

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

TRADE UNION TAKE ON SDG IMPLEMENTATION

#HLPF2018



ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Trade unions report that the government of the Republic of Korea has not taken significant measures to integrate the SDGs into its national planning and programming. While the various activities implemented by the government have an impact on reaching SDG targets, including those prioritised by trade unions, they are not specifically designed to meet the objectives set by the 2030 Agenda.

The lead department charged with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the Ministry of the Environment. With regards to resource allocation, considerable sections of the budget have been allocated to the national action plans for a fair labour market and sustainable development, but these are not being officially linked to the SDG process.

As no regular reporting process has been set up, trade unions have not benefitted from regular and transparent access to information on SDG implementation by the Korean government. In addition, no institutional platform has been set up for Korean civil society, including trade unions, to participate in consultations on the implementation of the SDGs. Subsequently, trade unions have not had any opportunity to input towards the government's strategy to meet the 2030 Agenda. While social dialogue related to labour themes generally exists, it is entirely separate from the SDG implementation process.

TRANSPARENCY



Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



There are information sessions but no interaction

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



There is no involvement of social partners by the national government on an SDG national plan definition and implementation





IS THE (DECENT) WORK BEING DONE?

Trade unions highlight that certain challenges to reaching the targets set by the SDGs remain to be tackled by the Republic of Korea.

There is a clear need for improvement to achieve progress on **SDG 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)**. 2014 indicators for target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work) show that on average, women dedicate over four times the amount of time to unpaid work per day than men (over 3 hours per day for women compared to 42 minutes for men). Moreover, the gender wage gap of 36.6% is staggering, the worst among all OECD countries. With regards to **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life)**, while by 2015 over 88.8% of the female population had achieved at least a secondary level of education, only 0.3% of people in managerial positions were women.

Some challenges remain for Korea to meet the targets set by **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. Indicators for **target 8.3 (support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of MSMEs)** show that in 2016, 23.5% of work was low paid and 19.4% of all employment was precarious. While the overall unemployment rate is low at 3.7%, the youth (15-24) unemployment rate is at a considerably higher (and likely underestimated) at 10.3%, suggesting difficulties in meeting **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)**.

While there are no official NEET indicators for Korea, it is estimated that in 2016, 18.9% of people aged 15 to 29 were not in employment, education or training, suggesting that **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of NEET youth)** remains unmet. Furthermore, indicators for **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** suggest that there is a long way to go to meet this objective, as in 2015, the collective bargaining coverage in the country stood at only 11.8% and trade union density was at a low 10.1%.

Progress remains to be made for Korea to reach **target 10.7 (facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people)**, as Korea lacks an integrated immigration law, and no government agency is charged with coordinating overall migration policy. Trade unions are concerned about the working conditions facing many migrant workers, especially in the farming, agricultural and fishing industries, where they are often forced to live in squalid accommodation, face delays in the payment of wages and seizures of passports.

Korea is committed to meeting target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning) – 30% of its electricity needs are met through nuclear reactors, while coal and renewable energy supplies meet 37.5% and 6.7% of its needs respectively. The government has set its national target for the Paris climate agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 37% from business-as-usual levels by 2030.

WHERE TO NEXT?

TRADE UNION RECIPE TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The FKTU calls on the Korean government to:

- Integrate the SDGs into government policy, including setting up a system for the implementation and monitoring of the individual goals;
- Upgrade the committee on sustainable development from a consultative committee to a national commission;
- Enhance the inclusiveness, representativeness, accountability, and transparency of participation of civil society in the decision-making process;
- Establish participatory platforms for major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS) for sustainable development at national and local level.



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