

SURVEY AMONG GEA MEMBER COMPANIES ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW ESTABLISHED REQUIREMENTS ON PREVENTION COVID 19 AND APPROPRIATE ANALYSIS AS WELL AS RECOMMENDATION FOR FOR FURTHER SUPPORT.

FOREWORD

The Georgian Employers Association is an economic and social partner to the Government of Georgia and the Trade Unions Confederation as a constituent involved in the tripartite social dialogue. Since its establishment in 2000 the GEA unifies more than 2000 businesses from all the sectors of industry around Georgia. The Association is the independent, non-governmental, non-profit and self-regulating business union that works in accordance with the recognized international standards for protecting the interests of employers in the free market economy principles. The Georgian Employers Association recognizes the importance of human resources factor in the economics and in its activities foresees the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards and policies in parallel of business development.

In political and economic aspects - Georgia has made excellent progress in the past years in various directions - political, economic, social, environmental responding to the Association Agreement (AA) agenda signed and in force from 2014. Cooperation and partnership with the ILO have always been the focus for the Georgian Employers Association for strengthening of social dialogue in the country at all levels through various activities and projects. The DANIDA/ILO project - "Inclusive Labour Market for Job Creation in Georgia" supported conducting of the survey among the member companies of GEA with the objective on how the new requirements established by the GoG for prevention of Covid-19 at working places are implemented as well as development relevant recommendations and policy proposals for GEA on provision of new and practical services in the new realities and requirements.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND GEORGIA

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought horrible and catastrophic results for the health and lives of hundreds of thousands of people around the world not to say anything about the social and economic impact of it as businesses in various sectors have been forced to temporarily (or thoroughly) close to branch the spread and circulation of the virus, to adapt their normal daily working arrangements and etc... Around the world, enterprises are facing serious challenges to their ongoing viability, and workers have been forced to stay home, many of them in temporary or partial unemployment. This is especially serious challenge for the low-income countries or developing countries as Georgia. To look back, before the COVID-19 pandemic and outbreak of the virus, Georgia has created a strong record of reforming its economy and raising the living standards of its citizens in the recent years. Growth has been strong and sustainable, entrepreneurship is lively, and living conditions have been steadily improving. Between 2010 and 2019, Georgia's GDP per capita grew at an average annual rate of 4.8 percent. Coupled with a system of targeted social transfers, this helped to nearly halve the poverty rate from 37.4 percent in 2007 to 20.1 percent in 2018 and to improve living conditions. The country has a sound macroeconomic framework, an attractive business environment, and robust public financial management arrangements. The World Bank's World Governance Indicators ranks Georgia among the best countries in Europe in terms of control of corruption. In the Bank's Doing Business (DB) 2020 report, Georgia remained one of the most business-friendly countries globally, ranked 7 out of 190 countries. The country has a shared consensus on national priorities, including participation in Euro-Atlantic integration, more efficient government, stronger growth, and a better functioning welfare state. This has paved the way for the signing of an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), including a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area preferential trade regime. Free trade agreements with the EU and China position Georgia well to attract foreign direct investment (FDI). (source:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/georgia/overview>

The mentioned above is the data from April 2020 (updated) from which the situation has been changed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemics. From 31, 2019 the new corona virus COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) rapidly spreads all over the world after the first known case in China. The affected countries are more than 190 and the World Health Organization (WHO) declares the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11. Georgia, as the member of the WHO was informed about the new coronavirus in January 2020 and the Ministry of Health of Georgia started the process of control and evaluation on local basis. The Government of Georgia, from the very first steps started operation in 2 main directions: health of citizens and economics. Any action were focused on the mentioned pillars. The Government, in parallel, implements all the measures needed for prevention of the spread of the virus and sets the plans for social, economic, health and business intensive support. Beside, the Government works with international partners to overcome the crisis and its impact decrease to minimum grade. This also covered financial resource mobilization from international partners' community.

<https://stopcov.ge/Content/files/Government--report.pdf>

The new COVID-19 first case in Georgia was fixed on February 26, 2020 and by now the number of COVID-positive persons are 1085 cases (with 16 persons fatal cases). The best solution for prevention of the spread of the virus is still social distancing all over the world and strict isolation (lockdown). To reach this incredible number the Governments immediate measures were:

- State of emergency was announced;
- Prohibition of international flights and closure of borders;
- Restriction of public transport;
- Restriction of gathering;
- Only vitally important sectors were operating;

Restriction of economic activities: - In accordance with the global and local epidemiological situation, the government took immediate action and on March 23 all the economic sectors operation were banned except pharm houses and grocery shops. Still. The obligations were set to the operating objects to follow the set rules for social distancing and avoiding of gathering even at those places to prevent the spread and circulation of the virus. With the internal spread of the virus even more strict measures were established by the Government to temporary restriction of all the economic sectors (except of those mentioned above) and recommendations for remote work and online trading were given. From May 11 the restrictions are slightly over and all the types of enterprises and shops are open (with some exceptions) and as the results of the strict measures work properly the mitigations are released step-by-step. For the purpose of safe resumption of the economic activities permitted in Georgia during the emergency situation, the detailed industry-by-industry recommendations for prevention of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) were developed. The Labor Inspection Department of the Georgian Ministry of the IDPs from the Occupied Territories, Labor, Health and Social Affairs is in charge of their enforcement.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID PANDEMICS

The new coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic brought a shocking blow to the world economy and to Georgia among them. The leading industries such as tourism, trade, construction, service etc., have been broken enormously and finally the environment largely impacted supply and demand on the markets. Useless to admit that COVID-19 pandemic has made a negative impact on the Georgian economy, which depends largely on external factors. The virus impeded the positive economic trends emerging last year. Namely, in 2019, there was an unanticipated high economic growth of 5.1%. Tourism revenues amounted to 3.3 billion USD (18.4% of GDP), export revenues to 3.8 billion USD (21.2% of GDP), and net remittances to 15 billion USD (8.4% of GDP). Consequently, the national current account deficit hit the historical minimum: 5.1% of GDP. The unexpected economic growth and improved export resulted in greater budget incomes to allow the state capital investments to hit a record 8% of GDP. The foreign debt remained stable, the credit portfolio grew, and the numbers of overdue loans dropped www.geostat.ge As we see the positive trends and results or the economic growth in the last year, the coronavirus shock significantly worsened Georgia's economic prospects in 2020 and especially for the specific sectors, promising investments and etc...The International Monetary Fund forecasts that, due to the economic slowdown, Georgia's economy in 2020 will drop by 4%. However, as a result of a positive trend in the 4th quarter of 2020, it is likely to grow by the same 4% in 2021 www.IMF.com

Export indicators - foreign trade had declined and Georgian export decreased by 28% and import by 39%. One of the very important issue is the volume of remittances, According to the statistical data issued in April of 2020, overall remittances dropped by 42.3%, namely from Russia by 61.8%, from Italy by 27.5%, from Greece by 37.9%, from the US by 33.6%, and from Israel by 48.4%.

The pandemic has affected both the private sector and individuals, which called for finding extra resources for their direct support, as well as for the prevention of the pandemic and treatment of patients. All these calls for over 3 billion GEL in additional expenses. In light of the foregoing, the Government of Georgia held intensive negotiations with international partners. Georgia was the first country amid the pandemic to receive increased IMF funding within the frameworks of an ongoing program. Successful negotiations with the IMF resulted in significant monetary resources attracted from other donors. Overall, 1.5 billion USD budget support has been attracted and IMF – 200.0 M USD; • ADB – 400.0 M USD; • WB – 250.0 M USD; • AFD - 200.0 M USD; • KfW – 250.0 M USD; • EU – 200.0 M USD; • AIIB – 100.0 M.

USD among them. Besides, 1.5 billion USD worth of financial resources has been made available to the private sector through various state-run projects. Due to the fact that there are no real predictions for the final fighting as well as the vaccine for the COVID 19, therefore, budget reserves have to be created to ensure against problems related to financing budget costs in the most pessimistic, worst-case scenario. (<https://stopcov.ge/Content/files/Government--report.pdf>)

The Government of Georgia, for responding to the economic rapid recovery immediately launched the process of re-opening the sectors. For renewing the economic activities, the business subjects had to follow the rules and recommendations established by the Ministry of labour and health for prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 at working places. The mentioned process gives the possibility to maximum prevention of the virus circulation and avoidance of people infected serving the opening of the economy. www.matsne.ge

The Georgian Employers Association (GEA) immediately, after declaring the re-opening processes, launched close cooperation with the specific working groups to support the member companies for the re-opening procedures (registration, recommendation and etc...) for the best possible compliance with the newly established regulations and recommendations by the GoG. GEA also provides direct services to members as regards the following:

- Support and advice regarding obtaining a permission from the municipalities to operate;
- Assistance regarding the development and implementation of an emergency or preparedness and response plan;
- GEA organized online distance trainings on labor relations for member companies during the crisis and post-crisis period;
- GEA organizes a series of online meetings for members on topics of importance for the business sector, with the goal that the meetings are aimed at providing relevant information to companies important for their operations, in particular on existing limitations and requirements that they will have to take into account when carrying out their activities during the COVID crisis;
- GEA organizes a series of trainings for members aimed at assisting members to overcome the crisis and to improve their operations;
- GEA development of a document containing policy recommendations to the government. The document is widely distributed to the media and members, and had a wide media coverage;
- GEA developed a guidebook for Employers on COVID;
- GEA prepares a desk research and review of existing force-majeure legislation and court practice;
- GEA runs the research and review of international best practice for employers in crisis situations;
- <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm#GE>

Notwithstanding the facts mentioned above and the positive assessment of the efforts of the Government and all the stakeholders, business still has problems with implementation of the regulations and recommendations of the Government. There are many aspects related to the issue, for instance expenses, arrangements of the working environment, internal systems deficiency, strict requirements and etc.. that are the subject of the survey analysis below. Besides, GEA intends to develop specific recommendations to the Government of Georgia about the implementation of the regulations and recommendations set on the businesses.

Overall Objective: Analysis of the existing reality connected with the COVID-19 regulations and recommendations for businesses, their challenges and requirements for the full compliance and filling the gaps.

The aim of the survey is to reveal the findings and analyzing the current situation in businesses on how the recently established regulations, requirements and recommendations by the Government of Georgia are implemented for prevention the new COVID-19 at working places for specific economic sectors. Besides, the analysis intends to find the challenges and needs of business for planning the supportive services and activities for the members requirements. Besides, the analysis will be the basic document for proposing the concrete and new policies and measures for the Government.

Specific objectives and tasks: For reaching the overall objective of the following specific objectives and tasks were set:

- Determination of the level of knowledge of the new regulations and recommendations established by the Government of Georgia for the businesses for prevention of the COVID-19;
- Compliances level of the business companies with the newly established regulations and requirements for prevention COVID-19;
- How and with which resources the companies implement the established regulations and requirements with regard to COVID-19;
- If the companies possess specific system on places for prevention COVID-19 and what are their requirements for establishing the mentioned system;
- What are the obstacles and core factors in implementation of the requirements and regulations for prevention of the COVID-19;
- How well and progressively the companies manage raising awareness and knowledge on COVID-19 and related requirements and regulations;
- What are the challenges and necessities that the companies face for the full compliance with the established regulations and requirements on COVID-19, especially in expectation of the second and further waves of the virus;

Survey methodology: The interviewing process of the respondent were conducted by telephone interview and online format. The number of the respondents were 250 companies from various sectors and regions of Georgia. The mentioned methodology enabled the authors to assess the existing reality, requirements and needs of companies in the Georgian businesses against the COVID-19 at working places as well as implementation of the established regulations by the Government of Georgia.

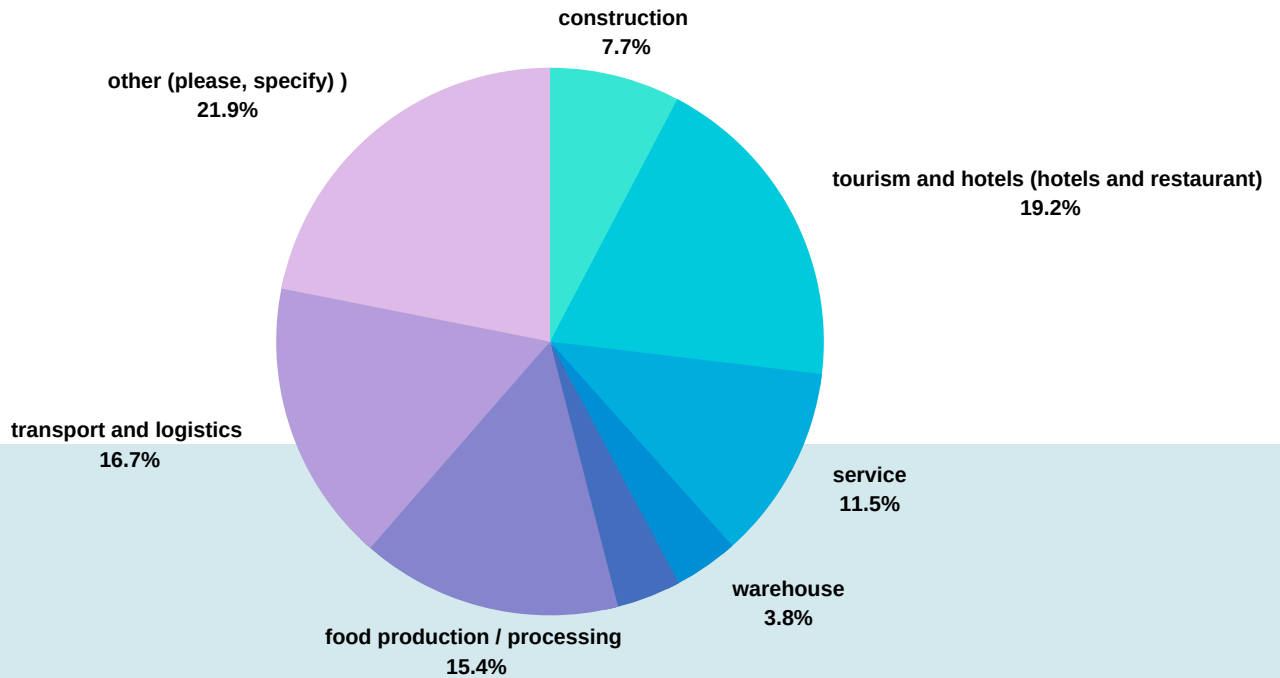
The sampling for the survey was determined by the sizes of the companies, as small, medium and large ones. The sectors were selected as tourism (restaurants/hotels), construction, warehouses, service, transport and logistics, agriculture, food processing/production in Tbilisi and regions of Georgia.

Survey instrument:

Before launching the survey procedures by the Georgian Employers Association internal data and resources, the survey key instrument – specific questionnaire was developed in cooperation with the selected expert. The aim of the Association (GEA) was to identify the existing situation at companies with regard to established regulations and recommendations established by the Government for work places at company level and find out the obstacles that business face for compliance of the requirements. The mentioned is especially important for the GEA for provision of specific services to companies in need and give recommendations to the Government of Georgia about improvement of the set regulations and concrete recommendations.

