

## Preventive activity

In view of a huge growth in the number of economic entities and the real possibility of covering with inspection only a few per cent of enterprises annually, expansion of preventive activity became an element of the NLI's long-term strategy, particularly in the form of advice, and legal and technical guidance. It also responds to the increasing public expectations in this respect (annually, the NLI provides over 1 million pieces of advice). Moreover, it is convergent with the policies and practice of labour inspectorates in the EU Member States. However, it should be underlined that in the light of statutory regulations, the National Labour Inspectorate is a body executing first and foremost supervisory and inspection functions. In the current Polish socio-economic reality, a radical change of proportions between inspection and prevention is impossible, mainly due to the unsatisfactory level of occupational safety and health, improper working conditions, and because of too large a number of enterprises under the supervision of one labour inspector.

Preventive activities are integrally connected with inspection and supervisory work, especially in the form of intervention inspections after a catastrophe or an accident. Experience obtained in this way is utilised in other companies and constitutes the basis for undertaking preventive initiatives. Performance of some statutory duties has also got a significant preventive value, namely those are: examination if collective labour agreements are in conformity to the law, participation in the drafting of legislation, and participation in the acceptance for operation of newly constructed or reconstructed industrial plants. Actions aimed at popularisation of OSH management systems in Polish enterprises are undertaken for a few years now and they are also of great preventive importance. Such systems involve all the participants of work processes, at various levels, at the same time contributing positively to work culture. Proper identification and assessment of occupational risks is fundamental for applying appropriate preventive measures. Recently, we succeeded in introducing an innovative form of partnership based on a Letter of Intention of Cooperation between the Chief Labour Inspector and the Forum of the European Union Chambers of Commerce in Poland. It comprises plans to undertake joint promotional and preventive actions to facilitate access of employers associated in the above-named Chambers to information on e.g. OSH management systems and checklists for particular branches. The agreement with EUC Forum was supplemented by a joint publication, which highlights new forms of collaborative public-private initiatives for the adoption of international standards of labour protection.

A separate, particularly significant group of initiatives are those for labour protection in private agriculture, in which the accident rate is 2.5 times higher than in other sectors of economy, and victims of which are often children. In relation to farmers, the National Labour Inspectorate can conduct only preventive actions in the form of e. g. advice given during visits to farms and fields at the time of farming work, and promotion of safe behaviour. The NLI cooperates with rural self-government structures, organisations, associations and institutions dealing with work safety in agriculture. Such actions are co-ordinated thanks to the agreement of 13 December, 1995 on cooperation for the improvement of OSH in private agriculture, extended and amended on 6 March, 2001. The signatories to this agreement, besides the Chief Labour Inspector, are: Minister of Agriculture and Development of Rural Areas, President of the Farmers' Social Insurance Fund, President of the National Association of Farmers, Farmers Co-operatives and Organisations, President of the Agricultural Property Agency of the State Treasury, President of the National Council of Farmers' Chambers, President of Employers' Federation - Leaseholders and Owners of Agricultural Land, President of the Voluntary Fire Brigades Association, President of the National Association of Villages' Administrators, and the President of the Trade Union of Agricultural Employees.

On the initiative of the National Labour Inspectorate, a list of agricultural tasks which should not be performed by children due to the hazards they create to child's health and development has been completed. It is systematically and consistently popularised among farmers and school children in rural areas.