



NORWAY

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2021

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED SDG-DRIVEN RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Norwegian government introduced measures designed to ease the impact of the crisis; these were negotiated through a tripartite dialogue. The measures focus on preventing bankruptcies of companies, ensuring the capacity to restructure sectors and securing the income of the unemployed and other vulnerable groups. The benefits have increased, and regulation has become more flexible to ease the situation for the unemployed and those who were laid off during Covid. Several tripartite branch programmes for improving competences have been established, and the possibilities for combining unemployment benefits with education have been increased.

Trade unions have called on the government to combat the increasing inequalities and ensure that companies cannot misuse the financial support they receive (e.g., by taking out dividends or firing workers), but to no avail so far. They have also asked that the financial situation of municipalities and local authorities be improved in order to promote economic activity. Trade unions hope that the government will improve its contingency planning and confirm that the current measures will remain in place as long as the pandemic and the related crisis persist.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Norwegian government is in the process of developing a national plan for the implementation of Agenda 2030. This move is a response to calls made by civil society, including trade unions, and an evaluation report from the Office of the Auditor General, which concluded that the government must better coordinate implementation, improve its progress reporting to the parliament, and adopt a comprehensive plan for the implementation of the SDGs at the national level.

The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation oversees the implementation of Agenda 2030. The SDGs are further included in the state budget at sectoral level, and individual ministries are charged with their integration and implementation in their policy area. However, trade unions warn that there is a lack of a coherent approach to this process, something which a holistic national plan should address. Trade unions report that the fragmentation of the SDG agenda implementation means that monitoring impact is difficult, resulting in a lack of transparency. The

same challenges persist with regard to consultations, to which trade unions and other civil society representatives are invited on an ad hoc thematic basis, often with very short notice, by different ministries.

There is a bipartite and tripartite dialogue on the social, economic and environmental aspects of Agenda 2030, and the SDGs are negotiated into some collective bargaining agreements. However, in the absence of a long-term national implementation plan, the dialogues are fragmented and a genuine discussion on Agenda 2030 based on social partners' requests is difficult. However, the aspects of SDG implementation relating to social dialogue have been well followed up.

Trade unions report that awareness of Agenda 2030 and its implementation has improved over the years, in particular among local and regional authorities; the commitment from academia and the education sector has been high and is rising.

TRANSPARENCY



Regular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners submit joint contributions to the government's SDG national plan



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

With an HDI of 0.957, Norway ranks as the most developed country in the world. Indicators on **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty)** show that none of its population lives in extreme poverty. With regard to **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)**, in 2016, 96 per cent of the population was covered by at least one social protection benefit. 100 per cent of children, mothers and people with severe disabilities are estimated to enjoy social protection coverage; these values were lower for certain categories, such as the unemployed (61.8 per cent in 2014) and vulnerable groups (83 per cent in 2016). Groups which lack coverage, such as some segments of the self-employed and part-time working students, have benefitted from ad hoc measures during the pandemic. Indicators on **target 1.a (ensure significant mobilisation of resources to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions)** show that in 2016, the equivalent of 16 per cent of government spending was dedicated to education; in 2019, 10.5 per cent of GDP was spent on healthcare.

On **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**, a new (2021) survey of relatives prepared for the national health agency finds that 36 per cent of the population is supporting, helping or nursing a person close to themselves. The gender differences are small but persistent. Women do slightly more unpaid domestic work (3h and 50 minutes) than men (3h) per week, according to 2010 data. With regard 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)**, in 2019 there were 37 per cent of women in managerial positions in Norway, compared to 32 per cent in 2008. Among the 200 top companies, the share of woman CEOs is only 14 per cent, and the share of women board chairs is only 11 per cent. 95.4 per cent of women have completed at least some secondary education.

Norway faces smaller challenges than most with regard to meeting the targets set by **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. Regarding **target 8.3 (promote policies that support productive activities, decent job creation)**, in 2020, 19 per cent of full-time wage earners had low-

paid work, earning less than 79 per cent of the median wage; 4.9 per cent of the work was considered as vulnerable or precarious. On **target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all)**, the underemployment rate stood at 8.7 per cent in 2020. The 2020 indicators on the gender wage gap suggest that, on average, women earn 89.3 per cent of a man's average wage. NEET ("not in employment, education or training") indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** stood at 10.7 per cent of youth aged between 15-29 in 2018 and 2019, a decrease compared to 2015. On **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**, in 2017, overall collective bargaining coverage stood at 69 per cent, with 100 per cent coverage in the public sector and 52 per cent in the private sector; trade union density stood at 50.2 per cent. The Norwegian government is addressing **target 8.b (develop and operationalise a global strategy for youth employment)** through the introduction of the "New Youth Effort", a policy designed to reduce the share of under-30-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

Progress remains to be made for Norway to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality)**, as the share of the bottom 20 per cent income earners in overall GDP in 2017 was 8.9 per cent, compared to the 21.6 per cent share of the top 10 per cent income earners. The labour share of GDP (wages and social protection transfers) stood at 52.7 per cent in 2017.

To reach the objectives of **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**, Norway's government has proposed a plan for achieving a reduction of emissions by at least 50 per cent, and towards 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030. The proposed Climate Action Plan for 2021-2030 on how to reach the targets is yet to be adopted and seems to be insufficient to meet the targets and the Paris Agreement.

Trade unions report that Norway is meeting its obligations under **target 16.10 (protect fundamental freedoms)**, as a public legal aid scheme is in place and there are no violations of trade unionists' rights.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Norwegian trade unions call on their government to improve the implementation of the SDGs in the country by:

- Developing a coherent national plan for the implementation of Agenda 2030 and ensuring that social dialogue is integrated throughout.
- Strengthening the Norwegian tripartite cooperation model through measures that increase the number of organised workers and employers, enhance their social dialogue, and deepen people's knowledge and understanding of the Norwegian working-life model.
- Ensuring a coherent and concrete reporting on the budget process combined with strengthening of parliamentary scrutiny.
- Adopting a holistic approach, in particular with regard to implementing SDG 8 together with the Paris Climate Agreement's call for a just transition and the ILO's Just Transition Guidelines.
- Combating work-related crime and social dumping to ensure a secure working life.
- Using public procurement to stimulate sustainable development, just transition and respect for international law and human and workers' rights.
- Addressing the interlinkages between education, employment and social policy in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Strengthening the public school system and supporting education and competence, including lifelong learning for all.
- Investing more in research.
- Adopting relevant legislation nationally to prevent tax evasion and avoidance, in particular corporate profit shifting, and increasing wealth taxation.
- Strengthening the ethical framework for the Government Pension Fund Global, with a view to increasing the use of company pre-screening when investing in countries and industries posing elevated risk for norm violations.



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