policies and the workload of counselors from the National Employment Service, to ensure adequate financial and institutional resources for employment and social policies, which would be more systematically targeted at youth, women, and the long-term unemployed, and to continue implementing the Youth Guarantee pilot project.²⁹

During 2024, the main challenges in implementing the Youth Guarantee were identified as: (1) low coverage with active measures due to limited financial resources, which are mostly spent on passive measures, (2) poorly designed measures that often do not meet labor market needs

28 <https://www.nsz.gov.rs/sadrzaj/plan-implementacije-garancije-za-mlade/11248>, 20.1.2025.

29 European Commission 2024 Report: www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/2024/izvestaj_24.pdf p. 15

or individual problems, especially in training and internships, (3) excessive use of employment subsidies without enough attention to their negative effects, and (4) over-reliance on self-employment programs, although only 2–3% of the unemployed have entrepreneurial potential.

A particular challenge is the long-term unemployment of young people aged 15 to 30. It is evident that the most disadvantaged are youth aged 25–29, who make up the largest number of unemployed persons. A positive trend worth noting is the visible decrease in the number of unemployed youths over the past five years, which may be attributed to youth emigration and prolonged education.

	Number of Unemployed	Age Group 15–19 years	Age Group 20–24 years	Age Group 25–29 years
2014.	196.260	20.666	77.484	98.110
2015.	183.602	19.242	72.973	91.387
2016.	171.245	17.765	66.919	85.561
2017.	146.843	14.472	56.569	75.802
2018.	123.686	12.934	46.654	64.098
2019.	114.679	10.979	43.690	60.010
2020.	104.702	10.711	38.902	55.702
2021.	115.533	13.844	44.295	57.394
2022.	86.575	10.703	33.475	42.397
2023.	75.526	10.109	29.080	36.337

Table 1. Data According to the Bulletin of the National Employment Service

3.2. The Position of Foreign Workers in the Republic of Serbia

The issue of employing foreigners in the Republic of Serbia has become relevant in the past three to four years, whereas before that, the number of foreign nationals working in Serbia was almost negligible. Each year, the number of issued work permits increases significantly, and according to the current supply and demand on the labor market, it appears that this trend will continue in the coming period. In 2024 as well, a considerable number of foreign workers were employed primarily in the construction sector, specifically as bricklayers, steel fixers, general construction laborers, carpenters, and joiners. Additionally, many work permits were issued to IT professionals, welders, and workers in service industries.

The largest number of foreign workers come from the People's Republic of China, Turkey, the Russian Federation, India, Cuba, North Macedonia, and Ukraine, with a significant number of permits also issued to citizens of Nepal and Sri Lanka.³⁰ Specifically regarding workers from Ukraine, under the Law on the Employment of Foreigners and based on the Government Decision on providing temporary protection in the Republic of Serbia to displaced persons from Ukraine, Ukrainian citizens have the opportunity to apply for a personal work permit. The personal work permit allows foreigners to freely engage in employment, self-employment, and to access unemployment-related rights. Most work permits for Ukrainian citizens were issued in Belgrade and Novi Sad.³¹

In terms of numbers, from the beginning of the Foreigners Portal operation on February 1 until November 30, 2024, a total of 34,146 "Unified Permits for Temporary Residence and Work of Foreign Nationals" were issued.³² The establishment of the Foreigners Portal in February 2024

30 <https://www.paragraf.rs/intervju/zoran-martinovic/aktuelnosti-u-zaposljavanju-stranaca.html>, 17.2.2025.

31 Ibid.

32 https://novaekonomija.rs/vesti-iz-zemlje/od-februara-izdate-34-000-dozvole-za-rad-preko-portala-za-strance#google_vignette, 17.2.2025.


simplified the procedure for temporary residence and work permits for foreign nationals. Thus, a unified permit may be issued based on employment, including employment under an employment contract or another agreement in accordance with the Labor Law, self-employment, intra-company transfers, independent professionals, as well as for training and professional development. The application for a Unified Permit may be submitted either by the foreign national or by the employer on behalf of the foreign national.