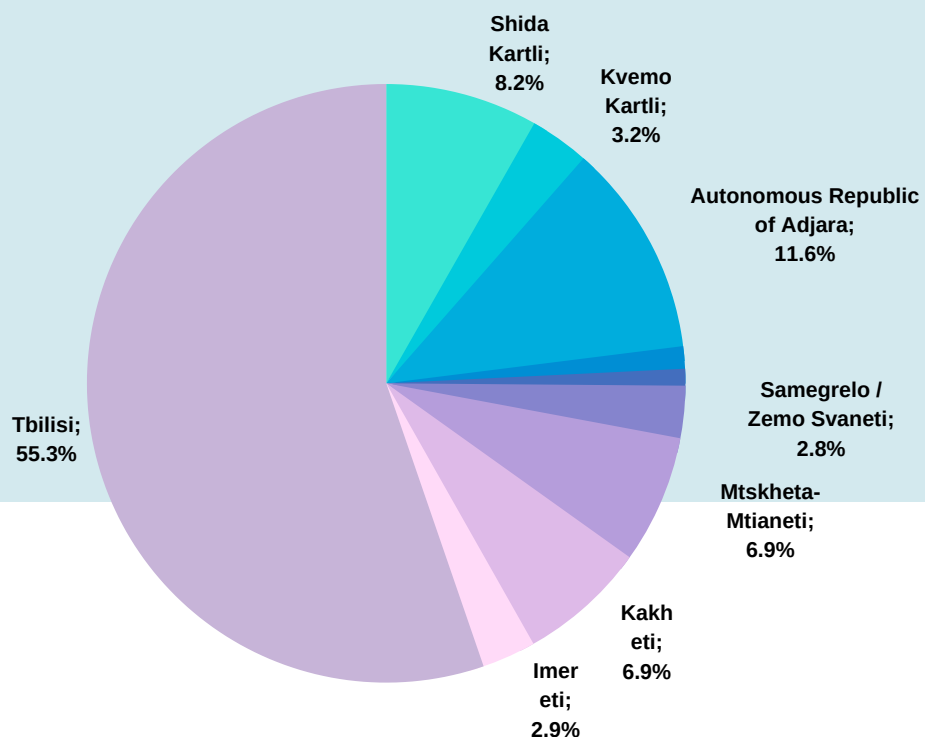
1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1. sphere of activity



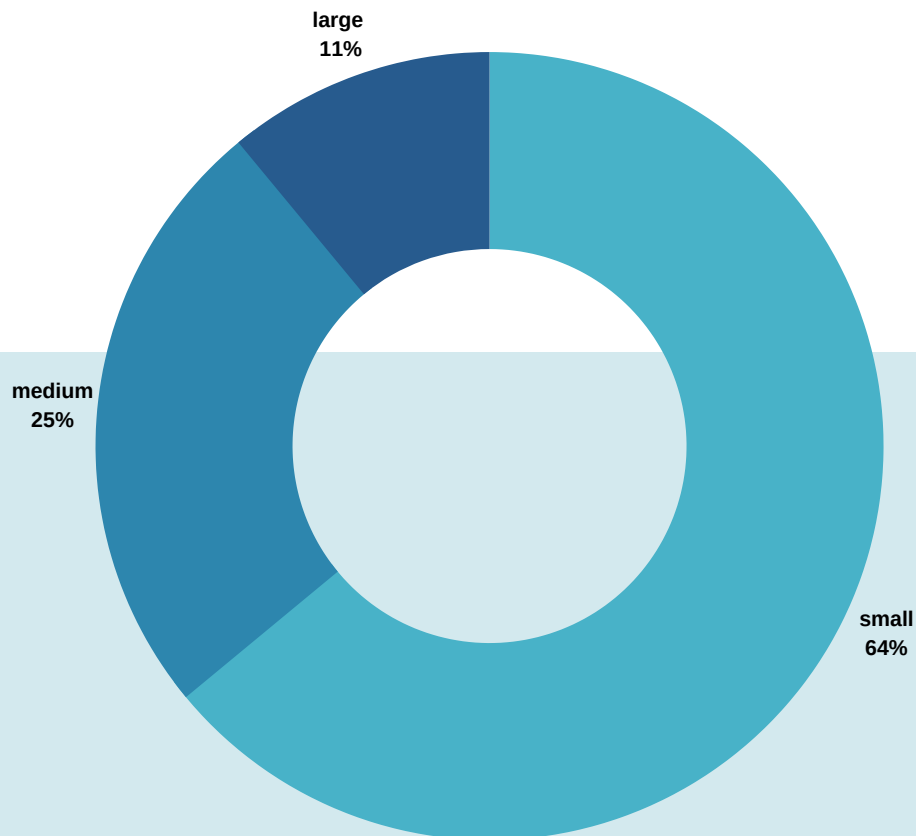
The graph shows the segregation of the companies by their sphere of operation. The numbers and percentage of the sectors are as follows: construction – 20 companies, service – 27 companies, tourism (hotels and restaurants) 48, warehouses – 10, food production and processing – 38 companies, logistics/transportation – 42 and other sectors – 55; the companies were selected from the data base of the Georgian Employers Association.

1.2. Geographical location:



The geographical locations of the majority of the respondent companies are from the capital of the country – Tbilisi (137 companies) and the rest as 113 companies are from the regions of Georgia, namely 9 regional units.

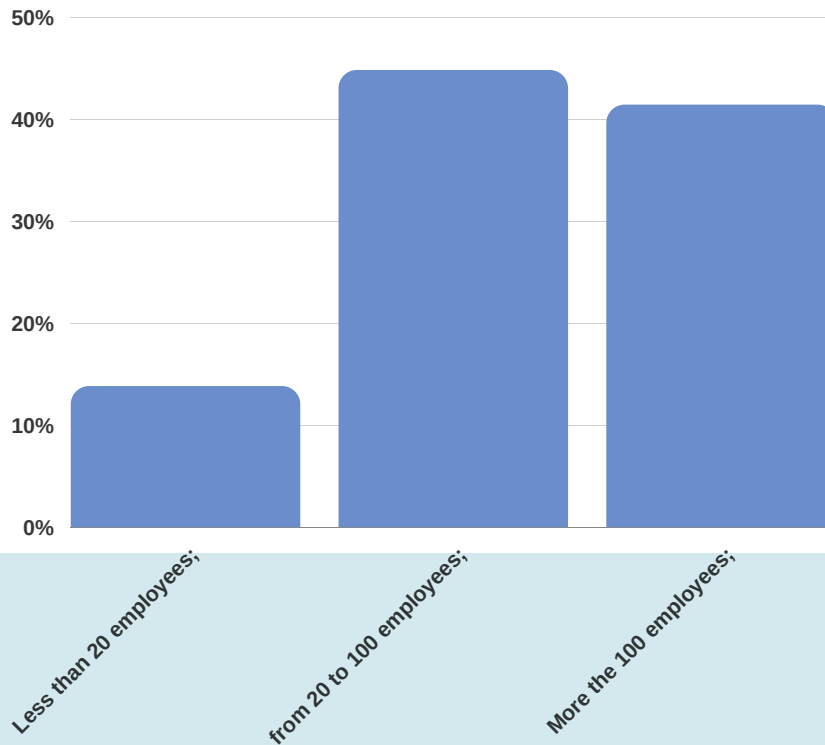
1.3. Size of the company



The respondent companies were divided into Small – 64%, Medium – 25% and Large companies – 11%. The survey focused on the defined scales of the businesses as a whole from which the absolute majority are SMEs.¹

¹ The legislation of Georgia defines the size of the companies with the formula: large companies are those having annual turnover of 60 mln. GEL with more than 249 employees; medium sized company is the one that has average 5-250 employees with annual turnover of 12- 60 mln. GEL; the small sized companies are those having less than 50 employees and not more than 12 mln. Annually.

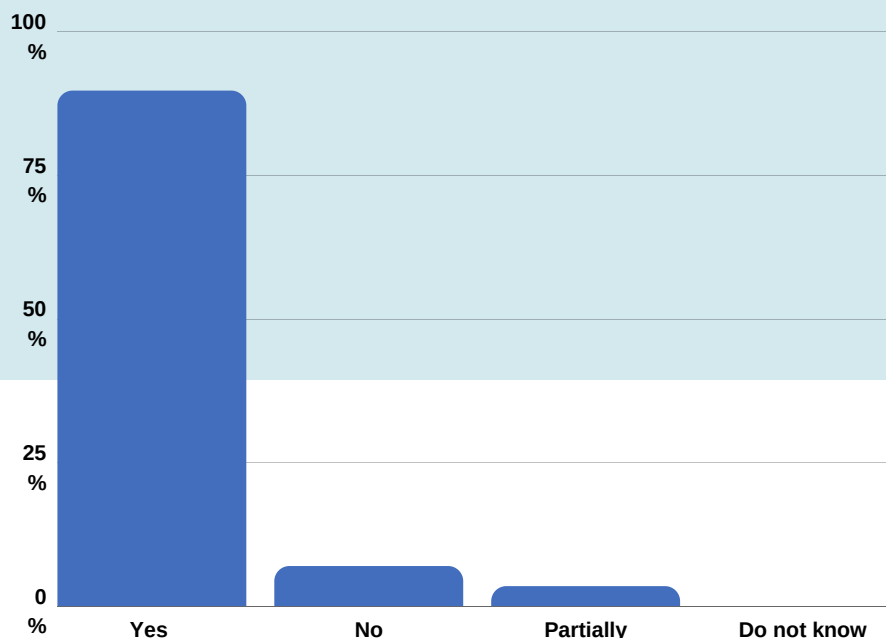
1.4. Number of employees



The graph shows that from the resurveyed 250 companies 41.4% have over 100 employees, 44.8% less than 20 employees and 13.8% of the respondents' state that that have average 20-100 employees. This specific question was important to have information about the human resources/employees of the companies to connect with the below questions with regard to COVID-19 prevention management and preparation of the employees and working places. (the specific questions are below).

2. EXISTING SITUATION AT COMPANIES

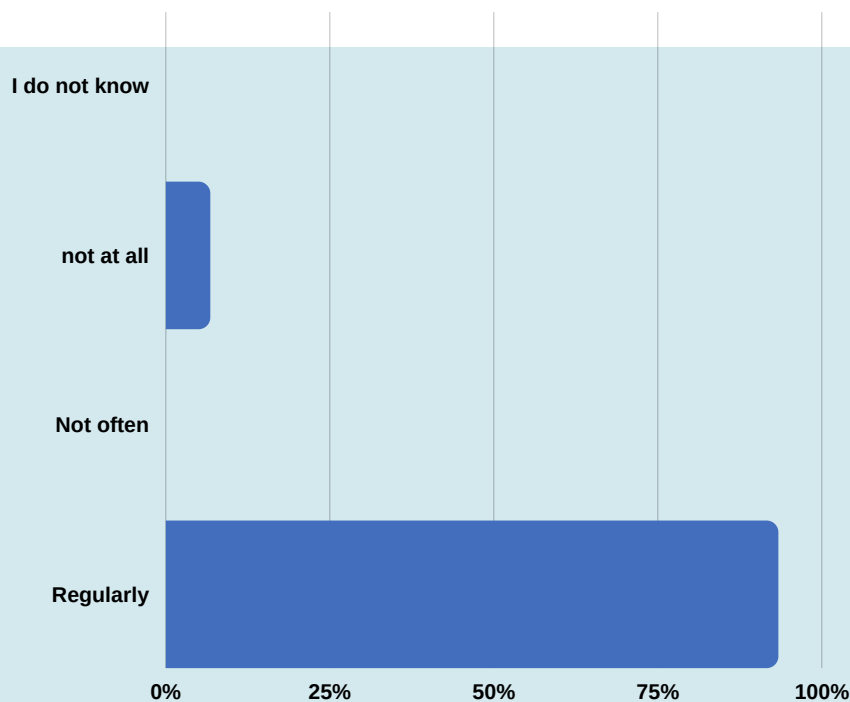
2.1. Do you have information about the regulations and recommendations established by the Government for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places?



The first section of the assessment is focused on the existing situation at member companies of GEA with regard to the COVID-19 preventive policies (recommendations, requirements, regulations) established by the Government of Georgia to understand the level of compliance. On the question if the companies have thorough information about the regulations and recommendations established by the Government for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places the 89.7% stated that they have information about it. The number is rather high but only on the level of information that is not enough for full compliance with established regulations and obligations.

Conclusion: the high number of the interviewed companies, namely 89.7% have information about the regulations and requirements established by the GoG for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places;

2.2. What is the frequency of getting the information about the new regulations and requirements of the Government on COVID 19 prevention at work places?

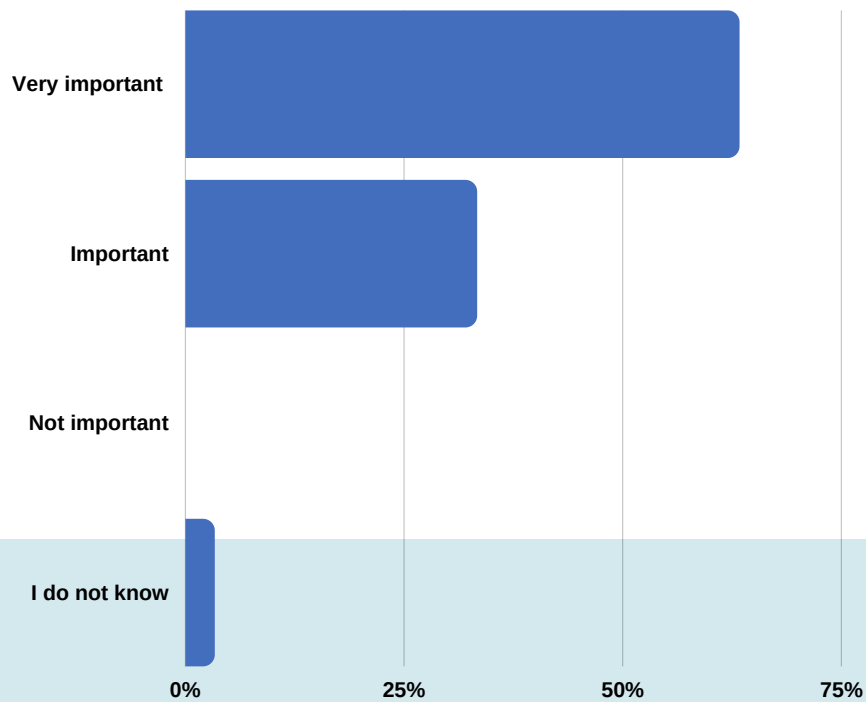


An important question related to the frequency of getting the information about the new regulations and requirements of the Government towards the COVID-19 prevention at work places, the respondents are rather active with 93% of the companies that following the news on regulations and obligations regularly. Still, the percentage as 6.7% is worth for GEA to consider to activate its communication channels and appropriate measures serving to delivering the relevant information and news to the member companies.

Conclusions:

- The 93% of the interviewed companies follow the news regularly on regulations and obligations of the GoG for prevention of the COVID-19 at work places.
- GEA should activate and strengthen its communication channels and appropriate mechanisms with the member companies to reach the 6.7% of them for receiving the news in timely manner directly from the Association;
- GEA should activate its frequency of communication with the member;

2.3. Do you think that implementation of norms, regulations and requirements on prevention of COVID 19 at working place are important?

