

FOREWORD

I would like to congratulate NFS for this project and to express how much it fits into the daily work of the ILO.

To assess the implementation and practice of ILO Fundamental International Labour Standards plus the Governance Convention N° 144 on tripartite consultation in three specific Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and to develop a trade union strategy for strengthening workers' rights in the region by strengthening social dialogue and effective application of Fundamental principles and rights at work is a major contribution to the understanding of the role of the ILO in supporting the creation of the institutions and the promotion of a strong, effective and efficient social dialogue.

In fact, the two main characteristics that make unique the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are the adoption of International Labour Standards (ILS) and its tripartite structure, where governments and social partners, Workers and Employers Organizations, work hand in hand.

The ILO Constitution recognizes that "labour is not a commodity". Indeed, work is part of everyone's daily life and is crucial to a person's dignity, well-being and development as a human being and an active citizen. The ILS are there to ensure the dignity at work and the respect for the human being.

Achieving the goal of decent work in the global economy requires action at different levels, from the enterprise, regional, national and the international level. Via its standards, the ILO contributes to making sure that economic growth, social justice and sustainable development go hand in hand with the creation of decent work. The ILO's unique tripartite structure ensures that these standards are backed by governments, employers and workers organisations.

ILS lay down the basic minimum standards to be respected in the regulated matters. In this context, fundamental principles and rights at work comprise the main four categories of rights that are considered to be essential to protect and respect in the world of work, including the fight against child and forced labour, the principle of freedom of association and collective bargaining and the work on non-discrimination and equality.

Social Dialogue is essential to achieve the objectives of constructive work to promote decent work and social justice. Social dialogue can only be effective if counts upon the active participation of the three partners, governments, autonomous, independent and representative workers' and employers' organizations, all with the relevant political and technical capacity to give a real meaning to social dialogue, capable of delivering solutions and choices that will contribute to effective and integrated economic, social and environmental protection policies, that will favor the society as a whole.

Political will, commitment to engage in social dialogue by all the parties, clear respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining, guaranteed by the government of an enabling legal and institutional framework conducive to effective social dialogue are all ingredients for success.

ILS, namely, Conventions and Protocols once ratified, and of course all Recommendations, have to be reflected in national legislation and implemented effectively. The role of trade unions in promoting implementation in practice is very relevant and social dialogue is the most appropriate tool to enable cooperation in applying ILS.

The proposed strategy for strengthening workers' rights in the Baltic region, elaborated by the trade unions in the framework of this project will certainly lead to a more effective promotion and protection of workers' rights and thus a proper application of ILS in every country.

On behalf of ACTRAV I encourage you to pursue this agenda in the future.

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