

# International Labour Standards on Employment policy

For most people, the key to escaping poverty is having a job. Recognizing that the development of labour standards without addressing employment would be meaningless, the ILO dedicates a large part of its programme to creating greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income. To achieve this goal, it promotes international standards on employment policy which, together with technical cooperation programmes, are aimed at achieving full, productive and freely chosen employment. No single policy can be prescribed to attain this objective. Every country, whether developing, developed or in transition, needs to devise its own policies to achieve full employment. ILO standards on employment policy provide a framework for designing and implementing such policies, thereby ensuring maximum access to the jobs needed to provide decent work.

## Relevant ILO instruments

- **Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)** > - [ratifications >]

This governance Convention requires ratifying States to declare and pursue an active policy designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment. Such a policy shall aim to ensure that there is work for all who are available for and seeking work; that such work is as productive as possible; and that there is freedom of choice of employment and the fullest possible opportunity for each worker to qualify for, and to use his or her skills and endowments in a job for which he or she is well suited, irrespective of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin. The **Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169)** >, adds that the economic and social policies, plans and programmes designed to promote full, productive and freely chosen employment should aim to ensure for all workers equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of access to employment, conditions of employment, vocational guidance and training and career development. Moreover, in view of the difficulties encountered by certain underprivileged groups in finding employment, the Recommendation calls on States to adopt measures to respond to the needs of all categories of persons frequently having difficulties in finding lasting employment, such as women, young workers, persons with disabilities, older workers, the long-term unemployed and migrant workers lawfully within their territory. The policy also has to take duly into account the stage and level of economic development and the mutual relationships between employment objectives and other economic and social objectives, and shall be pursued by methods that are appropriate to national conditions and practices. The Convention also requires ratifying States to take

measures to apply an employment policy in consultation with workers' and employers' representatives, and the representatives of the persons affected by the measures to be taken.

- **[Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 \(No. 198\)](#)** >

The objective of this Recommendation is to protect workers encountering difficulties in establishing whether an employment relationship exists in situations where the respective rights and obligations of the parties concerned are not clear, where there has been an attempt to disguise the employment relationship, or where inadequacies or limitations exist in the legal framework, or in its interpretation or application. The Recommendation envisages the adoption of a national policy to ensure effective protection for workers who perform work in the context of an employment relationship.

- **[Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 \(No. 205\)](#)** >

In June 2017, the ILO's constituents, recognizing the importance of employment and decent work in promoting peace, preventing situations of crisis resulting from conflict and disasters, enabling recovery and reinforcing resilience, and emphasizing the need to ensure respect for all human rights and the rule of law, including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards, adopted at the International Labour Conference the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205).

- **[Further relevant instruments](#)** >

## **Global Employment Agenda and Follow-up to the 2008 Declaration**

In 2003, the ILO Governing Body adopted the [Global Employment Agenda](#) >, which sets forth ten core elements for the development of a global strategy to boost employment. These include such economic strategies as promoting trade and investment for productive employment and market access for developing countries, sustainable development for sustainable livelihoods, and policy integration in macroeconomic policy. Other core elements include strategies supported by international labour standards, such as the promotion of cooperatives and small and medium-sized enterprises, training and education, social protection and occupational safety and health, as well as equality and collective bargaining.(Note 1) The follow-up action to the [2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization](#) > includes a scheme of recurrent discussions at the International Labour Conference. As a response to the requirement set out in the Declaration for an integrated approach to help member States meet ILO objectives, it was decided that a recurrent report would be prepared by the Office for discussion at the International Labour Conference. In November 2008, the Governing Body decided on the first of the strategic objectives to be discussed as a recurrent item. Up to now there have been three recurrent discussions by the International Labour Conference on the strategic objective of employment. The [first recurrent discussion](#) > was held in 2010 on "employment policies for social justice and a fair globalization". The [second recurrent discussion](#) > on employment was held in 2014, when the Conference discussed "employment policies for sustainable recovery and development". The [third recurrent discussion](#) > was held in 2022 on "responding to the crisis and fostering inclusive and sustainable development with a new generation of comprehensive employment policies"

## Further information

- General Survey (2021): [Promoting employment and decent work in a changing landscape >](#) and [Addendum >](#) to the General Survey
- Guide to international labour standards and rights at work concerning young people (2017) – [\[PDF >\]](#)
- Guide on employment policy and international labour standards (2014) – [\[PDF >\]](#)
- Guide for the formulation of national employment policies (2012) – [\[PDF >\]](#)
- Rights at work in times of crisis: Trends at the country level in terms of compliance with international labour standards (2011) – [\[PDF >\]](#)
- [General Survey concerning employment instruments >](#) in light of the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2010) – [ [PDF >](#) ] -
- General Survey on Employment Policy (2004) - [ [PDF >](#) ]
- [ILO Employment Sector >](#)

**Note 1** - ILO, [Review of the core elements of the Global Employment Agenda >](#), GB.286/ESP/1(rev), Governing Body, 286th Session, Geneva, March 2003.

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