

Decent Work Country Agenda between Bulgaria and the International Labour Organisation 2008-2009

Introduction

The primary goal of the ILO is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. A Decent Work Country Agenda promotes decent work as a key component of development policies and as a national policy objective of the Government and Social Partners. The present Country Agenda is influenced by international development agendas such as the Millennium Development Goals and strategic documents of the EU as well as being based on national development objectives. It also takes into account the priorities of the ILO constituents, as expressed in consultations held with them. The Agenda outlines the policies, strategies and results required to realise progress towards decent work for all. This document reflects the strategic planning of ILO cooperation activities with Bulgaria for 2008-09. Reflecting the constituents' as well as the ILO's assessment of past cooperation, the Agenda aims at ensuring greater synergies and stronger coherence of ILO's support to Bulgaria and thus contributes to achieving impact and sustainable outcomes.

In the period 2006-07, a Decent Work Country Programme was successfully implemented by the constituents, with the assistance of the ILO. Its aim was to promote decent work as an essential element for the development of the social and labour sphere in Bulgaria. It was structured around three priorities, combining different aspects of Decent Work; namely developing employment and labour market policies that meet national needs and comply with EU standards; adopting improved social protection policies for vulnerable groups, and strengthening of the representation, services and influence of the social partners.

Country Context and Priorities

After joining the European Union on 1 January 2007, Bulgaria has been facing new challenges related to improving human resource development, strengthening social dialogue and enhancing labour law enforcement in order to respond better to the new realities in the country. A Decent Work Agenda is not a lesson to be taught by some and learnt by others; it is a shared commitment and it is one that must be understood in accordance with the national and European context.

Promoting decent work is a shared responsibility of the ILO and its constituents through mobilizing their energy and resourcefulness, and providing a platform for constructing consensus on social and economic policies. Following tripartite consultations held in February 2008 in Sofia, a new type of cooperation aiming to meet the national constituents' needs has been proposed.

This is a "one priority" focused cooperation Agenda that would allow a results-oriented approach targeting several outcomes. Further to tripartite consultations conducted by the National Coordinator, the constituents have selected as a shared goal and priority for the Decent Work Agenda 2008-09 **the strengthening of the capacity of the institutions and the social partners to provide more effective services to their members.**

The ILO will continue to assist the reform of the legal framework to be brought into conformity with the stipulations of the international and European labour standards. In this

context, and as a follow up to the conclusions of the Conference Committee on Application of Standards at its session of June 2008, technical assistance will be provided to the Government to amend relevant Bulgarian law. The Office will also work with the tripartite constituents to secure a better implementation of C 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining and facilitate discussions for eventual ratification of C 154 concerning the promotion of Collective Bargaining.

The ILO will also contribute to increasing the value of employers' and workers' organizations to provide new or better services to existing and potential members. In the port and transport sectors the ILO will strengthen the capacity of social partners to engage effectively in social dialogue at a sectoral level.

The ILO will facilitate testing of social finance mechanisms providing support to unemployed people having better access to enterprise creation thus enabling these mechanisms to be integrated into active labour market policies.

The ILO will continue to provide support to the constituents in improving the social protection system, including social security, occupational safety and health (in particular risk assessment) and Labour Inspection. The ILO will assist the country's efforts to curb human trafficking and to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The ITC Turin will contribute to networking and building effective and efficient partnerships between Bulgaria and neighbouring countries from South East Europe through the design and implementation of social policies by way of an intensive HRD programme which will develop competencies for skills upgrading. Further, assistance will be given for the development of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's Centre for Professional Development, located at Kremikovtzi district.

The Decent Work Country Agenda will be implemented jointly by the constituents and the ILO. The ILO will provide the technical expertise and assistance to facilitate the achievement of the expected outcomes to which the constituents are committed.

The new cooperation framework is the continuation of the previous successful cooperation between Bulgaria and the International Labour Organization and builds upon achievements and lessons learnt.

The ILO and the Bulgarian constituents (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and social partners) will review the Agenda implementation periodically in order to assess progress made, while maintaining the necessary flexibility to adapt to emerging changes in the national context.