



International
Labour
Organization

The ILO at Work

Results 2014-2015



Europe and Central Asia



ILO work in the regions

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA





Projects: **63**

Countries: **51**
(of which 28 are European Union Member States)

New ratifications of international labour standards: **39**

Active Decent Work Country Programmes: **13**

Much of the diverse Europe and Central Asia region is still struggling with the social and labour impact of the economic and financial crisis. As a result, in 2014-15 the bulk of the ILO's work in the region addressed the impact of the crises, in addition to the new challenges faced – often characterized by rapid political, economic and social changes at global and regional levels, as well as increasing tension. To this end, the ILO has stepped up activities throughout the region, including in some EU countries such as Cyprus, Greece and Portugal, to help them address the consequences of the crisis, especially in the areas of social dialogue and youth employment. However, most development cooperation projects take place in Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

ILO work in 2014-15 prioritized addressing youth employment, strengthening social dialogue, promoting an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, and improving working conditions and occupational safety and health. In many countries of the region informality has emerged as a key issue. Migration has also re-emerged as a priority, particularly in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis.

Addressing the labour market implications of crises

In a context of global slowdown, unemployment rates remain high in Europe, in particular in Southern European countries. At the same time, labour market conditions have improved in some Eastern European countries, and unemployment should continue to decrease in EU countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. Western Europe continues to emerge slowly from the global crisis. Labour market conditions have improved slightly, but unemployment rates remain higher than before the crisis (around 10.1 per cent in 2015) and job creation often occurs at the expense of quality and involves the multiplication of temporary and low paid jobs.

“Change is proceeding apace and it can benefit us if we succeed in promoting certain values, setting certain rules and combating inequality. But if we simply let things happen without necessarily bringing progress for people in emerging countries, we will see a gradual loss of rights worldwide. We must therefore ensure that progress can be shared.

H.E. Mr François Hollande, President of the French Republic,
104th Session of the International Labour Conference,
11 June 2015



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Our impact, their story: Edmond

The ILO has offered assistance in helping develop a new model of service delivery in Albanian public employment offices. Since the first office was established in Tirana in January 2014, nine other employment offices have been modernized. The process aims to cover all 12 regions of the country.

Thanks to these employment offices, between January and July 2014 some 6,344 women and men found jobs, including long-term unemployed jobseekers, people with disabilities, Roma and Egyptians, as well as Albanian migrant workers recently returned from abroad. Since the crisis broke out in Greece and Italy, an estimated 130,000 Albanian migrants have returned home. Many of them are fighting an uphill battle to re-enter the job market in Albania.



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ALBANIA

Edmond Aliaj (46 years old) spent 17 years of his life in Italy, but after the economic crisis lost his job in the logistics department of an Italian company.

“I was obliged to move back to Albania. I was referred to the employment office in Tirana and just a week later I received an unexpected offer for exactly the same kind of job I held in Milano.

With the massive influx of refugees from Syria, the ILO is working with **Turkish** constituents to increase national and local capacities to deal with this crisis, in particular through the labour market integration of vulnerable groups. This response has involved a knowledge sharing platform to exchange good practices on how to address the labour market impact of the crisis. The ILO is also part of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) launched in 2014 as a UN framework for a coordinated response by the countries receiving refugees. In **Ukraine**, in order to address the issue of internally displaced people, the ILO has supported employment promotion by building the capacity of employment services and assisting in enforcing active labour market policies.

Improving job prospects for young people in particular

Youth unemployment remains one of the biggest challenges in the region, especially in Armenia, Georgia and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), where more than three out of ten young women and men are jobless. The ILO has supported the establishment of a regional knowledge sharing and mutual learning platform for countries of the **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)** and **Georgia**.

Another new cooperation platform covering the Western Balkan countries will focus on employment services, social dialogue and labour inspection and will be used as a mutual learning and peer review mechanism among those countries in their EU pre-accession process.

The ILO has supported the development and adoption of a national action plan on youth employment in **Cyprus** and **FYROM**, and a national youth guarantee scheme in **Portugal** with a performance monitoring framework.

