



The 2025-2027 action plan for the spanish occupational safety and health strategy

From strategy to implementation: governance, prevention and emerging risks

Interview with Prof. Joaquín Pérez Rey, Secretary of State for Labour, Government of Spain, Coordinator of the 2025-2027 Action Plan. By the Editorial Board of *aiasmag*.

INTRODUCTION

Background and structure of the 2025-2027 Action Plan

On 14 March 2023, the Spanish Council of Ministers approved the Spanish Occupational Safety and Health Strategy 2023-2027, following a tripartite consultation process involving the central government, the Autonomous Communities and the social partners. The Strategy is implemented through multiannual Action Plans, conceived as operational tools to translate strategic guidelines into concrete, measurable and assessable measures.

In this context:

- the 2023-2024 Action Plan, consisting of 106 measures, has been completed;
- the 2025-2027 Action Plan, published in April 2025, expands the previous framework with 197



Joaquín Pérez Rey

Secretary of State for Labour - Government of Spain
Coordinator of the 2025-2027 Action Plan



measures, structured around 6 strategic objectives and 25 lines of action, each associated with responsibilities, indicators and timelines.

The new Action Plan strengthens a systemic approach to prevention, addressing both traditional and emerging risks, while consolidating national governance of occupational safety and health.

The idea for this interview arose because, if we understood correctly, during the last EU-OSHA meeting in Bilbao in December 2025, you stated that the Spanish government had declared 2026 the Year of Occupational Safety and Health in Spain. Could you explain the idea behind this declaration more in detail?

The declaration of 2026 as the Year of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in Spain by the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy is, above all, a strategic opportunity. The declaration is not intended as a symbolic gesture, but as a clear political and social call to action.

Thirty years after the adoption of the Spanish OSH Law, the Government considers that this anniversary must serve to reactivate and deepen a true culture of prevention across society as a whole and not only among OSH professionals, but also among companies, workers and citizens.

This decision is grounded in a very concrete and urgent reality: occupational accidents and work-related harm remain unacceptably high. In 2024 alone, 796 people lost their lives at work or on their way to work, that means more than two every day. This is why the Government explicitly frames occupational risk as a “silent epidemic” that requires decisive and immediate action.

At the same time, the declaration sends a strong message: economic growth cannot and must not come at the expense of workers’ safety and health. On the contrary, evidence shows that improving job quality, reducing precariousness and increasing stability go hand in hand with lower accident rates.

Beyond traditional risks, the Year of OSH also aims to bring visibility to emerging and insufficiently addressed challenges, such as:

- the rise of psychosocial risks,
- the lack of full effective equality between women and men in prevention policies,
- work-related diseases,
- demographic ageing,
- and the growing impact of climate change on working conditions.

In this sense, the declaration is fully aligned with the Spanish OSH Strategy 2023-2027 and its Action Plans, reinforcing a systemic and forward-looking approach that anticipates risks linked to the digital, green and demographic transitions.

Most importantly, the declaration is backed by a set of concrete commitments by the Government:

- To reaffirm occupational safety and health as a fundamental right and a shared responsibility across institutions, employers and workers.
- To continue adapting the regulatory framework to emerging risks, including those linked to climate change and new forms of work.
- To strengthen awareness-raising and communication efforts, making prevention visible and understandable to society at large.
- To promote research, innovation and knowledge transfer, ensuring that policies are evidence-based and effective.
- To enhance national and international cooperation in OSH.
- To integrate prevention into education and training systems, embedding a preventive culture from early stages.

Declaring 2026 as the Year of Occupational Safety and Health is about placing prevention at the centre of public debate and collective action, accelerating ongoing reforms, and ensuring that safer and healthier work becomes a tangible reality for all.

On the one hand, it allows us to place OSH at the centre of public and media attention, something that

has traditionally been quite limited. The work of the National Institute for Safety and Health at Work (INSST) has mainly focused on OSH professionals, but now the objective is broader: to reach society as a whole and begin to build a strong preventive culture that goes beyond specialists and becomes part of everyday awareness.

On the other hand, it provides a strong framework to enhance inter administrative cooperation bringing together national, regional authorities and social partners under a shared agenda.

