

TENTH MEETING OF THE SRM TWG

(14 - 18 SEPTEMBER 2026)

EXAMINATION OF INSTRUMENTS CONCERNING WORKING TIME

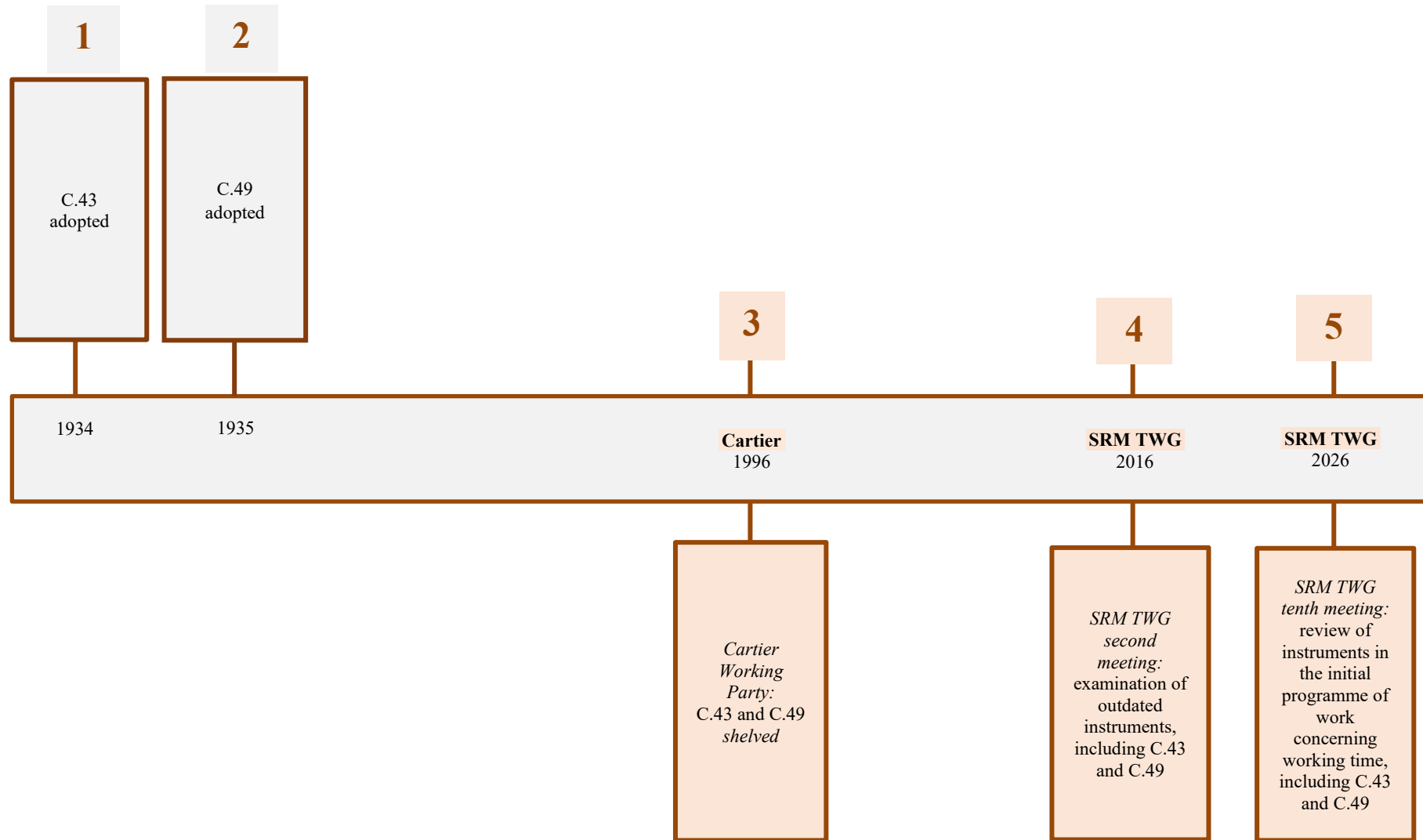
Technical Note 1.7: Outdated instruments concerning working time in glass work

- Two instruments in the initial programme of work concern working time in glass work: the Sheet-Glass Works Convention, 1934 (No. 43) and the Reduction of Hours of Work (Glass-Bottle Works) Convention, 1935 (No. 49).
- *Current status of instruments:* These instruments were reviewed by the Cartier Working Party, following which they were classified as outdated.
- *Action to be considered:* Follow-up action to be taken for outdated Conventions Nos 43 and 49; consideration of regulatory gap regarding shift work; and associated follow-up action.

