

Committee on the Application of Standards

► Draft outcome of the discussion by the Committee on the Application of Standards of the General Survey: Labour administration in a changing world of work

Introduction

1. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to examine the General Survey prepared by the Committee of Experts which is titled *Labour administration in a changing world of work*. The Survey encompassed two instruments: the Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150) and the Labour Administration Recommendation, 1978 (No. 158). The Committee observed that labour administration had been the subject of a previous General Survey in 1997.
2. The Committee underlined the timeliness of the General Survey in light of the fundamental and rapid changes in the world of work, as well as the various crises it has been experiencing. It underscored that effective labour administrations in line with Convention No. 150 are vital in achieving decent work, in ensuring the promotion and respect of fundamental principles and rights at work and in creating an enabling environment in which sustainable enterprises can contribute in their operations towards those achievements.
3. The Committee highlighted that the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic show that labour administrations have a key role in protecting workers' rights, in mitigating the employment impact of crises and in ensuring a human-centred recovery. Therefore, there is a need to build, foster and maintain sound labour administration systems that can withstand financial, economic, social and environmental crises. The creation of strong and effective labour administrations is also essential in achieving the objectives set out in the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work and the ILO's Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is, inclusive, sustainable and resilient.
4. The tripartite constituents highlighted that, within national governments, labour administrations are the main interlocutors of the ILO and aim at building upon the need to bring together relevant actors with a common ambition to promote strong, sustainable and inclusive development through strengthened global solidarity, policy coherence and concerted action.

The situation and needs of Member States

5. The Committee underlined that effective tripartite social dialogue, founded upon respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining, should be an integral part of every function

performed by the labour administration system. This contributes to a participatory and inclusive governance and builds trust among all partners in the labour administration system. Social dialogue is a driving force for social and economic resilience, competitiveness, stability, growth and sustainable and inclusive development. Therefore, the Committee highlighted that labour administrations should ensure that mechanisms for bipartite and tripartite cooperation, consultations and negotiations are granted appropriate resources and support and become or remain prominent in policymaking.

6. The Committee also noted the emphasis placed by tripartite constituents on the need for close cooperation and coordination across government agencies and between the different actors responsible for labour administration systems, including parastatal agencies. This is key to ensure that labour policies and regulatory measures are harmonised with other policy areas within the government agenda and effectively implemented. To protect the most vulnerable workers in the labour market, a comprehensive government response is needed and should involve multiple ministries and stakeholders.
7. Among the functions performed by labour administrations, the Committee highlighted the importance of sound, human-centred and evidence based policymaking, based on reliable and up-to date information and data. In this respect, the Committee underscored the significance of the activities of labour administrations concerning research and studies in order to ensure that the complexities and novelties of the evolving world of work are properly reflected. The involvement of social partners in these activities is crucial for enhancing the relevance of research and policy outcomes.
8. The Committee underlined the essential role of labour inspection within the labour administration system. The tripartite constituents stressed that a well-functioning labour inspection system is crucial for the effective implementation and monitoring of labour standards, to ensure social peace, promote good governance and contribute to economic and social progress. The Committee underscored that private compliance initiatives and self-regulation mechanisms can complement public labour inspections, but do not diminish governments' responsibilities in this area or replace regular and thorough public labour inspections.
9. Depending on the national context, the Committee highlighted that the creation of public-private partnership can prove beneficial for the delivery of certain labour administration services, including partnerships with universities and training institutions. At the same time, the Committee stressed that the overall organisation and effective operation of labour administration remains the obligation and responsibility of the governments. It underlined the importance for governments to ensure transparency, coordination, control and the participation of representative and independent employers' and workers' organizations in the design, implementation and evaluation of such initiatives. These partnerships should complement but cannot replace the role of the government in designing and implementing labour policies, laws and regulations.
10. The Committee highlighted that digitalization, including the use of artificial intelligence, provides for both opportunities and challenges and that labour administrations have a pivotal role in designing policies and other measures, including regulatory measures, to benefit from and respond to these technological changes, in close cooperation and consultation with representative and independent employers' and workers' organizations. The Committee particularly noted that the introduction of digital technologies requires investments in technology infrastructures and cybersecurity which can pose challenges in terms of costs, implementation and maintenance, in particular for SMEs. The Committee also drew attention

to the unequal access of workers and employers to digital technologies or the necessary digital literacy skills which may result in a digital divide.