On the other hand, according to data from January 1 to October 16, 2024, the competent branches of the National Employment Service issued a total of 16,591 work permits for foreign workers, while more than 52,000 were issued in 2023³³ and 35,167 in 2022³⁴, indicating a potential downward trend in the number of foreign workers. The highest number of work permits in 2024 was issued to citizens of China – 3,579, the Russian Federation – 6,615, and India – 1,526, according to data from the National Employment Service, although there is no available information on the sectors in which these foreign workers are most commonly employed.³⁵

33 <https://www.nsz.gov.rs/sadrzaj/izvestaj-i-program-rada-nsz/4109>, 16.1.2025.

34 <https://www.nsz.gov.rs/sadrzaj/izvestaj-i-program-rada-nsz/4109>, 16.1.2025.

35 <https://novaekonomija.rs/vesti-iz-zemlje/radne-dozvole-za-strance-sve-manje-odobrenja-za-ruse-i-kineze-opao-broj-zahteva-iz-turske>, 18.1.2025.



II Laws and Public Policy Documents in 2024

During 2024, no new laws or significant amendments to existing regulations in the field of labor and employment relations were adopted in the Republic of Serbia.

In the second half of 2024, the **Occupational Safety and Health Strategy of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2024–2027** was adopted, along with the Action Plan for its implementation.³⁶ This represents a continuation of previous efforts to improve working conditions and protect the health of the active workforce. The new strategy builds upon the implementation of the previous one (2018–2022) and is based on activities, goals, and directions for further advancement in this area. Additionally, it forms part of the fulfillment of obligations planned under the **National Program for the Adoption of the EU Acquis** and the **Government Work Plan for 2023**.

The general objective of the Strategy is to improve workplace safety and preserve the health of the active workforce. It is planned that during the implementation period, the number of workplace injuries in Serbia will decrease by 5% compared to the total number over the previous five-year period. The four key goals of the Strategy are: (1) improvement of the regulatory framework in occupational safety and health; (2) promotion of prevention importance, raising awareness, and informing the public about OSH issues; (3) improvement of working con-

36 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 84/2024.

ditions to prevent injuries at work, occupational diseases, and work-related illnesses; (4) enhancement of injury records and licensing systems.

Although these goals are strategically set to improve occupational safety and health, union representatives have expressed concern regarding their effective implementation. The main challenges include non-compliance with regulations, inadequate penalty policies, and institutional inefficiencies. Activities proposed in the Strategy are seen as too general, and previous analyses were not at a satisfactory level, which may impact the effectiveness of the Strategy. A particularly pressing issue is the insufficient number of labor inspectors to oversee its implementation.

The **Action Plan for the period 2024–2026** for implementing the Employment Strategy in the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021–2026 is a public policy document adopted to operationalize and achieve the general and specific objectives of the Strategy. By adopting this document, several key aims will be enabled, such as: encouraging the employment of persons with disabilities, further promoting dual education, stimulating the competitiveness of the economy, and supporting entrepreneurship development in Serbia.

The Strategy defines general and specific goals to be achieved through individual measures, while the Action Plan outlines concrete activities to ensure these goals and measures are realized. It also defines implementing bodies and partners, as well as deadlines.

Also worth mentioning is the **initiative of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality** to amend and supplement the **Law on Social Protection**.³⁷ Over time, the Commissioner submitted several initiatives to the Ministry of Labour regarding the amendment and/or supplementation of multiple provisions of the said law, but these have not been adopted in line with the existing proposals.

Following an ex-post analysis of the law, the Ministry prepared a **Draft Law on Amendments to the Law on Social Protection**, which was put to public consultation in mid-2018. The objectives stated in the justification included:

³⁷ Initiative No. 011-00-382/2024-02 dated October 31, 2024.

1. improving the quality of services and professional procedures in social protection;
2. developing community-based social protection services;
3. eliminating legal-technical deficiencies;
4. improving measures and support services to families and preventing child separation from families;
5. strengthening the competencies of professionals in social protection institutions;
6. expanding capacities for service provision;
7. improving monitoring, evaluation, and the system of social protection;
8. harmonizing the Law on Social Protection with other relevant legislation.

The Commissioner has repeatedly pointed out the insufficient quantitative and qualitative capacity of social work centers, which are key institutions in delivering rights and services in social protection. Given that the Law on Social Protection is the central legal act in this area, the Commissioner emphasized that any drafting or amendment must include an **impact assessment on the rights of socio-economically vulnerable individuals**. While the initiative has been submitted, the amendments to the Law have not yet been adopted.

