



International

Labour Organization

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Bureau for Workers' Activities

R198 Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006

Recommendation concerning the employment relationship

Recommendation:R198

Session of the Conference:95

Date of adoption:15:06:2006

The General Conference of the International Labour Organization,
Having been convened at Geneva by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office,
and having met in its Ninety-fifth Session on 31 May 2006, and
Considering that there is protection offered by national laws and regulations and collective
agreements which are linked to the existence of an employment relationship between an
employer and an employee, and
Considering that laws and regulations, and their interpretation, should be compatible with the
objectives of decent work, and
Considering that employment or labour law seeks, among other things, to address what can be
an unequal bargaining position between parties to an employment relationship, and
Considering that the protection of workers is at the heart of the mandate of the International
Labour Organization, and in accordance with principles set out in the ILO Declaration on
Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998, and the Decent Work Agenda, and
Considering the difficulties of establishing whether or not an employment relationship exists in
situations where the respective rights and obligations of the parties concerned are not clear,
where there has been an attempt to disguise the employment relationship, or where
inadequacies or limitations exist in the legal framework, or in its interpretation or application, and
Noting that situations exist where contractual arrangements can have the effect of depriving
workers of the protection they are due, and
Recognizing that there is a role for international guidance to Members in achieving this
protection through national law and practice, and that such guidance should remain relevant
over time, and
Further recognizing that such protection should be accessible to all, particularly vulnerable
workers, and should be based on law that is efficient, effective and comprehensive, with
expeditious outcomes, and that encourages voluntary compliance, and
Recognizing that national policy should be the result of consultation with the social partners and
should provide guidance to the parties concerned in the workplace, and
Recognizing that national policy should promote economic growth, job creation and decent
work, and
Considering that the globalized economy has increased the mobility of workers who are in need
of protection, at least against circumvention of national protection by choice of law, and
Noting that, in the framework of transnational provision of services, it is important to establish
who is considered a worker in an employment relationship, what rights the worker has, and who
the employer is, and
Considering that the difficulties in establishing the existence of an employment relationship may
create serious problems for those workers concerned, their communities, and society at large,
and
Considering that the uncertainty as to the existence of an employment relationship needs to be
addressed to guarantee fair competition and effective protection of workers in an employment
relationship in a manner appropriate to national law or practice, and
Noting all relevant international labour standards, especially those addressing the particular

situation of women, as well as those addressing the scope of the employment relationship, and Having decided upon the adoption of certain proposals with regard to the employment relationship, which is the fifth item on the agenda of the session, and Having determined that these proposals shall take the form of a Recommendation; adopts this fifteenth day of June of the year two thousand and six the following Recommendation, which may be cited as the Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006.

I. NATIONAL POLICY OF PROTECTION FOR WORKERS IN AN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

1. Members should formulate and apply a national policy for reviewing at appropriate intervals and, if necessary, clarifying and adapting the scope of relevant laws and regulations, in order to guarantee effective protection for workers who perform work in the context of an employment relationship.
2. The nature and extent of protection given to workers in an employment relationship should be defined by national law or practice, or both, taking into account relevant international labour standards. Such law or practice, including those elements pertaining to scope, coverage and responsibility for implementation, should be clear and adequate to ensure effective protection for workers in an employment relationship.
3. National policy should be formulated and implemented in accordance with national law and practice in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers.
4. National policy should at least include measures to:
 - (a) provide guidance for the parties concerned, in particular employers and workers, on effectively establishing the existence of an employment relationship and on the distinction between employed and self-employed workers;
 - (b) combat disguised employment relationships in the context of, for example, other relationships that may include the use of other forms of contractual arrangements that hide the true legal status, noting that a disguised employment relationship occurs when the employer treats an individual as other than an employee in a manner that hides his or her true legal status as an employee, and that situations can arise where contractual arrangements have the effect of depriving workers of the protection they are due;
 - (c) ensure standards applicable to all forms of contractual arrangements, including those involving multiple parties, so that employed workers have the protection they are due;
 - (d) ensure that standards applicable to all forms of contractual arrangements establish who is responsible for the protection contained therein;
 - (e) provide effective access of those concerned, in particular employers and workers, to appropriate, speedy, inexpensive, fair and efficient procedures and mechanisms for settling disputes regarding the existence and terms of an employment relationship;
 - (f) ensure compliance with, and effective application of, laws and regulations concerning the employment relationship; and
 - (g) provide for appropriate and adequate training in relevant international labour standards, comparative and case law for the judiciary, arbitrators, mediators, labour inspectors, and other persons responsible for dealing with the resolution of disputes and enforcement of national employment laws and standards.
5. Members should take particular account in national policy to ensure effective protection to workers especially affected by the uncertainty as to the existence of an employment relationship, including women workers, as well as the most vulnerable workers, young workers, older workers, workers in the informal economy, migrant workers and workers with disabilities.
6. Members should:
 - (a) take special account in national policy to address the gender dimension in that women workers predominate in certain occupations and sectors where there is a high proportion of disguised employment relationships, or where there is a lack of clarity of an employment relationship; and
 - (b) have clear policies on gender equality and better enforcement of the relevant laws and agreements at national level so that the gender dimension can be effectively addressed.
7. In the context of the transnational movement of workers:
 - (a) in framing national policy, a Member should, after consulting the most representative organizations of employers and workers, consider adopting appropriate measures within its jurisdiction, and where appropriate in collaboration with other Members, so as to provide effective protection to and prevent abuses of migrant workers in its territory who may be affected by uncertainty as to the existence of an employment relationship;
 - (b) where workers are recruited in one country for work in another, the Members concerned may consider concluding bilateral agreements to prevent abuses and fraudulent practices which

