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Policy Development Section
Employment and Social Protection Segment

POL

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FIRST ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Follow-up discussion on the voluntary peer-review mechanisms of national employment policies

Purpose of the document

The document provides detailed information on a proposed option for a voluntary peer-review mechanism of national employment policies as requested by the Governing Body at its 332nd Session in March 2018. The Governing Body is invited to decide whether to adopt the proposed mechanism (see the draft decision in paragraph 11).

Relevant strategic objective: Employment.

Main relevant outcome/cross-cutting policy driver: Outcome 1: More and better jobs for inclusive growth and improved youth employment prospects.

Policy implications: None.

Legal implications: None.

Financial implications: Yes.

Follow-up action required: Depending on the outcome of the discussion.

Author unit: Employment Policy Department (EMPLOYMENT).

Related documents: GB.328/POL/4; resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment, International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, Geneva, 2014.

Introduction

1. The resolution and conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment adopted at the 103rd Session (2014) of the International Labour Conference (ILC) called upon the Office to “assist member States, upon request, in the promotion and implementation of their comprehensive employment policy framework” by means of activities in different areas. This included the request to: “Develop proposals for a voluntary peer review of employment policy with the objective of promoting knowledge-sharing and mutual learning on good practices among Members of the Organization”.¹ At its 326th Session (March 2016), the Governing Body asked the Office to prepare a paper on options for voluntary employment policy peer-review mechanisms for the consideration of the Governing Body at its 328th Session (October–November 2016).² The evaluation of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, undertaken at the 105th Session (June 2016) of the International Labour Conference reiterated this call to enhance each Member’s capacity to produce, use and share information on best practices, including through voluntary national peer reviews.³
2. To respond to such requests, the Office carried out an overview of existing policy peer-review mechanisms in different international and regional organizations and, based on lessons from such overview, it presented three options for a voluntary peer-review mechanism of national employment policies for consideration by the Governing Body at its 328th Session (October–November 2016). The options differed mainly according to their geographical coverage, either global, regional or subregional.⁴ Taking stock of the discussion in October 2016, a set of four options was developed and presented at the Governing Body in March 2018, which differed based on their geographical scope (global or subregional) as well as on the modalities of the review (full peer review or partial peer review based on self-assessment by the country volunteering for the review).⁵
3. Based on the information provided, the Governing Body requested the Office to hold tripartite intersessional consultations on drafting further detailed proposals regarding document GB.332/POL/1, so that the issue can be examined for decision at its 334th Session in October–November 2018.⁶

¹ ILO: Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment, International Labour Conference, 103rd Session, Geneva, 2014. The request was confirmed through the approval of the follow-up plan to the resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment at the October/November 2014 session of the Governing Body. ILO: Matters arising out of the work of the 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference: Follow-up to the resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment, [GB.322/INS/4/1](#).

² [GB.326/PV](#), para. 296.

³ [Resolution on Advancing Social Justice through Decent Work](#), International Labour Conference, 105th Session, Geneva, 2016.

⁴ ILO: Voluntary peer-review mechanisms of national employment policies, Governing Body, 328th Session, Geneva, 2016, [GB.328/POL/4](#).

⁵ ILO: Follow-up discussion on the voluntary peer-review mechanisms of national employment policies, Governing Body, 332nd Session, Geneva, 2018, [GB.332/POL/1\(Rev.\)](#).

⁶ [GB.332/POL/PV](#), p. 4.

4. Reflecting the discussion during the Governing Body in March 2018 as well as the intersessional consultations that took place between April and September 2018, this paper: (a) briefly recalls the main guiding principles for an ILO voluntary partial peer-review mechanism of employment policy that emerged during the various discussions of this matter at the Governing Body; and (b) outlines the key elements of a proposal that takes into account the views and opinions expressed.
5. In the proposed peer-review mechanism, a volunteer country undertakes a tripartite self-assessment, followed by a peer review by interested countries from the subregion. Such an approach was favoured by most members of the Governing Body at its 332nd Session (March 2018) in order to enhance the value of the process in generating new knowledge on good practices concerning employment policy issues. At the same time, the mechanism provides for a global discussion of the outcomes of the subregional reviews so as to ensure broader sharing of the knowledge generated. These global discussions would be based on synthesis reports prepared every four years by the Office. This global aspect was considered a necessary feature by members of the Governing Body, not only to enhance the value added of the whole review process to all ILO constituents, but also to provide substantive inputs to the ILC recurrent discussions on employment and to contribute to support the implementation of national comprehensive employment policy frameworks.⁷

Main guiding principles

6. Overall, there was a broad consensus among the Governing Body members that:
 - the voluntary national employment policy peer-review mechanism should be truly voluntary;
 - its primary objective should be to foster mutual learning and exchange of good practice;
 - its process and outcomes would remain separate from the existing International Labour Standards supervisory system/mechanism;
 - the framework of reference should follow the conclusions concerning the second recurrent discussion on employment of 2014 where the key elements of comprehensive national employment policy frameworks were endorsed and adopted by the Conference;
 - tripartite involvement should be ensured throughout the process;
 - countries that volunteer should be given flexibility to adapt, based on tripartite consultations, the scope of the review in line with their distinctive needs and circumstances;
 - no ranking should be made of the volunteer countries based on the outcomes of the peer review;

⁷ The implementation of the employment policy peer-review mechanism – if adopted by the Governing Body – should also take into consideration possible synergies with the country-level partnerships for policy coherence and decent work discussed by the Governing Body at its 331st Session, in 2017; see, in particular, [GB.331/INS/9](#), paras 21–24.

