



► Technical Brief

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National social dialogue institutions in selected countries of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus Closing the knowledge gap

► Introduction

Recent years have seen significant turmoil around the world, and for countries in the subregion of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus in particular. First, countries worldwide were confronted with the global COVID-19 pandemic and had to react to new challenges, particularly in health, and in the world of work and other socioeconomic areas. Then, when economies were still attempting to recover, new geopolitical and economic turbulences erupted in different regions of the world.

Governments had to find solutions to new challenges which have also affected the world of work. For many national policy decisions, the social partners—employers and workers and their organizations—are well placed to give realistic, balanced, constructive and forward-looking contributions, particularly on matters related to the world of work. Countless examples globally have shown that social dialogue¹ is a powerful tool for proffering to public and political decision-makers expert opinions on labour, social and economic issues, based on their real-life experience. National social dialogue institutions (NSDIs) are best placed to offer a forum for the social partners to

discuss such experience and contribute to formulating policy responses.

While most Member States of the ILO have NSDIs, information on their functioning and impact is uneven. For instance, although studies conducted in Western Europe, including those by the ILO², in the field of social dialogue and industrial relations have shed some light on their role and functioning, in some other regions information is either scarce or non-existent. To close this information gap, and as part of the Plan of Action on Social Dialogue and Tripartism (2019–23)—as endorsed by the Governing Body of the ILO and intended to give effect to the International Labour Conference Resolution and conclusions of June 2018—the ILO, through the Social Dialogue and Tripartism Unit in the Governance and Tripartism Department, has initiated research aimed at documenting the institutional arrangements underpinning tripartite social dialogue in ILO Member States in all regions.

¹ The ILO defines social dialogue as all types of negotiation, consultation or information sharing among representatives of governments, employers and workers or between those of employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

² ILO, *Talking through the crisis*, 2017; ILO, *Peak-level social dialogue and COVID-19: The European experience*, 2022; Eurofound, “Social dialogue”.

This Brief describes the institutional arrangements in eight countries³ of Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus and assesses the role and achievements of the subregion's NSDIs, based on a survey conducted by the ILO in 2022. It gives basic information on the NSDIs and how they are positioned in their country's institutional setting and are used in policymaking. The Brief aims to launch discussion on these NSDIs' current role and impact, and on possible improvements. After this introduction, chapter 2 summarizes the competency and mandate of these institutions, the legal basis for their creation, their composition, their internal structure (including secretariat and chairperson) and other features. Chapter 3 presents some of the major achievements of roughly the last three

years. Chapter 4 offers conclusions and perspectives for a way forward.

In the research, the authors used quantitative and qualitative methods through desk studies (using resources such as public websites and published comments from ILO supervisory bodies), and through field research (collecting information through field colleagues in the subregion covered by the ILO Office in Moscow). The Brief is not a "static document", however, and will require updating as institutions further evolve⁴. The results of the research, provide an important foundation for deepening ILO's collaboration with NSDIs and can complement other information, such as that from the international network AICESIS (box 1).

► Box 1. AICESIS—the international network of NSDIs

Quite a few of the principal NSDIs around the world—often with slightly different names such as tripartite institutions, economic and social councils, national tripartite commissions, or national councils for social dialogue—are organized in a global network, the International Association of Economic and Social Councils or Similar Institutions (AICESIS). AICESIS was established in July 1999 in Port Louis, Mauritius and is today headquartered in Brussels, Belgium.

According to the AICESIS website, it has member institutions from 71 countries on four continents—Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Europe—as well as several regional institutions. Its mission is to promote dialogue, as well as to share experience and best practices among its members. More specifically, it aims to encourage dialogue among economic and social partners worldwide; support the development of their advisory role; enhance social dialogue and civil dialogue; and strengthen participative democracy and the role of social partners and other components of civil society in the world—as core factors of a genuine sustainable democratization and effective governance of modern societies.¹

In 2018, the ILO and AICESIS signed a cooperation agreement that covers the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (the [2030 Agenda](#)), the social dimension of globalization, the future of work and the strengthening of participatory democracy in general.²

Only one institution in the eight countries in this Brief is a member of AICESIS—the Public Council of Armenia.³ The ILO encourages NSDIs to join AICESIS as it can give more impetus to collaboration from and among NSDIs.

