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Research Article

THE TARIFF WAGE SYSTEM AS THE BASIS FOR FORMING FAIR WAGES

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This article examines the existing mechanism for constructing tariff systems of remuneration at organisations in the Republic of Belarus. Remuneration is an important tool for attracting, motivating and retaining qualified employees, and remuneration policy is an integral part of organisational management. The economic efficiency of an organisation and improvements in the wellbeing of its employees largely depend on the choice of remuneration system. The author has attempted to identify the inherent advantages and disadvantages of the tariff system and to chart possible avenues for development in a market economy.

Keywords: *tariff system, remuneration, wages, tariff and qualification directory, unified tariff schedule*

ТАРИФНАЯ СИСТЕМА ОПЛАТЫ ТРУДА КАК ОСНОВА ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ СПРАВЕДЛИВОЙ ЗАРАБОТНОЙ ПЛАТЫ

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В статье рассматривается механизм построения тарифных систем оплаты труда в организациях в Республике Беларусь. Оплата труда – важный инструмент для привлечения, мотивации и удержания квалифицированных работников, а политика в области оплаты труда – неотъемлемая часть управления организацией. От выбора системы оплаты труда во многом зависят экономическая эффектив-

ность организации и рост благосостояния работников. Автором предпринята попытка выявить присущие тарифной системе преимущества и недостатки, а также определить возможные направления развития в условиях рыночной экономики.

Ключевые слова: тарифная система, оплата труда, заработная плата, тарифно-квалификационный справочник, единая тарифная сетка

Introduction

Among the many concepts and institutions of labour law, remuneration occupies a special position in the system of social and labour relations. In this connection, a significant place among the studies of legislation in recent years is held by issues related to the study of the institution of remuneration. Such interest in the topic is prompted by urgent need, manifested primarily in practical terms. Namely: wages as a social and economic category that is one of the basic indicators of the standard of living of the working population.

To understand the process of regulating remuneration and establishing wage differentiation, the study of theoretical issues of legislative development in this area is currently of great importance.

The issue of remuneration remains highly relevant yet insufficiently studied by the country's researchers. Theoretical aspects of remuneration were considered in the works of a limited number of authors (S. N. Lebedeva, A. P. Morovaya, E. S. Rusak, G. G. Korzh). It is crucial to note the monograph by T. N. Dolinina 'Oplata truda nayemnykh rabotnikov: teoretiko-metodologicheskiye aspekty' [Dolinina, 2011], which systematically reveals the theoretical foundations of remuneration. Familiarisation with the publications of reputable researchers allows us to reach the conclusion that there is no unified position in understanding the essence of remuneration and wages, since such study has primarily been conducted in the applied aspect and most often by economists; in this regard, it is worth noting that the accounting approach prevails in research on this topic.

The purpose of this article is to examine the existing mechanism for constructing tariff systems of remuneration at organisations in the Republic of Belarus, to identify their inherent advantages and disadvantages and to chart possible avenues for development in a market economy.

Research methods

The methodological basis of the study was the dialectical method of cognition of social phenomena, which allows us to consider them in their development, interconnection and interdependence. A set of general and special methods of scientific inquiry, taken together, was used in conducting this study. For a comprehensive study of the theoretical and legal foundations of remuneration in labour law, the historical method was used, which clearly showed the logic of developing knowledge about this phenomenon. The analytical method was used to study the method of organising remuneration according to labour legislation in detail. The method of comparative legal and systemic analysis, as well as the method of expert assessments, were used to study the issue of implementing various labour remuneration systems.

Main points

The policy of any state should be aimed at ensuring fair and decent remuneration that improves quality of life. Currently, one of the main mechanisms of personnel management is financial incentives. In order to find an optimal remuneration system that combines the interests of employers and employees, aimed at developing the activities of organisations, it is important to create an effective mechanism for its regulation. In the Republic of Belarus, considerable attention is paid to improving the labour remuneration and employee incentivisation system in the current economic conditions.

