



Bosnia and Herzegovina - “Labourland” Capacity Assessment of Labour Inspections in Protection of Labour Rights

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Executive Summary

This policy study is result of a growing concern over increasing number of violations of labour rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their weak protection by labour inspections in the country. More and more employees strike complaining on unpaid work, disrespect of their basic human rights, non-payment of benefits by employers, working hours, lousy working conditions etc. At the same time, those who are supposed to react on violations of the labour rights, i.e. labour inspections as governments' appointed protectors and promoters of labour rights are not able to react to numerous violations due to their weak capacities, both financial and human. Therefore, this study, aimed at analysing the existing capacities of labour inspections in the country, seeks for possibilities of improving it in order to increase the protection of the labour rights. The study analysed the legal environment, organizational and financial constraints, as well as the current practice of labour inspections. The analysis of the problem of labour inspections' weak capacities has lead to three policy options for addressing this issue. Considering in this regard the necessity of urgent action and, additionally, taking into account the existing economic crisis in the country, a model of possible operational activities was suggested in order to achieve increase in capacities of labour inspections, thus contributing to decrease in number of violations of labour rights in future.

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Introduction

There are 36 labour inspectors supervising respect of labour rights in 60.000 enterprises in Republic of Srpska and around 51 labour inspectors for over 100.000 enterprises in Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At the same time, there are many reports coming from domestic and international institutions and organisations warning on numerous violations of labour rights in B-H. There is a link between obvious lack of capacities of labour inspections and violations of labour rights in the country.

This research focuses on the capacities of labour inspections in fulfilling their role as protectors and promoters of labour rights. Research aims at presenting the strong and weak points in capacities of labour inspections in the country. However, it has to be taken into account that this research is not a detailed description and evaluation of all labour inspections in the country. The ground for this research was the impression that inefficiency of labour inspections, due to their incapacity, results in numerous violations of labour rights in B-H. This means that without efficient labour inspections labour rights in B-H are unprotected and in danger of being completely marginalised.

Areas covered by this research were:

- position of labour inspection in national legislation and international standards in regard to their role in detection and prevention of violations of labour rights,
- current practice of labour inspections in regard to detection and prevention of violations of labour rights,
- relation between capacities of labour inspections and efficiency of their work,
- existing (if any) positive practices of labour inspections in the country which could be identified.

Research started with the analysis of relevant national legislation as well as international documents, B-H is signatory to, in order to provide clear and detailed illustration of the role of labour inspections in resolving labour rights issues. This was followed with investigation of relevant international and domestic documents, reports relating to the performance of labour inspections and problems they are facing with in their work. Case study analysis was done on example of Labour and Occupational Health and Safety Inspection of Republic of Srpska. It operates under unique legal framework (Republic of Srpska) unlike the situation in Federation of B&H where jurisdictions and legal framework are divided between entity and cantons (which would additionally complicate the analysis for it would be needed to look at 11 legal frameworks - 10 cantons plus 1 entity). In order to have a complete picture of situation, semi-structured interviews were done with representatives of labour inspection, trade unions and employers unions in RS, as well as representative of ILO in B-H.

This study is concluded with set of recommendations for concrete measures to be undertaken in order to strengthen the capacities of labour inspections in the country to be able to respond to their obligations as protectors and promoters of labour rights in satisfying manner.

Problem Description

Labour rights and labour inspections

Bosnia and Herzegovina (B-H) is facing obligations to meet all the criteria set in the process of EU integrations. As a signatory to numerous international human rights protection documents, B-H is obliged to implement them and harmonise its legislation and practice with those¹. Protection

¹ In regard to labour rights protection here is especially meant on conventions such as European Convention on Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as ILO Conventions: C81 Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (Ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02:06:1993); C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (Ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02:06:1993); C98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (Ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02:06:1993); C102 Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (Ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02:06:1993); C111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (Ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02:06:1993) and C122 Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (Ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina on 02:06:1993)



of labour rights², as part of human rights agenda, represents one of the major challenges for B-H institutions in the process of meeting the political criteria for EU accession. Citizens of B&H (41, 4 percent) consider that the right to work is one of the most endangered rights in the country (Human Right Centre University of Sarajevo, 2009).

