

# 8th European Regional Meeting

## FACTS ON *social dialogue*



International  
Labour  
Organization

*“Throughout the region, there is wide recognition of the value of social dialogue and tripartite consultations. This resource will prove especially valuable as governments, together with social partners, design policies to confront the crisis.”*

Juan Somavia, ILO Director General

Over the past 10 to 15 years, the industrial relations’ map of Europe and Central Asia has changed significantly. While in the early 1990s, social dialogue was practiced in less than half the region, in 2008 the large majority of countries at least formally adhere to the concept, despite numerous obstacles and weaknesses.

There are many examples of social dialogue as an efficient tool for addressing social policy issues and contributing to the strengthening of social peace, democracy and social cohesion. Social dialogue has played a significant role in EU enlargement, the introduction of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the strengthening of fragile democracies in former transition economies. It has also helped address recent challenges related to the global financial and economic crisis, such as employment insecurity and competitiveness of enterprises.

The regional dimension of social dialogue has been substantially strengthened in the EU. Decisive steps have been taken towards greater involvement by the social partners in policy formulation and decision-making.

Nevertheless, there are still major gaps in the efficiency of social dialogue in certain countries, including an inadequate legislative framework; insufficient compliance with existing labour legislation; weak labour administration systems; a lack of institutional capacity among the social partners; and unstable support by public policies.

### FACTS

- Social dialogue institutions have remained largely stable in the EU-15, with sectoral bargaining predominant in most countries. In the majority of the EU-12 countries, where enterprise bargaining dominated since the early 1990s, the sectoral level has gained certain, although still limited importance.
- The content of social dialogue has broadened substantially over the past decade to include such issues as training and life-long learning, competitiveness and innovation, social inclusion and cohesion, new forms of employment and work organization, the promotion of youth employment and HIV/AIDS.
- Since 1995, five framework agreements have been adopted by the European social partners establishing minimum EU standards on parental leave, part-time work, fixed-term work, telework and work-related stress.
- Over the past 10 to 15 years, the Western Balkan countries and the Republic of Moldova have made significant efforts to create the conditions for effective social dialogue and to bring their law and practice into compliance with ILO standards and closer to those of the EU. However, more commitment of all actors will be necessary to make the progress sustainable.
- In many CIS-countries, the functioning of independent employers’ and workers’ organisations is still impeded by remaining barriers to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

## The role of the ILO

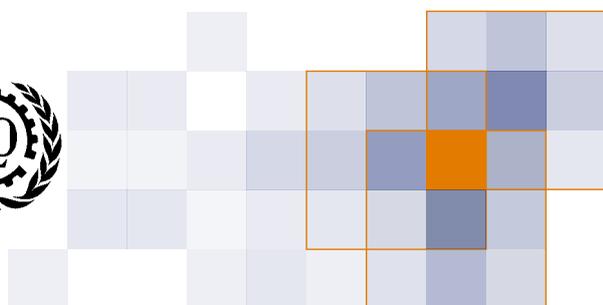
A far greater degree of social dialogue is required in the current economic environment for formulating an appropriate policy mix that produces sustained economic growth and better jobs. **Countries should use social dialogue, both at national and enterprise level, for an equitable sharing of recession-induced adjustment costs.**

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda offers a practical platform to achieve this goal. ILO assistance to countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia has mainly been concentrated on reinforcing social dialogue institutions, revising labour laws to bring them into line with international standards and improving the capacities of the social partners to participate in social dialogue processes.

## Key ILO standards relating to social dialogue

Social dialogue is inextricably linked to the right of employers and workers to establish independent organizations. The Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) sets forth the right for workers and employers to establish and join organizations of their own choice without previous authorization. The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No.98) protects workers' and employers' organizations against any acts of interference and enshrines the right to collective bargaining.

ILO standards related to industrial relations include especially the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), the Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), the Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154) and the Consultation (Industrial and National Level) Recommendation, 1960 (No.113).



## CHALLENGES FOR THE SOCIAL PARTNERS

**GOVERNMENTS** could consider improving the legal framework of social dialogue, strengthening institutions that support and facilitate social dialogue, encouraging broader involvement of the social partners in social and economic policies and reforms, adopting the promotional measures envisaged by ILO standards and ratifying them.

**EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS** could consider strengthening and adapting their organizational structures and services in order to increase their value for their members and their recognition as the competent, credible and representative voice of employers in their respective countries.

**WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS** could consider strengthening their capacity to engage in social dialogue and collective bargaining at both the national and European levels. This involves broadening their base, promoting internal reforms, consolidating their structures and developing strong expertise and services so that they can represent the interests of their members more effectively.

*For more information, please read:*

1. «Report of the Director-General to the 8th European Regional Meeting: Delivering decent work in Europe and Central Asia»  
- Volume I, Part 1, ISBN 978-92-2-121867-8  
- Volume I, Part 2, ISBN 978-92-2-121869-2
2. «Policy responses to the economic crisis: A decent work approach in Europe and Central Asia».  
ISBN 978-92-2-122080-0

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**February 2009**