That said, the issue of establishing decent wages for employees is rather contentious. The International Labour Organisation calls on all countries to implement the transition to decent labour, which involves the establishment of decent wages. While today's researchers approach the conceptual substance of 'decent remuneration' from different points of view, all definitions boil down to the following equation: 'decent remuneration = a decent life'. In the new edition of the FITUR (Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia Programme) 'Decent Work – the Basis of Human Wellbeing and National Development,' approved on February 9, 2015, by resolution of the FITUR IX Congress, the following definition of decent wages is given: 'By decent wages, trade unions mean wages that: provide economic freedom to the working person and their family; create the basic framework for social insurance and social security systems; can provide a person with free development, recreation, access to the achievements of civilisation; meet the concept of the fair distribution of labour output; are earned in conditions that do not degrade human dignity; solve the problem of the material base for the expanded reproduction of the country's population, provide the economy with qualified labour resources'¹.

Decent wages provide economic freedom, create opportunities for insurance and social security systems; help to provide a person with free development, recreation, access to the achievements of science and technology; solve the problem of the material base for the expanded reproduction of the country's population, provide the economy with qualified labour resources. Beyond just employees, employers are also objectively interested in establishing fair and decent wages, since decent wages encourage the latter to introduce new technologies and increase the competitiveness of organisations, create effective demand and stimulate economic development [Zhukov, 2019: 32].

It is the responsibility of the employer to organise the remuneration of employees, to determine the size, structure, conditions and procedure for paying wages to employees for the fulfilment of their work duties. Pursuant to the Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus (hereinafter – the Labour Code), regulatory legal acts, collective agreements, agreements, other local legal acts and employment contracts determine remuneration, which can be based on tariff or tariff-free systems. As noted by E. I. Kosakovskaya and G. V. Khnykin: 'The tariff system is usually called the basis of the scientific organisation of wages... the tariff system of remuneration is a broader concept than just the remuneration system. It is the basis for the establishment of all remuneration systems, insofar as it constitutes the set of norms (rules, criteria) whereby the work and qualifications of employees are ranked. The essence of remuneration systems is to determine the methods for calculating the amounts of the components of wages' [Kosakovskaya, Khnykin, 2023: 263, 271].

The Labour Code does not define the concept of 'tariff system'. The definition is given in Decree No. 27 of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated January 18, 2019 'On the Remuneration of Employees at Budgetary Organisations'. The tariff system is a remuneration system based on the differentiation of wages of employees in various categories according to the tariff schedule and base rate².

In Article 143 of the Labour Code of the Russian Federation (hereinafter – the LC of the Russian Federation), tariff systems are defined as 'remuneration systems based on a tariff system for differentiating the wages of employees in various categories. The tariff system for the differentiation of wages of employees in various categories includes: tariff rates, salaries (official salaries), tariff schedule and pay-rate multipliers. Remuneration tariff

¹ Resolution of the FITUR IX Congress On the FITUR Programme 'Decent Work – the Basis of Human Wellbeing and National Development'.

² On the Remuneration of Employees at Budgetary Organisations: Decree No. 27 of the President of the Republic of Belarus, January 18, 2019, ed. dated 23.06.2023.

systems are established by collective agreements, agreements and local regulations in accordance with labour legislation and other regulations containing 'labour law norms'³.

The meaning of the tariff system is as follows:

regardless of an organisation's productivity and the results of its economic activity, guaranteed tariff rates (salaries) are established for the fulfilment of core working hours;

the level of tariff rates and salaries is determined in view of the market price of labour and the cost of manpower reproduction;

the possibility of differentiating tariff rates (salaries) by personnel category, depending on differences in the value of the workplace, complexity and working conditions;

encouraging employees to improve their skills.