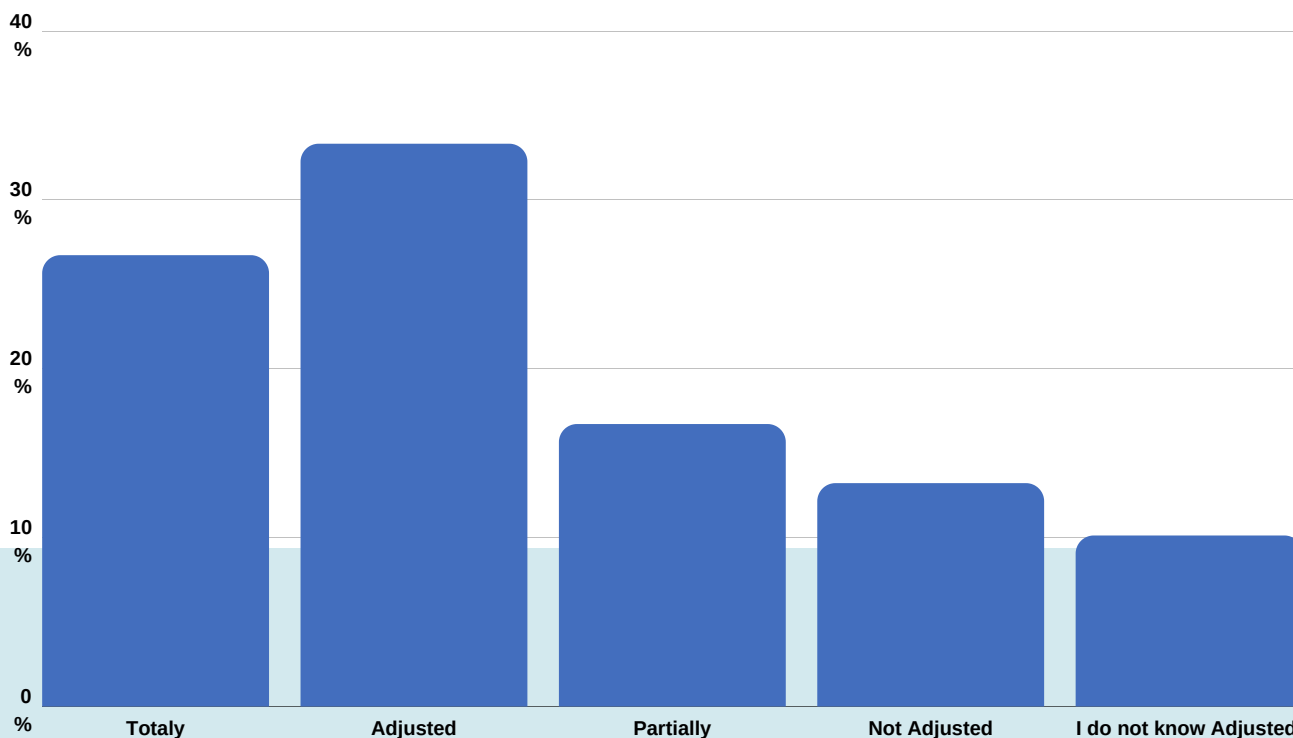


The graph shows that the whole 63% considers the implementation of the norms and regulation for prevention of the COVID-19 at work places as “very important”. The 33.3% responds to the question a “important” and only 3.3% does not have answer. To analyze the whole data from the responses as see that the entire positive answer as “important” and “very important” are – 96.6% that is the basis to think that GEA interviewed members fully understand importance of the issue. However, it is interesting to see what the respondents think about the further requirements for arranging the working spaces and what they need for the new outbreak that is on waiting regime.

Conclusion:

- The member companies of GEA fully understand the importance of the regulations and requirements of the GoG (combined 96.6%);
- GEA should strengthen the provision of information from its communications and relationships channels to its members, moreover when the companies have high level of importance of tcommon problem and requirements of the GoG for further implementation;

2.4. Are the COVID 19 preventive regulations and requirements at work places adjusted to specificities of your company?



The graph 2.4. – the question - “how the new regulations and requirements are adjusted to your company specificities in prevention of the COVID-19” - the respondents’ feedbacks are various. The 26.7% says that the regulations are totally adjusted to their companies’ specificities, 33.3% of the companies consider that the requirements and regulations are adjusted, 16.7% thinks that they are partially adjusted, 13.2 “not adjusted” and 10.1% declares they do not have answer to this question. We see that 60% considers the COVID-19 preventive regulations are adjusted to the specificities of their companies, but the negative answers to this concrete question is rather high (“partially” and “not adjusted” with “I do not know”) is also rather a high point that is not desirable and creates a ground of thinking the companies are not fully satisfied with the Government newly set requirements.

Considering the adjustment procedures and policies from the Government of and constituents, we can see that GEA and Government partnership needs strengthening. This is connected with the dialogue between the constituents while preparation of the regulations and obligations towards business. The lack of partnership will lead to the obstacles for the companies/business while implementation the established regulations with relevant sanctions. The role of GEA is huge to deliver the specificities of concrete sectors (companies operating in the sectors) to the Government and based on it, the last should consider the recommendations from the Employers.

Conclusion:

The companies are in need of more specific regulations/requirements established by the GoG to be fully adjusted for their companies/sectors;

GEA should ensure specific information sessions/trainings (sectoral and individual) for the regulations and recommendations established by the GoG;

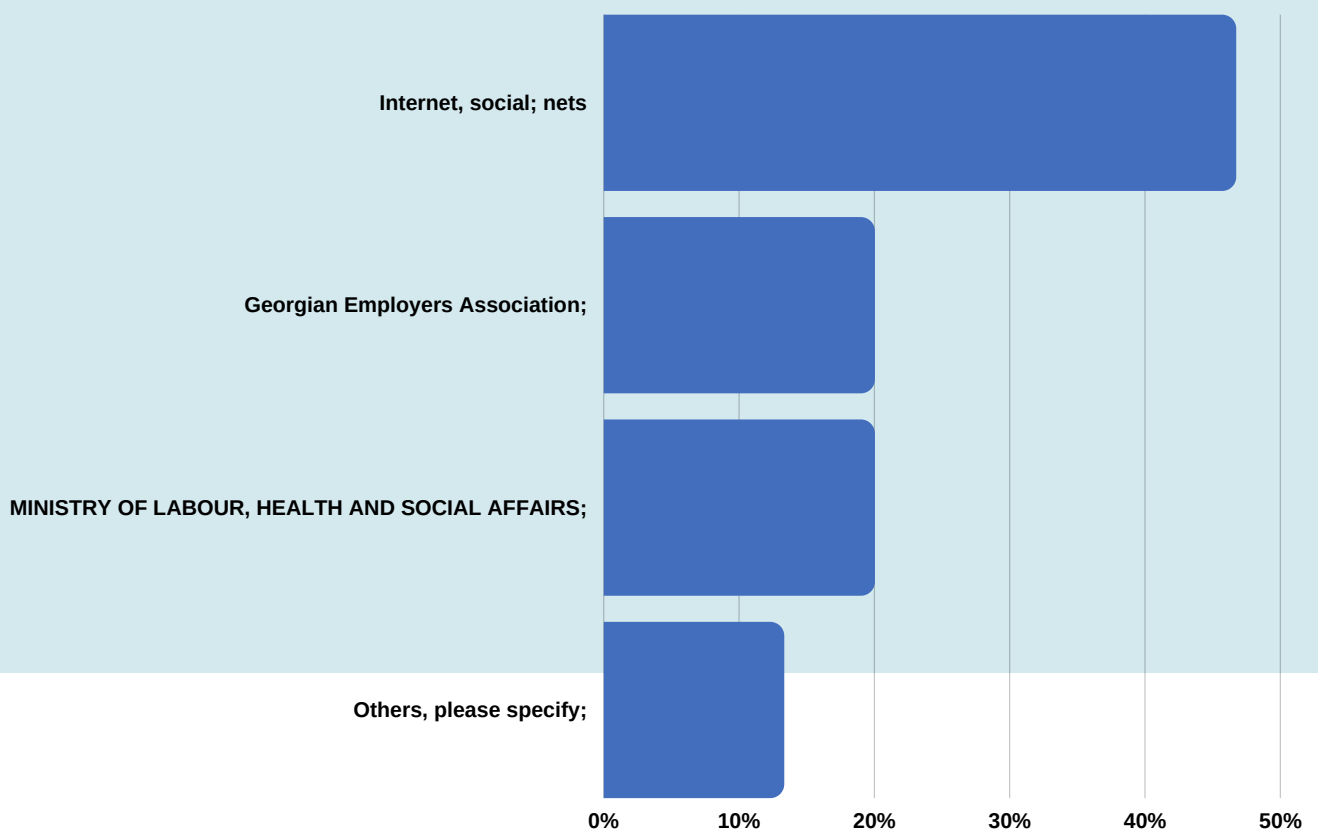
GEA should strengthen partnership with the Government to prior involvement of the Association in the process of developing the recommendations and regulations to businesses, specifically for the COVID 9 prevention at work places;

2.5. What are the sources of information on legislative requirements, recommendations and regulations connected to the COVID 19?

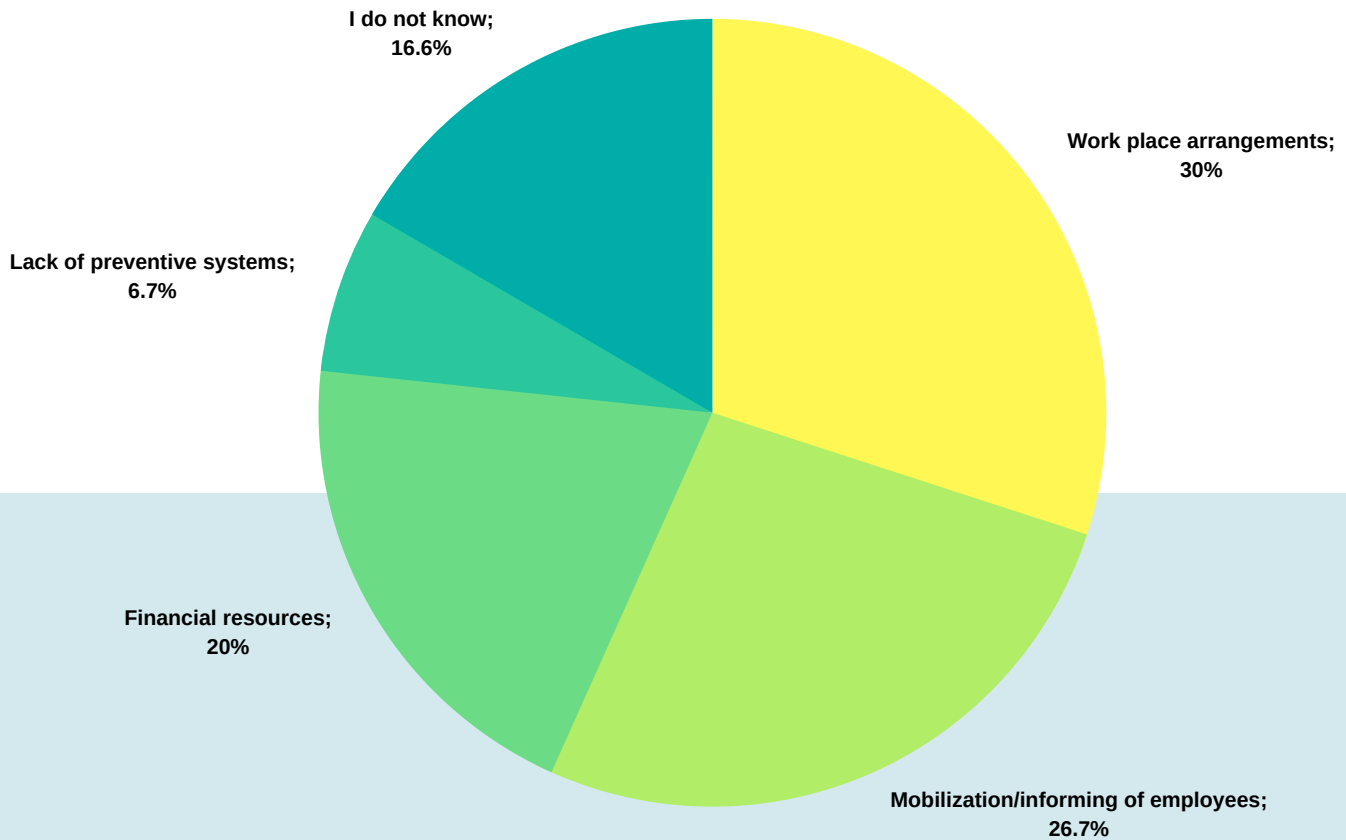
The picture below shows the sources of the information on legislative requirements, recommendations and regulations connected to the COVID-19 and which of them are mostly used by the companies. The respondents biggest number uses the internet and social nets as sources of information with the number as - 46.7%; the 20-20% are divided between Georgian Employers Association and the Ministry of Labour and Health of Georgia and only 3% uses the other resources. The data and findings of this specific questions reveals that GEA has only 20% as source of information for its member companies that is rather low indicator. In other words, if the companies highest percentage goes to the utilization of the internet and social media resources and not GEA as an organization of getting the full information, news and etc...on legislative changes or established regulations, it means that GEA has to strengthen its work and daily measures with the member companies. On the other hand, this data drives to the lack of dialogue and partnership between Government and Employers the last to be used as the first source of delivering the information to business.

Conclusion:

- GEA should improve its communication schemes and cannels with the companies so as te internet sources/social nets and even the Government are not the “number one” information providers (actually only 20% of the respondent confirm that they receive news and information from GEA);
- GEA has weak PR and communication long-termed strategies with the companies and especially in the legislative part;
- GEA should strengthen dialogues with the Government in general and specifically on the newly established regulations and requirements for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places;



2.6. What are the problems and obstacles in implementation of the established requirements and regulations for prevention of COVID 19 at work places by the Government?



The collected figures from the respondents show that the 30% of the interviewed companies consider it difficult to arrange the working places or make their adaptation to the needs and requirements from the Government established regulations. The 27% of the respondents think it problematic to mobilize and inform the personnel/employees on the preventive requirements and compliance measures; the 20% has financial problems. Besides, the 7% of the respondents' claim that the nonexistence of preventive system arise problems for the compliance to the regulations and requirements of the Government. The new regulations for arranging the working spaces require good material and technical basis that are very often inadequate for the companies, especially for the SMEs with the current background in the new past connected with the lockdown and stoppage of economic activities due to the world pandemics. The companies, for the full compliance with the Government established regulations and requirements, need to purchase personal and/or collective protective equipment (and all the COVID-19 preventive materials as liquids, soap, non-touching machines, face-masks, barriers, and etc...) that are the issue of additional financial resources. As said, this might be even worse for the small and medium sized companies that does not have relevant funds and are in lack of needed resources. As mentioned above, the specific and comprehensive assessment for the SMEs will be desired to have for the specific and separate supportive measures from the association/GEA (even with the background that the majority of the given survey are the same target group as SMEs) or relevant organizations.

