

History

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Late in 1918, the National Council adopted a temporary law on self-governments, which formed the base of first social legislation. The temporary law assigned to the self-governments the task to care for persons needing social assistance according to their places of residence.

In December 1918, the creation of Social Department was started.

In July 1919, the operation of Social Department comprised such tasks as labor protection, labor conflicts, care for disabled war veterans, social care and supervision of labor market, etc.

In 1920, Social Department was transformed into Ministry of Labor. During further operation of Ministry of Labor, the Department of Social Care and Pensions was created. Also the Social Department with its departments of labor protection, social insurance, and disabled veteran care, until that being in the structure of Ministry of Interior Affairs, was attached to Ministry of Labor.

On December 15, 1920, amendments to the former law of Russia on provision to workers in case of sickness were adopted by Constitutional Assembly of Latvia. This law was imposed to all paid employees, with exception of those employed in agriculture, and sailors of high sea vessels. The insurance was mandatory and performed by sickness funds, which were managed by institutions elected by the insured persons themselves. Contributions to sickness funds were made in equal parts by employees and employers, and the state paid equal amount as the insured.

Early 1921, a new department was formed, the task of which was to supervise and implement the provision of medical assistance to all state officials and clerks (except those of railways). In 1922, the Department of public works was founded, the competence of which included the addressing of unemployment issues.

With the idea of development of health protection, the Kurzeme Medical Management was established on March 6, 1919 in Liepaja at the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Its tasks comprised the care and protection of national health in the country. Later, the Kurzeme Medical Management was transformed to the Department of Health.

In the liberated districts, responsible for sanitary supervision and issues of hygiene and sanitation were district physicians and their assistants. In Liepaja a City Physician was appointed, and Riga was divided into three precincts, in each of which one court police doctor was appointed. The main tasks of these physicians was the abatement of contagious diseases, supervision over the health condition of population of the precinct, court medicine duties, supervision of pharmacies, sale of medicine, as well as supervision over midwives.

During the first years of existence of the country, the utmost attention of Department of Health was directed to abatement of acute contagious diseases, the most widespread of which were epidemic and relapsing typhus, as well as sexually transitive diseases.

Early in 1919, the Management of Pharmacies of Department of Health (since October 1923 Management of Pharmaceutics) started its operation in Liepaja. The task of Management of Pharmacies was to bring order into the work of pharmacies and the market of medicine, which was destroyed during the war. The operating pharmacies lacked medicine, non-quality medicine and trading with narcotics was a widespread reality.

In the spring of 1920, the Department of Labor Protection was established, which overtook also the tasks of Inspection of Factories. Labor inspectors supervised the observance of laws of labor protection, and partially those of social insurance.

After the war, in 1920, the first sickness funds started to be established, nevertheless, the most sickness funds of Latvia were established a year or two later.

On April 1, 1925, the Health Department was attached to the Ministry of Labor, and renamed to the Ministry of National Welfare, comprising three departments: those of Labor Protection, Social Care, and Health.

In 1927, the Saeima adopted the law on insurance of paid employees in cases of emergency and professional sicknesses, which was one of the most modern social insurance laws in the world. During this period, also regulations of collective employment contracts were passed, regulating the relations between employers and employees.

On April 28, 1931, the law on Ministry of National Welfare was adopted by the Saeima, establishing that it supervises social care, pensions, labor protection, social insurance, and care and protection of national health.

In 1938, important was the law on insurance in emergency cases and professional sicknesses. Also the "Law on Insurance Fund of Life's Evening" was adopted by Cabinet of Ministers, providing accumulation of funds for provision of the population for old age days. The social care and labor protection legislation developed during the free state of Latvia was one of the most modern and progressive in Europe.

During the period of free state of Latvia (1920s-1940s), twelve Ministers occupied the position of Minister of National Welfare (Labor):

Fridrihs Ozolins (12.06.1920. -18.12.1920.)

Pauls Mincks (19.12.1920.- 18.06.1921.)

Roberts Dukurs (19.06.1921.- 26.01.1923.)

Klāvs Lorencs (27.01.1923.- 27.06. 1923.)

Gustavs Klaustins (28.06.1923.- 26.01.1924.)

Ādams Krievins (27.01.1924.- 31.03.1925.)

Voldemārs Salnais (01.04.1925.- 23.12.1925.)

Vladislavs Rubulis (24.12.1925.-18.12.1926.), (24.01.1928.- 16.03.1934.), (18.05. 1934.- 26.06.1937.)

Ansis Rudevics (19.12.1926.- 23.01.1928.)

Juris Paberzs (17.03.1934.- 15.05.1934.)

Hermanis Apsitis (27.06.-1937.- 31.12.1937.)

Jānis Volonts (01.01.1938.- 20.06.1940.)

Modern history

The restoration of independence of Latvia on August 21, 1991, had an essential influence not only to the country as a whole, but also to each individual and his or her welfare. It was actually necessary to build up Latvia as a country from the start, because the policy implemented during the Soviet era was not useful for long-term development of Latvia as an independently functioning country. Like in other transition period countries, also in Latvia social issues and the related problems became especially important during this period.

The structural changes in national economics during the introduction of market economy principles caused substantial changes also in the principles of social security. The creation/reform of a new system was started, the basic principles of which were decentralization, participation and promotion of responsibility of individual persons, and provision of services depending on the needs of each specific individual.

Within the framework of general administrative reform in late 1991, by uniting the Ministry of Health Protection, Ministry of Social Maintenance, Committee of Labor and Social Affairs, as well as the Welfare Department of Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Welfare was established. Under the supervision of the new-founded Ministry were three main areas - social security, labor, and health. In the course of time, the competence of the Ministry overtook also such inter-sectoral issues, as reduction of poverty, promotion of sexual equality, and demography.

After the elections of the 8th Saeima, the new government, when establishing its priorities, decided to pass over the performance of part of the functions of Ministry of Welfare to separate institutions. Ministry of Health and the Secretarial Office of Minister of Special Tasks in Children and Family Affairs were established repeatedly. Since February 1, 2003, Ministry of Welfare is responsible for social security, labor and sexual equality.

During the period of restored Latvia, 11 ministers managed the Ministry of Welfare:

Teodors Enins (October 1989 - July 1993)

Jānis Ritenis (July 1993 - September 1994)

Andris Berzins (September 1994 - December 1995)

Vladimirs Makarovs (December 1995 - July 1999)

Roberts Jurdzs (July 1999 - April 2000)

Andrejs Pozarnovs (05.05.2000 - 02.05.2002)

Viktors Jaksons (22.05.2002 - 07.11.2002)

Dagnija Stake(21.11.2002 - 08.11.2007)

Iveta Purne (08.11.2007 - 11.03.2009)

Uldis Augulis (12.03.2009.-02.11.2010.)

Ilona Jursevaska (03.11.2010.- 24.10.2011.)

Ilze Vinkele (25.10.2011.-21.01.2014.)

Uldis Augulis (22.01.2014.-10.02.2016.)

Jānis Reirs (10.02.2016.- 23.01.2019.)

Ramona Petraviča (23.01.2019.-03.06.2021.)

The current Minister of Welfare is Gatis Eglītis.

<https://www.lm.gov.lv/en/history>