Accordingly, the tariff system is a set of standards whereby the regulation and differentiation of tariff rates and salaries are ensured depending on complexity, working conditions and the value of working time, also accounting for labour market price and the cost of living.

The tariff system of remuneration has undergone continuous refinement. At all historical stages of the country's development, it has played a significant and even major role in the organisation of remuneration [Ivanov, 2013: 175]. As E. S. Romanova notes in her research, in the period from 1917 to 1986, the use of the tariff system in the USSR was mandated as the only possible arrangement for the organisation of remuneration. In 1986, the country initiated wage restructuring, one of whose conditions was the broader independence of enterprises in the arrangement of remuneration [Romanova, 2014: 104]. Up until January 1, 2003, the application of elements of the tariff system in the Republic of Belarus was advisory in nature; however, with the entry into force of Resolution No. 123 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection dated September 20, 2002 'On Approval of the Instruction on the Procedure for Applying the Unified Tariff Schedule of Employees in the Republic of Belarus'⁴, which mandated the Unified Tariff Schedule, application of the tariff system of remuneration became compulsory once again.

Only in 2011, with the entry into force of Decree No. 181 of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated May 10, 2011 'On Certain Measures to Improve State Regulation in Remuneration', were organisations in the real sector of the economy able to use alternative, including tariff-free, systems of remuneration. Such systems are called 'flexible' in national legislation and methodological documents.

That said, with the passage of much time since the adoption of this decree, it is unnecessary to discuss the real spread of flexible systems of remuneration in the Republic of Belarus; therefore, it can be stated that the tariff wage system prevails in the republic, despite the abolition of its mandatory nature in 2011. Further application of the tariff wage system at both commercial organisations and public sector institutions was regulated by Decree No. 67 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus dated July 11, 2011 'Recommendations on Determining the Tariff Rates (Salaries) of Employees at Commercial Organisations and on the Procedure for Their Increase'. The differences for commercial and budgetary organisations consisted solely of the principle of imperative application and the right to set the value of the tariff rate of the first category [Aleksandrenok, 2021: 84].

Since January 2020, a new tariff system has been introduced to pay the employees of budgetary organisations (and other organisations receiving subsidies whose employees

³ Labour Code of the Russian Federation: December 30, 2001, No. 197-FZ: adopted by the State Duma on December 21, 2001: approved by the Federation Council on December 26, 2001: ed. Federal Law dated 04.08.2023.

⁴ On Approval of the Instruction on the Procedure for Applying the Unified Tariff Schedule of Employees in the Republic of Belarus: Resolution No. 123 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, September 20, 2002, ed. dated 23.03.2009.

are equal in terms of remuneration to the employees of budgetary organisations). Decree No. 27 of the President of the Republic of Belarus dated January 18, 2019 ‘On the Remuneration of Employees of Budgetary Organisations’ means a labour remuneration system based on the differentiation of wages of employees in various categories based on the tariff schedule and base rate⁵.

The main transformation took place in two structural elements of the tariff system:

the tariff rate of the first category was replaced by the base rate, which should be understood as the value used in calculating employee salaries at budgetary organisations;

tariff schedule, i. e. the distribution of categories of workers by professional qualification groups and tariff categories (ranges of tariff categories), with corresponding multipliers, was reduced from 27 to 18 tariff categories. The previous version of the tariff schedule wasn’t the most successful, as it differed in terms of its ‘surplus number of categories, excessively large range and regressively changing intercategory ratios, which does not correspond to the established practice of organising wages in developed countries and does not take into account the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation’ [Romanova, 2014: 105].

Accordingly, the remuneration of employees is determined by the base rate and the pay-rate multipliers for the tariff category of the tariff schedule, while tariff category is understood to mean the amount reflecting the complexity of work in the employee’s position, considering the level of qualification established by the qualification characteristic.