1. [Missions-aicesis](#). 2. [Social dialogue: ILO signs new cooperation agreement with Economic and Social Councils worldwide](#). 3. The Public Council is bipartite (not tripartite) and therefore not covered by this Brief. However, its work is complementary to that of the Republican Tripartite Commission (described below).

³ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

⁴ Information in the Brief is as of September 2023, unless stated otherwise.

► 1. Overview of NSDIs

National Tripartite Commissions

The survey shows that all eight countries have an NSDI, called a “Tripartite Commission”. Information about its activities can be obtained from the official website of the government or the ministry in charge of labour and social affairs (table 1). This differs from the NSDIs in other parts

of the world that sometimes have their own website. The subregion’s government websites mentioning NSDIs are always in the national language and sometimes also in Russian (as in, for example, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).

► Table 1. Official names of NSDIs

Country	Name of NSDI and website for related information
Armenia	Republican Tripartite Commission
Azerbaijan	Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs https://www.sosial.gov.az/
Georgia	Tripartite Social Partnership Commission https://www.moh.gov.ge
Kazakhstan	Republican (national) Tripartite Commission on Social Partnership and Regulation of Social and Labour Relations https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/enbek?lang=en
Kyrgyzstan	Republican Tripartite Commission
Tajikistan	Tripartite Commission for the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations
Turkmenistan	Tripartite Commission on Regulation of Social and Labour Issues
Uzbekistan	Republican Tripartite Commission on Social and Labour Issues https://mehnat.uz/

Legal basis and date of creation

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and subsequent independence of the former Soviet republics, all eight countries have now established their own national tripartite commission, some relatively early

(Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan between 1992 and 1994), others more recently (since 2008). The ILO often helped to strengthen or set up these institutions, through policy advice to the government and the social partners, capacity-building for its Member States or technical cooperation projects (as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan).

► **Table 2. Legal basis and date of creation of subregional NSDIs**

Country	Legal basis	Date of creation
Armenia	Tripartite Agreement ¹	2009
Azerbaijan	Decision of the Government ²	2016
Georgia	Labour Code; Ordinance of the Government ³	2013
Kazakhstan	Labour Code	1994
Kyrgyzstan	Law, ⁴ Order ⁵ of the Cabinet of Ministers, Decree of the Government ⁶	1993
Tajikistan	Labour Code, Decree of the Government ⁷	2008
Turkmenistan	Law ⁸ and other normative acts	2019
Uzbekistan	Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers ⁹	2019

1. National Collective Agreement. The Republican Tripartite Commission has been re-established every three years from 2009 with new agreements signed among the three parties. 2. Decision No. 6 on the Establishment of a Tripartite Commission on Social and Economic Affairs in Azerbaijan between the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Confederation of Azerbaijani Partnerships and the National Confederation of Owners of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 30 September 2016. 3. Ordinance of the Government of Georgia M258 on approval of the statute of Tripartite Social Partnership Commission, 7 October 2013. 4. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Social Partnership in the Field of Labour Relations, 25 July 2003. 5. Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic on endorsement of the General Agreement between the Cabinet of Ministers, Federation of Trade Unions and Republican (National) Employers' Organizations for 2022–2024. 6. Decree of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic No. 711, 12 October 2012 “On Amendment to the Decree of the Government of Kyrgyz Republic—On endorsement of Regulations on Republican (National) Tripartite Commission in the Area of Social and Labour Relations”. 7. Regulations on the tripartite Commission for Social and Labour Relations in the Republic of Tajikistan, 1 April 2008. 8. Law of Turkmenistan “On Tripartite Commission on Regulation of Social and Labour Issues” of 8 November 2018. 9. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 553, 3 July 2019 “On tripartite commissions on social and labour issues”.

Five of the eight countries based the creation of the tripartite commission on legislation (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan), with government decrees further regulating operations. In Armenia, the Republican Tripartite Commission was established by tripartite agreement, and in Azerbaijan and

Uzbekistan, establishment followed a government decision (table 2).

Membership—numbers, gender balance and renewal frequency

The size of the tripartite commissions varies by country, and almost all have the same number of representatives from each of the three parties. Although the same number is not necessary as long as the different parties have equal voice, having the same number may often make it easier to reach an agreement⁵. The number of government representatives may also depend on which ministries' or other public authorities' presence is necessary under the institution's mandate, which illustrates the ILO approach as stated in the International Labour Conference Resolution of June 2018: there is no one-size-fits-all solution to organizing social dialogue at

country level⁶. The size of the tripartite commissions in the eight countries ranges from 15 (Armenia and Azerbaijan, with five members per party) to 33 (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, with 11 members per party). The tripartite commissions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not have a permanent membership, and the number of representatives depends on the issues under consideration. On gender balance, all tripartite commissions have a majority of male members, ranging from 60 per cent to almost 90 per cent, but these shares are likely to change over time⁷.