Common understanding

11. In view of the rapidly changing world of work, the Committee emphasised the fundamental role that labour administration plays in anticipating and adapting to such transformations for the benefit of promoting decent work, good governance and sustainable enterprises that can generate productive employment and promote innovation. Labour administrations should continuously adapt and modernize in order to ensure that their services remain relevant and to ensure more resilient, sustainable and inclusive labour markets for the future. Modernization efforts may require exploring new approaches to governance and management, including new policies, services and approaches for strengthening labour standards. The tripartite constituents stressed that modernization efforts should respect the rule of law, tripartism, social dialogue, public interest, good governance and transparency.
12. Noting that the lack of resources continues to undermine the effectiveness of labour administration systems in many countries, the Committee affirmed the importance of ensuring that labour administrations are equipped with appropriate human and financial resources, as well as technological and material means, for their proper functioning and the efficient performance of their tasks, including during crises. The Committee highlighted that this is particularly relevant for the labour inspection services, given that they are faced with new or persistent challenges such as a growing informal economy, the changing nature of employment relationships, and the emergence of new work-related hazards. Resources should also include adequate digital means to generate, store and process data whilst ensuring the protection of workers' personal data.
13. The tripartite constituents stressed that policy frameworks for the governance of labour may be underpinned by appropriate legal and regulatory measures aimed at ensuring decent work for all while taking into account the needs of sustainable enterprises, in particular SMEs, to effectively realise decent work. Such measures should be designed to ensure coverage of all workers, including those most vulnerable to decent work deficits, such as workers in the informal economy, women, young workers, older workers, workers with disabilities, and migrant workers. Recognizing that the digital economy is rapidly emerging as one of the most significant transformations in the world of work, the Committee highlighted the need for labour administrations, where national conditions so require, to promote progressively the extension of labour administration functions to the conditions of work and working life of appropriate categories of workers, in line with article 7 of Convention No 150. In addition, in a world that is increasingly interconnected, labour administrations are key in addressing challenges of the world of work that transcend national borders and in making decent work a priority at all levels.

ILO means of action

14. The Committee underscored that the General Survey reaffirms the relevance of the instruments examined and recalled that they offer considerable flexibility in designing systems of labour administration that respond to the particularities of each national context. The Committee recalled to Member States that have ratified the Convention the importance to step up efforts to ensure its full implementation. It also encouraged non-ratifying Member States to consider the possibility of ratifying the Convention and recalled that they could avail

themselves of technical assistance from the Office, to assess potential obstacles to ratification and ways to overcome them.

15. The Committee emphasized the significance of integrating good governance principles into labour administration systems, as enshrined in the ILO instruments and aligning with UN principles referred to in the General Survey. Such approach will serve to promote the achievement of decent work while advancing the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including in particular the Sustainable Development Goal 16, target 6, which requires the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.
16. The Committee also endorsed for prioritised tailored technical assistance to be provided by the Office to Member States, where requested, with a view to strengthening national labour administration systems and supporting governments, employers' and workers' organizations in designing and implementing effective and coordinated labour administration systems.
17. In this regard, the Committee called upon the ILO to develop an action plan in consultation with social partners, to guide governments, employers and workers, to explore the potential for further strengthening of labour administration at the national level. This action plan could include strategies for the elaboration of labour policies, enforcement and social dialogue, supported by appropriate capacity-building activities. It could also encompass the development of a series of tools, including guidance materials that can assist in the ratification and implementation of the Convention by providing information on best practices and further clarifications regarding the content of the instruments.
18. Finally, the Committee requested the Office to take into account the General Survey on *Labour administration in a changing world of work*, the tripartite discussion that followed and the outcome of its discussion in relevant ILO work. It expressed the hope that the General Survey will provide useful information and guidance for the 2026 International Labour Conference's recurrent discussion on the strategic objective on social dialogue.