The procedure for assigning types of labour to a particular tariff category (rate setting) is conducted using an element of the tariff system such as tariff and qualification directories. In the Republic of Belarus, the rates for workers’ labour are set using the Unified Tariff and Qualification Directory of Jobs and Professions of Workers⁶; managers, specialists and other employees – the Unified Qualification Directory of Employee Positions⁷. The basis of labour differentiation is the complexity of the organisation and flow of the production process, as well as the main labour characteristics of the employee – level of education, length of service and industrial qualification degree.

These changes were reflected in Articles 60 and 61 of the Labour Code⁸. Article 61 of the Labour Code establishes that the remuneration of employees, with the exception of employees of budgetary organisations and other organisations receiving subsidies whose employees are equal in terms of remuneration to the employees of budgetary organisations, is based on tariff rates (tariff salaries) determined by the respective collective agreement, agreement or employer.

The remuneration of employees of budgetary organisations and other organisations receiving subsidies whose employees are equated in terms of remuneration to the employees of budgetary organisations is based on a tariff system that includes a base rate and a tariff schedule. The remuneration of civil servants is based on monthly official salaries determined pursuant to applicable legislation.

⁵ On the Remuneration of Employees at Budgetary Organisations: Decree No. 27 of the President of the Republic of Belarus, January 18, 2019, ed. dated 23.06.2023.

⁶ On Approval of the General Provisions of the Unified Tariff and Qualification Directory of Jobs and Professions of Workers (UTQD): Resolution No. 34 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, March 30, 2004, ed. dated 15.06.2018.

⁷ On Approval of the General Provisions of the Unified Tariff and Qualification Directory of Employee Positions: Resolution No. 1 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Belarus, January 2, 2012, ed. dated 31.10.2022.

⁸ Labour Code of the Republic of Belarus: July 26, 1999, No. 296-Z: adopted by the House of Representatives on June 8, 1999: approved by the Council of the Republic on June 30, 1999: ed. Law of the Republic of Belarus dated 30.06.2022.

Thus, four different terms are used to denote a single value: salary, tariff rate, monthly official salary and base rate, and it seems to us that the current tariff mechanism is becoming more complicated.

It should be noted that the main purpose of the tariff system is the differentiation of wages, which is accomplished using various tools.

The first tool is the division into three groups of remuneration for each title of the position of managers and specialists, depending on their affiliation with a particular industry.

The second tool is the categorisation of specialists / rate-setting for all work to be performed at the organisation, according to the qualification characteristics contained in the Unified Qualification Directory of Employee Positions and the Unified Tariff and Qualification Directory of Jobs and Professions of Workers.

The third tool is the structure of the Unified Tariff Schedule of employees, which rather precisely regulates the dependence of remuneration on employee qualifications, the complexity of the work being performed and management level.

We agree with the opinion of N. M. Salikova that at the present stage, the importance of the tariff system has increased in ensuring a social standard in remuneration of equal value, i. e. it is becoming a guarantor of putting into practice the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, as generally recognised by international practice [Salikova, 2003: 236].

Based on the principles of social justice, the proportionality of work and its results, as well as employee solidarity, the tariff remuneration system assumes the use of fixed rates or tariffs for certain positions or categories of employees. This ensures transparency and fairness in remuneration, as each position has a clearly defined rate based on the respective level of qualification and responsibility.

Despite its wide popularity and use, the tariff system of remuneration has some disadvantages. First of all, it has no flexibility. The tariff system of remuneration is fixed and unable to adapt quickly to the changing conditions or requirements of the labour market. This can lead to uneven pay for various positions.

Secondly, in a fixed-rate system, the employee may not have enough incentive to develop professionally and learn new skills. If rewards are not tied to individual growth and achievement, it can lead to stagnation and lack of motivation.

Thirdly, there is the difficulty of setting tariffs. The procedure for calculating and setting tariffs for various positions is labour-intensive and requires a detailed analysis and assessment of each position.

