

National Human Rights Index

<http://index.belhelcom.org>

2024

Right to Work

Expert Commentary

The score:	3,3	-0,1
<i>Including scores by component:</i>		
• Freely chosen work without any kind of compulsion	2,9	-0,2
• Equal access to work for all	3,4	-0,1
• Just and favorable conditions of work	4,0	
• Fair remuneration	5	+0,1
• Employment promotion and protection against unemployment	2,9	-0,1
• Protection mechanisms	1,6	-0,1

Assessing the situation with the right to work in 2024, the Index experts gave lower scores than in 2023, but noted improvements in some areas. **Among the main reasons:**

- the entry into force of a major package of amendments to labor legislation, which, on the one hand, adapted labor relations to modern world (electronic document management, remote work), and on the other hand, formalized discriminatory practices
- expansion of the practice of compulsory work (“mandatory graduate placement”)
- persistently low unemployment (both official and actual) and wage growth
- the completion of the automation of the sick leave process was generally positive, but in 2024 it led to a reduction in the amounts paid to a number of categories of workers

• Freely chosen work without any kind of compulsion

Forced labor in 2024 continues to exist primarily in the correctional system¹. Refusal to work in a colony is considered a malicious violation of the regime and is punishable by confinement in a punishment cell, and sometimes even a new criminal case under Article 411 of the Criminal Code (disobedience to the requirements of the administration). The practice of forcing people who have been forcibly placed in LTPs (compulsory rehabilitation centres) to work also continued, with the procedure for referral to these centers being simplified in 2024.²

¹ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/117081>

² <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3961&p0=H11000104>; <https://lex.by/novatsii-zakonodatelstva-o-prinuditelnom-lechenii-i-mediko-sotsialnoj-readaptatsii-v-chasti-pravovogo-regulirovaniya-otnoshenij-s-obyazannymi-litsami/>



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The mandatory graduate placement remains in place and is expanding. In 2024, plans to introduce a five-year mandatory work requirement for all graduates, which were actively discussed in 2023, were not implemented. Nevertheless, amendments to the Law on Health Care³ established that clinical residency training for doctors is funded exclusively from the budget, and all residents, starting in February 2024, are required to work for at least five years (previously, the mandatory “work period” for medical graduates was two years (and did not apply to distance learning residency programs), and now the minimum period has been more than doubled). This requirement applies to all citizens of the Republic of Belarus, permanent residents, refugees – that is, to everyone who studies for free; only non-resident foreigners can pay for residency.

In addition, experts note a number of other measures designed to prevent doctors from leaving the country, including the non-issuance of documents required for labor migration of medical professions; changes to the curriculum of medical universities in order to make it impossible to recognize qualifications abroad.

Changes in legislation on education⁴ on the one hand, establish preferential conditions for the mandatory placement of employees of law enforcement agencies (those who have studied full-time for at least half of the term at the expense of the state budget are exempt from mandatory placement if, at the time of placement, they are employees of the presidential security service, paramilitary organizations, state security agencies, customs authorities, or prosecutors). On the other hand, conditions are being tightened for many groups:

- reduction of situations of exemption from reimbursement by young specialists who have not completed their placement if it is impossible to provide them with a new job in the locality where their spouse works;
- the rules for the placement of spouses have been tightened (the wording “at the request of the graduate” has been removed from the norm and an obligation has been introduced to agree on the placement according to the place of residence or work of the wife (husband) with the organization where the person was originally supposed to be placed);
- the rules for reassignment have been tightened for graduates of certain specialties and graduates sent to rural areas (previously, only medical professionals and graduates of the specialty “Agriculture” were subject to reassignment subject to agreement from the ministry and the regional executive committee; now “Veterinary Medicine” and “Fisheries” have been added);
- despite some benefits for employees of the military and law enforcement agencies, the rules for the mandatory placement of traditional “beneficiaries,” i.e., children of military personnel, police officers, KGB employees, officers of other security forces, and veterans of the war in Afghanistan who became disabled or died in connection with their service, have been tightened. Now they can be placed to a different place of work without their consent (previously, this was only possible with the consent of

³ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12300308>

⁴ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400046>



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the graduate), and, if they wish, only to the place of residence of their parents (previously, this was also possible to the place of residence of their spouse)⁵.