14 August 2026

ILO regulation of working time in glass work

Chronology of developments



ILO regulatory approach to working time in glass work

In the 1930s, the ILO considered regulation to address the specific nature of rest in the glass industry.¹ A collective rest day was considered impracticable for automatic-sheet glass works since stopping the machinery would prevent resumption of normal production the following day.² The **Sheet-Glass Works Convention, 1934 (No. 43)** establishes a system of four shifts that ensures rest periods and suitable hours of work for workers engaged in the continuous processes of automatic sheet-glass works. Contemporaneous with the adoption of the generally applicable **Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47)** on the reduction of hours of work,³ a series of sectoral Conventions on the same topic were adopted,⁴ including the **Reduction of Hours of Work (Glass-Bottle Works) Convention, 1935 (No. 49)**.

Unlike other working time instruments, Conventions Nos 43 and 49 regulate minimum periods of rest and maximum shift lengths in the context of spells of shift work.⁵ Shift work is “a method of organization of working time in which workers succeed one another at the workplace so that the establishment can operate longer than the hours of work of individual workers” at different daily and night hours.⁶

ILO developments since adoption of the instruments

1. 1934: ILC adopted Convention No. 43

Convention No. 43 regulates hours of work in automatic sheet-glass works applying to persons working in “successive shifts in necessarily continuous operations in sheet-glass works which manufacture by automatic machines sheet-glass”. The Convention limits spells of work to eight hours, with a maximum average of 42 hours per week and a four-shift system. The interval between two spells of work by the same shift is set at a minimum of 16 hours, which may be reduced where necessary for the periodical change-over of shifts.

See: [Convention No. 43](#)

2. 1935: ILC adopted Convention No. 49

Convention No. 49 aims to reduce the hours of work in glass-bottle works. The Convention applies to “persons who, in glass works where bottles are produced by automatic machinery,

¹ ILO: *Methods of providing rest and alternation of shifts in automatic sheet-glass works*, [First Discussion](#), ILC, 17th Session, 1933, pp 6-7.

² [First Discussion](#), 1933, p. 8.

³ Convention No. 47 is on the agenda of the tenth meeting of the SRM TWG: Technical Note 1.1.

⁴ ILO: *Reduction of Hours of Work*, [Report VI](#), ILC, 19th Session, 1935, p. 14-15. See also: *Reduction of Hours of Work (Public Works) Convention, 1936 (No. 51)* and *Reduction of Hours of Work (Textiles) Convention, 1937 (No. 61)*, withdrawn at the 88th ILC Session (2000).

⁵ While Convention No. 1 sets specific limits for working hours in the case of shift work, it does not comprehensively regulate working time for shift workers. Article 2(c) provides that shift workers may be employed in excess of eight hours in any one day and 48 hours in any one week, provided that these limits are respected over a three-week period. Article 4 provides additional flexibility in the case of “processes which are required by reason of the nature of the process to be carried on continuously by a succession of shifts”. In such cases, working hours may reach an average of 56 hours a week (no reference period is specified). ILO: [2018 General Survey](#), para. 677.

⁶ ILO: *What is shift work?*, [Information Sheet No. WT-8](#), 2004.

work in successive shifts” in certain functions. The Convention limits spells of work to eight hours, with a maximum average of 42 hours per week and a four-shift system. The interval between two spells of work by the same shift is set at a minimum of 16 hours, which may be reduced where necessary for the periodical change-over of shifts.

See: [Convention No. 49](#)

3. 1996: Governing Body shelved Conventions Nos 43 and 49

In March 1996, the Governing Body shelved Conventions Nos 43 and 49 in follow up to the Cartier Working Party’s recommendations. The Cartier Working Party examined Conventions Nos 43 and 49 within its examination of the least-ratified and dormant Conventions. Previously, in 1985, the Governing Body had considered that these instruments were no longer relevant, had decided to discontinue detailed reporting on them, and had categorised them as “dormant” instruments.⁷

Following the Cartier Working Party’s recommendation, the Governing Body decided to:

- (a) shelve Conventions Nos 43 and 49 with immediate effect;
- (b) include Conventions Nos 43 and 49 among the Conventions that might be revised should the Working Party recommend the revision of other Conventions dealing with hours of work and working conditions of shift workers; and
- (c) re-examine their status in due course.

The result of the shelving was largely the same as the result of the dormant status conferred previously. That is, the Conventions were no longer promoted or discussed in Office documents, were effectively closed to new ratifications and were not the subject of requests for regular reports; they could, however, be the subject of article 24 and 26 procedures and observations under article 23.