Even though B-H has national legislation regulating labour rights and setting institutional mechanisms for protection of it in form of labour inspections, still there are many reports coming from domestic and international institutions and organisations warning on numerous violations of labour rights in B-H. For example, the Ombudsman of RS report for 2006 indicates that workers usually complain that they don't have signed employment contracts, and that they work overtime (including Sunday and holidays) without additional compensation. Also, majority of the workers' complaints, submitted to Ombudsman of RS, refer to the problem that they have not received salaries in months, even years. There are also a lot of cases of violation of the provision regarding the termination period. The situation regarding protection of labour rights is not different in 2009. Employers threaten their employees with dismissal when they seek for recognition of their rights, especially when requesting their salaries to be paid out and better working conditions (Nezavisne novine, 2009). In those cases, the labour inspection is the one supposed to check if the contract on employment and working conditions is in accordance with applicable provisions (International Labour Office Geneva, 2006). In B-H, *"labour inspections and court proceedings are evaluated as inefficient and intolerably slow. This in turn reinforces employers' further neglect of labour rights and the lack of trust of employees in state protection of their rights"* (SEENPM/CIJ, 2008). The analysis of labour related rights has shown that the work of inspections in Bosnia and Herzegovina is extremely inefficient leading to violations of the labour rights by large number of employers (ICVA, 2009).

The Law and Capacities

Legislation covering the labour rights issues in B-H is being fragmented due to division of B-H governmental system to 14 governments (state level, two entities, ten cantons and Brčko District). There is no legislation at the state level, but both Federation of B-H and Republika Srpska have their own Law on Labour providing legal protection of labour rights. However, *"Labour legislation without inspection is an exercise in ethics, but not a binding social discipline"* (Blanchard F. in Richthenhofen von W., 2002). Therefore, it is necessary to have a mechanism for monitoring and promotion of implementation of labour legislation in form of labour inspection. This is enabled through the Law on Inspections in RS and FB&H, providing authority for the labour inspection to supervise the implementation of legislation related to labour rights (contracting, working time, salaries, holidays, employment of minors, women, pregnant women, mothers, persons with disabilities, working conditions, realization of right to strike, termination of contract on work and other work related issues) (Law on Inspections in RS, art.14 and Law on Inspections in FB&H art.33).

Although legislation framework for labour inspection has been provided, the relevant government bodies in entities haven't done much in strengthening the capacities of inspections to act as enforcers and supervisors of existing labour rights. In RS, there are only 36 labour inspectors in charge of supervising implementation of the labour law by over 60.000 enterprises/subject of control (!) (Republic Administration for Inspection Activities, 2008) At the same time, in FB&H, there are total of 51 labour inspectors out of which 9 are federal and 42 are cantonal inspectors (Federal Department for Inspection Affairs, 2009) in charge of supervising implementation of the labour law by over 100.000 enterprises/subject of control! In ideal case, this would mean that each inspector should visit 11 enterprises on a daily basis in order to have total supervision over companies. This is impossible to realize since regular inspection control

² Labour rights, as part of economic and social rights, include: right to work, fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind, safe and healthy working conditions, equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in employment, rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, right to form trade unions and the right to strike. According to ILO they entail: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect to employment and occupation.

takes 2 hours in place of inspection (Centre for Investigative Journalism, 2007), not to mention the hours for preparation and reporting after inspection is done.

For comparison: Slovenia had 106 employees in labour inspection in 2001; Bulgaria had 355 inspectors in 2004; Denmark 714 inspectors in 2000; Sweden 391 inspectors in 2009. But even the number of inspectors does not say much on the effectiveness of execution of inspections in the countries mentioned above. The difference between, for example, Sweden and Bosnia and Herzegovina is also in the culture of respecting labour rights where first country has social democracy and respect of basic labour rights as something incorporated in the existence of the system, while, in B&H, respect of basic labour rights is in question due to the fact that we cannot take as presumption that majority of companies in the country actually respects basic labour rights (more and more workers' strikes and complaints in public are confirming this). However, one has to take into account that no inspection practice leads to complete supervision of all subjects of control, since the presumption is that not all the enterprises are violating labour rights. But the existing resources of labour inspections in B&H are still insufficient even for the partial inspections and visits to the number of those enterprises that are either reported or assessed as high-risk enterprises regarding the disrespect of labour rights. This points out to the core problem of labour inspections in B-H: lack of capacities to meet in satisfactory manner their obligations in protection of labour rights.