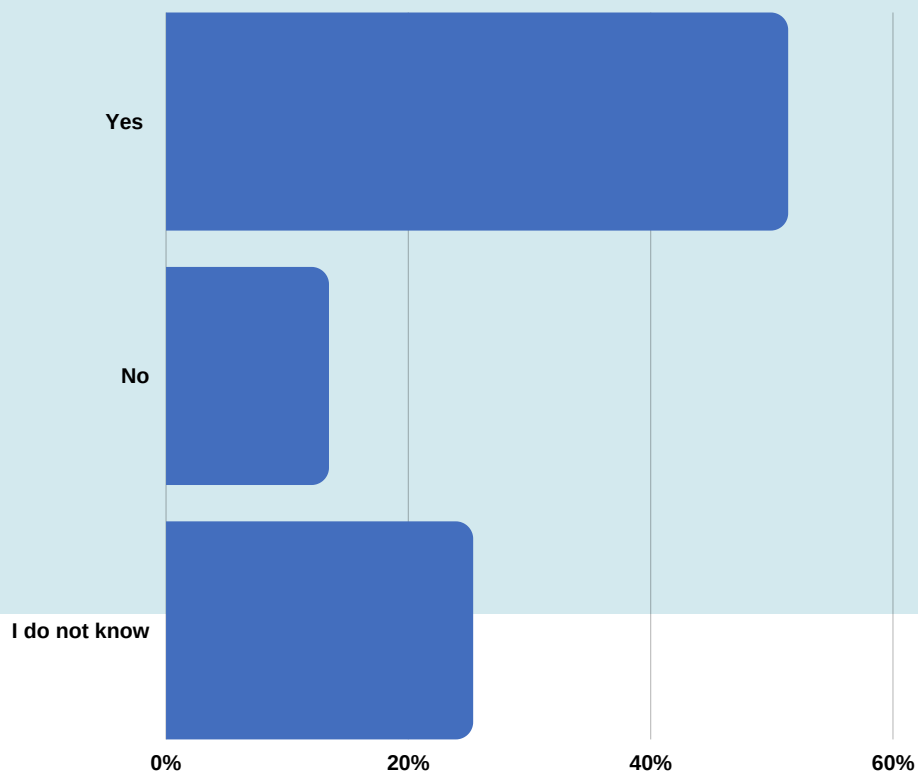
One more important issue here is the percentage of the respondents connected to the "mobilization/informing of employees" – that gives the ground to think that employers/companies have problems with management of human resources and mechanisms of their mobilization.

This arises the problem of employees' further training/provision of information about the preventive policies and requirements from the Government. It is predictable, based on this data, the companies will have additional problems with full compliance with the newly established regulations and requirements for working places. Besides, the responses also lead to concerns to Occupational Safety and Health management systems on place at company level generally and specifically to COVID-19 as well as to bio-hazard, because, actually the role of OSH specialists is the part of managing and training the employees for risks and preventive measures. So, we can conclude that the mentioned OSH systems as well as OSH specialists still need skills and professional development and improvement.

Conclusion:

- GEA should work in direction of Human Resource Management and appropriate systems with the companies as the response to the identified problems and obstacles connected with mobilizing the personnel against the COVID 19 prevention at work places;
- GEA should strengthen its programmes/trainings for the OSH specialists and use ILO methodology at its maximum level (OSH certified pool of trainer);
- GEA should develop specific system based on the provided manuals/guides on "COVID 19 prevention" provided by ILO for its implementation at companies in prevention of the COVID 19 at work places (the manuals and guides include recommendations and mechanisms of managing the personnel/employees as well as supervision);
- GEA should urgently improve its daily communication with the members and provision of the specific services/advices in direction of the of the problems and obstacles so that the members are in full compliance with the GoG established regulations and requirements in prevention of the COVID 19 at work places;

2.7. Do you have emergency and crisis management plans at your company?

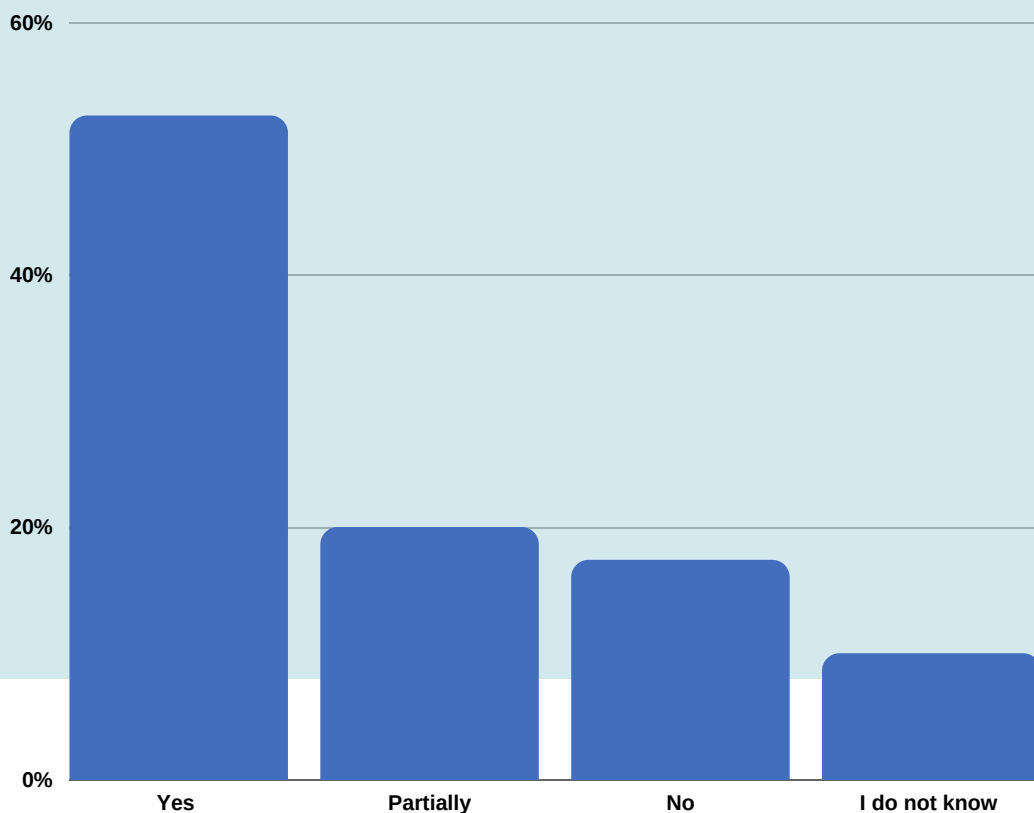


The question about having the crisis and emergency management plans at companies have the following responses: the 61.3% of the interviewed companies state that they have both - crisis and emergency plans on place; the 13.4% says they have not the mentioned plans and 25.3% have no information about the mentioned. If we look and analyze the data, it is easy to understand that emergency plan, that is the part of the OSH systems is still lacking at companies because the system considers involvement of all the personnel in them. Besides, the answers as "I do not know" leads to critical feedback from the companies as the figure is rather huge for not knowing what plans the company have internally and adequately the respect of the internal policies are low. It is recommended that GEA works in this specific direction and support the member companies in respect to development crisis management plan individually for the companies. The crisis and continuity management plans are largely connected with the unexpected (internal/external) hazards that should have appropriate internal system at companies for overcoming the obstacles as COVID-19 in all its aspects. This is considered as one of the core tasks of GEA in response of COVID-19 pandemics and its impact on business operations and human resources a well.

Conclusions:

- The member companies of GEA, (namely the 25.3% and 13.4% jointly) have problems with the emergency and crisis management plans on places at company level that creates more difficulties with regard to managing the COVID 19;
- GEA should provide the members with the crisis and emergency plans (individually, as a part of response to COVID 19) that is very important considering the current pandemic and economic crisis, especially for Georgia, to cope with the COVID 19;

2.8. Do you think that your company fully complies with the requirements and regulations established for prevention of COVID 19 at work places?

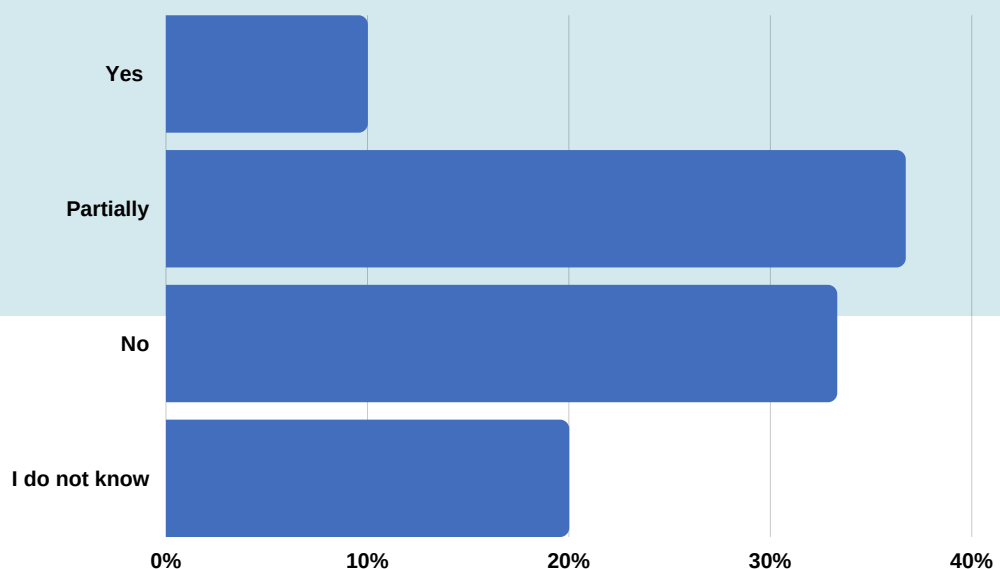


It is interesting to see that after the question if the companies have the crisis and emergency plans on place, what the respondents answer with regard to the question as: "Do you think that your company fully complies with the requirements and regulations established for prevention of COVID 19 at work places?". So, As the graph 2.8. shows, the respondents are not optimistic in their compliances with the requirements and regulations established by the Government of Georgia for prevention the COVID-19. So, the 10.6% does not have answer to this question, 17.4% consider that they are not in compliance with the requirements and the 52.6% complies with the COVUD-19 preventive regulations and requirements. Despite the data as 52.6% from the respondents, almost the half of them still is not satisfied with the compliance level with the established regulations at their companies and they give the status as "partially". The 17.4% says they are in non-compliance with the established obligations. The picture shows that we have contradiction with the questions as 2.1., 2.2., 2.3. and this leads us to think that companies receive information and they consider the newly established regulations and requirements as "important" but the problem lays at implementation level of the obligations set by the Government. The whole percentage of "partially". "no" and "I do not know" is extremally large and especially in the context of implementation of regulations and level of compliance. Here, in this aspect, GEA has responsibility of supporting the member companies to be adequate to the requirements and fully comply with the newly established rules and regulations for businesses. In this regard, GEA has to strengthen the communication campaign to the members and use the from the given analysis to offer the specific compliance measures and improve the outsource (existing OSH outsource service of GEA) services to support the members in response to the OSH legislative and COVID-19 preventive regulations. Besides, it is recommended that GEA develops a specific check-lists based on the provided manuals and guidelines of the ILO for responding the concrete needs and necessities of the companies serving to the compliance of the requirements of the Government for COVID-19 prevention at work places.

Conclusions:

- The certain number of GEA member companies re not in full compliance with the regulations and requirements established by the GoG;
- GEA should develop specific and target oriented check-list for revealing the level of compliances against the GoG established regulations and requirements for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places;
- GEA should activate its efforts (based on the specific above mentioned check-lists) in direction of the COVID 19 impact management for the members with various activities and specifically utilize the ILO guides and manuals for prevention the COVID 19 at work places;

2.9. Did the expenditure you made for preventive measures of COVID 19 reflected on the prices of your production/service?

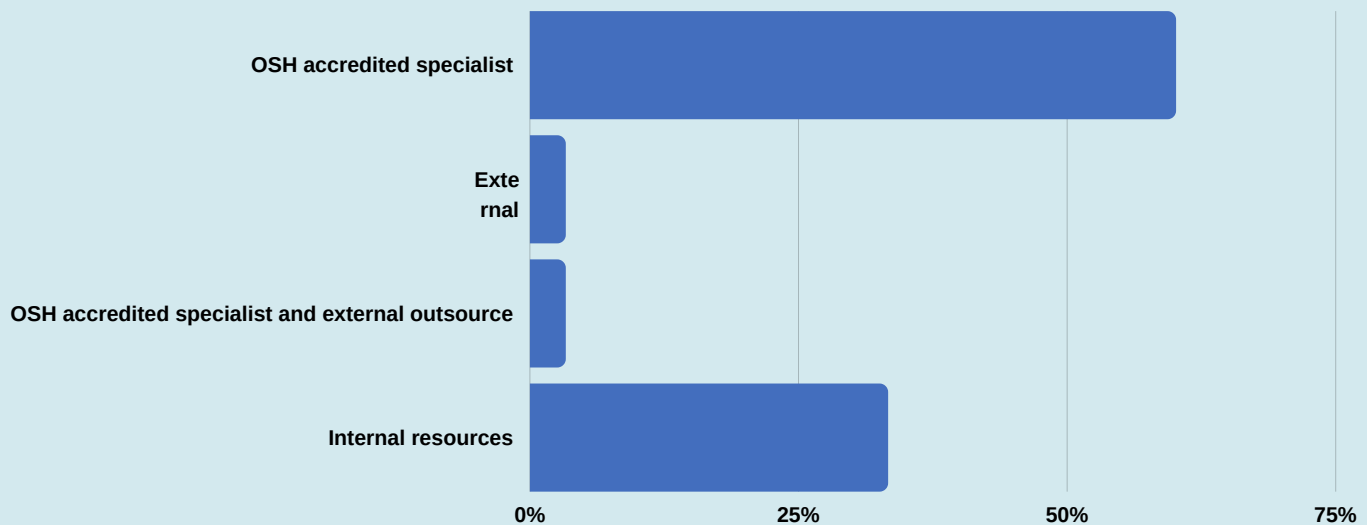


One of the most important data is taken from the question – “Did the expenditure from the newly set regulations for prevention of the COVID-19 has raised the prices of your services/production?” The whole impact is approx.: 46.7% as the companies state their expenditure increased and the impact of the pandemic reflected on the prices of their production and services. The 20% says they have no answer and 33.3% still declares “No”. If we summarize the data collected from the question and answers, we see that the impact was rather high amounting to the real impact except the 10% from the statistics. These conditions are connected with the vagueness of the current situation when the pandemic is over and business environment is in its normal working status. It is recommended that GEA conducts deeper analysis of the real financial impact of the crisis of their member companies to set up new and relevant services in response to this specific component.

Conclusions:

- GEA member companies were impacted by the COVID 19 and their expenditure increased revealing into process of their production/services;
- GEA should conduct specific and deeper analysis to respond to the financial impact to their members for planning the concrete support for access to finances for overcoming the COVID 19 impact;

2.10. Who implements the prevention of COVID-19 monitoring and assessment at work place?

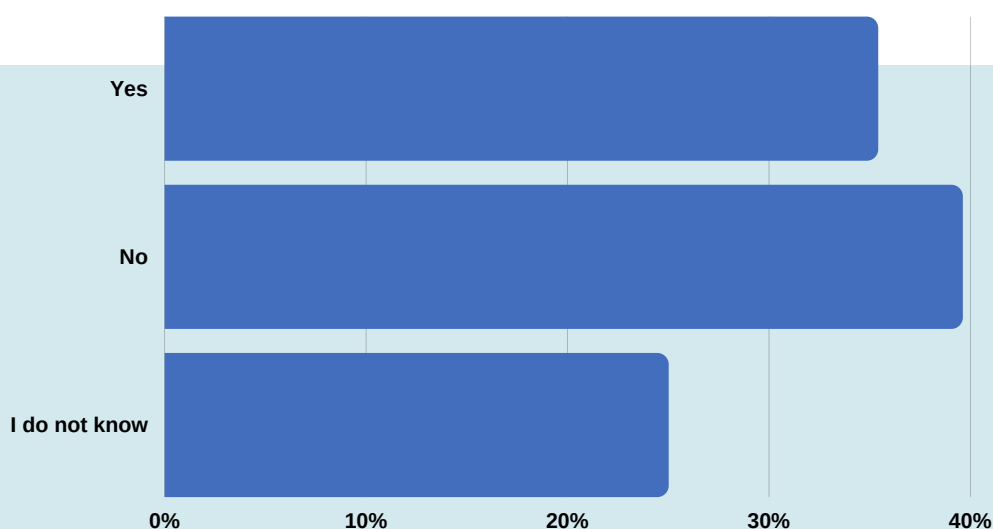


In normal conditions assessment and monitoring of the COVID-19 prevention policies at work places is implemented by OSH accredited specialist/OSH department or relevant company structures/units. The 60.1% says that OSH accredited specialist conduct assessment and monitoring of the COVID-19 prevention at work places. The 33.3% use internal resources, 3.3% - OSH accredited specialist and external resources together and some 3.3% goes to external resources. The information gives the possibility to think that the OSH accredited specialists who are responsible for assessment and monitoring activities at companies need knowledge and skills development that are also revealed in the corresponding questions above related to compliance of concrete companies with the COVID-19 preventive regulations at work places. The companies need more educational programmes and projects, namely offered from GEA including the specific instruments and mechanisms for proper assessment and monitoring. Apparently, it is recommended that the Government while amending the state accredited programme and delivering the status of service provider as GEA, should consider integration of the COVID-19 prevention as a separate module in the whole product/programme. In additional, GEA through ILO and relevant international organizations, should request support in various adequate tools to adapt and deliver the service to the member companies.