In 2024, Belarus was ranked among the ten worst countries for workers' rights in the ITUC Global Rights Index⁶.

• Equal access to work for all

Overall, the situation regarding access to work has improved due to increased demand for labor. Legislative changes adopted in 2024 (to come into force in 2025) expand the list of categories of unemployed persons to whom the state provides additional employment guarantees (persons of pre-retirement age, persons with addictions, and other “citizens who are unable to compete on equal terms in the labor market”⁷. Legislation⁸ has also been adopted restoring the right to a full pension for working pensioners.

Employment guarantees for persons in connection with military service and referral to alternative service have been strengthened. Previously, benefits were established in connection with and for the period after discharge from military service. Now, in accordance with the amendments to the Labor Code, an employer is obliged, within five days of receiving notification from the military commissariat, to take back a person who has been “dismissed in connection with conscription into military service but not sent for military service.”

At the same time, additional restrictions are being introduced for a number of professions: notaries⁹ and forensic experts are restricted in their ability to work part-time.

The practice of short-term contracts remains in place, which is used, among other things, for de facto dismissal (non-renewal of contracts) for political reasons¹⁰.

The practice of black lists¹¹ continues, involving checks during recruitment, including:

- checks against the “BESporadki” database
- checks against ‘extremist’ lists
- checks on individuals who have already been punished under articles relating to “extremist activities”¹².

⁵ <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/September2024/rpwVwnlIRve9WtJzxTzo.pdf>

⁶ https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/2024_ituc_global_rights_index_en.pdf

⁷ <https://pravo.by/novosti/analitika/2024/october/79190/>

⁸ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32400402>

⁹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400343>

¹⁰ See, for example: <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/87648.html>; <https://spring96.org/ru/news/116781>

¹¹ <https://www.dw.com/ru/neblagonadezen-kogo-v-belarusi-teper-ne-vozmuet-na-rabotu/a-68734245>

¹² <https://www.dw.com/ru/byvsij-politzaklucennyyj-snacala-ugrozali-zabrat-detej-a-potom-uvolili-direktora-zavoda-kotoryj-vzal-mena-iz-zalosti/a-68605720>



In addition, the formalization of discriminatory restrictions on the basis of political affiliation for specific professional groups continues¹³.

• Just and favorable conditions of work

On January 1, 2024, a major package of amendments¹⁴ to labor legislation, including the Labor Code, came into force, updating labor legislation to reflect modern realities (electronic documents, remote work, etc.). In particular¹⁵:

- contract workers must be paid at least twice a month;
- electronic documents between employers and employees are now possible (however, employment contracts cannot be concluded, extended, or amended via electronic document management);
- forms of remote work have been expanded (permanent, temporary, combined permanent, and combined temporary) and local regulation of remote employment has been simplified;
- remote workers can now be familiarized with dismissal orders, including in electronic form (for example, by sending a scanned copy of the order drawn up on paper), which does not require the use of an electronic signature;
- when granting leave outside the leave schedule with the employee's consent, leave pay may be paid no later than 2 working days from the start of the leave (which simplifies the granting of individual "emergency" leave (i.e., not in accordance with the leave schedule) for both the employer and the employee);
- Leave can now be divided into more than two parts (provided that one part is at least 14 days);
- Working time regulations have changed: for part-time employees, the reduction of the pre-holiday day is now proportional (for example, for a 4-hour day, the reduction is 0.5 hours instead of 1 hour); also, employees with a working day of ≤4 hours are allowed, at their request, to work without a lunch break;
- there is a maximum period of leave "at the employee's expense" – 3 months during a calendar year, regardless of the terms of local legal acts, the employer's order, etc. (previously – no more than 30 calendar days).

According to Decree No. 105¹⁶ of March 21, 2024, aimed at regulating overtime and weekend work in industrial organizations, employers were given the opportunity to increase the number of overtime hours and weekend work, subject to prior agreement with the trade union operating in the organization.