Case study: Labour and Occupational Health and Safety Inspection of RS

An example of struggle to execute its work properly under low capacities, both in terms of human capacities to their workload and in terms of financial capacities, is the Labour and Occupational Health and Safety Inspection in Republic of Srpska (the Inspection). In 2006, the Republic of Srpska Inspectorate separated from the structures of the Ministry of Labour of RS becoming an independent authority at the entity level in charge of supervision of implementation of the legislation. The Inspection is one out of 12 inspections³ at the Inspectorate divided in 6 regional departments in: Prijedor, Banja Luka, Dobo, Bijeljina, Istočno Sarajevo and Trebinje. The Inspection is organized only at the entity level and centralized, distancing itself from the local community (R. Mišić, President of Association of Trade Unions in Republic of Srpska - personal interview - 4 January, 2010). In 2009, only 37 labour inspectors were in charge of supervising over 60.000 subjects of control. According to systematization, the Inspection has free space for total of 44 labour inspectors but due to the budget constraints⁴ it is not in position to employ more inspectors even though it needs reinforcement in human resources (R. Puzić, Chief Inspector at the Labour Inspectorate of Republic of Srpska - personal interview - 27 October, 2009). Workload of inspectors currently employed at the Inspection is high. Apart from regularly scheduled inspections they receive a large number of complaints (only in 2008 there were 1155 complaints) through its Centre for Complaints. Having in mind that there are only 37 inspectors, statistics on realization of inspection controls in first six months of 2009 are quite positive:

³ Other 11 inspections at the Inspectorate are: Market Inspection, Agricultural Inspection, Forestry and Hunting Inspection, Veterinary Inspection, Water Inspection, Technical Inspection, Traffic and Communications Inspection, Urban Planning, Construction and Ecology Inspection, Health and Sanitary Inspection, Education Inspection and Fire Safety Inspection

⁴ Budget of the Inspection and the Republic of Srpska Inspectorate is determined by the Government of Republic of Srpska upon draft annual budget proposed by the Inspectorate

Table 1
Inspection statistics for first six months in 2009

Labour inspection	Controls executed			Penalties		
	Regular ⁵	Extraordinary ⁶	Total	Misdemeanour Warrant ⁷	Misdemeanour Complaint ⁸	Total
	1.897	2.105	4.002	583	143	726

⁵ Regular inspection/control is control executed in accordance with the (annual) programme of the Inspectorate/Inspection

⁶ Extraordinary inspection/control is based on special warrants, complaints and appeals

⁷ Misdemeanour warrant - warrant issued by labour inspector for violation of the law provisions (usually in form of a fine - in accordance with the Law on Inspections)

⁸ Misdemeanour complaint - complaint submitted by labour inspector to competent court



However, this is still not satisfying considering that there are over 60.000 subjects of control, meaning that the inspection annually covers around 13-15% of subjects of control. ILO Conventions no.81 and 129 recommend that the number of labour inspectors should be sufficient to ensure the effective realization of their duties in terms of *“the number, size and situation of the workplaces liable to inspection; the number and the range of categories of workers employed in such workplaces; and the number and complexity of the legal provisions to be enforced”* (International Labour Office Geneva, 2006). This is not the case with this Inspection (or any other in the country).

Cooperation of Inspection with Association of Trade Unions in RS (SSRS) is sometimes positive and sometimes without effect (R. Mišić - personal interview - 04 January, 2010). SSRS provides Inspection with the so called “black book” - a list of companies who are most often suspected to violate rights of workers (usually reported by workers to SSRS anonymously or in person). The SSRS is not quite satisfied with the work of the existing structures at the Inspection regarding the execution of controls (R. Mišić - personal interview - 04 January, 2010).

Existing structures at the Inspection are trying to maximize their performance by providing licence for labour inspection to their colleagues from other inspections at the Inspectorate. They organize trainings for their colleagues in order to ensure that they could cope with the labour rights issues and conduct controls in proper manner. The Inspection uses stimulation measures for its employees to keep up the efforts - a reward for good work during the year in form of “13th salary⁹” was given to 4 inspectors in 2008.

In 2007, the USAID in B&H started project of Efficiency of Labour Market Organisations (ELMO¹⁰) trying to enhance the social dialogue between the state, employers and workers (through trade unions). The Inspection is also engaged in this process and currently, 10 inspectors are going through the cycle of training for trainers and are supposed to be able to pass their new knowledge on risk assessment, occupational safety and health, procedures and other labour related issues to their colleagues (R. Puzić - personal interview - 27 October, 2009). In second half of 2008, the ELMO project provided the Inspection with the New Policy of Labour Inspection in Republic of Srpska. Though this policy represents a new instrument to the Inspection, it only provides general directions for the Inspection and not concrete operational steps (it leaves development of action plans the social partners) thereby leaving the policy on the level of strategic wishful thinking.

⁹ Thirteenth salary or thirteenth month's salary is additional salary paid out at the end of calendar year in the amount of regular monthly salary. This is usual for civil services.