We are also at a turning point. Spain has made significant progress in regulation, enforcement and sanctions, and technological advances have helped reduce accidents. However, to move further, we need a shift: from compliance-based approaches to a societal

commitment to prevention. This means engaging the general public so that:

- People do not tolerate unsafe practices in how work is organized and carried out.
- Prevention becomes a shared responsibility, especially considering that over 90% of Spanish companies are SMEs.

In short, the idea behind this declaration is to move from a technical and regulatory approach to a cultural one, where protecting health and life at work is understood as a collective value.

To support this, a wide range of actions have been planned throughout the year, including institutional events, awareness campaigns, collaboration with media and organizations, and initiatives to amplify preventive



messages across society. The aim is clear: to make OSH visible, understandable and shared by everyone.

1. GOVERNANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

Institutional coordination, monitoring and accountability

The 2025-2027 Action Plan significantly expands the number of measures and the range of stakeholders involved, including the 17 Autonomous Communities and two autonomous cities, numerous public bodies and the social partners. What governance and coordination tools have been put in place to ensure effective and consistent implementation of the Plan across the territory?

In order to promote the development of the Action Plan at the national level and ensure the involvement of all stakeholders responsible for occupational safety and health, the role of the National Commission for Safety and Health at Work (CNSST) has been strengthened. This body, composed of representatives from the central government, the autonomous communities, and the social partners, serves as the main institutional framework in this field.

To support this objective, tripartite working groups have been established to jointly address priority issues such as the prevention of occupational cancer, digital transformation, demographic change, ecological transition, and exposure to respirable crystalline silica. One of the strengths of the Action Plan is that it includes measures attributed to different agents, promoting joint collaboration actions.

The CNSST's working groups include the so-called Spanish Strategy for Safety and Health at Work 2023-2027, which was created to draw up the Strategy and its Action Plans, and is currently responsible for monitoring the measures included in them.

Furthermore, to enhance coordination among the scientific and technical bodies across the autonomous communities and the INSST, the Strategy has provided for the creation of a dedicated cooperation mechanism: the Network of Institutes for Safety and Health at Work. This body, in addition to identifying and jointly addressing technical issues, aims to coordinate and develop training and awareness-raising actions.

2. PREVENTION OF OCCUPATIONAL CANCER AND SILICA EXPOSURE

Priority interventions and long-latency diseases

(Strategic Objective 1 - 84 measures)

Strategic Objective 1 introduces the National Agenda for the Prevention of Occupational Cancer and provides for the study of a National Plan on Respirable Crystalline Silica.

Which carcinogenic substances have been identified as priorities? What actions are planned to improve the identification and recognition of long-latency occupational diseases?

Spain follows the roadmap set by the European Union in all its policies related to occupational exposure to carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances.

In particular, Spain aligns its legislation and prevention strategies with the objectives established by the European Commission under the Carcinogens, Mutagens and Reprotoxic Substances Directive (CMRD). This means that national regulations incorporate EU requirements on exposure limits, risk assessment, substitution of hazardous substances, and worker protection measures.

Furthermore, Spanish occupational health policies are developed in coordination with European initia-

tives, ensuring a harmonised approach across Member States. As a result, Spain applies the same priorities identified at EU level regarding carcinogenic substances, contributing to the common goal of reducing work-related cancers and improving worker safety.

In this context, the Spanish Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2027 (EESST) addresses the issue of work-related cancer through a specific National Agenda, in line with European priorities.

The National Agenda for the Prevention of Occupational Cancer in Spain, developed within the framework of the Spanish Strategy on Safety and Health at Work, identifies the main carcinogenic agents that pose the greatest risk to workers. Rather than establishing a fixed list, it focuses on those substances and exposures with the highest impact and strongest scientific evidence.

First of all, particular attention is given to priority carcinogens such as asbestos, respirable crystalline silica (RCS), and wood dust, especially from hardwoods. These agents are responsible for a significant proportion of occupational cancers in Spain.

The Agenda identifies several opportunities to improve the diagnosis of occupational diseases. These include strengthening knowledge of the latest scientific evidence on cancer screening to ensure more effective individual health surveillance and assessing whether existing health surveillance protocols need to be reviewed or updated.