¹³ Regulations on the procedure and conditions for professional certification confirming the qualifications of tour guides and interpreter-guides; Rules of professional ethics for notaries approved by the Ministry of Justice:
<https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/September2024/rpwVwnlIRve9WtJzxTzo.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12300273>

¹⁵ <https://www.sorainen.com/ru/publikatsii/klyuchevye-izmeneniya-pravovogo-regulirovaniya-trudovyh-otnoshenij-v-respublike-belarus-s-2024-goda/#::~text=>

¹⁶ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=P32400105>



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This mechanism appears to guarantee that employees are not forced to work overtime, but in the absence of independent trade unions, it effectively expands the possibilities for compulsory overtime, which is linked to the use of Belarusian enterprises for the purposes of Russia's defense industry in the context of the ongoing war¹⁷.

On July 1, 2024, new rules came into force regarding temporary disability benefits ("sick leave")¹⁸:

- for citizens who have worked for 10 years or more, sick leave is paid from the first day of illness at 100% of lost earnings (previously, the first 12 calendar days were compensated at 80%);
- all payments subject to mandatory insurance contributions to the Fund of Social Protection for social insurance for all employers (including former employers) in the calculation period are included in the calculation. Previously, only payments related to work performance were included (one-time payments such as financial assistance, health benefits, etc. were not included in the calculation).
- the calculation period has been increased to 18 months (previously, it was 6 months and only took into account earnings from current employers).
- the calculation of average daily earnings and periods of contribution payments to the fund is carried out automatically by the Fund of Social Protection (the decision to centralize the calculation minimizes the number of errors in the calculation of sick leave by the accounting services of organizations).

This new procedure is a step towards the automation of social calculations, but in 2024, due to the increase in the calculation period for many categories of workers who did not have earnings for the previous 18 months, the actual amount of sick leave was reduced, according to experts.

The procedure for traveling abroad to so-called "unfriendly countries" is being tightened: at the level of individual organizations, measures are being introduced for additional reporting on trips abroad in the case of business trips and even vacations; "security deputies" are conducting talks on the undesirability of travel to such countries; an additional requirement for approval by superiors is being introduced—while it is clear that there is no regulatory standardization, there is already an administrative requirement for increased control¹⁹.

The practice of holding talks with the signing of documents containing a promise "not to allow destructive behavior at the place of work and residence, ... not to participate in unauthorized mass events" began to be applied to employees of private companies in 2024.²⁰

In January 2024, amendments²¹ were made to advertising legislation, introducing a ban on advertising employment and training abroad. Exceptions were made only for advertising organizations and

¹⁷ <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/May2024/mThCnjcl93yD6VN0ystL.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://pravo.by/novosti/analitika/2025/february/80676/>

¹⁹ <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/May2024/mThCnjcl93yD6VN0ystL.pdf>

²⁰ <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/September2024/rpwVwnlIRve9WtJzxTzo.pdf>

²¹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400353>



individual entrepreneurs whose activities are related to employment abroad; such advertising may only be posted on their websites.

According to experts, the closure of private childcare facilities (in particular, kindergartens²²) and private nursing homes²³ had a negative impact on the working conditions of certain categories of workers (those with parental responsibilities and elderly relatives).

● Fair remuneration

In 2024, the favorable economic situation also affected the labor market. Economic activity grew against a backdrop of stimulating domestic economic policy and the highest excess demand in Russia since 2008, accompanied by a rapid increase in consumer demand and wages, a decline in unemployment to record lows, and the highest level of industrial capacity utilization since 2013²⁴.

According to official data for 2024, real wages increased by 13% (including 11% in the public sector)²⁵; the minimum subsistence budget and the first-level tariff rate increased during the year²⁶.

In 2024, banks were granted²⁷ the right to issue loans for the payment of wages. Also in 2024, “card slavery” was abolished, i.e., workers have the right to choose which card they want to receive their wages on (Article 75 of the Labor Code).

At the same time, according to experts, there were problems with wage payments in agriculture and trade in 2024. The regulation of bonus payments to managers of state-owned and state-controlled enterprises has also changed, and the criterion of timely payment of wages has been removed from the list of objectives to be achieved.

