

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS PLATFORM

The overall objective of ESAP, implemented from April 2016 - October 2019, is to assist the Western Balkans with the employment and social policy reforms in their EU accession process. ESAP has helped improve the regional cooperation in employment and social policy-making, labour market governance, working conditions and social dialogue.

Under ESAP, the ILO has supported labour inspectorates, agencies for peaceful settlement of labour disputes, and ESCs with the aim to strengthen social dialogue, modernise labour inspection functions taking into consideration international labour standards and enhance alternative resolution of labour disputes.

ESAP - Key achievements

Improved relevance of bipartite and tripartite social dialogue processes:

- Peer review of the structure, functioning and effectiveness of the seven ESCs with a total of 45 recommendations of which the ESCs have committed to implement 14 strategic recommendations.
- Improved awareness of the ESCs in policy making processes through implementation of three parliamentary ESC information days for more than 80 parliamentarians.
- ESC secretaries equipped with managerial skills and tools for management of the ESC secretariats.
- More than 175 social partners and government officials trained in policy dialogue on employment policy design and implementation.
- Regional online database on industrial relations, collective bargaining and working conditions updated and available for policy makers in the Western Balkans.
- Regional network of labour law experts counting 25 members.

Increased recourse to alternative dispute resolution:

- Establishment of regional Network of Agencies for Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes with

28 members, including directors of the agencies.

- Regional agreement on joint guidelines for the application of mediation as method for peaceful settlement of labour disputes.
- More than 120 directors and conciliators participated in regional peer learning.
- Multilanguage regional case database with 50 selected peerlearning cases used by Agencies.
- Recourse to alternative dispute resolution increased with up to up to 50%.

Improved detection of occupational safety and health (OSH) violation:

- Network of Labour Inspectorates in the Western Balkans based in the EU Senior Labour Inspection Committee (SLIC) model for peer exchange and peer learning established.
- More than 200 labour inspectors trained in design and implementation of labour inspection campaigns.
- Online inspection and monitoring guidelines developed and tested.
- Four labour inspection campaigns implemented in the construction sector covering more than 1.500 enterprise visits - detecting violation of OSH in some countries with up to 80% of the visits carried out.

Improved regional online peer-learning and knowledge exchange:

- Establishment of ESAP online platform promoting the exchange of experience, good practices, data and information among the six Western Balkans. Online inspection and monitoring guidelines developed and tested.
- Two online Community of Practices (CoPs) established covering more than 60 members.

For further information:

Visit: www.esap.online

Or contact: Ada Huibregtse
Chief Technical Advisor, ILO
Mail: budapest@ilo.org



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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.



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The Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP), funded by the EU and implemented jointly by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) in period from 2016 to 2019, supported the Western Balkan (WB) Six economies in labour market, employment and social policy reforms aimed at increasing employment opportunities for all across the region.

The RCC, under ESAP, has enhanced institutional capacities of Public Employment Services (PES) and Ministries of Labour (MoL) for employment and labour market policy reviews through peer reviews; improved PES-to-PES dialogue by introducing benchlearning exercise for the first time ever in the region, based on the EU PES model; supported development of a holistic approach to tackling undeclared work in the region; and addressed partners' small-scale demands in furthering their national employment and social reform agenda.

ESAP - Key achievements

Enhanced institutional capacity for policy reviews and outcomes related to employment and labour market policies by implementing, for the first time in the region, a series of peer reviews on selected employment policies and programmes, modelled after the EU mutual learning programme. Ministries of Labour (MoL) and Public Employment Services (PES) have jointly reviewed the selected employment programmes and measures, including youth employment, employment of persons with disabilities, self-employment, local employment partnerships, internships and on-the-job training. The process has resulted in:

- An analytical overview of the selected programmes in terms of strengths, good practices and areas for improvement in each economy;
- Improved understanding of current implementation modalities of these programmes across the region as well as the main challenges faced by respective institutions;
- Recommendations on improving the design, implementation and monitoring of employment programmes and measures. The ESAP platform will aim to continuously monitor progress and act as a knowledge centre for sharing good practices;
- Increased openness and trust among officials of MoL and PES in the region to engage in a frank and direct exchange.

Strengthened PES capacities and enhanced existing PES-to-PES dialogue through implementation of first ever PES benchlearning exercise in the Western Balkans, following the experience of the EU PES Network, which resulted in:

- Implementation of a monitoring system which tracks key indicators on transition of the unemployed into employment and enables PES to design more effective, targeted services for the unemployed;
- Implementation of 6 self-assessment exercises and 6 regional external assessment visits by peer practitioners, which have resulted in a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of 21 performance areas of each PES, with a focus on strengths, weaknesses, good practices and recommendations for further action on enhancing PES performance;
- Areas of interest, identified during the benchlearning exercise, have been subject to follow-up analytical work, including development of a regional roadmap on management by objectives, guidelines for development of local employment plans and an EURES compatibility analysis of PESs in the Western Balkans.

Supported development of a holistic approach to tackling undeclared work in the six Western Balkan economies

6 national diagnostic reports on undeclared work have been prepared, which look at drivers of undeclared work, the institutional framework and current policy approaches. Drawing on the EU experience and in light of the importance of aligning the six Western Balkan economies to the EU policy cooperation and practice, ESAP provided support for establishment of a regional forum specifically aimed at transformation of undeclared work into declared work, pursuing a holistic, integrated strategic approach, akin to that of the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work.

Provided targeted, small scale and demand-driven national support to MoL and PES in the region through technical assistance instrument, aimed at furthering their national employment and social reform agenda. ESAP ended its 1st phase at the end of 2019 and continued straight into its second phase for another 3 years, also funded by the EU and jointly implemented with the ILO.

For further information:

Visit: www.esap.online

Or contact: Nand Shani, RCC ESAP Team Leader

Mail: nand.shani@rcc.int



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