In general, the tariff system of remuneration in the Republic of Belarus seeks to ensure fair and decent remuneration for workers, motivate them to work more efficiently, and create social and economic stability in the country.

Recently, so-called tariff-free, flexible remuneration systems based on the workers' share in enterprise profits or income are increasingly being used. A flexible remuneration system is understood as a system that makes a certain part of earnings dependent on personal merits and on the overall efficiency of the organisation, provides an opportunity to avoid one-time reductions in base salary. Flexible payment makes it possible to respond in a timely and adequate manner to changes in the employee's performance through the individualisation of their earnings. Such remuneration systems involve the establishment of differentiated remuneration conditions aimed at strengthening the employees' material interest in increasing labour productivity and taking into account as much as possible the complexity of the work being performed, skill level, efficiency, quality and working conditions, as well as each employee's contribution to the overall results of activities, their entrepreneurial spirit and creative approach. When determining the amount of remuneration, not only length of service, qualifications, and professional skills are

taken into account, but also the employee's importance to the enterprise and their ability to accomplish goals, thereby contributing to the organisation's development.

In tariff-free systems, employee wages consist of two main parts: permanent and variable. The permanent part is the employee's basic salary, which is regulated by the planned salary fund, while the variable part is an additional payment whose amount depends on the overall performance (profit) of the entire enterprise. At the same time, the tariff-free remuneration system is associated with such concepts as the qualification multiplier, degree of labour participation and the financial fund from which wages are allocated. It is formed based on the results of the team's work, whereby each employee claims a share from the fund. Most often, this system is used at small organisations, where it is relatively easy to keep records of each employee's work output and thereby stimulate the team to achieve greater results. Some people point out that such a remuneration system is the most promising wage model [Aliyev & Gorelov & Ilyina, 2015: 30].

Thus, tariff-free remuneration systems are based on the following basic principles:

the salary fund of the enterprise and its divisions represents a fixed percentage of the revenue (profit) of the enterprise;

there is a shared distribution of the salary fund among enterprise employees, based on their actual labour contribution;

the personal results of employee work are determined on the basis of a set of multipliers that take into account length of service, qualifications, professional skills, the employee's importance, their ability to achieve certain current and long-term goals, and most importantly – the degree of execution of this ability, expressed as the estimated characteristics of the efficiency of their work [Genkin, 2016: 216].

In contrast to traditional tariff remuneration systems, in accordance with tariff-free models, an employee's earnings are set and fixed in the Wage Regulations (or a similar document of the organisation) not in monetary terms, but in the form of a certain multiplier showing the employee's share in the salary fund or payroll budget. Moreover, as a rule, this multiplier may vary depending on how effectively the organisation (or its division) worked in the reporting period and how well the employee performed their official duties. Rejection of the monetary fixation of wages in favour of the introduction of a wage multiplier makes it possible to protect an employee's salary from inflation and to abandon the regular revision of its value in a situation of rising prices. In her research on the technology of developing flexible remuneration systems in the context of the introduction of professional standards, L. G. Milyaeva notes that flexible remuneration systems should be based on three fundamental points that form their essential basis [Milyaeva, 2022: 133]. In particular, such as:

1) the directly proportional dependence of the collective staff payroll budget on the enterprise's performance and the market demand for its products; that is, on the volume of products sold during the billing period;

2) shared, adequate personal labour contribution, distribution of the collective payroll budget among employees of the enterprise (its structural divisions);

3) use of a set of multipliers to assess an employee's personal labour contribution, considering length of service, qualifications, professional skills, the corporate importance of the employee and their ability to achieve certain current and long-term goals.

The choice of labour payment system depends on the organisation's specifics and types of activities, its structural divisions, the specifics of its labour and production processes, organisational structure, number of employees and other factors and should help strengthen the interest of both the individual employee and broader employee groups in the organisation's final results, including generating a profit, in meeting the organisation's socioeconomic development indicators.

