

Ministry Proposes Mandatory Health Programs for Employees

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The Czech Ministry of Health has proposed a new initiative to improve the health and well-being of employees by making health programs mandatory for all companies. This initiative is about workplace safety and focuses on lifestyle habits outside of work. Companies must offer preventive health programs, including medical check-ups, vaccinations, and educational materials. The ministry believes that this approach will lead to a reduction in lifestyle-related diseases and lower rates of employee absenteeism.

Matyáš Fošum, Director of the Public Health Protection Department, confirmed the ministry's intentions, stating that they are currently discussing the proposal with employees and employers. "For the purpose of health support programs, we propose to make it mandatory," Fošum told Novinky. The proposed programs will vary based on the type of profession, its demands, and the specific health risks associated with it.

One key challenge will be defining the minimum requirements for these health programs. While the ministry will set basic standards, the specifics will be left to the discretion of individual employers and their occupational physicians. For example, professional drivers, who often suffer from cardiovascular issues due to a stressful and sedentary lifestyle, will require targeted health measures.

However, the proposal has met with resistance from employers and the medical community. Employers, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, are concerned about the financial and administrative burden that mandatory health programs could impose. Jiří Horecký, President of the Union of Employer Associations, expressed concerns about the increased administrative workload and costs associated with implementing these programs.

Doctors are also wary of the proposal, citing a potential shortage of medical professionals to meet the increased demand. With around 279,000 employers in the country, there are concerns that the current number of general practitioners and occupational health specialists may not be sufficient. The ministry is aware of this issue and plans to expand the list of eligible providers to include nutrition therapists and public health experts.

Despite the resistance, the ministry remains optimistic that employees will see the benefits of these programs and participate voluntarily. "The goal is not to force employees to comply with the employer's requirements. Participation will be voluntary," Fošum emphasized. The ministry hopes to implement these changes in the specific health services law by 2026.