

CONCEPT NOTE

ILO-AICESIS Joint International Conference: The role of social dialogue and its institutions in combating inequalities in the world of work (23-24 November 2023, Athens-Greece)

Background

The ILO is founded on the principle of tripartism, meaning that cooperation and social dialogue between governments, employers' and workers' representatives underpins all aspects of its work. Social dialogue is essential for good governance of the world of work and the pursuit of social justice. The ILO advocates and promotes effective and inclusive social dialogue between the tripartite partners at all levels from the local to the global. This includes the provision of support to national institutions for social dialogue to strengthen their role and impact in national economic and social policy-making.

In pursuit of this objective, the ILO signed a partnership agreement with the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions ([AICESIS](#)) in 2012, since renewed for 2018 – 2024. The agreement aims to support the achievement of the objectives of both organizations, through mutual consultations and the organization of joint activities to strengthen social dialogue and tripartism as means to promote decent work and social justice.

AICESIS was created in 1999 as an international forum for the exchange of information, experiences and good practices between Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) and similar social dialogue institutions.¹ AICESIS is a key advocate of the Decent Work Agenda and has consistently promoted ILO standards and instruments among its member institutions, including the Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019) and the Global Call to Action for a Human-centred Recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient (2021).

In the context of the partnership agreement, the ILO and AICESIS jointly organize on a regular basis (at least once every two years) an international conference on a thematic area of the Decent Work Agenda, intended to build the capacity of the members of national institutions for social dialogue on global social issues. The themes of previous events include the following: Response to the financial and economic crisis (Madrid, 2013), Social Protection Floors (Seoul, 2014), Promoting Workplace Compliance (the Hague, 2015), the Future of Work (Athens, 2017), and Governance of the Digital Economy (Bucharest, 2019). These events also served to enhance international policy coherence through the participation of representatives of international organizations of the UN System and beyond (for instance, UNDESA and

¹ AICESIS currently has more than 75 members; these include both national ESCs and similar institution from all regions across the world as well as regional institutions (such as the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Union of Economic and Social Councils of Africa (UCESA), the Union of Francophone Economic and Social Councils (UCESIF) and the Labour and Social Dialogue Committee of the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA).

ECOSOC, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the OECD, the World Trade Organization and the World Economic Forum), in line with the request of ILO tripartite constituents.

Conference theme

In 2023, the conference will focus on the theme: *“The role of social dialogue and its institutions in combating inequalities in the world of work”*. It will be held on 23-24 November 2023 in Athens, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Council of Greece (OKE) as host institution.

A background report (currently under preparation in collaboration with AICESIS) will be shared prior to the conference, which will present the results of a survey of ESCs and similar institutions (both members and non-members of AICESIS), which seeks to understand the ESCs’ perspectives on inequalities in the world of work and the action they are taking to address them. The conference will also be informed by the outcome of the 109th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) general discussion on inequalities and the world of work held in 2021, including the office [report](#), the ILC [resolution and conclusions](#) and the ILO strategy to reduce and prevent inequalities. The conference is also organized in the framework of the 2030 Agenda, in particular [SDGs 8, 10 and 16](#) and the Our Common Agenda report of the UN Secretary-General, 2021.

The conference will offer a unique opportunity for representatives of governments, employers and workers who are members of national social dialogue institutions, experts from international institutions, and representatives of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to discuss the challenge of inequalities in the world of work and the role that ESCs and similar institutions can play in designing and implementing effective strategies, based on inclusive social dialogue, to address them. Participants will discuss the interactions and intersections between different forms of inequality, including, but not limited to, digital inequality. The aggravating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on inequalities will also be addressed.

It is expected that the conference will close with the adoption of a declaration, including recommendations for action by the ESCs and similar institutions to strengthen the role of social dialogue in addressing inequalities in the world of work.

Conference agenda

The agenda will comprise the following four blocks:

I. Opening ceremony

II. Presentation of the background paper

III. Policy dialogues

- Panels involving tripartite representatives of national ESCs and similar institutions. Panelists will discuss the perspectives and role of their institutions in tackling inequalities in the world of work in their national context, highlighting challenges and opportunities for the future.

- Panels involving experts from the international social partner organizations (IOE and ITUC) and other international organizations. Panelists will discuss international perspectives on the fight against inequalities in the world of work, and their future strategies in this regard.

IV. Presentation and adoption of a declaration and conference closing.

Participants

The conference is expected to bring together around 150 participants and speakers from around the world. They will include:

- Members of National Economic and Social Councils representing governments, employers and workers
- Representatives of the international social partner organizations (IOE and ITUC)
- Experts from international organizations
- ILO officials
- Independent experts
- Other participants as appropriate

Conference documents

- Conference background paper
- Documents from the International Labour Conference general discussion on inequalities and the world of work, 2021, and the ILO strategy to reduce and prevent inequalities.

Working languages

English, French, Greek and Spanish

Follow-up action

- Publication of the conference proceedings
- Implementation of recommendations set out in the declaration
- AICESIS follow up regional webinars with ILO support
- AICESIS report on the results of the webinars