● Employment promotion and protection against unemployment

At the end of 2024, unemployment in Belarus, calculated using ILO methodology, stood at 3%, while official unemployment (registered with employment agencies) stood at 2,585 unemployed (out of a working-age population of 5,262,500), or 0.041%.²⁸

Decree No. 3 “On the Prevention of Social Dependency” remains officially in force²⁹ (as amended by Decree No. 1 “On the Promotion of Employment” of 2018³⁰), but changes made to labor legislation in 2024 significantly tightened state employment policy, making it harder to get unemployment benefits.

²² <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/70078.html>

²³ <https://nashaniva.com/ru/352357>

²⁴ https://beleconomy.org/publications/policy_papers/peregrev-ekonomiki-belarusi/

²⁵ <https://belta.by/special/society/view/petrishenko-realnaja-zarplata-po-strane-za-god-vyroslo-na-13-698853-2025/>

²⁶ <https://etalonline.by/novosti/korotko-o-vazhnomy/byudzhet-prozhitochnogo-minimuma-s-1.08.24/> ; <https://pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2024/august/78529/> ; <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22400848>

²⁷ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=B22440952>

²⁸ <https://1prof.by/news/ekonomika-i-biznes/belstat-podschital-uroven-bezrabotichy-v-2024-godu/>

²⁹ https://president.gov.by/fp/v1/007/document-thumb_7_original/7.1587034455.932207d7f5.pdf

³⁰ https://president.gov.by/fp/v1/008/document-thumb_8_original/8.1587034457.a78aa2e72d.pdf



On October 11, 2024, Law No. 36-Z “On Amendments to Laws on Employment”³¹ was adopted, which will come into force on January 1, 2025. This law introduced a new version of the Employment Law and a number of important innovations:

1. Tighter conditions for the granting of unemployment benefits: benefits will now only be paid to those who have registered with the employment service no later than one month after the date of dismissal (or termination of contract, graduation from higher education, etc.) and who have at least five years of work experience with contributions paid prior to dismissal. In addition, dismissal must occur for valid reasons clearly listed in the law (expiration of the contract, health reasons, conscription into military service, reinstatement of a previously dismissed employee, etc.). This means that those who voluntarily resigned or were laid off without sufficient work experience are now not eligible for benefits. There are some exceptions: the seniority requirements do not apply to citizens who have been caring for children under 3 years of age, disabled children under 18 years of age or disabled persons of group I or elderly persons over 80 years of age, as well as young people under 21 years of age who are looking for their first job. Graduates of educational institutions and those dismissed from military/alternative service for valid reasons also retain their unconditional right to benefits.
2. The period for receiving unemployment benefits has been cut in half. Previously, benefits were paid for up to 26 calendar weeks (about 6 months), but now the maximum period has been reduced to 13 weeks (3 months). Only certain categories of people will continue to receive benefits for up to 26 weeks: unemployed people who have 5 years or less left before retirement, as well as unemployed people in regions with a tense labor market. The government will establish a separate list of such territories each year.
3. New procedure for determining the amount of unemployment benefits. Previously, it was linked to the base amount and depended on the salary, with a maximum amount of 2 base amounts (in 2024, this is 80 rubles). Now, the law provides for a fixed amount of benefits, set by the Council of Ministers with the consent of the president (by a resolution of the Council of Ministers dated December 31, 2024³², from January 1, 2025, benefits for all categories of unemployed persons will be unified at 40 rubles per month (approximately 12 euros). In addition to reducing the payment period, other restrictions have been introduced: now the benefit is granted only once within 36 months after dismissal (previously it could be received again after a year), and the maximum period of registration with the employment service has been reduced from 18 to 12 months.
4. The law separately regulates the employment of so-called “obligated persons” – parents who are obliged to reimburse the costs of maintaining children taken into state care (previously, this area was regulated by Decree No. 18). Now, when hiring such persons, employers do not need to request a reference from their previous place of work, and the hiring itself must take place

³¹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400036>

³² <https://etalonline.by/document/?regnum=c22401064>

on the day the person appears on the court referral. Formally, this facilitates the process of their employment, but the essence remains the same – to force dysfunctional parents to work through the courts so that they can “compensate the state for its expenses”. The ILO has criticized Belarus for its practice of forced labor of such categories of citizens, and the change in legislation may be linked to a desire to soften its image without completely abandoning the practice of forced employment.

