

HR LAW BRIEF: CEE

21/2025



Dear Readers,

We are back with another edition of our HR Law Brief: CEE. Again, it's a 3-minute read to bring you up to speed with the latest news from Central-Eastern Europe.

If you need any support in the CEE region, let us know.



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UKRAINE: STRICTER LIABILITY FOR VIOLATIONS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

Ukraine is planning to tighten liability for breaches of occupational health and safety regulations. According to draft law, both employers and employees could face administrative and criminal responsibility for violations, particularly in high-risk sectors. One of the key measures includes fines ranging from 25 to 600 times the minimum income (approx. UAH 200,000–4,8 million / EUR 4,150–100,200), depending on the role and the severity of the breach. Criminal liability would also apply in cases where a violation results in harm to health. Employers are advised to review and reinforce internal safety procedures to ensure full compliance with occupational health and safety requirements to mitigate the risk of severe penalties under the forthcoming changes.

BULGARIA: CHANGES IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Bulgaria has published a draft law amending the Labour Code to enhance collective bargaining at the branch level. Key changes include: (i) encouraging state-supported initiatives in cooperation with nationally representative employer and trade union organizations, (ii) introducing general principles to promote sectoral collective bargaining, (iii) granting the General Labour Inspectorate authority to monitor compliance with collective labour agreements. The draft is currently open for public consultation. Employers should note the growing significance of collective bargaining agreements in shaping remuneration frameworks and wage policy, and prepare for potential adjustments once the law is adopted.

SLOVAKIA: NEW LAW ON EQUAL PAY

Slovakia has published a draft law aimed at strengthening equal pay for women and men and enhancing pay transparency. Key changes include: (i) mandatory publication of average salaries for men and women in the same or comparable roles by larger employers, (ii) the right for employees to access anonymized pay data for comparable positions, (iii) a ban on retaliation against employees who raise concerns about unequal pay, (iv) employer liability for unjustified pay gaps, including retroactive compensation. Employers will be required to develop internal job evaluation systems, maintain regular pay reporting, and cooperate with labour inspections. The Labour Inspectorate will gain broader enforcement powers, including the ability to impose fines and issue recommendations for amending internal wage regulations. Employers are encouraged to review and adjust their pay structures and policies to ensure fair and equitable compensation across all employee groups.

ROMANIA: NEGOTIATION OF WORK ORGANIZATION WITH EMPLOYEES

A draft law introduces new obligations for employers to negotiate certain aspects of work organization with trade unions or employees' representatives. Areas subject to negotiation include work arrangements, holiday scheduling, and internal regulations. The draft also grants employees the right to choose between reduced working hours and a night work bonus. These changes shift the regulation of internal policies from a unilateral employer decision to a joint process requiring employee input. Employers will be encouraged to actively manage their cooperation with trade unions to ensure smoother implementation of workplace changes.

POLAND: COURT RULING ON PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES APPROACHING RETIREMENT

On 30 September 2025, the Polish Supreme Court ruled that Article 39 of the Labor Code, which protects employees approaching retirement from dismissal, also applies to fixed-term contracts — even if these contracts end before the employee reaches retirement age. The Court rejected a narrow interpretation that would limit protection only to contracts lasting beyond retirement age, stressing that the law's intent is to protect employees based on their entire employment history, not just the current contract. This ruling limits employers' ability to terminate contracts early for employees close to retirement and reinforces job security during this period. Employers should review their termination practices accordingly.

EUROPEAN UNION: ENTRY/EXIT SYSTEM NOW IN FORCE

As of 12 October 2025, the Entry/Exit System (EES) has come into effect, aiming to register the entry and exit of third-country nationals into the Schengen Area for short-term stays (visa-free travel up to 90 days within a 180-day period) and short-term visa holders. Access to the data is granted to national authorities and institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Office for Foreigners, regional offices, and other relevant services. The system stores biometric data such as facial images and/or fingerprints for persons aged 12 and older. As part of the Smart Borders package, the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) is scheduled to be implemented in the last quarter of 2026. Third-country nationals not covered by visa-free travel will be required to apply online and obtain travel authorization to visit the 30 participating European countries. To remain compliant, employers must ensure that their third-country employees fulfil all conditions for legal entry within the EU.

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