It also highlights the need to improve the training and continuous professional development of occupational health doctors, particularly in screening and early cancer diagnosis techniques, as well as providing clearer information to public health profession-



als, both in primary and specialised care, on their obligation to report suspected occupational diseases. Finally, the Agenda underlines the importance of improving the quality of risk assessments, ensuring they include exposure to carcinogens and identify affected workers, so as to enable more targeted health surveillance, early detection, and timely intervention.

Regarding RCS, and as part of the Spanish strategy, a dedicated working group has been set up within the National Commission for Occupational Safety and Health (CNSST) that is the Government's advisory body on occupational risk prevention.

The Working Group on Respirable Crystalline Silica, is a key element in Spain's strategy to prevent occupational diseases, particularly occupational cancer.

This working group is tasked with analysing and improving the management of risks associated with exposure to respirable crystalline silica in the workplace. Its main objective is to support the effective implementation of national and European regulations.

Among its core functions, the group promotes the development of technical guidance, preventive measures, and best practices aimed at reducing workers' exposure. It also facilitates the exchange of knowledge and coordination between public authorities, social partners, and technical experts.

In addition, the group contributes to identifying high-risk sectors, such as construction, mining, and manufacturing, and supports awareness-raising and training initiatives targeted at employers and workers.

In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy will promote the creation of a registry of exposure to carcinogenic agents in the workplace, with the aim of improving the knowledge available to the competent authorities regarding occupational exposure to these agents in Spain.

Although there is already legislation requiring companies to maintain a list of exposed workers and to provide it to labour and health authorities upon request, public administrations do not systematically have access to this information, which hinders the performance of their functions.

This lack of information limits the ability of public administrations to properly design and guide occupational risk prevention policies, particularly in relation to the prevention of work-related cancer and other diseases associated with exposure to carcinogenic agents. The creation of a mandatory registry of exposure to carcinogenic agents in the workplace will help to reduce this lack of information.

3. DIGITALISATION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND EMERGING RISKS

Transformations of work and prevention

(Strategic Objective 2 - 38 measures)

The Plan devotes specific attention to emerging risks linked to digital transformation and climate change.

What are the main new risks identified as priorities? How does the Plan intend to strengthen the effective application of the right to digital disconnection? Is the permanent protocol for the management of future health emergencies already operational?

The Action Plan identifies a broad set of emerging and priority risks linked to the major transformations currently reshaping the world of work, particularly digitalization and the ecological transition.

Through its Action Plans, the Strategy has opened a specific line of research to analyse the effects of digitalization and the ecological transition on workers' health. This initiative aims to provide a solid scientific basis for future regulatory and technical proposals, as well as for the development of actions that promote workers' physical and mental well-being.

In this context, several priority areas under study have been identified. These include cyberbullying at work, the impact of technological overexposure on rest, digital skills in the population over 50 years of

age, the management of risks arising from climate change, and the development of protocols for action in the face of adverse phenomena.

More broadly, the Plan highlights the new risks associated with technological developments stemming from Industry 4.0, such as collaborative robots and 3D printing equipment. It also underlines risks arising from the implementation of digitalization itself, including hyperconnectivity, cyberbullying, the potential digital divide, employee monitoring, and data management.

Furthermore, digitalization is enabling the development of new forms of work, such as teleworking, platform-based work, and algorithmic management. Together with the use of artificial intelligence, these transformations can lead to working conditions that may jeopardize workers' health, both in terms of physical and mental well-being.

In parallel, the ecological transition and the current climate change context mean, above all, that we need to adapt to a working environment that will become increasingly warmer. Although climate change also entails other significant risks, such as major flooding, other extreme events, and vector-borne diseases. The greatest challenge lies in adapting to high temperatures, particularly in the Mediterranean region, but also across the rest of Europe.

Additionally, we must remain vigilant regarding the new risks that may arise from work activities linked to the green transition, such as so-called green jobs, which may introduce new risks or exacerbate existing ones.

Regarding the right to digital disconnection, the Action Plan includes both structural and awareness-raising measures. It provides for the development of criteria and good practices to prevent occupational risks related to digital disconnection, together with information and awareness-raising actions on the risks associated with digitalization. More specifically, it commits to "developing criteria and best practices for preventing occupational risks related to digital disconnection." In addition, the Plan includes support measures for companies to properly address dig-

italization processes and adapt them in a preventive and responsible way.