In the field of labor legislation, particularly the **Labour Law**, no new law aligned with EU standards was adopted in 2024. The last significant amendments to the Labour Law date back to 2014, but they still do not address several outstanding issues and remain misaligned with the actual labor market situation.

In 2024, no new legislative acts were adopted, only a few amendments to existing regulations. The end of 2024 was marked by **mass protests** following the collapse of a station roof in Novi Sad, which killed 15 people, triggering blockades at almost all higher education institutions in Serbia and a **strike by all representative education unions**, due to the government's failure to fulfill obligations from a previously signed

protocol. The unions demanded that teachers' salaries be raised and aligned with the national average. The government's last proposal included an 11% salary increase and a one-time payment of 15,000 dinars for all education employees (excluding those at universities), which was rejected by the unions.

The **Workers' Proclamation**, adopted the previous year and calling on the government to amend the Labour Law by the end of 2024, was not implemented.

In 2024, several **bylaws were adopted** to ensure full implementation of the **Law on Employment of Foreigners**, including: (1) Rulebook on submitting permanent residence applications electronically; (2) Rulebook on issuing unified permits for temporary residence and work for foreigners; (3) Rulebook on approving temporary residence.³⁸ Also, the previously adopted Rulebook on approving permanent residence came into effect on January 5, 2024.

According to the **European Commission's 2024 Report**, in March 2024, Serbia extended by one year the **temporary protection** granted to persons fleeing the war in Ukraine, and the response plan for managing mixed migration was updated and approved by the Government in March 2024.³⁹

Positively, the **National Employment Service (NES)** continued preparations in 2024 to **join the European Employment Services network (EURES)** and began adjusting its operations to meet EURES requirements. Serbia is also expected to begin preparations to **join the European Labour Authority**, and bilateral agreements have been established with 20 EU member states. However, legislative and technical conditions in social security institutions must be improved to ensure cooperation with EU countries.⁴⁰

38 All of the aforementioned by-laws were published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 6/2024.

39 European Commission Report for 2024, p. 53.

40 Ibid., p. 77.

Regarding the **Labour Inspectorate's activities** in 2023 (as the 2024 report was not yet published), labor inspectors conducted 66,896 inspections at both registered and unregistered entities, including 34,111 in labor relations, 32,461 in occupational safety and health, and 313 at unregistered entities. They found 6,315 persons working “off the books,” 61% of whom formalized their employment following inspections. Additionally, they conducted 1,039 injury-related inspections: 22 concerning fatalities, 18 serious with fatal outcomes, 25 collective, 886 serious, and 88 minor injuries.⁴¹

Several laws are still in **draft stages**, some having already gone through multiple public consultations. In late 2024, a working group was formed to prepare a **Draft Law on Seasonal and Other Occasional Work in Specific Sectors**,⁴² with the task of expanding the application of the current law on simplified seasonal engagement to include hospitality, tourism, and domestic help, and improving the rights of engaged persons in line with international standards. The group's mandate extends to Q4 of 2026. Previous drafts faced heavy criticism from the professional public, the International Labour Organization, and even the **American Bar Association**, which deemed the draft unconstitutional. The law's main objective remains combating undeclared work and enabling flexible workforce engagement. The construction sector, initially considered under the law's scope, has now been excluded — a welcomed decision given its year-round nature.

Additionally, a **working group for drafting the Law on Internships** has been established, with a deadline of September 30, 2026. The draft was first presented for public consultation in December 2021, and again in 2023 (August 17 to September 18). Feedback was reviewed in a working group meeting on September 29, 2023. Social partners participated, but were overall dissatisfied, especially the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia, which stated that internships should not be regulated outside the Labour Law but rather as a part of it.

41 Labour Inspectorate Annual Report for 2023.

42 No. 003007531 2024 13400 001 002 012 002 dated November 12, 2024.

Finally, the **Draft Law on Volunteering**, revised after public consultation, was submitted in July 2022 to social partners and the Republic Secretariat for Public Policy. It aims to improve the culture of volunteering through collaboration between the public sector and volunteer organizations. A new working group was formed in September 2023, but the draft has yet to be made public or sent for another round of consultations. The draft regulates key volunteering concepts, defines the rights and duties of volunteers and organizers, and introduces **digitalization of volunteer management**, including a **national digital platform** for volunteer registration — a move that would reduce paperwork and increase transparency.

