



## **LEGAL REGULATION OF REDUCED WORKING HOURS: THE CASE OF UZBEKISTAN IN LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the legal regulation of reduced (incomplete) working hours in the Republic of Uzbekistan and provides a comparative analysis with selected international practices, particularly focusing on Finland. In Uzbekistan, labor legislation mandates shortened working hours for certain vulnerable groups, including minors, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and individuals working in harmful or hazardous conditions. These provisions serve to protect employees' health and ensure safe working environments. By analyzing national legislation, international labor standards, and country-specific practices, this article highlights the strengths and limitations of mandatory versus negotiated approaches to reduced working hours. The study concludes with recommendations for improving legal enforcement, promoting flexibility, and aligning national practices with global labor protection trends.

**Keywords:** labor law, reduced working hours, Uzbekistan Labor Code, minors and labor protection, disability rights, flexible work arrangements, international labor standards.

### **Methodology:**

This study uses a qualitative doctrinal legal research method, focusing on the analysis of national legislation—primarily the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan and related government acts. A comparative legal approach is also applied, examining reduced working hour regulations in countries such as Finland, selected for their structured labor policies.

The research relies on primary legal texts, official government publications (e.g., Finland's MEAE Guidelines), and relevant ILO standards. A descriptive and analytical method is used to interpret the legal provisions, identify regulatory trends, and draw conclusions for improving national labor law practices.

### **Introduction**

The regulation of working hours is a fundamental component of labor law, directly impacting the health, well-being, and social life of employees. Among various forms of working time arrangements, reduced or incomplete working hours play a particularly important role in ensuring that vulnerable categories of workers—such as minors, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and those working in difficult or hazardous conditions—are protected from excessive workload and its harmful consequences.

In Uzbekistan, the Labor Code provides a legal foundation for the use of incomplete working hours as a mandatory or voluntary measure to accommodate the specific needs of certain workers. This legal safeguard reflects both social responsibility and alignment with international labor standards, including conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO). However,

despite a sound legal framework, practical implementation challenges remain, especially in the private sector and informal employment settings.

Article 181 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan defines the concept of working time. According to this article, working time is the period during which an employee must fulfill their work duties in accordance with the internal labor regulations, shift schedules, other internal documents, or the terms of the employment contract. In short, working time refers to the time during which the employee is required to perform their work obligations as specified in the employment contract.

According to the Labour Code, the following types of working time are recognized:

- normal;
- reduced;
- incomplete (part-time).

In accordance with Article 182 of the Code, the duration of normal working time shall not exceed 40 hours per week, regardless of whether a five-day or six-day work schedule is applied.

The reduced duration of working time applies to certain categories of individuals, and must be granted on a mandatory basis to the following employees:

- employees under the age of eighteen;
- persons with Group I and II disabilities;
- employees engaged in work under unfavorable (hazardous) working conditions;
- employees whose work involves a high level of psychological, mental, or nervous strain;
- one parent (not employed in the budgetary sector) of a child under the age of three.

Article 415 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan sets out the duration of reduced working hours for persons under the age of 18. According to this article, employees aged 16 to 18 may work no more than 36 hours per week, while those aged 15 to 16 may work no more than 24 hours per week.

In such cases, if the employee is between the ages of 15 and 16, their daily working time must not exceed: 4 hours per day under a 6-day workweek, or 5 hours per day under a 5-day workweek. For employees aged 16 to 18, the daily working time must not exceed: 6 hours per day under a 6-day workweek, or 7 hours and 30 minutes per day under a 5-day workweek.

For employees with Group I and II disabilities, the reduced duration of working time is established in Article 427 of the Labour Code. According to this article, the working time for such employees must not exceed 36 hours per week. What makes the regulation of reduced working hours for persons with disabilities unique is that the duration of a workday (or shift) must be determined in accordance with the recommendations of the medical and social expert commission. However, even in such cases, the maximum daily working hours per week are clearly defined by law. As stated in the second part of Article 427, the working time for persons with disabilities must not exceed: 6 hours per day under a 6-day workweek, or 7 hours and 30 minutes per day under a 5-day workweek.

The third category of individuals entitled to reduced working hours includes employees engaged in work under unfavorable (hazardous) working conditions. The legal basis for applying

this type of working time to such employees is provided in Article 477 of the Labour Code. According to this article, the working time for employees in this category must not exceed 36 hours per week.

Employees whose work involves a high level of psychological, mental, or nervous strain are also subject to reduced working hours. The list of employees entitled to a shortened working day due to the specific nature of their work is clearly defined in Annex 4 of the Resolution No. 758 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to this annex, the following categories are included among such employees:

-Medical personnel

-Pedagogical (teaching) staff

-Other employees, including: Television and radio presenters, sound engineers, sign language interpreters. For employees in these categories, the working time must not exceed 36 hours per week.

The final category of employees entitled to reduced working hours are one of the parents of a child under the age of three, as stipulated in Article 397 of the Labour Code. For individuals in this category, the working time must not exceed 35 hours per week.

In contrast to Uzbekistan's labor legislation, which mandates reduced working hours for specific categories of workers such as minors, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women, Finland adopts a flexible, agreement-based model that offers similar protections but through a framework of mutual consent and individualized accommodation.

Under Chapter 4 of Finland's Employment Contracts Act, employees may request to work fewer hours than the regular working time for social or health-related reasons, including partial early retirement, disability-related concerns, or child care responsibilities. The employer is legally required to strive to organize the work in such a way that part-time employment becomes possible. This reduction in working hours may take the form of shortened daily or weekly schedules, and the arrangement may last for a maximum of 26 weeks at a time, unless extended by agreement between the parties.

Additionally, parents of young children are entitled to apply for partial child care leave, allowing them to reduce their working time. Employees nearing retirement or those receiving partial disability pensions also have the right to request reduced working hours. Importantly, the law requires the employer to provide written reasons if a request for part-time work is denied, thus introducing an element of accountability and transparency into the process.

### **Conclusion:**

The concept of reduced working hours plays a crucial role in protecting the rights and well-being of vulnerable employee groups. In Uzbekistan, the Labour Code provides mandatory reduced working hours for categories such as minors, persons with disabilities, employees working under hazardous conditions, and those in psychologically demanding roles. This reflects a strong commitment to labor protection through legal obligations. Comparative analysis with countries like Finland shows that while Uzbekistan emphasizes mandatory provisions, other jurisdictions often adopt a flexible, agreement-based approach, allowing employees to negotiate reduced hours based on personal or family needs. Finland's model, in particular, offers a balance between legal protection and adaptability to individual circumstances. To enhance the current system, Uzbekistan may consider incorporating more flexible mechanisms that support both employee welfare and employer needs, particularly for caregivers and workers in evolving labor markets.

Strengthening enforcement, clarifying implementation procedures, and aligning with international labor standards can contribute to a more inclusive and effective legal framework.

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