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## **Priorities of IOE Members from Europe & Central Asia for ILO work in the region**

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### Introduction

Europe & Central Asia is a very diverse region, with ILO member states not only located in different continents, but also encountering different opportunities and facing different challenges. ILO constituents from the region therefore have very different needs when it comes to ILO work, support and technical assistance.

The ILO Regional Office for Europe & Central Asia, based at the ILO headquarters in Geneva, has undertaken important initiatives in the region since the last ILO Regional Meeting, in Oslo in 2013. The Employers particularly appreciate, for instance, the ongoing capacity building of employers' organisations, especially through ACT/EMP; the creation of a position for an Enterprise Specialist in the ILO Office in Moscow; the support for the roll-out of the "[Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises](#)" (EASE) tool; the engagement for decent work in Uzbekistan; the work to strengthen and modernise social dialogue in the FYR of Macedonia and the programmes on VET, Social Dialogue and undeclared work in Greece; local employment development in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the technical assistance on OSH and youth employment in several countries, as well as the many other projects and programmes.

The Employers note that Europe & Central Asia receives less ILO funding than other regions. In view of the challenges many countries face in the region, funding should be adjusted in line with the budget for other regions. At the same time, the Employers note that budgetary limitations require the ILO Regional Office to be particularly effective and efficient. Against this backdrop, the Employers propose focus areas for the ILO in the region as follows.

### Key Priorities for ILO work in Europe & Central Asia

1. **Promoting employment creation** is of the utmost importance as a key focus for ILO work in Europe & Central Asia because each of the objectives of the Organisation is advanced in this way. The Employers therefore seek in particular to identify framework conditions that facilitate job creation and contribute to the implementation of the goal 8 of the SDGs, as well as Qualification Frameworks which are conducive for addressing mismatches of skills in labour. In the 2015 ILC discussion on SMEs, the need for an enabling environment for SMEs was particularly stressed. The ILO has in its "Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises" (EASE) tool a practical approach to understanding and analysing the environment for business. The results of EASE work undertaken so far by the ILO in the region are very encouraging. The Employers call on the ILO to continue to scale up this work.

2. **Scaling up productivity** is also a key requirement in several countries in the region. The [ILO SCORE Programme](#) is one important tool to support SMEs in improving management practices, productivity and working conditions. So far, Turkey is the only country in Europe & Central Asia that has benefitted from SCORE, but there is a much broader demand. The ILO Regional Office should engage with donors to mobilise funding for a roll-out of SCORE in those countries that wish to take advantage of the programme. Moreover, productivity-improvement modules should be systematically added to ILO technical cooperation interventions on other issues.
3. Some former transition economies in the region have started to reform their old occupational safety and health (OSH) frameworks. However, while the legislative frameworks are changing (with the support of the ILO), knowledge and understanding within companies and labour administrations often remain limited. The Regional Office should continue and strengthen its engagement to **promote the creation of safe workplaces** in cooperation with employers' organisations through awareness raising and capacity building initiatives for companies on OSH approaches based on prevention, continuous improvement, responsibility, adequate expert support and the cooperation of the social partners, as well as by supporting governments in the modernisation of labour administrations. The OSH-engagement of the ILO in Turkey following the Soma tragedy is a good example of a successful intervention in this regard.
4. Tripartism is one of the founding principles of the ILO. **Fully engaging the tripartite constituents from the outset** in the planning of any activity at country level not only respects tripartism but also ensures the success of the activity by encouraging more "buy-in". The Regional Office should continue to ensure that the Employers are fully involved in the development of ILO policies, programmes and products in the region. This also requires that the Employers receive their fair share of available funding for specific capacity-building activities.
5. ILO-EU engagement has evolved from being ad hoc in nature to a more structured relationship. This gives rise to governance issues as it is not always clear whether the ILO speaks in this relationship as the Office or as the Organization. At times, the tripartite constituents are not properly involved in, or even necessarily informed about, ILO engagement with the EU. As a general principle, the Employers would like to reiterate that **EU cooperation with the ILO should be technical and focused on specific areas of work**, but not interfere in political solutions. ILO constituents should be regularly informed about EU-ILO activities.
6. The Office increasingly engages with the private sector on issues such as CSR, responsible supply chains, and child and forced labour. The ILO Enterprise Initiative is also a high priority for the Employers. Stronger engagement with the private sector clearly has a number of important mutual benefits. However, there is a need to **better coordinate ILO outreach to companies with the Secretariat of the Employers and the respective national employers' organisations** in the region. All too often, companies are approached by the Office without any information being sent to, or any engagement with, the IOE or the national employers' organisation. The companies,

which are not necessarily familiar with the ILO often do not react or indeed may reject any engagement. The national employers' organisation can serve as a valuable and effective facilitator in ensuring that companies understand and appreciate the possibilities and benefits of engagement with the ILO.

### IOE Priorities for the ILO Regional Meeting, 2-5 October 2017 in Istanbul

1. **Transparency and accountability:** The Regional Office should present in Istanbul what it has done to implement the Oslo Declaration, the lessons learned regarding what works and what does not, as well as the conclusions the Regional Office can draw for future activities and programmes. These evaluations and findings should be discussed at the Istanbul meeting.
2. **Short and to the point conclusions:** Europe & Central Asia has set the example in 2013 with the Oslo Declaration, which other regions have tried to follow. The Istanbul conclusions must continue with this approach.
3. **Open to outside ideas:** The ILO Regional Meeting in Istanbul should bring in outside expertise which challenges some of the existing orthodoxies. In his report to the 2015 ILC, the ILO Director-General stressed that "any attempt to resist innovation should not so much be considered misguided or self-defeating but simply impossible. There can be no credible way to do so". This requires taking a fresh look at ILO activities and policies in the region.
4. **Relevance and impact:** The ILO Regional Meeting in Istanbul needs to have a clear impact on the policies and activities in the region as well as on the priorities of the ILO in general. The Office, as well as the Regional Office, should develop pathways to ensure that the conclusions of Istanbul are fully taken into account in the Programme & Budget (P&B) of the Organisation, as well as in the planning of regional activities and policies.
5. **Right thematic approach:** In choosing the future of work in the region as the priority for the Istanbul meeting, the Regional Office has made the right choice. The Employers' Group also fully supports the sub-themes of sustainable growth, job creation and demographic change; migration; quality of employment and sustainable social protection systems. The Group particularly appreciates the emphasis on the need for an enabling business environment in the meeting outline, which was approved in the March 2016 ILO GB. The Employers would appreciate the opportunity to provide input when the sub-themes are being drafted.
6. Employers also believe that when addressing **the Future of Work** as a thematic for the regional meeting, the ILO should bear in mind the need for:
  - A focused approach on elements that will be really crucially different in the new scenario of work, avoiding a mere repetition of existing ILO debates.
  - Evidence-based research or existing reliable literature which provides accurate data or information on coming realities (not just based on simple speculation).

- A balanced perspective which is not purely negative and which shows not only the risks but also the good opportunities that these new realities will bring, in terms of prosperity and wellbeing.
- Proper identification of the policy questions that consequently would need to be answered.

**The Employers in Europe & Central Asia are committed to closely engaging with the ILO in its regional activities and to making the regional meeting in Istanbul a full success.**

This outline of the Employers' priorities should only be seen as the first step in a much broader engagement with the Regional Office in this regard. The Employers look forward to continuing the discussions until and beyond the regional meeting next October.

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