have as their purpose the evasion of the existing arrangements for the protection of workers in the context of an employment relationship.

8. National policy for protection of workers in an employment relationship should not interfere with true civil and commercial relationships, while at the same time ensuring that individuals in an employment relationship have the protection they are due.

II. DETERMINATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF AN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP

9. For the purposes of the national policy of protection for workers in an employment relationship, the determination of the existence of such a relationship should be guided primarily by the facts relating to the performance of work and the remuneration of the worker, notwithstanding how the relationship is characterized in any contrary arrangement, contractual or otherwise, that may have been agreed between the parties.

10. Members should promote clear methods for guiding workers and employers as to the determination of the existence of an employment relationship.

11. For the purpose of facilitating the determination of the existence of an employment relationship, Members should, within the framework of the national policy referred to in this Recommendation, consider the possibility of the following:

(a) allowing a broad range of means for determining the existence of an employment relationship;

(b) providing for a legal presumption that an employment relationship exists where one or more relevant indicators is present; and

(c) determining, following prior consultations with the most representative organizations of employers and workers, that workers with certain characteristics, in general or in a particular sector, must be deemed to be either employed or self-employed.

12. For the purposes of the national policy referred to in this Recommendation, Members may consider clearly defining the conditions applied for determining the existence of an employment relationship, for example, subordination or dependence.

13. Members should consider the possibility of defining in their laws and regulations, or by other means, specific indicators of the existence of an employment relationship. Those indicators might include:

(a) the fact that the work: is carried out according to the instructions and under the control of another party; involves the integration of the worker in the organization of the enterprise; is performed solely or mainly for the benefit of another person; must be carried out personally by the worker; is carried out within specific working hours or at a workplace specified or agreed by the party requesting the work; is of a particular duration and has a certain continuity; requires the worker's availability; or involves the provision of tools, materials and machinery by the party requesting the work;

(b) periodic payment of remuneration to the worker; the fact that such remuneration constitutes the worker's sole or principal source of income; provision of payment in kind, such as food, lodging or transport; recognition of entitlements such as weekly rest and annual holidays; payment by the party requesting the work for travel undertaken by the worker in order to carry out the work; or absence of financial risk for the worker.

14. The settlement of disputes concerning the existence and terms of an employment relationship should be a matter for industrial or other tribunals or arbitration authorities to which workers and employers have effective access in accordance with national law and practice.

15. The competent authority should adopt measures with a view to ensuring respect for and implementation of laws and regulations concerning the employment relationship with regard to the various aspects considered in this Recommendation, for example, through labour inspection services and their collaboration with the social security administration and the tax authorities.

16. In regard to the employment relationship, national labour administrations and their associated services should regularly monitor their enforcement programmes and processes. Special attention should be paid to occupations and sectors with a high proportion of women workers.

17. Members should develop, as part of the national policy referred to in this Recommendation, effective measures aimed at removing incentives to disguise an employment relationship.

18. As part of the national policy, Members should promote the role of collective bargaining and social dialogue as a means, among others, of finding solutions to questions related to the scope of the employment relationship at the national level.

III. MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION

19. Members should establish an appropriate mechanism, or make use of an existing one, for monitoring developments in the labour market and the organization of work, and for formulating advice on the adoption and implementation of measures concerning the employment

relationship within the framework of the national policy.

20. The most representative organizations of employers and workers should be represented, on an equal footing, in the mechanism for monitoring developments in the labour market and the organization of work. In addition, these organizations should be consulted under the mechanism as often as necessary and, wherever possible and useful, on the basis of expert reports or technical studies.

21. Members should, to the extent possible, collect information and statistical data and undertake research on changes in the patterns and structure of work at the national and sectoral levels, taking into account the distribution of men and women and other relevant factors.

22. Members should establish specific national mechanisms in order to ensure that employment relationships can be effectively identified within the framework of the transnational provision of services. Consideration should be given to developing systematic contact and exchange of information on the subject with other States.

IV. FINAL PARAGRAPH

23. This Recommendation does not revise the Private Employment Agencies Recommendation, 1997 (No. 188), nor can it revise the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181).

Cross **references**

[Conventions: C181 Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997](#)
[Recommendations:R188 Private Employment Agencies Recommendation, 1997](#)