Finally, concerning the permanent protocol for the management of future health emergencies, the measure is foreseen within the Action Plan; however, it has not yet been developed and is therefore not yet operational.

4. PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE WORKERS

Domestic work and the transport sector

(Strategic Objective 4 - 32 measures)

Strategic Objective 4 introduces targeted measures for groups of workers who are particularly exposed.

How is occupational safety and health legislation applied in practice to domestic work, taking into account the specific characteristics of private households? What information and training tools are provided for workers who are often foreign nationals? And what specific interventions have been defined to improve prevention in the transport sector?

The legislation stipulates that it is the employer themselves who must carry out the risk assessment for home-based work, although it is also possible to use an external prevention service or appoint the worker; we believe this will be the most common option.

To this end, a free online tool has been made available, developed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which has already processed around 340,000 assessments, meaning that compliance with this requirement is being achieved very quickly. This tool is based on a questionnaire developed by occupational health and safety experts, taking into account the main tasks carried out in households as well as the specific characteristics of

this employment relationship and the people who typically perform this work: predominantly women, many of foreign origin and aged between 40 and 65. Furthermore, to ensure that the quality of the assessments and preventive measures is as high as possible – bearing in mind that employers may lack knowledge of occupational health and safety – a technical guide has been developed which explains all the concepts and provides examples, based on the risk assessment questionnaire contained within the online tool itself. In addition, information materials have been produced, aimed at both employers and employees, in the form of fact sheets and infographics, which summarise legal and preventive concepts in a simple and clear manner. All this material is available at Prevencion10.es. The training has been developed in line with the same philosophy of providing tools through public

services; as such, a free online course has been created covering the most common tasks in this sector. If an employer faces specific risks in their workplace, they must provide training using their own resources.

This course is currently available in Spanish, although there are plans to translate it in the future into the languages most commonly spoken by staff in this sector. However, it is worth noting that the majority of foreign-born people working in this sector come from Spanish-speaking countries.

Related to the improvement of prevention in the transport sector, several specific interventions have been defined to improve prevention in the transport sector, particularly through the strengthening of occupational road safety (SVL) as a key priority. First, a cooperation protocol between the INSST and the General Directorate for Traffic, signed in



July 2025, establishes a clear objective: to promote occupational road safety within organisations and reduce work-related traffic accidents through institutional cooperation.

This protocol includes concrete actions such as:

- the exchange of data and statistics to better identify priority areas for action,
- technical cooperation and joint development of projects on occupational road safety,
- training, information and awareness-raising activities,
- and support in disseminating publications and events.

In terms of preventive action within companies, the approach is clear: road risk must be treated as another occupational risk, requiring proper identification, assessment and management. This includes:

- work organisation measures,
- management of travel, driving times and rest periods,
- vehicle maintenance,
- and training and awareness of workers.

A key element for success is the strong involvement of company management in integrating these measures into prevention systems.

The Plan also promotes the development of specific tools and frameworks, such as:

- a model plan for safe and sustainable mobility in companies,
- guidelines on occupational road safety being developed within the framework of the National OSH Commission,
- and participation in initiatives such as the European Road Safety Charter and the Higher Council for Traffic and Road Safety.

In addition, new initiatives are being developed, including a national distinction in occupational road safety, currently being redefined, and an online self-assessment tool to help organisations evaluate

their level of maturity in managing road safety and receive tailored recommendations for improvement. Finally, an important regulatory development is the Sustainable Mobility Law, which requires companies with more than 200 workers (or 100 per shift) to adopt workplace mobility plans within two years. These plans must include:

- measures to promote sustainable transport (public transport, active mobility, car-sharing, teleworking, flexible working hours),
- and, crucially, specific measures for safety and accident prevention in commuting.

In this context, the role of the INSST is to ensure that occupational risk prevention is fully integrated into these mobility plans, applying preventive prin-



ciples and prioritising workers' safety across all forms of mobility.

Overall, these interventions reflect a comprehensive and coordinated approach, combining regulation, technical tools, data, awareness and institutional co-operation to effectively reduce work-related traffic accidents.

5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

Organisational health and quality of work

(Strategic Objective 5 - 15 measures)

The Plan strengthens the integration of the gender perspective and addresses psychosocial risks in a structured manner.