Membership is renewed at different intervals. The Tripartite Commission in Azerbaijan updates its membership as needed, Uzbekistan every year, and others (Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) every three years (table 3)

► **Table 3. Legal basis and date of creation of subregional NSDIs**

Country	Number of members ¹	Gender balance, male/female, %	Renewal frequency
Armenia	15 (5G, 5E, 5W)	67/33	Every three years ²
Azerbaijan	15 (5G, 5E, 5W)	60/40	As needed ³
Georgia	18 (6G, 6E, 6W)	89/11	Every three years
Kazakhstan	Depends on meeting ⁴	70/30 ⁵	Not applicable
Kyrgyzstan	33 (11G, 11E, 11W)	70/30 ⁶	Not applicable
Tajikistan	33 (11G, 11E, 11W)	79/21	Every three years
Turkmenistan	21 (7G, 7E, 7W) ⁷	60/40	Every three years
Uzbekistan	22 (7G, 8E, 7W)	62/38	Every year

1. G = government; E = employers; W = workers. 2. Membership is updated as a new national tripartite agreement is signed. 3. Approximately twice a year. 4. As agreed between the government and the social partners and depending on the discussion topic, the composition can vary between 3 and over 30. 5. Approximate average of meetings over the three years to December 2022. 6. While the number of representatives from each side is legally regulated, practice differs and is usually an ad hoc presence, with varying numbers per party. The gender composition is accordingly approximate and draws on an average presence in past meetings. 7. The overall number is taken from the law, which states that the number of representatives from each party should not exceed seven.

⁵ For effective and inclusive social dialogue, it is necessary that all sides of the tripartite social dialogue are represented on "equal footing". This does not necessarily call for an equal number of representatives in the tripartite institution, but it does require that the views of each side be given equal consideration.

⁶ [ILO Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social dialogue and tripartism](#), see "Guiding Principles" in the Conclusions.

⁷ None of the countries in this Brief has explicit legal clauses related to gender balance in composition. The data in table 3 draw on the situation on 10 September 2022. The ILO promotes gender equality among constituents. The importance of gender equality is recognized in the [ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022–25](#), and such equality is essential in creating a fair, inclusive and secure future of work.

Chairperson and structure

The chairing of the NSDIs is often performed by very senior government officials. In four of the countries (Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), the chairperson is the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister, and in Turkmenistan it is the Deputy Labour Minister. In countries where the Prime Minister is formally the chairperson, the chairing in certain sessions is at times delegated to another high-level government official. In three countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan), the chairperson is designated on a rotating basis by each of

the three parties in turn, annually. For the government, the chair is the Minister of Labour, while employers' and workers' organizations are represented by their president or secretary general.

All tripartite commissions have plenary bodies, supported by secretariats. Some (Armenia, Georgia and Turkmenistan) have subcommittees and working groups, which focus on a particular topic and undertake preparatory work that is followed up or concluded in plenary sessions (table 4).

► Table 4. Chairperson and structure

Country	Chairperson	Structure
Armenia	Annual rotation among three parties	Plenary, secretariat, working groups can be created as necessary
Azerbaijan	Annual rotation among three parties	Plenary, secretariat
Georgia	Prime Minister	Plenary, secretariat, a working group, ¹ a subcommittee ²
Kazakhstan	Deputy Prime Minister	Plenary, secretariat
Kyrgyzstan	Deputy Prime Minister	Plenary, secretariat
Tajikistan	Prime Minister	Plenary, secretariat
Turkmenistan	Deputy Labour Minister	Plenary, secretariat, working groups can be created as necessary
Uzbekistan	Annual rotation among three parties	Plenary, secretariat
1. A body of specialists that holds preliminary discussions on all the issues related to the commission agenda (total 21 persons), who can, but do not have to, be members of the Commission. 2. One subcommittee holds consultations related to ILO Convention No. 144		

Secretariat

The secretariat is generally made up of two or three persons, who are always close to the chairperson. In six out of the eight countries, the functions of the secretariat

are assigned to one of the units in the ministry in charge of labour and social affairs or other government institution. In these cases, the secretariat's functions are usually combined with other tasks within that ministry's mandate, often owing to scarcity of resources for labour administration (table 5).