See: [GB.265/LILS/WP/PRS/1](#), paras III.2 and III.3 (*Office background paper for Working Party, March 1996*); [GB.265/LILS/5](#), paras 31-32 (*discussion by Working Party, March 1996*); [GB.265/8/2](#), para. 24(d)(ii) (*discussion by LILS Committee, March 1996*)

4. 2016: SRM TWG examined the follow-up taken to Conventions Nos 43 and 49

The SRM TWG examined Conventions Nos 43 and 49 within the context of its 2016 examination of the follow-up to be taken to outdated instruments. In light of its recommendations, the Governing Body requested that:

- (a) the Office commences follow-up within the next 12 months with Member States currently bound by the Conventions with the aim of understanding whether or not those instruments still serve a relevant purpose in those countries;
- (b) based on the Office’s report concerning the information obtained through that follow-up, the SRM TWG will consider Conventions Nos 43 and 49 during its later

⁷ [GB.229/SC/1/2](#), paras 4 and 7(d); [GB.229/10/19](#), para. 22(b).

examination of other instruments concerning working time (set of instruments 8) and decide at that time whether or not to recommend their abrogation or withdrawal as appropriate and, at the same time, consider the resulting regulatory gap on the topic of shift work.

The Governing Body noted that the SRM TWG would follow-up on the regulatory gap identified with regard to the topic of shift work in its later discussion on the working time instruments.

In line with these recommendations, and in preparation for the present meeting of the SRM TWG, the Office contacted the 12 Member States bound by Conventions Nos 43 and/or 49, seeking information on whether these instruments continue to serve a relevant purpose. The responses received indicated that, in the responding Member States,⁸ the Conventions no longer served a relevant purpose within their national legal framework, and a number of Governments indicated that the Conventions were no longer applied in practice due to substantial legislative changes.

See: [GB.328/LILS/2/1\(Rev.\)](#), Annex I, para. 12 (Oct-Nov 2016); [GB.328/PV](#), para. 581

The instruments in 2026

A Policy context

The glass industry has undergone significant technological and workforce changes since the instruments were adopted.⁹ Glass industry workers operate on a shift system that has gradually evolved over the years. The industry has been increasingly mechanized, particularly in jobs traditionally performed by women, reducing the number of women employed in the industry.¹⁰ There is a trend towards an ageing of the workforce, as the number of new recruits to the industry has diminished.¹¹ Occupational safety and health concerns have been recorded in the glass manufacturing industry.¹²

B International labour standards context

(1) Information relating to the ratification of Conventions Nos 43 and 49

Convention No. 43 is in force in 12 Member States and Convention No. 49 is in force in 9 Member States. The number of Member States that have ratified Conventions Nos 43 and 49 is unchanged since they were shelved.

Convention	Effective ratifications:	Further information
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⁸ Responses received from Mexico, Ireland, France, Slovakia, Belgium and Norway.

⁹ ILO: *The glass industry: Recent trends and changes in working conditions and employment relations*, [WP No. 310](#), 2015, p. 20.

¹⁰ [WP No. 310](#), 2015, p. 20.

¹¹ [WP No. 310](#), 2015, p. 20.

¹² [WP No. 310](#), 2015, p. 2.

Convention No. 43	12 effective ratifications (1 denunciation)	• <u>Last ratification</u>: 1993 (<i>Czechia</i> and <i>Slovakia</i>) • <u>Ratification by region</u>: Europe and Central Asia: 8 ratifications;¹³ Americas: 3 ratifications;¹⁴ Africa: 1 ratification;¹⁵ Arab States: 0 ratifications; Asia and the Pacific: 0 ratifications. • There are two declarations of applicability to non-metropolitan territories: <i>France</i> (<i>French Polynesia</i> and <i>New Caledonia</i>).
Convention No. 49	9 effective ratifications (1 denunciation)	• <u>Last ratification</u>: 1993 (<i>Czechia</i> and <i>Slovakia</i>) • <u>Ratification by region</u>: Europe and Central Asia: 7 ratifications;¹⁶ Americas: 1 ratification;¹⁷ Africa: 1 ratification;¹⁸ Arab States: 0 ratifications; Asia and the Pacific: 0 ratifications. • There are two declarations of applicability to non-metropolitan territories: <i>France</i> (<i>French Polynesia</i> and <i>New Caledonia</i>).

(2) Information concerning the implementation of Conventions Nos 43 and 49

The Committee of Experts has not conducted regular supervision of Conventions Nos 43 and 49 since 1992.

