



# PROMOTING SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN SRI LANKA THROUGH STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

## CONTEXT

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Social dialogue is a key instrument for achieving a broad range of societal goals, including reducing poverty and inequality, improving the resilience of education and training systems, increasing productivity and fostering economic growth. As such, social dialogue plays a key role in realising decent work and advancing social inclusion worldwide.

In Sri Lanka, the Ministry of Labour and Foreign Employment collaborates with other ministries in the implementation of labour market-related policies. The government, the Employers' Federation of Ceylon, and the trade unions have agreed to work together to improve the governance of the labour market, including by reinforcing the institutions for social dialogue and tripartism, as well as to promote decent work in the wider context of development and poverty alleviation.

The National Labour Advisory Council is the main tripartite mechanism between the government and social partners at the national level on matters relating to social and labour policies. The Ministry has also set up a Tripartite Task Force to identify labour market priorities and formulate a collective response to the current economic crisis. In addition, the Ministry oversees the work of the National Institute for Labour Studies, a professional body dedicated to providing education, training and advisory services to Sri Lanka's tripartite constituents with a focus on labour law and industrial relations, human resource management and workplace productivity.

Despite these strengths and positive frameworks, effective social dialogue is weakened by a large informal economy covering 67% of total employment and is further hampered by a lack in the technical capacity of social partners to negotiate in an environment of mutual trust.



## THE PROJECT'S OBJECTIVES

In this context a new project under the [Global Deal for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth](#) aims at supporting the government and social partners in Sri Lanka to address these barriers, reduce gaps in decent work and improve working conditions. Funding for this Global Deal initiative is provided by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

The project will support the [National Institute for Labour Studies](#) to:

- Expand its training offer to include a new capacity building track and a set of online and face-to-face courses and methodologies on social dialogue and industrial relations.
- Enhance its research capacity by supporting the organisation of targeted experience-sharing workshops and the production of knowledge outputs and good practices on social dialogue and industrial relations.

Strengthening the capacity of the Institute, as the primary body for capacity building on social dialogue in Sri Lanka, will yield positive outcomes by equipping the government and social partners to engage in dialogue effectively across various levels.

The project will leverage the Global Deal multi-stakeholder partnership, including governments, businesses and employers' organisations, trade unions and civil society. Sri Lanka is a beneficiary of the EU's GSP+ tariff preference system. Strengthening social dialogue in Sri Lanka will also help the country to meet its GSP+ requirements in terms of advancing human and labour rights and contributing to sustainable development through promoting compliance with core ILS.

## KEY OUTPUTS

- A contextual study on the status of social dialogue in the country, based on desk reviews and interviews with relevant stakeholders, and two good practice case studies for the [Global Deal repository](#).
- The design and piloting of a new Diploma on Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations, together with the provision of training courses and methodologies on labour relations adapted to the local context and languages.
- A final in-person high-level conference to raise awareness about the benefits of social dialogue, and to facilitate a tripartite commitment and action plan aimed at accelerating the ratification of, implementation and compliance with ILS on social dialogue.