► Table 5. Secretariat

Country	Size (persons)	Comments
Armenia	1	Currently with the Ministry of Labour. It was agreed in the most recent National Tripartite Agreement (2020) that secretariat functions will be carried out by the body chairing the Republican Tripartite Commission for the given year. ⁸
Azerbaijan	3	One from each party
Georgia	3	The secretariat is represented by the Labour and Employment Policy and Collective Labour Disputes Division (Policy Department) of the Ministry of Labour
Kazakhstan	5	Social Partnership Department of the Labour Ministry
Kyrgyzstan	2	The Labour Relations Unit of the Ministry of Labour plays the role of the Secretariat
Tajikistan	2	The function of the secretariat is given to the Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Department of Labour, Migration and Employment
Turkmenistan	Unknown	The functions of the secretariat are performed by employees of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan	3	One from each party

⁸ The agreement was due to end in September 2023 and a renewed agreement is expected to be signed before the end of 2023.

Frequency of NSDI meetings, reporting structure and publishing of results

Most NSDIs met only once or twice in 2021 and 2022 (table 6), no doubt a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tripartite commissions and their working groups used to meet more often pre-COVID-19 (table 6), and the number of meetings may well now increase to the earlier frequency. In other ILO regions, many NSDIs met more frequently, even during the pandemic, albeit mainly in virtual format.

On the reporting structure, in three out of eight countries (Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan) the

NSDIs report the outcomes of tripartite discussions to the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister. Three NSDIs report to the government as a whole (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), while two commissions report to the Minister of Labour (Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan).

Tripartite commissions in the subregion do not have their own websites, and general information is often on the government's website or that of the ministry in charge of labour and social affairs. However, only four out of the eight NSDIs publish outcomes of tripartite discussions in their "news" sections, and only when unanimously agreed, and only occasionally disclose the discussions' substance.

► **Table 6. Frequency of NSDI meetings, reporting structure and publishing of results**

Country	Meeting frequency		Reporting to ...	Results published?	Country
	2021	2022			
Armenia	1	1	Prime Minister	Yes	Armenia
Azerbaijan	2	2	Minister of Labour and Social Protection	No	Azerbaijan
Georgia	1 ¹	1	Prime Minister	Yes ²	Georgia
Kazakhstan	4	2	Deputy Prime Minister	No	Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan	0 ³	3	Government	No	Kyrgyzstan
Tajikistan	1	2	Government	Yes ⁴	Tajikistan
Turkmenistan	2	2	Minister of Labour and Social Protection	No	Turkmenistan
Uzbekistan	2	3	Government	Yes ⁵	Uzbekistan

1. The working group held two meetings in 2021. 2. The protocols are not published, but information on the decisions taken is available in the "news" on the website of the ministry in charge of labour and social affairs. 3. Tripartite constituents held meetings in the framework of the Commission on the Improvement of Labour Legislation, substituting meetings of the tripartite commission. 4. The protocols are not published, but the information on the decisions taken is available in the form of news on the website of the Ministry of Labour as well as other public media websites. 5. The decisions of the tripartite commissions are published in the news section on the Ministry of Labour's website as there is no separate section for the commissions.

Mandate and competencies

All eight countries have a formal legal basis for their NSDI. Six of the eight countries' NSDIs have a consultation, negotiation and decision-making mandate (table 7), suggesting strong potential to influence social and labour policies in both design and implementation. In Georgia and Kazakhstan, the mandate is limited to consultation functions only.

Tripartite agreements and legal acts empower tripartite commissions with a rather broad set of competencies, in the centre of which are labour market and employment issues as well as protection of rights. Moreover, policy areas such as wages, income, living standards, social protection, and occupational safety and health play an important role in the agenda of the given institutions.

► **Table 7. Mandate and competencies**

Country	Mandate ¹	Competencies) as per legal act or tripartite agreement)							
		Labour market and employment	Wages, Income and living standards	Informality	Social security / protection	Protection of rights	OSH ²	Inter-national labour standards	Other
Armenia	C, N, D	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Azerbaijan	C, N, D	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Georgia	C, N, D	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Kazakhstan	C only	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓
Kyrgyzstan	C only	✓				✓		✓	✓
Tajikistan	C, N, D	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Turkmenistan	C, N, D	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Uzbekistan	C, N, D	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓

1. C = consultation/advisory, N = negotiation, D = decision-making. 2. OSH = occupational safety and health.

All eight countries have ratified the ILO Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144) (box 2). This is a governance—that is, priority—Convention in the system of international labour

standards. Consequently, consultations on all relevant matters concerning the activities of the ILO have also become a part of the NSDIs' competencies⁹.