Key considerations

In examining Conventions Nos 43 and 49 for the purpose of determining the follow-up to be taken to these outdated instruments, the following considerations are particularly relevant:

- Convention No. 43 is in force in 12 Member States and Convention No. 49 in 9 Member States.
- Conventions Nos 43 and 49 have been dormant since 1985 and were shelved in 1996. Accordingly, they are neither promoted nor subject to regular supervision by the Committee of Experts.
- The reality of work in the glass works industry has changed significantly since the instruments were adopted.¹⁹
- Conventions Nos 43 and 49 regulate minimum periods of rest and maximum shift lengths in the context of spells of shift work, which is not replicated in other standards concerning working time for shift workers. The possibility of standard-setting on shift work has not yet been taken up.
- In 2016, the SRM TWG examined these instruments in the context of the follow-up to be taken for outdated instruments. It noted that during its later examination of the working

¹³ *Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Ireland, Malta, Norway and Slovakia.*

¹⁴ *Mexico, Panama and Uruguay.*

¹⁵ *Djibouti.*

¹⁶ *Belgium, Czechia, France, Ireland, Malta, Norway and Slovakia.*

¹⁷ *Mexico.*

¹⁸ *Djibouti.*

¹⁹ [GB.265/LILS/WP/PRS/1](#), paras III.2 and III.3; [WP No. 310](#), 2015.

time instruments, it would consider the abrogation or withdrawal of Conventions Nos 43 and 49 and would follow up on the regulatory gap identified concerning shift work.²⁰

- Responses received from Member States in relation to the Office's request for information on whether Conventions Nos 43 and/or 49 continue to serve a relevant purpose indicated that the Conventions no longer served a relevant purpose within their national legal framework, and a number of Governments indicated that the Conventions were no longer applied in practice due to substantial legislative changes.²¹

Possible action to be considered in relation to Conventions Nos 43 and 49

The outdated sectoral Conventions Nos 43 and 49, concerning working time in the glass industry, are not promoted or discussed in Office documents, and are not the subject of requests for regular Article 22 reports. While these sectoral instruments have been shelved, they are the only working time instruments regulating minimum periods of rest and maximum shift lengths in shift work.

Following its consideration of the follow up to be taken to outdated Conventions Nos 43 and 49, the SRM TWG will tailor lessons learnt through the SRM TWG process to the specificities of this review.

If the SRM TWG were to decide to recommend the adoption of a comprehensive instrument concerning working time, it may wish to indicate that this would include the instruments regulating shift work and make appropriate recommendations in that regard. This could include recommending consideration of the abrogation or withdrawal of Conventions Nos 43 and 49 following the adoption of a new comprehensive instrument, should such an instrument be adopted, that ensures the enhanced protection of the rights of workers in relation to shift work.

Alternatively, the SRM TWG may wish to consider the review of these instruments separately as set out below.

Based on the preceding information, and ensuring consistency with past SRM TWG recommendations, **the Office proposes consideration of:**

- acknowledging the status of Conventions Nos 43 and 49 as *outdated* instruments;
- consideration of the *regulatory gap in coverage* in relation to the international regulation of shift work; and
- *practical and time-bound follow-up action* composed of the non-normative measures set out below.

In this regard, the Office has taken particular account of the fact that these outdated sectoral instruments are no longer relevant, except with respect to the principle of regulating minimum periods of rest and maximum shift lengths in shift work.

²⁰ [GB.328/LILS/2/1\(Rev.\)](#), Annex I, para. 12 (Oct-Nov 2016); [GB.328/PV](#), para. 581.

²¹ Responses received from *Mexico, Ireland, France, Slovakia, Belgium and Norway*.

The SRM TWG will take decisions concerning the three elements within its mandate and make corresponding recommendations to the Governing Body concerning Conventions Nos 43 and 49.

1. STATUS OF INSTRUMENTS UNDER REVIEW:

The SRM TWG will consider acknowledging, within their current legal status as active instruments, the status of Conventions Nos 43 and 49 as *outdated* instruments.

2. IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS IN COVERAGE:

Considering that a regulatory gap in coverage was identified by the SRM TWG in 2016 in relation to the international regulation of shift work, the SRM TWG could recommend that the Governing Body consider addressing this gap, including through placing a standard-setting item on the agenda of the Conference and/or through non-normative means.

3. FOLLOW-UP ACTION AS APPROPRIATE:

Considering past practices of the SRM TWG and the specificities of the instruments under review, the SRM TWG will consider what follow-up action should be taken:

- (i) **If the SRM TWG considers that a gap in coverage exists in relation to the international regulation of shift work**, it could decide to recommend that the regulatory gap in coverage is addressed through placing a standard-setting item to that effect on the agenda of the Conference and/or through non-normative means.
- (ii) **If the SRM TWG considers that the outdated status of Conventions Nos 43 and 49 warrants a decision to abrogate the Conventions by the Conference**, it could decide to recommend that their abrogation by the Conference be considered either as soon as possible or at a particular session of the Conference as it determines.