Conclusions:

- The interviewed companies do not fully respond to the assessment and evaluation of the COVID 19 prevention at work places that is connected with the OSH managers skills and knowledge;
- GEA should improve its efforts in direction of OSH management systems and its implementation at companies (training/re-training of OSH managers among them) to reach the full compliance with the regulations and requirements of the GoG, the basis of which is the proper assessment and monitoring tools and instruments;
- GEA should use the relevant ILO manuals and guides for assessment and evaluation of work places (human resource mobilization and management among them) to respond to the prevention of the COVID 19;

2.11. Do you conduct trainings for your employees for prevention of COVID 19?

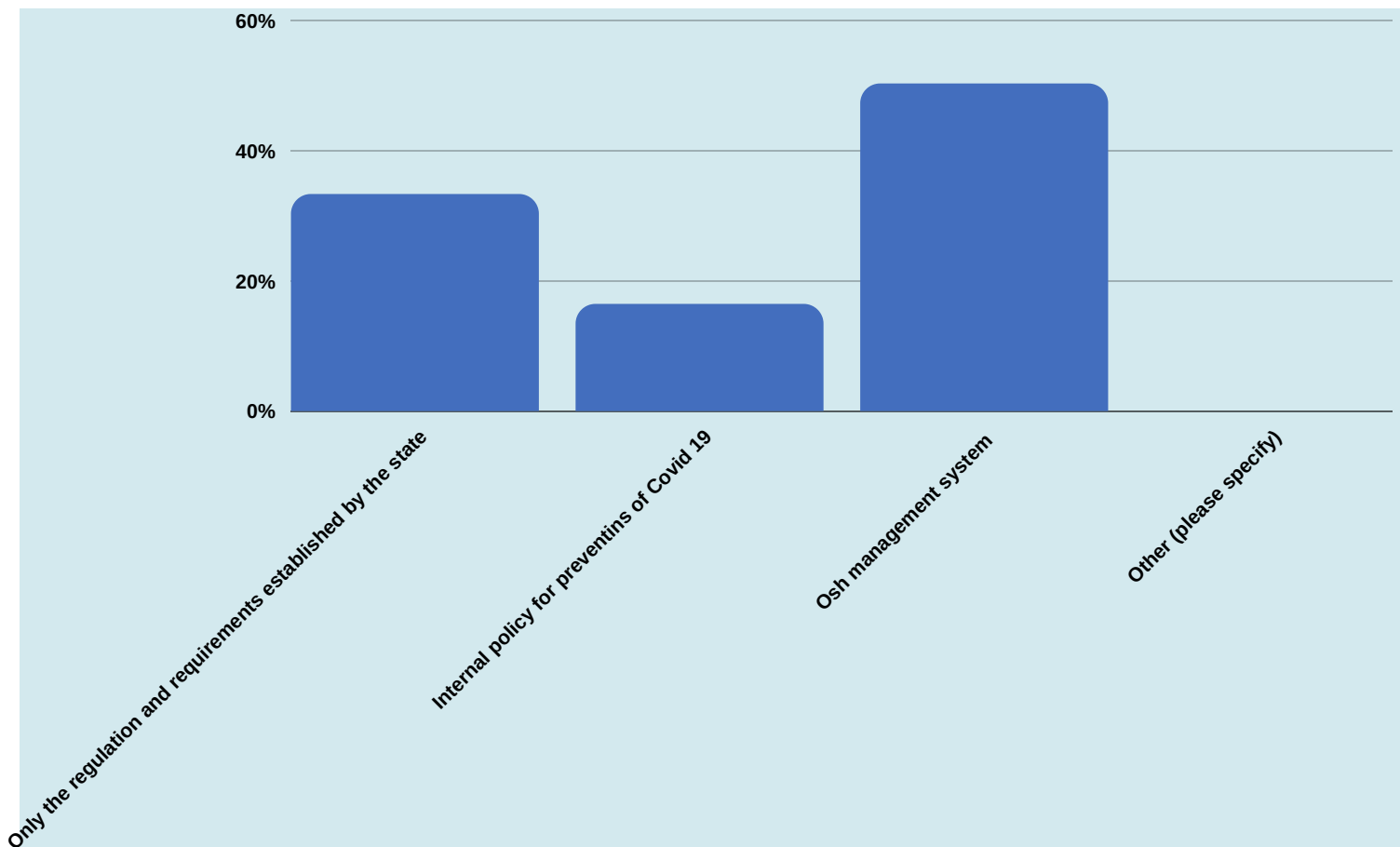


As we saw from the graph. 2.6. one of the obstacles in implementation of the established requirements and regulations for prevention of the COVID-19 at work places was mobilization and informing of employees. Here, in the picture, the question "if the companies conduct trainings for employees for prevention of COVID-19" the responses are rather interesting and contradictory. Namely: 35.4% says that they do conduct trainings and raising knowledge activities for their employees on preventive measures of COVID-19 at work places, the 39.6% state that they do not make it and 25.0% says that they do not know about it at all. If we consider that the core persons in delivering the knowledge on OSH and adequately the COVID-19 prevention are or should be the OSH specialists (not to say anything about the employers themselves), we easily come to the conclusion that the OSH management systems need serious interference at company level and raising the knowledge/skills and education of the ones responsible for human resources/employees. Adequately, the findings reveal that companies are in serious lack of human resource management mechanisms and instruments on places and GEA has to take steps to its improvement with relevant services. The answers as "I do not know", actually is similar to the response as "no" because, if the company leads serious educational campaign or activities, then the refusal of the question is without question, all the levels of management and personnel must be educated with the COVID-19 preventive measures, finally serving to the high level of compliance with the established regulations and requirements by the Government. Adequately, the sanctions and fines for non-compliances are avoided. The GEA has to use the tools and guidelines/manuals from ILO and other experienced organizations to adjust and implement the relevant measures individually for organizations/companies in managing the COVID-19 at working places.

Conclusions:

- The interviewed companies do not conduct trainings/information session for their employees that complicates implementation of preventive regulations and requirements of the COVID 19 at work places;
- The majority of GEA members have no educational policies/programmes and schemes at their companies that would support even in managing the prevention of COVID 19 and implementation of the regulations and requirements by the GoG for compliance;
- GEA should offer target-oriented trainings/informational sessions to their companies against the COVID 19 at work places as well as implementation measures to be responsive to the Government; (based on the ILO manuals and relevant best practices/materials);

2.12. What are the preventive mechanisms you use for monitoring the contractors, visitors and other persons?



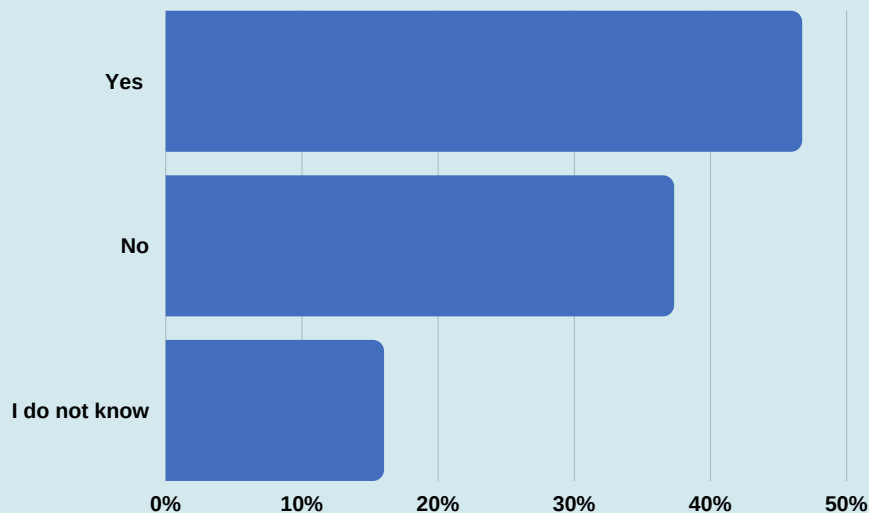
Regarding the preventive mechanisms that the companies use for monitoring the contractors, visitors and other external persons, as we see responses are rather interesting, the 33.3% of the respondents claim that they use only regulations and requirements established by the Government, the 50.3% says that they use OSH management systems and only 16.4% considers that they have so called internal policy for prevention of the COVID-19. The data is really worth to think for deeper researches because, if we look at the above questions that are closely connected to the internal policies and management systems of managing the situation, crises and etc...we can find that even the OSH systems are not reliable and needs additional intervention as the COVID-19 and all the bio-hazards are the part of OSH management systems and the specialist (employer) is responsible for developing and implementation internally. The situation is even worse if the last is not properly developed at companies, because controlling the visitors, contractors and external

persons are the issue of high level management tools that seem not be on places in the majority of the interviewed companies. Once again, the GEA should pay attention to the concrete check-lists and guides to respond to the needs of the respondent member companies in developing the internal systems and implementation of it. The ILO manuals and guideline, for example, "safe return to work places" is the perfect instrument for companies. So, the GEA has to develop specific programmes based on the mentioned materials and integrate them in the company policies and management systems. The last is especially critical for the supply chains.

Conclusions:

- The interviewed companies use the general regulations and requirements as well as OSH management systems as preventive measures for monitoring the contractors, visitors and external persons that is not reliable for compliance with the requirements of the GoG because the findings from the previous questions give the ground for this vision.
- The GEA should work individually with the companies for implementation the relevant mechanisms for prevention of the COVID 19 not only at work places but also for assessing and monitoring the relevant contracts, providers, visitors and etc...
- GEA should develop and/or adapt the relevant guides and manuals for integration of the preventive measures/rules on COVID 19 into the companies internal strategies and policies (serving to full compliance with the requirements and regulations by the GoG, including the providers and contractors and etc...);

2.13. Has your organization been inspected by the labour conditions inspecting department or by other organs for COVID 19 prevention and compliance with the requirements and regulations at work places?



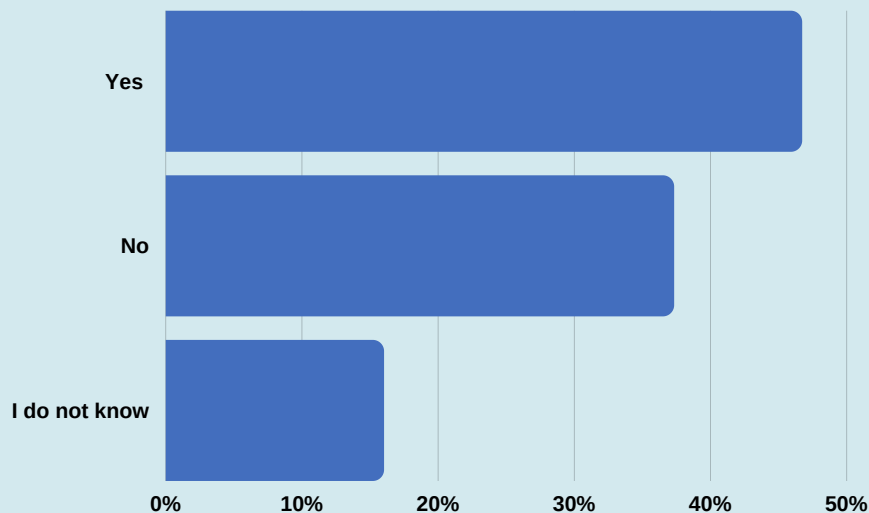
The graph 2.13. shows that 46.7% of the companies has been inspected by the labour conditions inspection department or relevant organs for checking the prevention of COVID-19 at work places and see the compliance with the established regulations and requirements by the Government. The 37.3% says that they have not been inspected and 16.0% says they do not know the answer. The overall picture of the statistics lays space to think that more than half of the interviewed companies have not been visited by the State Labour Conditions Inspection Department or similar organs by the time of survey. The number is high and GEA has to take measures to immediate action before the inspectorate missions to the member companies because the compliance with the established regulations and requirements from the Government are not in good conditions at companies (graphs: 2.8; 2.10.2.11).

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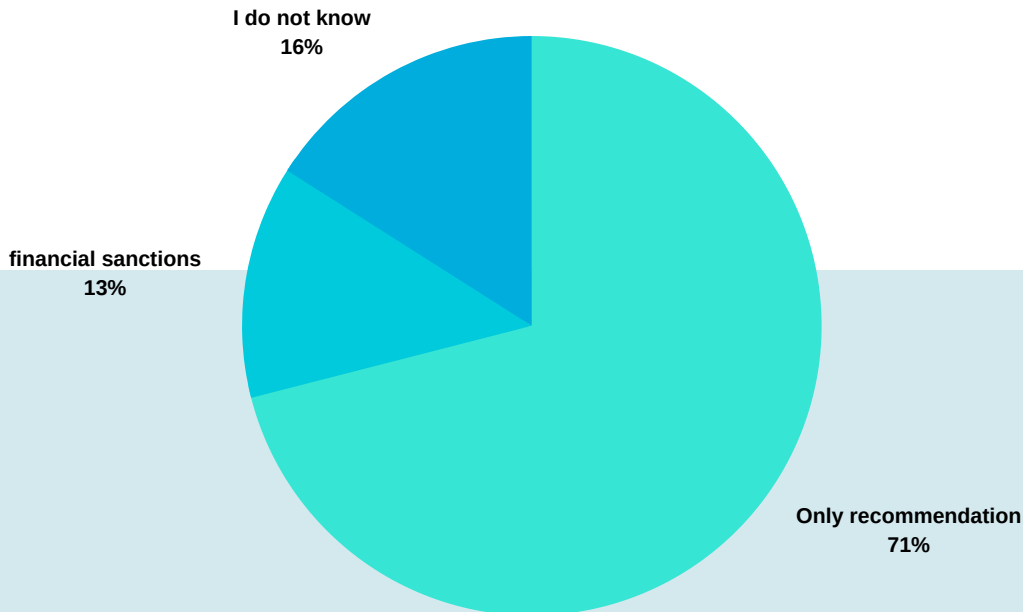


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Conclusions:

- GEA should strengthen its efforts towards the companies to enable them be in compliance with the requirements and regulations established by the GoG;
- GEA should actively use the check-lists for identifying the level of compliance with the Government established regulations from the side of the companies and plan the concrete measures; in this manner the members will be ready for the inspection missions from the state inspectorate or similar organs;