⁹ For details, see Convention No. 144 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 152, particularly paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Recommendation.

► **Box 2. Ratification of social dialogue-related Conventions**

The two fundamental Conventions No. 87 and No. 98,¹ and the governance Convention No. 144² are considered the principal social dialogue-related Conventions. Their ratification and implementation are the building blocks and preconditions for effective social dialogue and tripartism.

It is noteworthy to mention that all eight countries have ratified these Conventions.³

Box table 2.1 Year of ratification of three Conventions

Country	Convention No. 87	Convention No. 98	Convention No. 144
Armenia	2006	2003	2005
Azerbaijan	1992	1992	1993
Georgia	1999	1993	2018
Kazakhstan	2000	2001	2000
Kyrgyzstan	1992	1992	2007
Tajikistan	1993	1993	2014
Turkmenistan	1997	1997	2019
Uzbekistan	2016	1992	2019

This ratification shows that the principles of freedom of association, collective bargaining and tripartite consultations are widely recognized in the subregion. However, ratification alone does not automatically lead to their effective integration into national laws and a smooth implementation – this is where still many challenges remain. Having a legal and administrative basis for the NSDI is an important, but not sufficient, element for effective social dialogue.

1. Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). 2. Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144). 3. Other Conventions of particular importance for social dialogue are Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978 (No. 151), and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154). Many other, more technical, Conventions refer implicitly or explicitly to social dialogue as a necessary tool for their implementation.

Comments of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations

Following the ratification of Convention No. 144, Member States are obliged to submit reports to the ILO about its implementation on a three-year basis which is standard procedure for all fundamental and governance conventions (table 8). The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), which is composed of independent legal experts, assesses these reports with the observations, if any, of the social partners. It may ask for clarifications, and request that the government take certain steps or amend legislation so as to achieve full compliance with the Convention in question.

When assessing the reports, the CEACR can make two kinds of comments: *observations* and *direct requests*¹⁰. While there are currently no observations vis-à-vis these countries on the implementation of Convention No. 144 within the last seven years that are published, some governments have received direct requests, mainly to

submit more detailed information on specific points (table 8).

For instance, direct requests concerning Article 2 of Convention No. 144 refer to procedures that ensure effective consultations between representatives of the government, of employers and of workers on matters set out in Article 5. Such requests were received by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Direct requests concerning Article 4 seek clarification on administrative support and financing of necessary training of participants of tripartite consultations. Such requests were received by Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Direct requests related to Article 5 refer to several specific consultations: replies to questionnaires concerning items on the International Labour Conference agenda; the submission of instruments adopted by that Conference to the National Assembly; re-examination at appropriate intervals of unratified ILO Conventions and Recommendations to which effect has not yet been given; questions arising out of reports on the application of ratified Conventions; and possible denunciation of ratified Conventions. All eight countries have received direct requests concerning one or more points of Article 5 in the past seven years (see table 8).

¹⁰ Observations contain comments on fundamental questions raised by the application of a Convention by a Member State. These observations are published in the annual report of the Committee of Experts. Direct requests relate more to technical questions or requests for further

information that are not published in that report but are communicated directly to the government concerned; they are also published on the ILO website (that is, publicly available).

► Table 8. Direct requests of CEACR on the application of Convention No. 144¹¹

Country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Armenia	-	Art. 5	-	-	Art. 5	-	-	-
Azerbaijan	-	Art. 5	-	-	Art. 5	-	-	-
Georgia	n/a	n/a	Ratified	-	-	-	Art. 2, 4, 5, 6	-
Kazakhstan	Art. 2, 4, 5	-	-	Art. 2, 4, 5	-	-	Art. 2, 4, 5	-
Kyrgyzstan	Art. 2, 4, 5	Art. 2, 4, 5	Art. 2, 4, 5	-	Art. 2, 4, 5	-	Art. 2, 4, 5	-
Tajikistan	-	Art. 2, 4, 5	-	-	-	-	Art. 2, 4, 5	-
Turkmenistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ratified	-	-	Art. 4, 5, 6	-
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	Ratified	-	-	Art. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	-

¹¹ It should be noted that “No comments” can be for various reasons, for instance no response received by the Government; comments by the Committee of Experts referred to another year, particularly during the Covid pandemic etc

► 2. Achievements

Country results over the last few years

A review of its history globally shows that, to be meaningful, social dialogue depends on a few preconditions for it to function effectively and to deliver policy outcomes:

- An enabling legal framework, including respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- Strong, independent and representative employers' and workers' organizations;
- Political will and commitment to engage in effective social dialogue by all parties;
- Appropriate institutional support; and
- Mutual trust.