Regarding the **regulation of platform work**, given the global challenges it poses to labor law and the increasing number of people involved, the **Serbian Association for Labor and Social Insurance Law** initiated an **ex-ante normative analysis**. Conducted within the EU project *“New Employment: Promoting Rights of Digital Workers in Serbia”*, the goal is to propose realistic and optimal legal solutions by identifying gaps and current issues.

The general aim is to establish a **flexible legal framework** to improve the status of platform workers and ensure fairer distribution of social welfare. The lack of regulation leads to labor, social, and legal issues, especially for workers lacking employment protection, social security, and transparent working conditions.

Platform workers, regardless of how they're engaged, often lack basic employment rights. Providing access to such rights through a proper legal framework would promote social inclusion and quality of life. Social protection is essential for more equitable wealth distribution.

The grey economy is a major issue — many platform workers are unregistered, resulting in lost taxes and contributions. Regulating this sector could increase state revenues and secure social funds. Formalizing these jobs would enable long-term pension and welfare benefits, reducing future pressure on public finances.

Establishing a fairer regulatory framework would improve the rule of law and labor market transparency. The current lack of clear rules enables abuse, including undeclared work and employer non-compliance. The analysis aims to offer solutions for worker protection and more effective regulatory enforcement.

Globally — and especially in the **EU** — this issue is highly topical. In **October 2024**, the EU adopted a **Directive on improving working conditions in platform work**, introducing standards for: determining employment status, transparency, fairness, human oversight, and algorithmic accountability. The directive pays special attention to cross-jurisdictional challenges. Serbia's analysis focuses on **transposing** these solutions functionally.

Ultimately, improving platform workers' rights is key to resolving social, economic, and legal challenges and achieving a fairer, more inclusive society in line with the demands of today's labor market.



III Social Dialogue in 2024

During 2024, social dialogue in Serbia was the focus of various initiatives and projects aimed at its enhancement. One of the key events was the launch of the project **“Empowering Social Dialogue in the Republic of Serbia”** in September 2024, presented by the International Labour Organization and the European Union. The objective of this project is to strengthen the status and rights of workers, as well as to align Serbia’s labor legislation with the EU acquis. Participants in the project include the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia, the United Branch Trade Unions “Independence,” and the Union of Employers of Serbia.

The strategic framework concerning social dialogue in Serbia was established through the **Action Plan for Chapter 19** from May 2020, which relates to identifying competent institutions for the adoption of regulations and strengthening administrative capacities for their implementation.⁴³ The Action Plan identifies responsible institutions involved in implementing each activity that transposes an EU regulation or enforces a domestic regulation transposing EU law into the Serbian legal system. In most cases, these are ministries and their affiliated bodies (primarily the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs and the Labour Inspectorate), while in some cases, special government services (such as the Republic Secretariat for Legislation) and special administrative organizations (such as the Republic Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes) are also listed.

43 Action Plan for Chapter 19, <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2020-06/AP19%20ENG%20FINAL%20-%202020.docx>, August 30, 2024.

The Action Plan states that to strengthen bipartite social dialogue, it is necessary to enhance the capacity of social partners themselves to create an environment of constructive mutual dialogue. In this regard, it proposes strengthening the professional capacities of the Labour and Employment Sector through additional recruitment of civil servants. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish administrative conditions to provide organizational and professional support to social partners for participating in all forms of technical bilateral and multilateral assistance, as well as in educational activities aimed at strengthening social dialogue at all levels.

Within the program to strengthen the capacity of social partners, the Action Plan foresees the implementation of workshops, trainings, and other forms of education to instruct management structures in state-owned enterprises on the necessity of social dialogue and the conclusion of collective agreements.⁴⁴ Education also includes training social partners on European collective agreements, European works councils, and European social dialogue as preparation for integration into the European social dialogue.

To further strengthen social dialogue, the Action Plan proposes a review of existing provisions of the Labour Law regarding collective bargaining, conditions for the representativeness of social partners, the process for determining representativeness, the work of the Committee for Determining the Representativeness of Trade Unions and Employer Associations, procedures for participating in collective bargaining and concluding collective agreements, as well as the establishment of prerequisites for promoting the principle of good faith in the negotiation process. It also proposes revising provisions of the Law on the Socio-Economic Council to enhance the role of social dialogue in the legislative process and the registration of local socio-economic councils to encourage their establishment and ensure sustainable functional operation.