2.14. What was the results of the inspection?



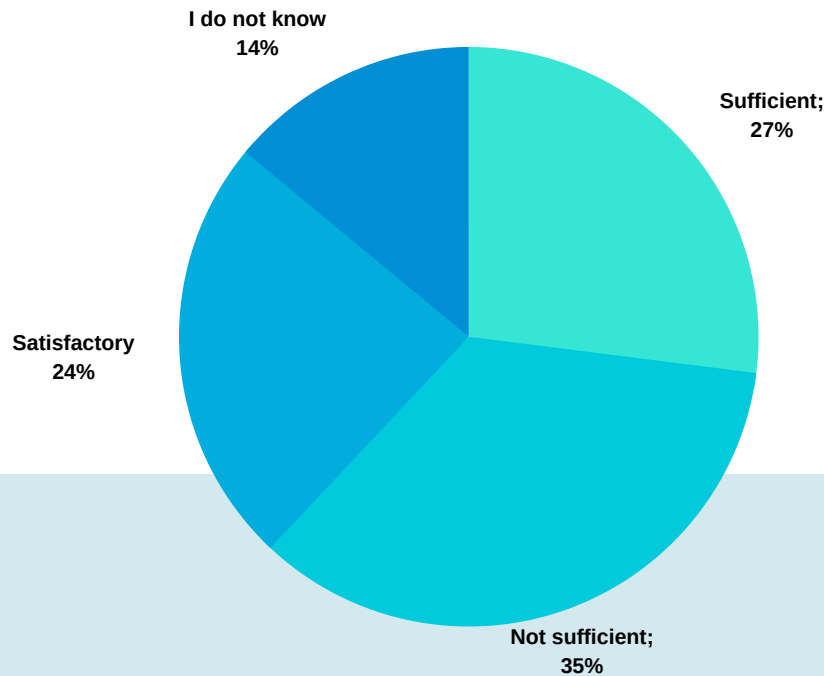
As a continuation of the previous question, namely “if the companies were inspected by any of the inspection organs” the current question – “what was the result of the inspection process?”, the answers of the respondents are as follows: 71% say they were given only recommendations and instructions for prevention the COVID-19 at work places, the 13% were fined and the 16% does not know what was the results of the inspection process. The percentage of the recommendations from the side of the inspection organs coincide the process of re-opening the economic activities but now, when all the sectors are open and in full operational conditions, there is presumption that the number of fines will be increased. In this regard, the GEA has to act rapidly and get in closer connection with the companies providing various and complex services so that they are in full compliance with the established regulations. The control from the Government organs may be strengthened and become stricter as the second and further waves of the COVID-19 (along with other seasonal infections) are still on waiting regime and the public health must maximally managed to avoid the big number of infected persons. So, GEA is the one that has responsibility for responding the needs of the companies and be ready for the inspection processes.

Conclusions:

- GEA should strengthen its efforts towards the companies to enable them be in compliance with the requirements and regulations established by the GoG as the end of pandemic is uncertain giving the ground to the concern that the Government will take additional strict measures for itsprevention (especially for avoiding the impact of further COVID 19 waves);
- GEA should actively its service packages for the companies (especially for those that were not inspected) to ensure their compliance with the regulations and requirements established by the government for prevention the COVID 19 at work places;

3. NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS OF COMPANIES

3.1. Do you think that the regulations and recommendations set for your sector is sufficient for prevention of COVID-19?

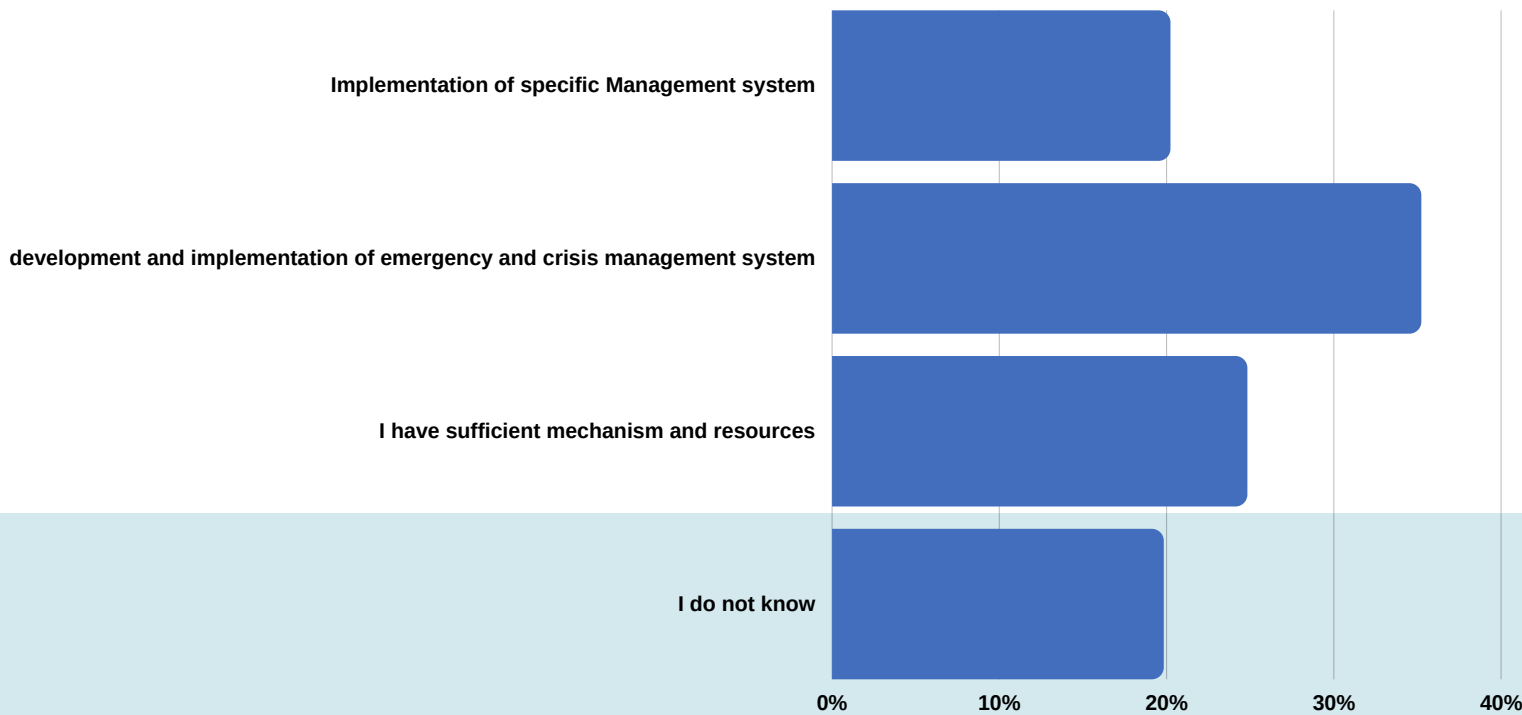


A very important part of the survey and analysis is the current one from the viewpoint of the needs and requirements from the companies, what they namely think and desire for the future at their working places and adequately be in the position of continuation of the activities. On the question what they think about the sufficiency of the recommendations and requirements set for their sectors by the Government for prevention the COVID-19, they responded as follows: the 35% says that the recommendations for their specific sector are not sufficient and they need more information/recommendations/mechanisms/systems to be ready and at the same time in compliance with the new obligations. The 24% consider that the recommendations and regulations are satisfactory; the 27% thinks that the recommendations are sufficient and only 14% does not have response to the asked question. The picture gives possibility to conclude that the recommendations and requirements from the Government should be more detailed for concrete sectors. Still, the role of GEA is also critical for their members as Association should be more active and responsive to the developing process of the recommendations finally established by the Government. In this regard, the Government should ask the Employers Organization in the format of social dialogue and develop the recommendations and new regulations/fines and etc...together with the constituents. In this context we see the absolute lack of social dialogue that may bring even worse results in the future for businesses and not only. So, the role of GEA as a social partner on company, sector and national levels should be strengthened and empowered or protecting the companies and advocate their needs.

Conclusions:

- The majority of the member companies of GEA think that the regulations and requirements established by the Government are not sufficient for the full compliance;
- GEA should work closely with the Government for revision of the recommendations, regulations and requirements set for the business;
- GEA should conduct concrete, specifically regulation-based assessment (RIA) among the companies to concretize the explicit concerns from the companies;
- GEA should actively its specific, COVID 19 preventive services to members;

3.2. Do you think that the regulations and recommendations set for your sector is sufficient for prevention of COVID-19?

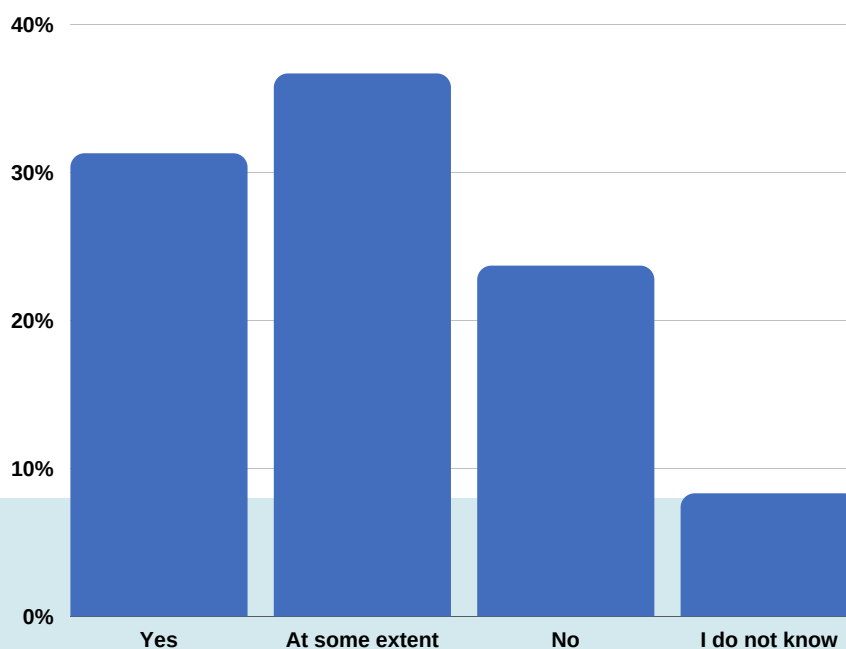


This specific question is critical for GEA as an Employers Organization unifying the members from various sectors of economy. Namely, the question “what are the additional mechanisms and instruments you wish to have in place for prevention of the COVID-19 at working place” the respondents gave the feedback as follows: The 35.2% of the respondents answered that the crisis and emergency plans would help them to deal with the COVID-19 prevention at their working places; 20.2% think that specific system adapted to the needs of their companies would be the best solution from the situation; 24.8% considers that they do not have the proper mechanisms to cope with the problems and 19.8% does not have answer. All the answers give space to think that the member companies of GEA are in need of concrete and target-oriented measures/activities/programmes from the side of the Association. The questions above and responses from the members give the ready requirements from them towards GEA in which direction the Association had to re-activate the service provision. The GEA has lots of instruments to intervene with all its resources, partner international organizations, ILO (with current projects) and etc...to be the perfect umbrella for the members and especially in response to the concrete requirements from their side.

Conclusions:

- The majority of the member companies of GEA have no crisis and emergency at places, integrated into their strategies;
- GEA has to strengthen the internal resources of the companies to provide additional mechanisms and instruments for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places, assess and monitor its implementation for the guaranteed compliance with the regulations and requirements established by the Government;
- GEA should make additional efforts to communicate with the companies so that they have information about the possible schemes and mechanisms for prevention of the COVID 19 and be ready for acceptance the services from GEA (the figure as 19.8 of the responses as “I do not know” should be amended);

3.3. Do you think that your employees need additional training for prevention of COVID 19 at work places?

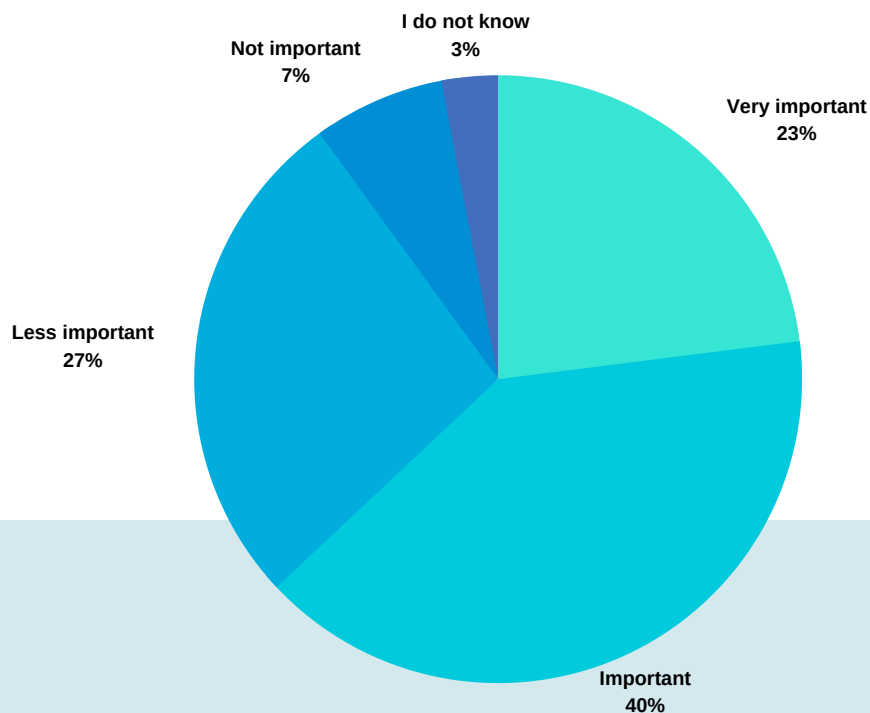


This focused question on additional trainings for the employees is the logical one for the question 2.12. from the results of which we see the absolute need for the companies to conduct more and target-oriented trainings/re-trainings for the human resources/employees. Regarding the employees and their knowledge as well as educational activities for prevention of the COVID-19 and their role in struggling with the infection/virus – the question and the graph above gives the following percentages from the respondents: the 31.3% of the respondents think their employees need additional trainings for prevention of the COVID-9 at working places, the 36.7% think that they can take care of it at some extent, the 23.7 say they do not have any of the activities for training of their personnel and 8.3% has no answer. The figures undoubtedly need interference as the numbers are rather high and “at some extent” is also the basis for not been sure in the quality and guaranteed knowledge for their employees for the preventive measures and mechanisms against the COVID-19. So, the GEA has to work hard and provide the services to its members based on the needs on additional trainings for employees and use all the guides and instruments to be responsive to educational programmes for companies as well as their integration into the internal policies. This concerns to the OSH specialists and all the employees as well with regard to the COVID-19 prevention.

Conclusions:

- The member companies of GEA do not conduct the specific trainings or raising awareness sessions for their employees serving to prevention of the COVID 19 at work places;
- GEA should intervene immediately for providing the information with relevant and specific measures for the companies for employees' knowledge about the COVID 19 and their role in it;
- GEA should work in direction of implementing the culture of education of employees through adequate HR management mechanisms;
- With the appropriate services (for employees trainings and education) the members of GEA avoid the sanctions from the inspection organs;

3.4. Do you think it is important to have a specific and concrete system for prevention of COVID 19 at work place that will decrease the infection and circulation risks?