¹⁰ More information on this project available at: <http://www.usaidelmo.ba>

Policy Options

Status quo - continued efforts with the same structure and capacities

Economic crisis entered Bosnia and Herzegovina pressuring governments at all levels to respond to it immediately. The response of governments was to turn to savings and decrease budget lines, including decrease of salaries of government officials and administration. In following year, the emphasis will be mainly on keeping the employees that are currently employed and not taking new ones. This will also apply to the Inspection since it is financed by the budget provided by the government of entity/canton. The Inspection will have to continue its efforts with same small number of human resources in supervising much greater number of enterprises. The situation today, with the same ratio of inspector per enterprise, is clearly unfavourable towards the workers and their rights. Employers are taking advantage of the low capacities of inspections mistreating their employees and violating the labour rights. The same will probably continue if capacities of labour inspections in the country would remain the same.

Increase capacities of labour inspections

In order to be effective in their work and conduct its functions as protector, promoter and monitor of labour rights, labour inspections have to be given necessary resources, predominantly human resources. Number of 35-50 inspectors per 60-100 thousand subjects to control is insufficient for proper execution of inspection duties. If the Inspection covers around 13-15% of subjects to control with its current number of inspectors, logical conclusion is that it would at least double the coverage in case of increase of number of inspectors employed. However, the issue is not only in number of labour inspectors employed but it's also about how to use the existing resources (financial, organisational and human) in the best possible way. The ILO also points out to the problems of understaffed, under-equipped, under-trained and underpaid labour inspection services in many countries leading to labour inspections not being able to conduct their roles and functions properly (International Labour Office, 2006).

Centralization - decentralisation?

Centralization of labour inspections in FB-H from cantonal inspections to one single authority of Federal Labour Inspection would lead to better coordination of activities of inspections and thus better performance of inspectors. This was achieved in Republic of Srpska in 2006 when the Inspectorate separated from the Ministry of Labour and gathered all inspectors under the central authority of Inspectorate. Still, considering the fact that cantons have their own authority and jurisdiction, it is probable that the lack of will might stop the efforts for centralization. On the other hand, there is a question of inspections at the local community level. Since labour inspections are either at entity or cantonal level, there is a question of low representation of inspections at the local level where they are needed the most. Even in the 2008 Annual Report on the Work and Effects of Work of Inspectorate of RS, the Inspectorate admits that there is a lack of inspectors in most of the municipalities (especially smaller ones) and that there is the need to analyse and establish sufficient number of inspectors at the local level. However, this is again the question of financial resources for employment of additional number of inspectors at local level, the question of to whom will these inspectors answer for their work - local community/municipality or labour inspectorate at entity level, the question of restructuring again and again the organisation of Inspectorate to introduce local level branches of the Inspectorate. All these require both the will of political actors and the time for planning and implementing the changes, not to mention the lacking financial resources.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The research has shown that labour inspections are prevented from being in position to adequately respond to their obligations and properly conduct supervision on realization of labour rights. This is mainly due to the lack of their capacities, in particular:

- Human capacities - small number of inspectors employed in comparison to number of existing subjects to control and
- Financial resources - budget constraints.

Only strong and efficient labour inspections could impact the better protection of labour rights as one of the basic elements for achieving economic and social development (especially enhancing the labour market conditions) being a part of the Mid-Term Development Strategy 2008-2013 goals, EU integration process etc. Therefore, it is necessary to upgrade the existing capacities on higher level providing the power and resources for inspections to fulfil their work in satisfactory manner. This means increase in number of inspectors in each inspection and the



application of certain aspects of human resources management. In particular, strengthening of capacities of labour inspections should be done through several steps:

1. Reallocation of budget lines (shifts within the existing budgets) and provision of necessary funds for increasing number of inspectors.

Within its annual planning and budget proposal, the Inspectorate of RS should suggest increase in number of labour inspectors in order to reach at least the number of 44 inspectors as prescribed by the staff plan in the Labour Inspectorate of RS. Additionally, the Inspectorate of RS should, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour of RS, prepare a suggestion of possible reallocations of budget lines and a plan for obtaining additional fund for Inspectorate's functioning. The shifts in budget could be made either within the budget of the Inspectorate itself, or within the general budget of the Government of RS. Another tool for increasing the financial capacities of the labour inspection is to ensure that certain percentage of the money, coming from fines prescribed to those enterprises that violate the labour related laws, also comes as an income within the budget of the labour inspection. The same model is recommended for the cantonal and Federal inspections at the Federation of B&H respectively towards the cantonal or Federal Government depending on the jurisdiction.