Our impact, their story: Margur



As a result of the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) Programme, a management training programme, 6 million entrepreneurs have been trained – or 1 million in 2014-15 – in more than 96 countries worldwide. To ensure their entrepreneurial success, ILO specialists visit them regularly to monitor how their business is going and to provide assistance and advice when needed.

In Azerbaijan there are 3 million young people. In 2014, the unemployment rate among young people aged 15 to 29 was 9.7%, compared to a total unemployment rate of 4.9%. The situation of young workers and entrepreneurs in the informal economy is particularly difficult.

For Margur Ahmadov, a young sheep-breeder in Azerbaijan who took part in the SIYB Programme, everything he learned from the training was new. “Now I have a totally different vision of improving and expanding my family business,” he says. Margur has carefully planned how to invest the funding he received to improve and expand his business and to move it to the formal economy.

AZERBAIJAN



In the spotlight: Voluntary peer reviews for youth employment

In 2013, the ILO and Russian oil company LUKOIL teamed up in the CIS countries and Georgia to develop solutions to the youth employment crisis. This project focuses on effective responses to the escalating youth employment crisis through initiatives at regional, national and local levels.

A regional Youth Employment Network has been set up – comprising representatives of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. To find out how to assess national efforts to promote decent work for youth, peer reviews were carried out to share good practices and to find solutions to common challenges.

How do peer reviews work? A country submits its youth employment policies and practices for review by peers from other countries. The resulting recommendations can

be used to formulate specific legislative initiatives, and implemented as part of a national action plan to boost youth employment.

For example, participants discussed the valuable experience of Azerbaijan, with detailed analysis by colleagues from the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, which had been presented as part of the third round of peer reviews. They also developed a set of policy recommendations, for the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan. To support this process, the ILO has prepared guidelines for conducting peer reviews for all countries willing to rely on this tool in their policy making.





“Unemployment is tragically expanding the frontiers of poverty. This is particularly disheartening for unemployed young people who can all too easily become demoralized, losing their sense of worth, feeling alienated from society. In working for greater opportunities for employment, we affirm the conviction that it is only ‘through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive work that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their life.’

Message of Pope Francis to the 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference, 22 May 2014



Strengthening social dialogue

The ILO has continued to promote social dialogue in the region through capacity building, assisting in the development of legal frameworks and acting as a platform to share knowledge and good practices and develop research. One significant achievement has been the re-establishment of social dialogue in **Greece**, in particular in relation to collective bargaining and collective dismissal legislation.

The ILO and the European Commission concluded a strategic partnership on social dialogue for the period 2014–2017 to implement joint projects, and share information, research and practical experience, with a focus on **FYROM, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Greece**.

Promoting an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises

Progress has been achieved in the Western Balkans, where ILO support has yielded advances in the capacity of employers' organizations to advocate an improved environment for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The knowledge base and capacities of employers' organizations in **Armenia, Albania, FYROM, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan** and **Tajikistan** have also been strengthened, enabling them to define actions and measures to improve the business environment.



In the spotlight: Formalizing the informal economy in the Republic of Moldova

Eastern and South-Eastern European countries are characterized by a relatively large informal sector, which is seen as an obstacle to the substantial modernization of the economy and of society as a whole. The share of the informal economy is typically estimated in the range of 30 to 50 per cent of official GDP in Central and Eastern Europe. Inadequate economic and social policies, the lack of appropriate legal and institutional frameworks, poor enforcement of regulation, reduced confidence in institutions, and excessive administrative procedures, combined with economic downturn, are the main factors retaining or directing economic activity towards informality.

The informal economy and undeclared work are major concerns for the labour market and social security system in the Republic of Moldova. In 2014, a total of 385,500 women and men had an informal job as their main form of employment, representing more than 32% of the employed population in Moldova. Such informality is particularly high in agriculture (73%), followed by commerce, hotels and restaurants, and the construction sector.



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An ILO project implemented between June 2014 and December 2015 aimed to strengthen the capacity and commitment of the Government and social partners to design and implement policies and measures that will improve the quality, decency and productivity of jobs through the formalization of the economy. The project serves as a model for inter-disciplinary collaboration within the ILO to address the key challenges and combat the informal economy in a comprehensive manner.