On the question what the companies think to have a specific and concrete system on place for prevention of the COVID-19 and avoid the circulation of the virus at working places, the respondents answered as follows: 40% considers it as important to have specific and concrete systems on places; 23% believes that it very important, 27% - less important, 7% not important and 3% does not have answer. And, so to sum up the positive reaction on the question and the given answers the data it is recommended that the GEA should consider the needs of the members and start preparation of the concrete, adjusted programme/package for offering the appropriate services to the companies. This should be based on international experience from relevant organizations' best cases/practices, mainly from the ILO to adjust the similar activities/systems.

Conclusions:

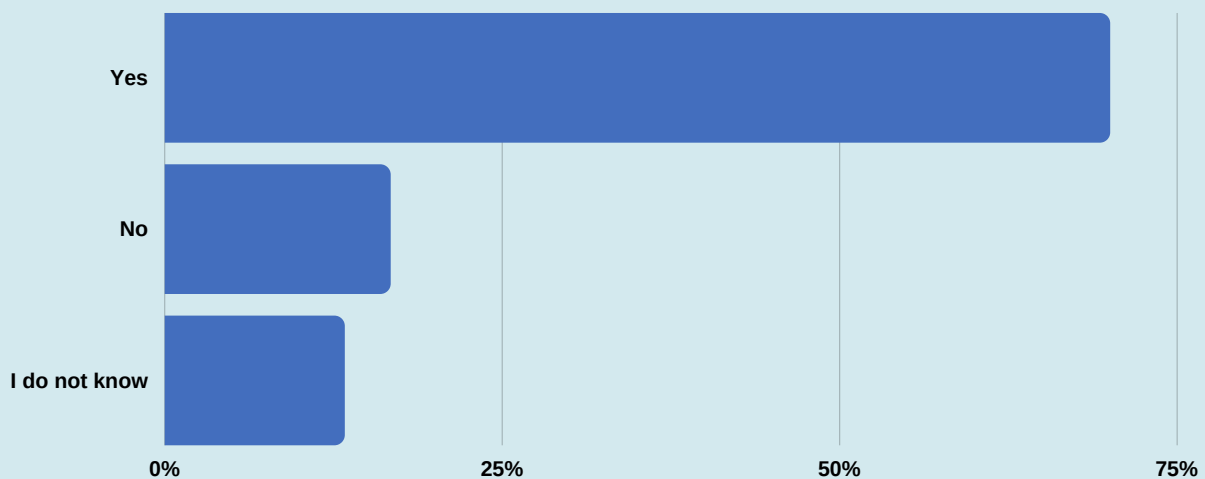
- The member companies of GEA consider having the specific system for prevention of the COVID 19 circulation as important and there are in need of concrete measures towards it;
- GEA should develop, based on the ILO or relevant organizations materials and guides, concrete systems that
- would enable the companies manage the COVID 19 at work place and be in compliance with the established requirements and regulations by the State;

3.5. Do you think it is important to have a specific and concrete system for prevention of COVID 19 at work place that will decrease the infection and circulation risks?

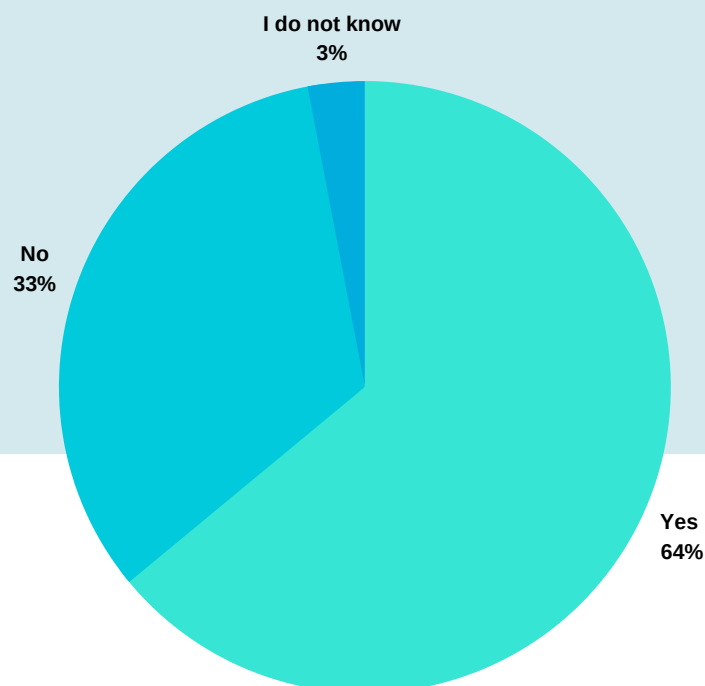
As a logical result from the previous data, we see that to monitor the contractors, visitors, external persons, the 70% of the companies believe that the specific system could support them to manage all the mentioned sides. The last is closely connected with the business development long-termed strategies, continuation plan and OSH management system.

Conclusions:

- The absolute majority of the interviewed companies believe that the specific in-company system will support them to assess and monitor the contractors, visitors and etc..
- GEA should adapt and use the guides and manuals (ILO among them) for developing specific system of management with recording journals and other components for externals;
- GEA should work individually with the companies for developing the long-termed and integrated strategies for the members;



3.6. Is your organization in need of development of an emergency and crisis management plan?

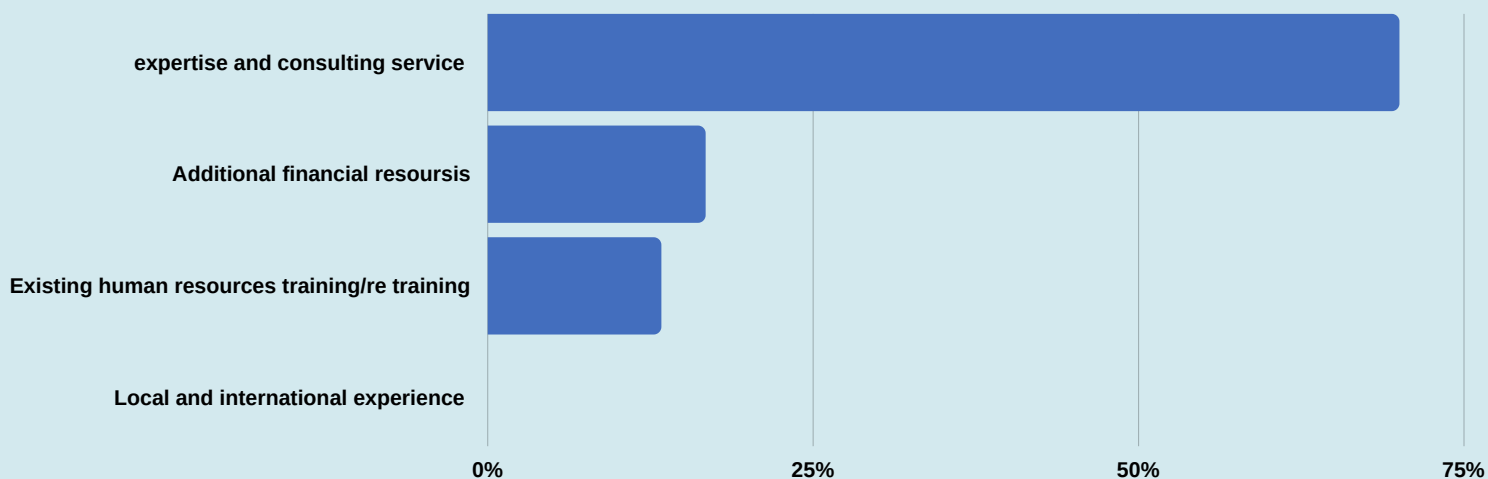


Appropriately, as stated several times in the relevant section and defining the graphs, the necessity of suitable management systems should be implemented in the companies where the role of GEA as a business supporting and employers' organization, is crucial. The picture reveals that the whole 64% consider the crisis and emergency plans in urgent need for the companies and it is recommended that the services should be focused specifically on OSH and business continuity plans (including crisis management plans). The ILO has delivered to GEA the business continuity plan (BCP) concept that has to be adapted and integrated into the GEA services.

Conclusions:

- The absolute majority of the interviewed companies believe that they are in need of emergency and crisis management plans, especially now under COVID 19 pandemic that can be even more critical for the further waves of the infection;
- GEA should implement the ILO adapted BCP as a service from GEA to their companies;

3.7. What concrete requirements do you have for developing and implementation of a specific system?

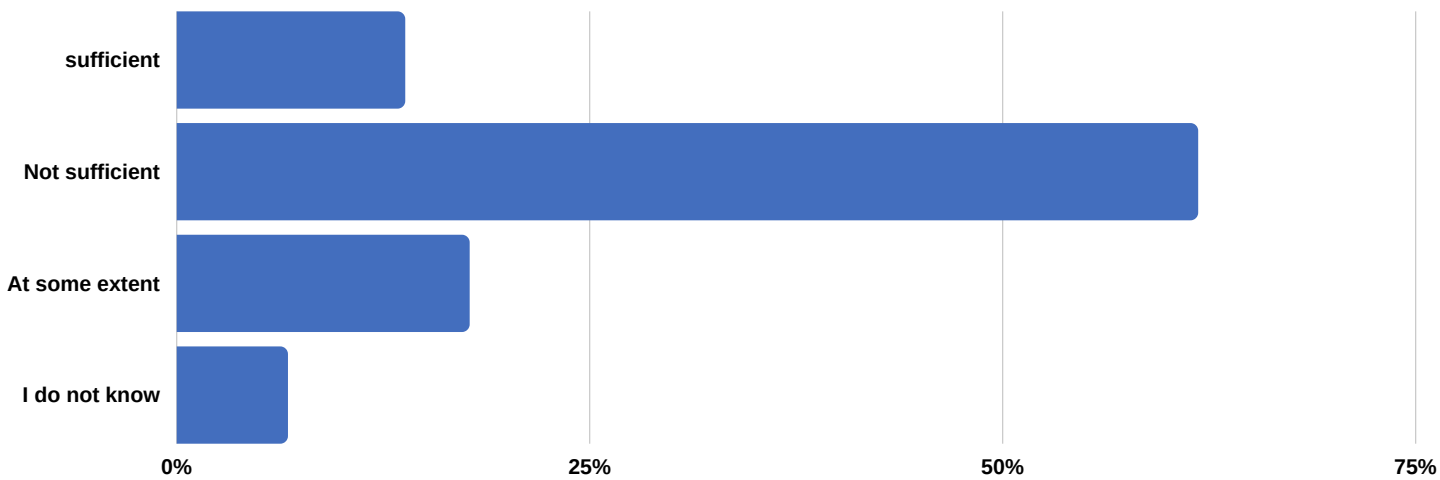


And so, on the question of what exactly companies are thinking on concrete requirements for developing and implementation of a specific system the 36.3% answers that it is the expertise and consulting services – apparently external ones or otherwise they would use their internal resources; the 12.0% says that they need financial resources, 16.7% believes that the existing human resources training/re-training could help and 35.0% consider local or international experience as a solution. If we conclude based on the data given, the majority are the requests of additional service that could be provided by GEA for their members in case of the best use of its potential – international experience/expertise, various methodologies, supporting the member in finding the additional funds, re-training of the employees of their members, and consultancy as well. It is recommended that GEA uses all its international links and expertise to start developing the specific systems required by the members.

Conclusions:

- The interviewed companies consider that they need expertise and consultancy on developing specific systems (local and international experiences among them);
- GEA should utilize all its potential – local and international, various methodologies, supporting the member in finding the additional funds, re-training of the employees of their members, and consultancy as well. It is recommended that GEA uses all its international links and expertise to start developing the specific systems required by the members (ILO among them).

3.8. Is the regulations and recommendations established by the Government sufficient for the next and following waves of outbreak?



On the significant question related to the next waves of the pandemics that are actually declared by the relevant authorities against the compliances of the companies to the established regulations and requirements by the Government the 61.8% think that the recommendations and regulations to avoid or manage the second and further waves of the COVID-19 are not sufficient, 13.8% of the respondents think that they are sufficient, 17.7% says that regulations and requirement are “at some extent” acceptable and 6.7% does not have answer to the question. The results seem that companies are not satisfied with the regulations and requirements, at least for the second and next waves of the virus and moreover they have threats that in case of additional quarantine and emergency situation, there will be in totally bad condition. So, the GEA and relevant organizations should pay attention to the findings and take the appropriate measures as new and quality services, OSH management systems, working places/environment arrangement and etc...herewith, if the companies are not satisfied with the recommendations and regulations of the Government, GEA has to think about offering the Government ways of solutions, perfection of the established regulations/requirements and requesting them to enable GEA be more and more involved in the process of any initiatives/amendments planned with regard to COVID-19 prevention and appropriate measures for compliance. This leads to strengthening of dialogue between the constituents and joint decisions at national level.

Conclusions:

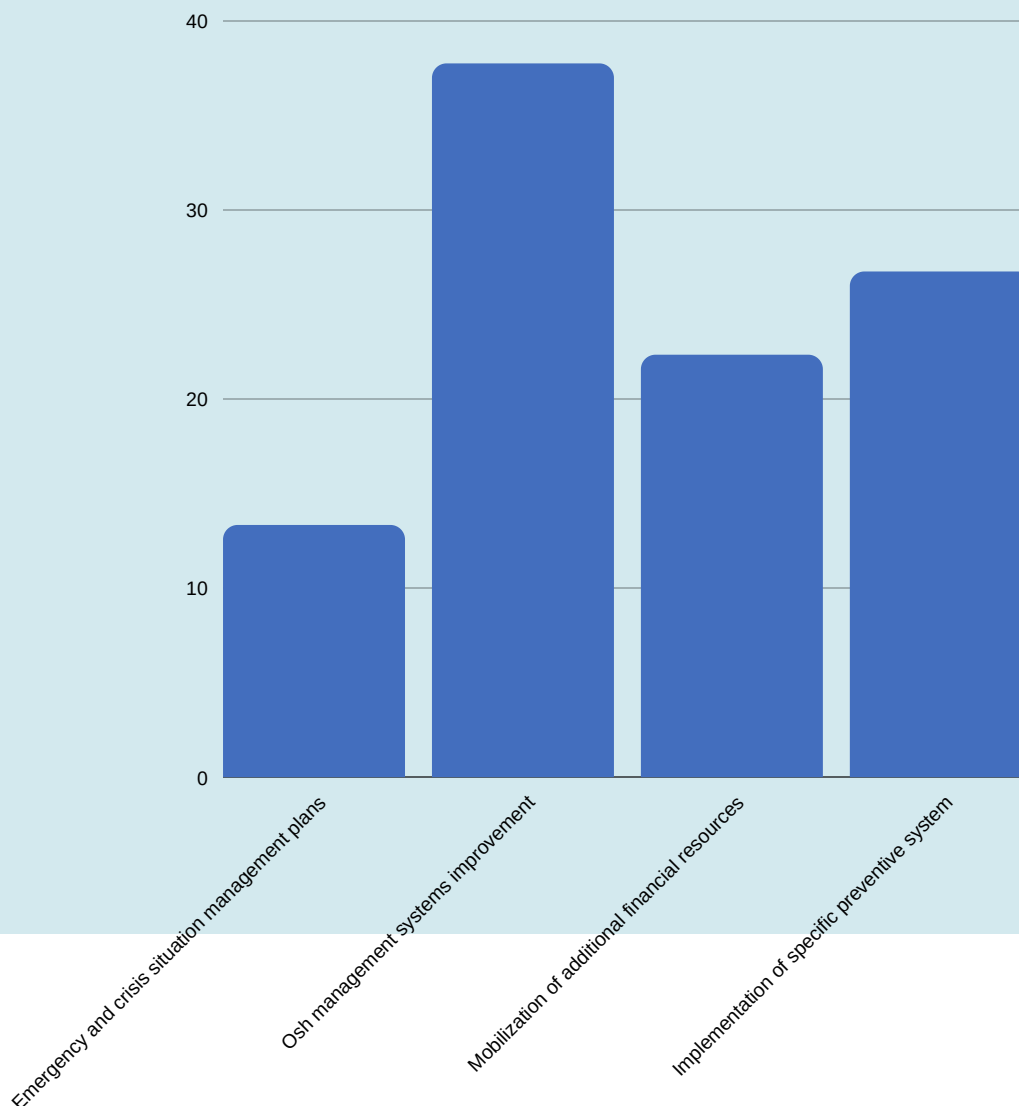
- The interviewed companies believe that the regulations and recommendations for prevention of the COVID 19 established by the Government are not sufficient to manage the virus impact for the next and further waves;
- GEA should be activated and focused on its concrete and result-oriented services, specifically for managing the COVID 19 at work places;
- GEA should offer its proposals to the Government for revision the regulations and requirements based on the findings and results of the survey data;