Who is responsible for verifying the implementation of Psychosocial Risk Prevention Plans in companies? What initial results are emerging from inspection and enforcement activities?

Psychosocial risks are one of the most important factors in the new occupational risk prevention law that we have agreed upon with the most representative trade unions and which is currently pending parliamentary approval.

The Spanish Labor and Social Security Inspectorate (ITSS) establishes guidelines for inspection activities related to psychosocial risks. Its objective is to update and standardize the application of current regulations, taking into account European guidelines and the diversity of workers, it addresses the assessment of psychosocial risks, including the identification of factors, sources of information, and protection of privacy. Details inspection procedures in cases of exposure to risks such as stress, harassment, and workplace violence and establishes the monitoring of preventive measures and the investigation of health problems resulting from these risks.

Company management is responsible for deciding on the specific preventive measures to be implemented in response to the identified psychosocial risk factors. For this task, management can consult with the occupational health and safety service or the designated worker and must first consult with the health and safety representatives.

6. STRENGTHENING THE LABOUR INSPECTION SYSTEM AND INNOVATION

Competencies, technologies and response capacity

(Strategic Objective 6 - 11 measures)

The Plan provides for significant investment in strengthening Labour Inspection and in the adoption of advanced technological tools.

How will the new inspectors be distributed and specialised across the territory and in high-risk sectors? How will the digital forensics laboratory and predictive systems based on data analysis support inspection activities?

We are making an unprecedented effort to have a modern Labor Inspectorate that responds to the needs of workers today.

We are increasing the number of inspectors and sub-inspectors by more than 500 over the next three years. In addition to strengthening the technical and administrative staff, we are promoting specialization and ongoing training for our personnel. We are also investing more than €28 million to introduce technological improvements. A forensic computing laboratory dedicated to obtaining digital evidence will be created.

All of this will modernize the State Labor and Social Security Inspectorate, adapting it to the needs of the current social and economic context of economic and employment growth.

The strategy promotes specialization and ongoing training for increasingly effective personnel, providing them with more technological resources and an ever-better-designed capacity to protect workers' rights.

CONCLUSIONS

Prevention as a structural investment

The Spanish Strategy 2023-2027 and the 2025-2027 Action Plan outline a structured approach aimed at the continuous improvement of prevention.

What message would you like to convey to occupational safety and health professionals and to European social partners on the value of prevention policies as a central element of quality of work and sustainable development?

Occupational risk prevention is surely one of the most evident examples of the responsibility of the European social partners, and, of course, the States, which holds legislative authority.

I believe that coordination mechanisms must be promoted, and Occupational Safety and Health and Its modernization will allow us to once again address specific actions in collaboration with social partners, including collective bargaining, which must be an essential element for effective prevention policies.

The profound transformation of production organization systems will impact occupational risk prevention. It is clear that few companies will remain outside the use of artificial intelligence, algorithms, automated decision management... and this opens up a horizon with many risks, but also many opportunities, because these automation elements can help us to adequately detect occupational risks in each

workplace, to prevent accidents, to know when and how they occur... but alongside these opportunities, I believe there is also a range of risks, such as the potential invasion of workers' privacy, an almost unlimited capacity to know what they do, when they do it, and how they do it, which can generate new forms of psychosocial risks.

Factories, offices, shops, and supermarkets of the future, and those of the present, are largely managed with the support of artificial intelligence, algorithms, and automated decision-making. Clearly, this will lead to an impact on occupational health that requires measures such as human oversight of decisions, the need to clearly protect the privacy and fundamental rights of workers and ensuring that the use of these tools does not become an unmanageable workload or strain on their attention.

Therefore, I believe we will have to monitor the effects of the technological revolution on occupational health. Much of what will happen is still unknown because the potential is limitless.

What is clear, however, is that the automated use of tools and artificial intelligence, if not managed carefully, will have an extremely negative impact on the health of workers.

We must also advance in establishing rights to address the labour-related consequences of climate change. But it is essential to continue moving in this direction while ensuring legal certainty.

I have great confidence in the development that collective bargaining will bring to all these tools, but I also believe that the effects of natural disasters, extreme temperatures, and adverse weather events must be incorporated into risk assessments and preventative measures as elements that must be considered in the design of these jobs.

These are some of the challenges that deserve our common work to succeed.