If the employer decides to apply the tariff remuneration system at the organisation, it is necessary to develop its own tariff schedule to ensure the commensurate distribution of employees, depending on the complexity and intensity of their work, skill level and working conditions, and also determine the minimum value underlying the formation of the employee's tariff rate (tariff salary), i. e. the tariff rate of the 1st category. The decision to use such structural elements of the remuneration system as the tariff schedule and the tariff rate of the 1st category is made independently by the employer and specified in the respective collective agreements, regulations, other local legal acts and employment agreements (contracts).

When developing a remuneration policy and determining the size, structure, conditions and procedure for paying wages to employees for the fulfilment of their work duties, employers need to remember that the remuneration system being used must meet certain requirements:

- be transparent and understandable to employees, insofar as they must know precisely how and by which criteria their wages are being determined;

- be fair and proportionate to the efforts being made;

- be flexible and adaptive, take into account changes in market competition and the economic situation at the organisation;

- should correspond to the external labour market and take into account the level of risk and responsibility associated with a particular position;

- should take into account gender pay equality and combat discrimination based on gender, age, race and other factors;

- be timely and stable to ensure the employee's comfortable work and their financial stability.

Conclusion

Based on the study conducted, it should be noted that the role of the tariff system in the formation of wages has changed significantly. In the context of expanding the independence of business entities, the tariff system has lost its previously inherent rigidity and stability while retaining its importance as a basis for differentiating the earnings of workers with different qualifications. The social significance of the tariff system is predicated on the fact that it must ensure the guarantee of a certain (tariff-based) part of wages. We believe that as long as there are qualitative differences in labour, the tariff system will remain one of the main tools for regulating remuneration, since wages formed on the basis of the tariff system are not related to the results of the organisation's economic performance and wages are paid regardless of the results of its economic activities. On the one hand, this feature of tariffs significantly reduces their incentivising role, while on the other – this same feature increases the level of legal guarantees for wage payment to employees.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to propose an ideal remuneration system that would be fair and meet all the needs and expectations of employees. In each specific case, it is necessary to take a balanced approach to choosing a remuneration system, which must ensure fair labour remuneration. Each system has its advantages and disadvantages and may not be suitable for all situations and all employees.

The study conducted revealed some trends in the further development of approaches to labour remuneration.

1. Individualisation of remuneration. Current trends in the development of labour relations emphasise the importance of an employee's individual skills, achievements and contributions. This may lead to a shift from strictly-fixed tariffs to a more flexible and individualised payment system that takes into account the specific results and contributions of each employee.

2. Accounting for non-material factors. In addition to material payment, modern remuneration systems increasingly take into account non-material factors such as career

development, work-life balance and learning and growth opportunities. This reflects the growing interest of employees in the creation of more satisfactory and balanced working conditions.

3. Flexibility and variable rates. In response to the changing economic environment and the needs of the labour market, some organisations are moving to flexible payment systems, including variable rates and bonuses tied to the achievement of goals and results. This can stimulate motivation and increase employee productivity.

4. Accounting for differences in competencies. With the increasing importance of competencies and specialisation in different industries, remuneration systems may become more differentiated, accounting for differences in the skill level and specialisation of employees. This can help attract and retain highly-qualified specialists.

Labour relations are characterised by a combination of centralised and decentralised methods of regulation. This is manifested in the fact that labour legislation defines a system of state guarantees for employee remuneration, such as the amount of the minimum wage, the base rate value, the amount of the increase in wages for work in unconventional conditions, requirements for the payment of compensation and benefits, etc. The optimised remuneration system did not lead to an increase in employee wages; rather, it merely made the wage formation mechanism clearer and more transparent and also led to a reduction in the scope of labour legislation. It is worth noting that the influence of employees, trade unions and labour agreements can play a significant role in determining the remuneration system. Generally speaking, we must strive to ensure that the payment system being used is transparent and fair while stimulating the productivity and motivation of workers.

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