Social dialogue, through the work of NSDIs, has shown progress in the subregion's eight countries—to varying degrees, inevitably. Several factors determine social dialogue's effectiveness. Looking at the last few years, which have largely been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent restrictions on face-to-face meetings and impacts on the practice of social dialogue, the following achievements stand out.

In **Armenia**, the Republican Tripartite Commission provided recommendations on draft amendments to the Labour Code and supported several bilateral agreements between the social partners. Still, the potential for deeper and more comprehensive work of the Republican Tripartite Commission remains, with a stronger role for the social partners.

Interesting dynamics in the evolution of social dialogue can be noted in **Azerbaijan**. Since its creation in 2016, the Tripartite Commission adopted a National Employment Strategy (2018), a National Action Plan on Informality (2020) and several recommendations on amendments to the Labour Code.

Considerable results have been achieved in **Georgia** by and through the Tripartite Social Partnership Commission.

The social partners have discussed extensive amendments to the Labour Code and were instrumental in the adoption of the Law on Labour Inspection (2020), which established the country's Labour Inspection Service. On the adoption of the Law on Occupational Safety and Health (2019), the social partners did not agree between themselves, but did present their views at parliamentary hearings. The ratification of Convention No. 144 in 2018 was a further step in placing social dialogue on a more solid basis. Notwithstanding these positive trends, there still seems room for improvement for social dialogue in Georgia to become a real means of policy coordination.

Although the Republican Tripartite Commission in **Kazakhstan** has a rather "formal" approach, it does not have a set structure. The tripartite partners agreed in their General Agreement of 2021–2023 to embark on significant reform of social dialogue by introducing a new social partnership law. Despite some weaknesses, particularly limitations as to the social partners' voice, some positive developments are seen, such as the adoption of amendments to the Labour Code, to the Law on Trade Unions, and to the Administrative Code, as well as in 2022 the ratification of the ILO Part-Time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175). Other national legal acts were discussed and updated in response to the conclusions by the ILC Conference Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS)¹² concerning freedom of association.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the Republican Tripartite Commission, after a two-year break in meetings (2020–2021), concluded a General Agreement in 2022 (a three-year agreement) and considered various laws. The Agreement targets renewing collaboration between the social partners and the government in social and economic areas and strengthening workers' rights.

In **Tajikistan**, the Tripartite Commission has adopted several recommendations for better implementing the General Agreement aimed at creating new jobs via increasing the number of manufacturing companies and decreasing the number of wage arrears, among other things.

¹² The ILO Committee on the Application of Standards.

Turkmenistan ratified ILO Convention No. 144 and established its Tripartite Commission in 2019. In 2021, social partners signed a tripartite agreement for 2022–2024, which will guide responses to social, labour and economic issues.

In **Uzbekistan**, the Republican Tripartite Commission, created in 2019, was involved in the adoption of several policy strategies, notably the first National Employment Strategy (2021), the National Strategy on Social Protection (2021), and a new edition of the Labour Code (2021).

Social dialogue—beyond this concrete work of the NSDIs—can also be evaluated through the level of

interventions by the ILO’s supervisory mechanism,¹³ particularly cases before the CAS and the Committee on the Freedom of Association (CFA).¹⁴ In 2023, Kazakhstan had a case before the CAS,¹⁵ and in addition, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have pending cases in the CFA, with all complaints submitted by a national or international trade union or confederation.¹⁶ Another indicator can be government and social-partner engagement with the CEACR on submissions, reporting obligations, consultations with the social partners on these matters, or the extent to which social partners actually provide observations on the ratified Conventions.

¹³ See [ILO supervisory system/mechanism](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-supervisory-system-mechanism/lang--en/index.htm).