2. Increase number of inspectors: (a) employment of new inspectors and (b) establishing a programme for apprentices - soon to be graduates at the Faculty of Law.

As mentioned previously, number of labour inspectors should be at least increased to the number planned by the staff plan in each inspection. The Inspectorate should, in accordance with the budget requested for the employment of new inspectors, either through vacancies or through promotion of apprentices to inspectors, increase the number of employed labour inspectors. The establishment of programme for apprentices will provide the possibility for recruitment of new staff and, at the same time, provide possibility for interested final year students at the Faculty of Law to have practical experience as assistants to labour inspectors. Initially, this programme could function on basis of volunteering, meaning that interested candidates/students would be volunteers at the inspection thus realizing less expenditures in regards to the payment for the work of volunteers.

3. Trainings for newcomers.

Since newly employed inspectors and apprentices have limited knowledge, more theoretical, on promotion and protection of labour rights, they would need initial trainings and field practices under the supervision of experienced inspectors. Training modules will be organized in accordance with the inspection requirements and all candidates will receive a certificate at the end of their training.

4. Procedural changes - sending inspector from one town to do inspection in another town (for example, from Bijeljina to Prijedor) in order to decrease the possibility of corruption.

One of the changes within the very practice of labour inspection should be the manner in which the inspections are done. Firstly, in order to avoid the possibility of employers, who violate labour related law, to prepare for the upcoming inspection is that labour inspectors avoid making announcement to enterprises that they will come to execute inspection control on particular day. It is better to have "sudden/unannounced" inspections which would lead to better insight in the real situation regarding the respect of labour rights within

particular enterprise. Secondly, in order to decrease the possibility of cases of corruption and bribery among inspectors, inspectorate office should develop procedures for sending inspectors from one part of the entity/canton to another part where they are not known in person and where there is less possibility of having external influences and pressures imposed on inspectors. This would mean development of internal schedule and plan of inspections with specified tasks for each inspector when is his/her duty to go to another city/municipality for inspection.

5. Ensuring more power in hand of inspector - changes of law provisions in more restrictive manner.

Ministry of Labour, together with the Inspectorate, should elaborate a draft law on inspection, or amendment to the existing ones, in order to provide more powers to the inspectors regarding the enforcement of the law. Namely, provisions should be made in such manner that labour inspector could request payment of a fine "on spot" of the control, the latest within 24h. The case is that currently, due to the overload of courts at municipal level with various cases, if the inspector sets a fine or issues a misdemeanour warrant, duration of the execution of this order will be too long. In that sense, it will be good to have inspectors with more powers which they can execute on the spot of control making those companies violating labour law provisions respond for their misdemeanour in shortest possible term, thus making them to think twice before violating the law again. Otherwise, they will probably benefit of the longevity of processes before the domestic courts due to their overload with cases. For example, Swedish labour inspectors are empowered to use sanctions as inspection notices, injunctions and prohibitions. They can issue injunctions/prohibition subpoenas carrying a contingent fine that employer has to pay, and infringement of the injunction/prohibition can lead up to one-year of imprisonment of employer. Also, Swedish labour inspectors use prohibition as sanction measure which can enter into force immediately if the inspector judges that there is an immediate risk of accidents of ill health (Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee, 2009).

There is still a lot of work ahead

Labour inspections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still dealing mostly with enforcement and protection of basic labour rights with insufficient capacities, while most of the EU countries and EU neighbouring countries are moving towards the protection in sphere of occupational health and safety. The culture of respect of labour rights is different in Bosnia and Herzegovina comparing to the EU countries. This is evident through the differences in development of new procedures within labour inspectorates. EU countries are moving towards the "soft" approach (prevention, information, and social dialogue) while Bosnia and Herzegovina still has to pursue "hard" approach with warrants, high fines and similar restrictive measures. In order to reach the stage of better protection and realization of basic labour rights in the country, labour inspections will have to pursue more restrictive measures to ensure that the employers don't violate workers' basic labour rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ensuring the basis, i.e. respect of basic labour rights, is a precondition for labour inspections to widen their focus to protection of workers in context of occupational health and safety. This is possible only by having the efficient and effective labour inspections with sufficient human and financial resources.



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A "Policy Development Fellowship Program" has been launched by the Open Society Fund BiH in early 2004 with the aim to improve BiH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options. The program provides an opportunity for selected fellows to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research and writing a policy study with the support of mentors and trainers during the whole process. Sixty three fellowships have been granted in three cycles since the starting of the Program.