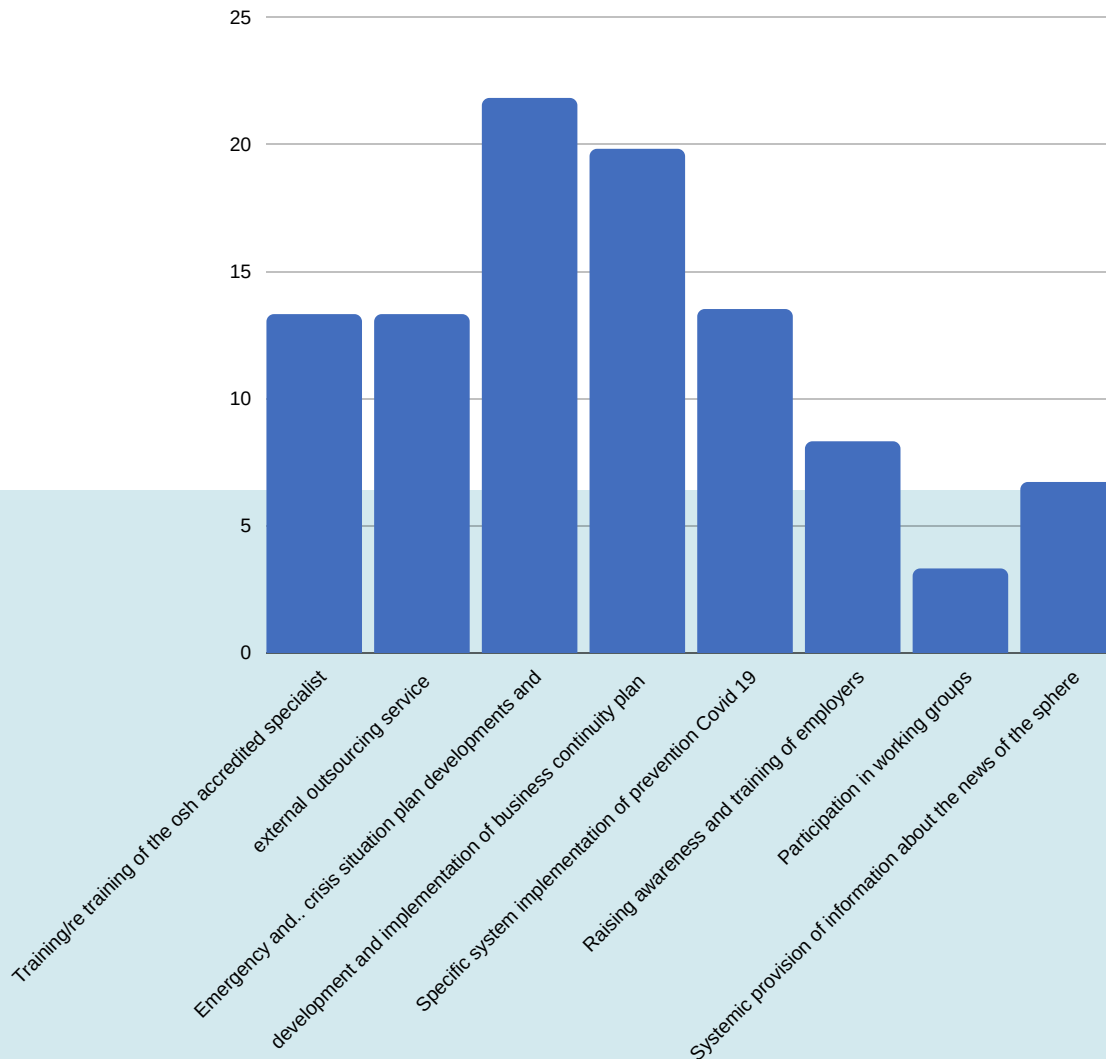
3.9. In case of COVID 19 next waves, what are the additional needs and requirements for your readiness?

On the graph 3.9. below we can see that the respondents consider it very important to have OSH management systems improved – 37.7%; the 22.3% think that mobilization of financial resources will be needed, 13.3% considers emergency and crisis management as important for the further reality and 26.7% believes that specific prevention system implementation is the way out. Again, the role of services from GEA to the member companies with the relevant consultancy and expertise is actual and critical.

Conclusions:

- The interviewed companies are in need of improvement of OSH management systems on place, especially for the strike of COVID 19 next and further waves;
- The companies are in need of additional financial resources as crises management, the part of which is the financial issues as well;
- GEA should activate its policy on OSH and provide concrete measures towards it;
- GEA should analyze deeper the financial impact of the COVID 19 and apparently support the companies (especially SMEs) in managing the crises (financial among them) in case of next waves of the pandemics;





3.10. Considering the interests of your company, what are the services you require for fully complying the requirements and regulations for prevention of COVID 19 ?

Question 3.10 with the graph –“what are the services you require for the full compliance with the newly established regulations and requirements” is the most important for the GEA to plan and develop the new services or adapt the existing ones for the member companies. The objective is the full compliance of the members with the new regulations and recommendations that are established from the side of the Government.

Conclusions:

- The interviewed companies are in need of:
- Training/re-training of the OSH accredited specialist and external outsourcing service among them where GEA is in full compliance as policy and service provider;
- Emergency and crisis situation management plans development and BCP;
- Specific system implementation of prevention of COVID 19 at work places;
- Raising awareness and training of employees;
- Systemic provision of information about the news of the sphere - 6.7%;

So, the GEA has to activate the relations with its members and use the data above as the guideline for the rapid reaction to the needs of the member companies on the way of developing and implementation of the services. In case, GEA has ready services in the directions mentioned above, it has to adapt them to the statistical data that the above specific question includes.

Assessment results and recommendation for service provision and policies on national level

Georgia has gone through various reforms and harmonization process to the EU legislation during the recent years and really reached lots of progress. The economy was growing fast until the shock from the COVID-19 pandemics that really destroyed plans for the world and Georgia among them. For the immediate response to the COVID-pandemics the Government of Georgia established new rules, regulations and requirements towards business that has to match and comply with the new reality but at the same time think over its development and continuity. The Georgian Employers Association (GEA) conducted the research among the member 250 companies with the objective to Analysis of the existing reality connected with the COVID-19 regulations and recommendations for businesses, their challenges and requirements for the full compliance and filling the gaps. Specifically, the tasks of the survey were:

- Determination of the level of knowledge of the new regulations and recommendations established by the Government of Georgia for the businesses for prevention of the COVID-19;
- Compliances level of the business companies with the newly established regulations and requirements for prevention COVID-19;
- How and with which resources the companies implement the established regulations and requirements with regard to COVID-19;
- If the companies possess specific system on places for prevention COVID-19 and what are their requirements for establishing the mentioned system;
- What are the obstacles and core factors in implementation of the requirements and regulations for prevention of the COVID-19;
- How well and progressively the companies manage raising awareness and knowledge on COVID-19 and related requirements and regulations;
- What are the challenges and necessities that the companies face for the full compliance with the established regulations and requirements on COVID-19, especially in expectation of the second and further waves of the virus;

The main finding for GEA and recommendations on development of new service:

1. Raising the capacities of GEA for providing the new and appropriate services to the member companies, especially for their full compliances with the established regulations and requirements by the Government of Georgia for prevention of the COVID-19 at work places:More specifically:

1.1. Development and empowerment of GEA internal human resources in general and especially in the direction of Occupational Safety and Health (with its outsource team) and relevant management systems with focus on COVID-19 prevention at work places and generally of Bio-hazards;

- GEA's internal human resources are strengthened in the direction of OSH and management systems;
- GEA's expertise on COVID 19 and its prevention/impact on work places are improved (based on the ILO and relevant organizations manuals/guidelines/instructions/methodologies and etc...);

2. Activation of GEA and its communication and public relations strategies with companies (daily contacts with members) and all the stakeholders to raise the public profile of GEA;

- GEA has daily communication with the members on provision of information and news on regulations and requirements of the Government for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places;
- GEA Develops specific check-lists serving to identify the level of compliances of the companies with the regulations and requirements established by the Government of Georgia, for responding the concrete needs for acquiescence of the members;
- GEA develops/revises its PR and communications strategies (short-termed and long-termed) to members and national levels for improving the public profile of the association so that the GEA is the number one provider of legislative amendments, new regulations and etc...to its member companies and strong social partner to the Government;

3. Integration of international practice in the services of GEA, more specifically for the COVID-19 and utilization of the ILO guides and manuals for “Safe Return to Work Places” and others;

- GEA uses all the ILO (and relevant organizations) delivered guidelines and manual for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places for their further adaptation to the local specific needs;
- GEA integrates the international (ILO) best practices and specific guidelines for its services targeted on prevention of the COVID 19 at work places (safe return to work places, among them) because the member companies consider the international experience and expertise as a need, especially for managing the COVID 19 for its next and further stages/waves and full compliance with the established regulations and requirements that could be even stricter in the future;
- GEA integrates the recommendations and regulations of the GoG in its OSH management systems and in relevant services (for ensuring the compliance with the regulations by the State while inspecting the members of GEA);
- GEA adapts/develops COVID 19 prevention assessment and monitoring tools and instruments for the companies and integrates them into the OSH management system;

4. Development of training programmes and specific modules for the human resource and OSH managers of companies for managing and mobilizations of the employees in struggle with the COVID-19;

- GEA develops short-termed trainings programmes for companies' employees on raising awareness of COVID-19 prevention measures and responsibilities of all human resources/units in its prevention that would raise the organizational culture and comprehension of the role of employees in it;
- Supporting the companies individually to develop specific modules of educational programmes for the companies' employees based on the guidelines and manuals from international organizations (considering the national requirements in prevention of the COVID 19 at work places);
- GEA focuses on the HR management services for its members as the findings and data from the survey shows the urgent necessity for it;
- GEA uses all the materials form ILO and other organizations for supporting the member companies in arrangement of working places as a response to COVID-19 (including trainings for employees);

5. Promotion of business continuity plan (ILO materials and promo videos on web-site, social media, media agencies and etc...) with relevant activities and measures and long-termed development strategies (crisis management among them);

GEA raises its internal capacities towards development of BCPs and works individually with the companies to development and implementation of the relevant plan serving to support the members overcoming the crisis of COVID 19 and its further waves/impacts maintaining the operational status;
GEA supports its member to establish the culture of managements systems and long-termed development strategies;

6. Development of special packages for SMEs for overcoming the strike of pandemics (financial,

state programmes, relevant trainings/knowledge and etc...);
majority of the surveyed companies are SMEs identifying the problems describes in appropriate chapters. So, GEA works on special services along with the mentioned above to assist the SMEs with trainings, access to finances, implementation of the state run supporting programmes, compliance with the established regulations and requirements from the GoG for avoiding additional sanctions that may drive to closure of some members, especially the small and micro enterprises;

7. Strengthening the role of GEA on national level:

- Strengthening the role, capacities and public image of GEA as a social partner;
- Strengthening the mechanism and instruments of communication and negotiations of GEA with the Government, especially in legislative initiatives and for better cooperation between public and private sectors;
- Promotion of OSH management systems and internationally recognized standards, ILO among them, by GEA at national level;
- Involvement of GEA in improving the efficiency of public administration through good management and
- better organization;

GEA Policy proposals and recommendations to the Government of Georgia

1. Addition and integration of the COVID-19 related recommendations and requirement established by the Government as an obligatory training modules into the OSH accredited programme.

The impact of the COVID-19 seriously injured business sector and placed it in front of various challenges. The majority of the companies found it difficult to implement the requirements and regulations established by the Government of Georgia that hindered their economic recovery process. One of the reasons is the fact that the OSH managers/responsible persons have no adequate qualification and knowledge of crisis and emergency situations management. That is why, they were unable to comply with the requirements and regulations established by the Government of Georgia for prevention of the COVID-19 at work places. The results of the non-compliance for the preventive policies were financial sanctions/fines laid to the certain amount of companies. For resolving the problems described in the survey analysis the Georgian Employers Association has the proposal that foresees integration of the COVID-19 related recommendations and requirement established by the Government, biological hazards, crisis and emergency situations specific training modules into the OSH accredited programme. Moreover, the respondents from the given survey claim that the recommendations for prevention of the COVID 19 at work places are not satisfactory and the requirements not detailed. GEA, should recommend the Government to start revision of the regulations established and work on the new and detailed version of it together with GEA as a social partner. The joint efforts from GEA and the Government would enable business (also through additional services of GEA) be in compliance with regulations and avoid any complications in operation. Moreover, the revised regulations will make the clear picture of responsibilities from the side of businesses and the Government as well.

2. Strengthening of tripartite social dialogue

The economic and social crisis caused by the COVID-19 created lots of problems for many countries. The social dialogue has significant and vital role in such critical situations and increase of efficiency of the dialogue between the constituents – employers, government and trade unions are really crucial. Considering the mentioned, the role of employers' and employees' organizations is important in sharing experiences and taking relevant political decisions. The Government should ensure maximal involvement of social partners in regulations developing process serving to transparency and credibility from the side of society. GEA proposes to the Government to activate and use all the mechanisms of social partnership in the working groups and state tripartite commission to overcome the obstacles and ensure the full compliance by prior involvement of the dialogue parties into the process for ensuring the later compliances and respect of public administration. The revision of the COVID 19 prevention policies is recommended to start urgently in the working groups of the tripartite commission representing the three sides.

3. Revision of the penal sanctions for noncompliance with the recommendations and regulations established by the Government related to COVID-19 prevention at work places

For prevention of the COVID-19 spread at work places and struggle with the pandemics, the legislation puts many various obligations to businesses that were reflected in the recommendations established by the Ministry of Labour and Health of Georgia. Adequately, employers are required to implement the recommendations. In case the employers do not comply with the requirements and regulations the financial sanction for the companies is determined by 10 000 Georgian Lari (GEL).

The mentioned attitude from the Government was the topic of critics from the side of many companies and they assess it as very negative. This, especially concerns to the companies that fixed decrease of their incomes and are in financial crisis. Beside, lots of companies put questions how the government fixed the mentioned penalty (10 000 GEL) on the stage of its determination. If we look into the OSH organic law, we can see that it regulates the methodology and amount of the sanction by specific formula. Considering the reality that no one knows about the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic and how many months or even years the companies have to cope with the existing hard conditions, it is recommended that the Government revise the penal sanctions for their established requirements to avoid the similar questions from the companies. It is very important to involve the social partners into the process of revision of the sanction policy (prevention of the COVID 19 at work places) of the Government and ensure the equal opportunities for all the parties. This is the process that guarantees strengthening of the social dialogue and adequately the;