The **Decent Work Program for the Republic of Serbia for the period 2013–2017**⁴⁵ identified several shortcomings in the functioning of

44 Ibid.

45 <https://www.minrzs.gov.rs/sr/dokumenti/predlozi-i-nacrti/sektor-za-rad-i-zaposljavanje/program-dostojanstvenog-rada-za-rs-2013>, February 20, 2025.

social dialogue in Serbia. A key obstacle was the relatively weak and politically marginal role of the Socio-Economic Council, which during that period was almost completely excluded from influencing national policy. It was also noted that collective bargaining had been limited in recent years, and that the lack of implementation of the General Collective Agreement signed in 2008 and the late and difficult conclusion of some sectoral agreements in 2010/2011 contributed to complicated relationships among social partners and demonstrated that the Labour Law still does not provide enough flexibility for meaningful collective bargaining.

Regarding unratified international labor standards, the document states Serbia's readiness to ratify ILO Convention No. 154 on collective bargaining in the near future but makes no mention of Convention No. 151 on labor relations in public service.

The **latest Decent Work Program for the Republic of Serbia for 2019–2022**⁴⁶ points to the limited effectiveness of tripartite social dialogue in Serbia. It is worth noting that in 2018, social partners submitted complaints to the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards regarding the application of Convention No. 144 on tripartite consultations. Unlike the previous program, the latest one does not foresee the adoption of new international instruments, namely Conventions No. 154 or 151.

According to information from the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, initiating the ratification process for these conventions requires an analysis of relevant national legislation. The ministry has not received any initiative for ratification from social partners, other state bodies, NGOs, or any third party. In this sense, it is recommended that the ratification of both international instruments be planned during negotiations for a new Decent Work Program.

Attention should also be paid to the **human resources capacity of the Ministry of Labour**, particularly the Department for Social Dialogue Affairs, which had 11 employees in 2014, but only 6 in 2024. This is unacceptable considering the increased workload under Chapter 19, where

46 Decent Work Programme for the Republic of Serbia 2019–2022, <https://www.ilo.org/media/62681/download>, August 30, 2024.

social dialogue holds a significant position. It is particularly concerning that the ministry has not participated in or implemented any social dialogue-related project in the past ten years.

Finally, the **European Commission Report for 2024**, which partly addresses the state of social dialogue in Serbia, notes that the situation has not significantly changed compared to previous years.⁴⁷ The report points out that social dialogue remains weak, especially regarding the involvement of social partners in the development of relevant policies.

It should be recalled that **tripartite social dialogue was established in Serbia on August 2, 2001**, when the **Agreement on the Establishment, Scope, and Functioning of the Socio-Economic Council of the Republic of Serbia**⁴⁸ was signed between then-relevant national trade unions, the Union of Employers of Serbia, and the Government of the Republic of Serbia. That agreement emphasized the importance of the Council in democratizing society and finding ways out of the crisis through economic and social reforms, recognized as a joint responsibility and interest of all three social partners.

In **November 2004**, the **Law on the Socio-Economic Council**⁴⁹ was adopted, giving the Council a legal framework for establishment and functioning. According to the law, the Socio-Economic Council is an independent body composed of representatives of the Government, representative employer associations, and representative national-level trade unions.

Regarding attendance at Council sessions between 2016 and 2024, the **active engagement of social partners (unions and employers)** is commendable, but government representatives were less consistent — appearing at only **32% of sessions** in the last eight years. An exception is the **Minister of Labour**, who attended almost every session. It

47 2023 European Commission Report, p. 130, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_695_Serbia.pdf, January 30, 2025.

48 <http://www.arhiva.srbija.gov.rs/vesti/2001-08/02/26844.html>, January 20, 2025.

49 Law on the Socio-Economic Council, Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 125/2004.

is particularly concerning that the **Minister of Economy**, who oversees sectors such as investment, SMEs, and privatization, rarely participates, even though Serbian economic development heavily relies on small and medium enterprises.

In 2024, the Socio-Economic Council decided on the **minimum wage**, marking only the third time in the past 15 years that this decision was made by the Council rather than the Government. Typically, the Government had made this decision, citing budgetary implications tied to minimum wage levels.

