

## NORTHERN MACEDONIA

In North Macedonia, the following risks apply:

**Discrimination and gender;** In the eastern part of the country there are examples of ethnic differences from other Macedonian ethnic groups and in the western part of the country discrimination of Macedonian ethnicity.

**Freedom of association;** The unions SSM and UNASM as well as some NGOs say that workers are misinformed, unaware or familiar with forming and joining unions. This can entail risks over time. Workers are afraid to join a trade union because they fear dismissal.

**Living wage;** According to workers, the amount for 16,500 dinars is enough to cover basic living costs in the event that both parents are working. The average for the worker is now 14,500, this is a risk.

**Excessive overtime;** Employees often work 8 am Monday to Saturday; total 48 hours. By law, an average of max. 8 hours of overtime per week is permitted. There is a risk that the legal maximum will not be respected and that more than the permitted overtime hours will be worked. The Labor Code prescribes weekly working hours of 40 hours, plus an option for 8 hours of overtime.

**Workplace safety and health;** Health and safety awareness in the workplace is very low among employees. They are often unfamiliar with dangers that their accidents or injuries can cause. One of the common instances of non-compliance with the law is the absence of an employee health and safety representative. Due to the poor conditions, absenteeism in the factories can average from 7% to as much as 20%. Usually this absenteeism is related to the very high temperatures in the factories in the summer period.

## TUNISIA

In Tunisia the following general risks apply:

**Discrimination and gender;** Women in Tunisia face discrimination both in law and in practice. There is insufficient protection against gender-based violence.

**Freedom of association;** The right to association and collective bargaining is widely violated in the textile sector. Workers are afraid to join a trade union because they fear dismissal. Union leaders are threatened and find it difficult to get in touch with workers. This creates inequality between factory owners and their employees.

**Living wage;** There is strong evidence that wages in the Tunisian garment industry, although above the minimum wage, are too low to meet the basic needs of workers. This is compounded by the rise in the cost of living.

**Excessive overtime;** A maximum of 12 hours of overtime per week is allowed (maximum 2 hours per day). There is a risk that more overtime will be worked than is permitted by law.

**Workplace safety and health;** There are signs that the right to a healthy and safe workplace is regularly being violated in the Tunisian clothing sector. Workers can be exposed to hot and dusty working conditions, including cases of lack of necessary hygiene in the workplace, such as not properly cleaning up excess materials. Often there are also bad foundations and subsurface in the factories, unsafe wiring, blocked emergency exits and illegally built extra floors.

## VIETNAM

The following general risks apply in Vietnam:

**Discrimination and gender;** There is strong evidence that discrimination between men and women in terms of salary and promotion is taking place in the garment sector in Vietnam. Women often work in low-skilled, low-paid jobs, while the technical and managerial positions are occupied by men. In addition, there are strong signs that there is discrimination between local workers and migrants.

**Child labor;** Child labor is significant in Vietnam. It has fallen sharply over the past fifteen years due to rising prosperity. Child labor in Vietnam mainly involves children performing domestic work in rural areas, but there are also signs of child labor occurring in the clothing and textile sector, especially in small private factories in and around Ho Chi Minh City. Many of these children have migrated from the countryside and live in factories.

**Forced labor;** In Vietnam, “mild” form of 'forced labor' occurs: by asking a down payment from workers before they start working in companies, a worker is forced to continue working for a certain period of time.

**Freedom of association;** In many garment factories in Vietnam, workers cannot consult without management, and senior management tries to disrupt the union. In Vietnamese companies with more than ten employees, a 'works council' may be set up, often co-controlled by management or of which management members form part. In organizations with a works council, workers are usually more aware of their rights.

**Living wage;** Wages in Vietnam are relatively low compared to neighboring and competing countries. The minimum wages are set by the government and are therefore immediately fixed for a longer period of time, independent of inflation. The cost of living also varies by region. Many migrant workers support not only their own families, but also their families in the countryside. Some clothing factories in Vietnam do not pay at least the legal minimum wage. In addition, many factories do not sufficiently compensate their workers for overtime or do not pay social and other insurance premiums on time.

**Excessive overtime;** Excessive overtime is a widespread problem in the garment sector in Vietnam. This is mainly due to factory practices, for example correction of errors in the production line, and pressure from customers.

**Workplace safety and health;** Safety and health problems in companies are common in Vietnam; the number of industrial accidents is high. This is due to outdated machinery, a lack of expertise and professional competence and insufficient training. Often there are no safety regulations and it is not clear which measures must be taken in case of calamities. Factories adhere little or not to labor legislation, often do not register and operate without the required permits.

## BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh the following general risks apply:

**Discrimination and gender;** Ethnic minorities are at risk of discrimination in the workplace based on identity, religion, ethnicity and their socio-economic status. In the garment industry in Bangladesh, women sometimes face discrimination, sexual harassment and violence.

**Child labor;** Education is not compulsory for minors in Bangladesh. This is one reason that child labor is common. Child labor also occurs in the clothing and fabric industry. In the production of clothing and shoes, and in the processing of leather and jute.

**Forced labor;** Forced labor is not an issue in Bangladesh, according to the stakeholders consulted. However, several stakeholders point out that high unemployment and the economic situation are not good. The labor law in Bangladesh establishes inspection mechanisms to ensure compliance with the law, but these mechanisms do not always work as effectively.

**Freedom of association;** The right to association and collective bargaining is widely violated in the textile sector of Bangladesh. Workers often do not dare to join a trade union because they fear dismissal. Bangladesh scores a 5 on the ITUC Global Rights Index (scale 1-5) for freedom of association and labor rights, which means that labor rights cannot be guaranteed. Although certain rights are enshrined in law, in practice workers often cannot invoke these rights.

**Living wage;** Wages in the textile and clothing industry in Bangladesh are low. In addition, compliance with wage legislation is often inadequate in this sector. Because wages are low in the textile and clothing industry, employees often have to work overtime, which is detrimental to their physical and mental health. These overtime hours are often not paid according to the legal regulations. It is reported that none of the minimum wages set in Bangladesh are sufficient for an adequate standard of living.

**Excessive overtime;** By law, an average of max. 8 hours of overtime per week is permitted. There is a risk that the legal maximum is not respected and that more than the permitted overtime hours are worked. Overtime hours are generally paid according to the applicable legislation. Employees work 8 hours a day from Monday to Saturday; a total of 48 hours per week.

**Workplace safety and health;** Occupational accidents and illness were a serious problem in the country. Safety & Rights noted in 2017 that the majority of employers had little knowledge of their legal obligations and that there was only minimal guidance from the government to help these employers understand what to do to comply with health and safety requirements. safety regulations. Emergency exits are absent from many factories and many factories fail to perform evacuation drills. There is also often a lack of ventilation in the factories. In addition, employees and trade unions were not aware of the actions they can take to improve workplace health and safety conditions. Several cases of accidents at garment factories in Bangladesh have been reported in the past, including the Rana Plaza disaster 5 years ago