One of the major outputs of the project has been a comprehensive review of the informal economy in the Republic of Moldova. The review will help public authorities improve existing policies and identify new solutions to support the transition from the informal to formal economy.

Facilitating the transition to formality

“Informality is one of the main features of today’s world of work insecurity that not only concerns developing countries, but also the industrialized world. It undermines both current consumption and potential output and productivity growth in the long term.”

Heinz Koller, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia at the Regional Tripartite Conference on the Formalization of the Informal Economy, Montenegro, 15 September 2015

The ILO has been working towards the design and implementation of policies that will improve the quality and productivity of jobs in the **Republic of Moldova** and **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. In preparation for and as follow-up to the 2015 discussion at the International Labour Conference on the transition from the informal

to the formal economy, awareness-raising campaigns were initiated by social partners, with ILO support, in **Tajikistan**, **Kyrgyzstan** and at the regional level in the **Russian Federation**. In **Montenegro**, the ILO facilitated the exchange of knowledge on the drivers, costs and possible remedies for informality, best practices, and steps towards the implementation of the ILO’s Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204).

Improving working conditions and occupational safety and health

Following the tragic explosion in an underground mine in Soma on 13 May 2014, in which 301 workers lost their lives, and based on the international commitments made by **Turkey**, the ILO has provided technical assistance to improve occupational safety and health (OSH), in particular in the mining and construction sectors. Such assistance has led to the development of a mid-

In the spotlight: Building a preventative safety and health culture

“It must be admitted that there is high rate of occupational accidents and diseases in Turkey. The mining accident in Soma attracted attention both at an international and national level. Turkey has recently ratified some fundamental Conventions on work safety and this is a remarkable development. What needs to be done at this point – beyond legislative arrangements – is to create a culture of prevention and ensure a transformation in mentality.

Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General, interview with Hürriyet Newspaper, 18 September 2015

A project entitled Improve Occupational Safety and Health through Compliance with International Labour Standards was initiated in 2015 to build a safety and health culture in Turkey's mining and construction sectors – in line with relevant international labour standards. This project will also facilitate the implementation of these key Conventions.

As a result, and given the recent entry into force in Turkey of Convention No. 187, the World Day for Safety and Health at Work – observed each 28 April – was celebrated for the first time in Turkey in 2015, which looked at how best to build a preventative safety and

health culture, in particular in the areas of construction and mining. In line with Recommendation No. 197 and in order to create a benchmark for progress related to occupational safety and health, the project has commissioned a National OSH Profile. Gap analyses on Conventions Nos. 167 and 176 have also been commissioned to compare the Conventions with national legislation. Other key pieces of work include a study on contractual arrangements in the mining sector in collaboration with the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV).



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term Tripartite National Plan of Action combined with immediate measures. Moreover, the country ratified the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) in 2014, and the Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167), and the Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176) in 2015. This assistance has contributed to the development of a national tripartite OSH policy framework - combined with immediate measures.



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Partnerships with regional institutions and the UN

Collaboration with regional institutions has remained a cornerstone of the ILO's support in the region. Work with the European Commission, European Parliament and EU Presidencies remains a priority. A new partnership has been developed with the European Investment Bank on increasing the employment impact of investment.

Political support from constituents, for example the important initiative by the Russian Federation to conduct the first ever joint Finance and Labour Ministerial Meeting of G20 countries in 2013, as well as the first BRICS Labour Ministerial Meeting (January 2016), has been essential for promotion of the Decent Work Agenda.

Work with the Turkish G20 has also been important. The ILO has continued to be engaged in the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism, the Regional UN Development Group Team, and a number of associated thematic groups. Within the regional consultations on the Sustainable Development Goals, the ILO has led the establishment of a regional, UN-wide thematic working group on Social Protection Floors.



“A strict line between humanitarian and development dimensions has become increasingly difficult to maintain... Consequently, jobs and livelihoods are moving to the centre stage.

Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General

**Department of Partnerships and Field Support
(PARDEV)**

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4 CH-1211, Geneva 22
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 799 7239 - Fax: +41 22 799 6668
E-mail: pardev@ilo.org



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