¹⁴ The CEACR, composed of independent legal experts, analyses the situation in a given country on all ratified Conventions, such as Convention No. 144, and sends its report to the International Labour Conference. At the Conference, the CAS—a tripartite standing committee composed of ILC delegates—examines this report and discusses and adopts conclusions. A separate procedure is foreseen for cases of violation of freedom of association, which can be submitted by

a social partner and will be looked at by the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA). More information can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-supervisory-system-mechanism/lang--en/index.htm>.

¹⁵ For Kazakhstan see Individual Case (CAS) – Discussion: 2022, Publication: 110th ILC session (2022) at [Comments \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/ilo-supervisory-system-mechanism/lang--en/index.htm).

¹⁶ Case No 3283 for Kazakhstan and Case No 3386 for Kyrgyzstan, both countries over the possible adoption of a new law.

► 3. Conclusions and way forward

Social dialogue is present in all eight countries at different stages of development. Accordingly, active participation and effective involvement of the social partners in crafting and shaping economic and social policies have seen differing rates of success. While some countries have advanced in establishing and implementing social dialogue, other countries, are still in their early stages. The different sizes of, and the legal and administrative arrangements for the tripartite commissions reflect a variety of possible approaches to social dialogue. Despite these differences, most countries have made progress in tripartite deliberations, although some areas offer themselves for reflection and improvement, including:

- Gender balance of membership generally favours men and should be reviewed when the composition is renewed.
- Information on the work and the results of tripartite deliberations is sometimes difficult to obtain through public means. A separate website, dedicated to or administered by the NSDI, would help to increase the institution's visibility and publicize its valuable work.
- Although NSDIs often report to a high level in government, a direct contact with the national parliament may further increase their work's relevance.
- The voice of social partners is not always strong and heard. More capacity-building of its members as well as the recognition of an "equal voice" by all may well improve the quality of discussions and hence of possible outcomes.
- Most NSDIs do not meet very frequently. While the frequency of meetings depends largely on the political will of the government and how strong the social partners are in pushing for regular consultations and/or meetings, secretariats can also play a crucial role in supporting the NSDIs. Strengthening them may enable more frequent meetings, while contributing to better preparation for these meetings; help to follow up on decisions; and ultimately improve social dialogue's outcomes.
- All eight NSDIs have broad competencies, usually centred on traditional labour and employment matters. New challenges and contemporary issues surrounding

the future of work, however, such as the green and digital transitions, are still rarely prominent. Integrating such new topics may enhance the NSDIs' relevance for modern policymaking, but this heavily depends on awareness of these issues, which requires capacity-building.

- All countries have ratified Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 as well as No. 144. However, full adherence to their principles and sound implementation will strengthen the NSDIs and improve their international recognition.
- The chairperson of a tripartite commission in the region is usually at a very high level of government, such as Prime Minister or Minister of Labour, which should facilitate the integration of its recommendations in national policymaking and their subsequent implementation.

Summarizing all aspects, this subregion reveals encouraging trends in developing and empowering NSDIs, but with room for further improvement, so as to achieve more meaningful and effective social dialogue. With regard to the context of the UN reform, more awareness is needed among all constituents and the UN agencies on tripartism and social dialogue, including the need to involve the social partners in the national dialogue on development priorities, in coordination with the UN and along with broader civil society.

The ILO, through its Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia as well as relevant headquarters services, stands ready to support specific aspects through technical advice and capacity-building to the NSDIs and to the tripartite constituents. The ILO has developed tools to support the constituents on this, notably a comprehensive guide for national tripartite social dialogue.¹⁷ If requested by a constituent, the ILO can provide assistance in strengthening the institutional framework for social dialogue.

¹⁷ ILO, [National Tripartite Social Dialogue: An ILO guide for improved governance](#), 2013.

Another tool more recently developed by the ILO is a method for self-assessing a social dialogue institution.¹⁸ It can help constituents to analyse and strengthen the inclusiveness and effectiveness of their NSDI. The method can be applied in all parts of the world and to institutions of varying size, composition, mandate and resources. It consists of “stepping-stones” and guides users through the process—from making the decision to undertaking the

self-assessment; to assessing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the institution; and to developing, implementing and monitoring an action plan, adjusted as necessary by the NSDI to local needs. Interested NSDIs can contact the ILO for further information or possible support in its use.

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¹⁸ ILO, [A self-assessment method for social dialogue institutions: SAM-SDI](#), 2021. It has been translated into several languages, including Russian and Armenian.

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