

The ILO's Core Labor Standards

Since 1919 the International Labor Organization (ILO) has been championing employees' rights across the world. Its goal is to introduce globally applicable minimum social standards. These are designed to prevent individual countries or businesses from gaining competitive advantages by flouting employees' rights. The member states of the ILO have adopted a series of conventions. They are, however, only legally binding once the member states have ratified them. That is why in 1998 the ILO adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which lists the most important of the 185 ILO conventions and calls on members to ratify them.

The core labor standards, or fundamental labor laws, include the following conventions:

- 1. Convention No. 29:**
Forced or Compulsory Labor (1930)
- 2. Convention No. 87:**
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (1948)
- 3. Convention No. 98:**
Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (1949)
- 4. Convention No. 100:**
Equal Remuneration (1951)
- 5. Convention No. 105:**
Abolition of Forced Labor (1957)
- 6. Convention No. 111:**
Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) (1958)
- 7. Convention No. 138:**
Minimum Age (1973)
- 8. Convention No. 182:**
Worst Forms of Child Labor (1999)

The ILO's core labor standards are recognized internationally as "qualitative social standards" and take the form of universal human rights that claim validity for all countries - regardless of the level of economic development.

The right to work, to fair and decent terms and conditions of employment, to organize in trade unions and the right to strike were already established in the UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966. The right to social security and the right to protection of the family and to an appropriate standard of living are also included.

As well as core labor standards many industrialized countries have adopted "qualitative social standards" that also comprise regulations governing working time and holiday entitlement, minimum wages, industrial safety and rights of participation at plant level.

Source:

Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), www.bmz.de

Further information

International Labor Organization (ILO), www.ilo.org

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OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are recommendations by governments to companies active in international markets, with the central aim of advancing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) around the world. The Guidelines were developed by the OECD member countries in cooperation with companies, labor and business organizations, and civil society actors, and have been adopted by all 34 OECD member countries as well as eight non-OECD states. The Guidelines target all main areas of business ethics, including general policies, information disclosure, human rights, employment and industrial relations, environment, combating corruption, consumer interests, science and technology, competition, and taxation.

Key Notes of the Contents of the OECD Guidelines:

General Policies

Enterprises should contribute to economic, environmental and social progress with a view to achieving sustainable development and encourage local capacities and human capital formation.

Disclosure

Enterprises should ensure that timely and accurate information is disclosed on all material matters regarding their activities, structure, financial situation, performance, ownership and governance.

Human Rights

Enterprises should respect human rights and carry out human rights due diligence as appropriate to their size, the nature and context of operations and the severity of the risks of adverse human rights impacts.

Employment and Industrial Relations

Enterprises should comply with the core labor standards of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Enterprises and trade unions or representative organizations should engage in constructive negotiations with a view to reaching agreements on terms and conditions of employment.

Environment

Enterprises should establish and maintain a system of environmental management, conduct their activities in a manner contributing to the wider goal of sustainable development and maintain contingency plans for preventing, mitigating, and controlling serious environmental and health damages.

Combating Bribery, Bribe Solicitation and Extortion

Enterprises should not, directly or indirectly, offer, promise, give, or demand a bribe or other undue advantage to obtain or retain business or other improper advantage. Enterprises should also resist the solicitation of bribes and extortion. They should develop and adopt adequate internal controls, ethics and compliance programs or measures for preventing and detecting bribery

Consumer Interests

When dealing with consumers, enterprises should act in accordance with fair business, marketing and advertising practices and should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality and reliability of the goods and services that they provide including comprehensive product information and protection of personal data.

Science and Technology

Enterprises should adopt, where practicable in the course of their business activities, practices that permit the transfer and rapid diffusion of technologies and know-how, with due regard to the protection of intellectual property rights.

Competition

Enterprises should refrain from entering into or carrying out anti-competitive agreements among competitors and carry out their activities in a manner consistent with all applicable competition laws and regulations.

Taxation

Enterprises should contribute to the public finances of host countries by making timely payment of their tax liabilities. In particular, enterprises should comply with both the letter and spirit of the tax laws and regulations of the countries in which they operate.

Additional Information:

Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie

www.bmwi.de

www.oecd-nks.de

www.oecd.org

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