- the process should be facilitated by the Office by means of providing technical and analytical support to tripartite constituents in the country;
- the process should add value to and not duplicate similar processes under way as part of the development of national employment policies and Decent Work Country Programmes, or as part of the peer-review activities of other international and regional bodies including those aimed at attaining the Sustainable Development Goals;
- the process should contribute to policy coherence at the country level and take into consideration possible synergies with the country-level partnerships for policy coherence and decent work under consideration by the Governing Body;⁸
- the Office should be ready, upon request, to provide assistance to a country's efforts to follow up on the outcomes of the review, for example, should the process lead to identifying the need for policy and institutional reforms, capacity-building needs of governments and social partners, or gaps in the mobilization of technical and financial resources for employment policy implementation.

Detailed proposal for a voluntary peer-review mechanism

7. Under the proposed mechanism, partial peer reviews are carried out in volunteer countries in a given subregion.⁹ This comprises the following stages:
- (i) ***Inception and selection process:*** The Office will invite member States to indicate their interest in a voluntary partial peer review. A maximum of five national reviews will be carried out each year. Each year, therefore, a maximum of one volunteering country in each of the five ILO regions will be selected for the review. In regions where more than one country wishes to take part in the process, the Office will, in consultation with the interested countries, decide on the chronological order of the reviews within that region.
 - (ii) ***The production of national tripartite self-assessment reports:*** In each volunteering country, the review should address all elements of the comprehensive employment policy framework. The scope could, however, be adjusted, based on tripartite consultations, to focus more in depth on those policy areas and good practices that are deemed most relevant to national needs and circumstances. The national self-assessment report will be produced by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with relevant government agencies and the social partners. If requested, the Office could provide technical assistance. The national employment policy review report so produced will be discussed and validated at a national tripartite conference.
 - (iii) ***Reviewing process at the subregional level:*** The validated national report will provide the basis for the peer-review discussion that will take place during a subregional tripartite peer-review workshop. Tripartite representatives from the country under review and other volunteer peer countries from the subregion will meet to discuss and substantiate the findings of the review. Participants would include high-ranking officials and technical experts from other relevant government agencies and

⁸ Governing Body, 331st Session, Geneva, 2017; see, in particular, [GB.331/INS/9](#), paras 21–24.

⁹ The sum of the countries under each Decent Work Technical Support Team is referred to as a subregion.

institutions. If deemed useful, experts from outside the subregion could be invited to provide additional peer learning and exchange of information.

- (iv) **Mutual learning at the global level:** Every four years, the outcomes of the subregional review workshops will be synthesized by the Office in a global report.¹⁰ The global report will be presented for discussion at global employment policy events organized by the Office, with the presence of tripartite delegations of the countries that volunteered as well as tripartite delegations from interested countries.
- (v) **Global follow-up:** The discussion of the global synthesis report should take place every four years, ahead of the preparation of the Office report submitted for the ILC recurrent discussions on employment. In this way, the outcomes of the peer review mechanism would be one of the technical inputs feeding into the ILC report and contribute new and substantive inputs to inform the ILC deliberations, thereby allowing a richer institutional reporting on the implementation of the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization.
- (vi) **National follow-up:** Following a national review, if requested, the Office would assist the volunteer country in implementing the findings of the review and mobilizing technical and financial assistance.

8. The modalities of implementation of the mechanism will be assessed once the first full four-year cycle of reviews has been completed.
9. The question of the costs of the proposed mechanism was raised by several members of the Governing Body. For the above proposal, assuming that the maximum of five volunteering countries is reached every year, the Office estimates suggest a total cost of about US\$700,000 per year on average (or US\$2.8 million over the full cycle of four years), about two-thirds of which is accounted for by the costs of organizing national and subregional workshops for mutual sharing of experiences.¹¹ The total costs do not include the costs of the eventual follow-up in the reviewed countries.
10. The costs of the mechanism have to be considered vis-à-vis the value added, including the fact that processes for peer exchange and learning of good practice in employment policy are not commonly available or fully developed for many emerging economies and developing countries. In addition to building and exchanging knowledge on what worked and what did not, the proposed mechanisms could also trigger policy and institutional reform, identify the capacity-building needs of governments and social partners, develop proposals for technical assistance – including through South–South and triangular cooperation – and facilitate the mobilization of national resources for the implementation of employment policy. The peer reviews would also contribute to the further dissemination of knowledge by the ILO on good practice in employment policies and to the further refinement of ILO tools and technical advice in response to specific needs.¹² Another value addition would be the possibility for capacity building of countries volunteering for peer review, during the process, through the assistance provided by the Office. Based on the findings of

¹⁰ The report will be based on 15 country reports and subregional peer reviews, five from year 1 to 3 of each cycle. Year 4 of the cycle will be dedicated to the preparation of the global report and the discussion of it.

¹¹ The cost estimates differ from those given in the February 2018 Governing Body paper as this proposal combines elements of a global discussion with a review process at subregional levels and requires additional meetings and work time of ILO specialists.

¹² GB.332/POL/1(Rev.), para. 6.

the national self-assessment reports and the learning experience through the subregional and global discussions, countries will be better capacitated to design, implement and monitor comprehensive employment policy frameworks, and ensure policy coherence at the national level.

Draft decision

- 11. The Governing Body requested the Director-General to implement, taking into account its guidance, the proposed voluntary peer-review mechanism of national employment policies.***