In 2024, there were **no discussions on adopting a new Strike Law**. In Serbia's legal system, the right to strike is a **constitutionally recognized right**. Article 61 of the Constitution states that “employees have the right to strike, in accordance with the law and collective agreement,” and that this right may be limited only by law in relation to nature or type of activity. In addition to the Constitution, this right is regulated by the **1996 Strike Law**, which defines a strike in Article 1 as a “work stoppage organized by employees to protect their professional and economic interests related to work.”⁵⁰

It should be noted that under both the Constitution and the law, the right to strike is granted only to **employees**, i.e., individuals in an employment relationship. This means that those working under other arrangements — such as service contracts, internships, temporary work, seasonal jobs, or volunteering — **do not have this right**.⁵¹

The current Strike Law was created for a federal state that no longer exists. Its continued application — **28 years later**, and across three constitutional regimes — is a clear sign of the **state's inability to establish a quality social dialogue** that would lead to its modernization and adjustment to the current legal framework.

There is an urgent need to **modernize the law**, in line with the promo-

50 Law on Strike, Official Gazette of the FRY, No. 29/96 and Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, Nos. 101/2005 – other law and 103/2012 – Constitutional Court decision.

51 This includes persons engaged under contracts for temporary and occasional work, professional training and development, service contracts, seasonal work, volunteering, etc.

tion of social dialogue, which has long been formally stated as a development priority in Serbian labor law. A new law should ensure that the right to strike is aligned with the relevant **ILO Conventions on freedom of association**⁵² and the **right to organize and collective bargaining**⁵³, which Serbia ratified in 1958. Priority in resolving strike-related disputes should be given to procedures for peaceful settlement.

In 2024, Serbia witnessed several significant **strikes and protests** across different sectors. These included: The **education workers' strike** in early 2024 over low wages, poor working conditions, and unresolved status issues. The strike was held in multiple schools across the country, with reduced or canceled classes, leading to negotiations with the Ministry of Education — although no swift solutions were reached.

In **February**, **healthcare workers** protested due to overwork, staff shortages, low salaries, and systemic issues in the healthcare sector. Protests were peaceful and did not disrupt emergency services.

Municipal services workers also went on strike due to late payments and poor conditions, followed by **farmers' protests** over dissatisfaction with subsidies, fuel prices, and market instability.

On **October 2, 2024**, a **one-day strike** by teachers was held, continuing into **November** with broader walkouts. These coincided with **mass anti-corruption protests** after the collapse of a railway station canopy that killed 16 people.

Additionally, **environmental protests** against the “Jadar” project by **Rio Tinto** took place, over concerns about lithium mining's impact on the environment.

All these events reflect growing discontent among various societal groups in Serbia in 2024, centering on labor rights, corruption, and environmental protection.

52 ILO Convention No. 87 – Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, Official Gazette of the FPRY – International Treaties No. 8/58.

53 ILO Convention No. 98 – Convention on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, Official Gazette of the FPRY – International Treaties No. 8/5.



Conclusion

From the presented *Report on the State of Labour Rights in the Republic of Serbia for 2024*, we can conclude that 2024 was the most modest year so far, both in terms of legislation and adopted strategic documents in the field of labour and employment relations. It is evident that the adoption of the already announced Labour Law is being awaited, which is currently “in the hands” of a twinning project, whose implementation is expected to begin at the end of the first or beginning of the second quarter of 2025. In this sense, it is realistic to expect that the first version of the draft Labour Law might appear only at the beginning or mid-2026. This is perhaps a clear indicator that the following year, 2025, will also be very modest in terms of adopting new legislative regulations and public policy documents in the field of labour and employment relations. It seems that even the presented drafts of certain legislative texts mentioned in this Report are awaiting the adoption of the Labour Law before they are passed.

Until the adoption of the new Labour Law, social partners need to work on improving their organizational capacities, transparency, reputation, and bargaining power. The same applies to the state, particularly to ministries and inspection authorities, which lack both equipment and personnel. Strengthening the capacities of social partners through strategic support and organization financed by the state and the EU, aimed at expanding membership bases within organizations, is key to creating a critical dynamic in industrial relations.

Promoting collective bargaining and increasing the coverage of collective agreements requires the consolidation of relevant actors at every level, especially at the sectoral level, to increase capacities and readiness for negotiating and concluding collective agreements, which are still very few.

Finally, we can conclude that in 2024 there was still a noticeable lack of development in social dialogue and collective bargaining, which represents a significant obstacle to the smooth functioning of the economy and the overall labour market.

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