5. Job quotas for persons with disabilities: From January 1, 2025, quotas will be established for the employment of persons with disabilities by all employers (except for small businesses with up to five employees, as well as organizations of persons with disabilities, budgetary organizations, and organizations equivalent to them). The parameters of the quotas will be determined by the government, but the law already imposes obligations on employers: to fulfill the established quota, to hire people with disabilities referred by the employment service under the quota, and to report on the creation of jobs for people with disabilities. Previously, Belarus had a practice of reserving jobs for persons with disabilities, but this measure has now been strengthened by mandatory quotas. The implementation of quotas should help to employ persons with disabilities, but much will depend on how effectively the State monitors the implementation of this provision and creates conditions for the employment of persons with disabilities (barrier-free environment, subsidies to employers, etc.).

Although material support for the unemployed has been reduced, the state has continued some employment incentive programs. For example, there is a program to resettle unemployed people in rural areas, which provides relocation allowances for those who move to work in villages. However, the scale of this support is small: in 2024, only about 80 families took advantage of the resettlement program, of which 26 moved from the city to the countryside and 51 from one village to another.³³

The guarantees of labor rights in 2024 were influenced by regulations amending the legislation on entrepreneurial activity³⁴, which stipulate that individual entrepreneurs whose income exceeds a certain threshold are required to conduct their activities through a legal entity. This measure, which was announced as a way to increase transparency and ensure compliance with labor standards, has led to a significant reduction in the number of self-employed and individual entrepreneurs at this stage. Experts note the lack of state policy to help former individual entrepreneurs enter the labor market (training programs, etc.)

The state forecasts a labor shortage. In 2024, discussions of this problem reached the public level. The state has begun efforts to encourage labor migration from EAEU countries, as well as for a number of particularly sought-after professions³⁵.

The state considers the “one district – one project” program to be one of the mechanisms of regional

³³ <https://www.sb.by/articles/v-mintruda-rasskazali-na-kakikh-usloviyakh-bezrabotnykh-pereselyayut-v-selskuyu-mestnost.html>

³⁴ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400365>

³⁵ <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2024/november/79392/>



development designed to ensure the availability of jobs in the regions³⁶.

Thus, in terms of support for the unemployed, 2024 was marked by coercion to work and punishment for not having a job (maintaining all burdens on so-called “social parasites”).

● Protection mechanisms

Analysis of court statistics on labor disputes in 2024 is complicated by the closure of information: the Supreme Court website is unavailable from abroad. The results for 2024 have not been published (unlike in 2023³⁷).

Pro-government trade unions (the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus – FTUB and its sectoral structures) remain effectively integrated into the executive. In 2024, the FTUB played a special role during the elections (single voting day and presidential elections*)³⁸, contributing to the violation of workers’ electoral rights (by coercion during the signature collection, election commission formation, campaigning, and voting periods), as trade union committees at enterprises are effectively responsible for “ideological work.”

The persecution of leaders of the independent trade union movement continued³⁹. In 2024, reports emerged of a tightening of the regime for convicted members of the “Workers’ Movement”: some were transferred from a correctional colony to prison. Also in 2024, the second trial of Olga Britikova, former head of the independent trade union at the Naftan plant, took place (in fact, while serving one sentence, the trade union leader received new charges). At the same time, in June 2024, at the 112th session of the ILO in Geneva, Alexander Yaroshuk, a political prisoner, was symbolically elected a member of the ILO Governing Body. Vasily Beresnev, 74, sentenced to nine years in prison, was released in August 2024 on health grounds (his only kidney failed) after two years in prison.

³⁶ <https://economy.gov.by/ru/news-ru/view/dmitrij-klimenkov-glavnyj-rezultat-initsiativy-odin-rajonodin-proekt-novye-proizvodstva-i-rabochie-50078-2025/>

³⁷ <https://pravo.by/novosti/obshchestvenno-politicheskie-i-v-oblasti-prava/2024/february/76846/>

³⁸ <https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114851> ; <https://elections2025.spring96.org/be/news/117551>

³⁹ <https://spring96.org/ru/news/113363>



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