

29 June 2015

IOE Input to the EU Consultation: "Towards a new European Neighbourhood Policy"

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) was established in 1920 and is based in Geneva, Switzerland. It is the largest network of the private sector in the world, with more than 150 business and employer organisation members, including in countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). In social and labour policy debate taking place in the International Labour Organization, across the UN and multilateral system, and in the G20 and other emerging processes, the IOE is the recognised voice of business. The IOE coordinates the voice of employers' organisations in the activities of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

The ENP has contributed to strengthening civil society and social partners and to building capacities in neighbouring countries of the EU, but has not yet achieved its full potential. The IOE, which coordinates the voice of employers' organisations in the neighbouring countries of the EU, appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the development of the new ENP and would like to provide the following comments:

1. The ENP should be maintained as a single framework. However, it is necessary to allow for more flexible ways of working with the neighbours of the neighbours, with whom EU neighbouring countries have many strong, historical, cultural and economic ties. Engaging more with the neighbours of the neighbours will create not only direct and indirect benefits for these countries, but also for the EU neighbouring countries themselves.
2. There is a need for stronger support for the development of social partner organisations under the umbrella of the ENP. This is not only important for economic and social development and employment creation, but also because strong social partners are a fundamental pillar of good governance and democratic stability. There should be more exclusively-dedicated budget lines for capacity building of social partner organisations.
3. There needs to be much closer involvement of the social partners in ENP activities on issues such as OSH, social protection, skills and education, etc. This has not been the case to a sufficient extent in the past.
4. The work of employers' organisations could also be facilitated through very practical measures such as granting easily accessible, long-term, multi-entry-visas to enable smooth cooperation between EU employers' organisations with partner organisations in neighbouring countries.
5. EU institutions and national development agencies in EU countries have to be mindful not to weaken the representative social partners in the countries by selecting organisations for cooperation without transparent criteria, and by neglecting to

engage with the representative organisations. The IOE is prepared to fully support EU institutions in identifying the representative employers' organisations in the countries concerned.

6. The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Platform needs to be fundamentally revised. Not only do the organisational procedures need to be improved, but more and more NGOs are becoming involved in social issues, with no legitimate representativeness or mandate, thereby undermining legitimate social partner organisations. There must be a clearer separation in the ENP between social dialogue and civil dialogue.
7. In high-level labour and social affairs-related meetings between the EU and neighbourhood countries, there must be better preparation to ensure that the meetings have more meaningful content and outcomes. More time slots need to be allocated during the course of the meetings to allow for the social partners to meet separately for preparatory discussions. There should also be more rigorous follow-up to the meetings.
8. A key focus in the new ENP should be the improvement of the business environment in the neighbouring countries. There are many existing tools available which the EU could draw upon. For example, the ILO has developed, in a tripartite manner, the [Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises \(ESEE\)](#) practical assessment tool to identify the challenges for business, on which the social partners follow-up with policy recommendations. Support for such activities would also contribute to recasting EU financial support as an investment rather than continuing the donor dynamic.
9. There is a need to support and engage with organisations that bring together IOE members from EU and neighbouring countries such as Business-MED.
10. In order to tackle common challenges such as irregular migration, there is need to tackle its root cause, particularly unemployment in EU neighbouring countries. African employers' organisations have launched a joint initiative on employment and employability which could receive EU budget support. The initiative is supported by the IOE and Business Africa.

The IOE looks forward to continuing to engage in the ENP and to closely collaborating with the EU in the revision of this policy.

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