

The Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88)



C88

- ▶ What it is
- ▶ How it can propel a human-centred jobs recovery
- ▶ And why every country should ratify it

The global COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing jobs crisis have highlighted the critical role of public employment services and, by extension, the ILO's Convention that supports them.

Public employment services match workers with jobs, help employers find the workers they need, and support both workers and employers in adapting to labour market disruptions. Operating on their own or in collaboration with other labour market actors, these government services have proved their value in retaining jobs, supporting enterprises, facilitating recruitment, and growing the workforce – in both good times and bad.

Most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic, public employment services have helped cushion income losses, protect existing jobs, and facilitate employment in sectors still operating during lockdowns. Their role will grow in importance as the recovery gathers steam.

Wider ratification of the **ILO's Employment Service Convention, 1948 (No. 88)** – which calls on governments to maintain a free nationwide public employment service – can help repair the social and economic damages caused by the crisis by promoting a human-centered recovery based on decent work principles.

A country's public employment service is a key resource for jobseekers, for workers wanting a career change and for enterprises looking for workers. It provides workers with access to support, programmes and incentives that help them participate in the economy through decent work. The public employment service also helps anticipate and match labour market and skills-needs, supporting employers and jobseekers in adapting to change.

The ILO urges member States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying and implementing Convention No. 88, an instrument that remains highly relevant in a changing world of work. It provides valuable guidance for the best possible organization of national labour markets struggling to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic.



What is Convention No. 88?

- ▶ An international labour standard that is legally binding for countries that ratify it.
- ▶ Adopted by ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers) at the International Labour Conference in 1948.
- ▶ Calls on governments to ensure the provision of publicly funded employment services that
 - ▶ Match people to jobs
 - ▶ Support those wishing to make a career change
 - ▶ Support those who want to start their own businesses
- ▶ Requires that public employment services remain cost-free for their clients and open to everyone who needs support in searching for employment or in hiring workers.

C88 also emphasizes the coordination role played by public employment services. It calls for cooperation with public and private bodies to ensure the best possible organisation of the labour market for achieving and maintaining full employment and for developing and deploying productive resources (Article 1).

As of 2021:

92 countries have ratified C88



Why ratify Convention No. 88?

Ratifying and implementing C88 will strengthen public employment services, which in turn can improve labour market matching and equality in accessing job opportunities.

Particularly in the wake of a crisis such as COVID-19, a more robust public employment service can help drive employment recovery, remove impediments to decent jobs, and promote self-employment by:

- ▶ Enabling women and men jobseekers to access or return to work.
- ▶ Assisting employers with hiring and rehiring to ramp up their business operations.
- ▶ Mitigating the risk of inactivity and further job losses.
- ▶ Helping workers, including youth, prepare for and take advantage of jobs made available during the recovery and ensuring support to those in low-income occupations or holding fixed-term contracts.
- ▶ Providing young workers with career guidance, job search assistance and support to get access to education or training.
- ▶ Enabling governments to ensure effective coordination of recovery plans which lead to creation of decent, full and productive employment.

Ratification of C88 helps improve the functioning of labour markets, notably by promoting the participation of groups who face challenges linked to gender, age, disability, race, ethnicity and migration status, among other factors.



The vital, everyday role of public employment services

Public employment services work closely with social partners and other key stakeholders such as private employment agencies and civil society organizations.

Workers, employers, and the national economy all benefit from these services.

For workers and jobseekers

As a public service, public employment services target primarily those in the most vulnerable situations in terms of the labour market – including youth, women, older workers, people with disabilities, migrant workers, workers in the informal economy, and the long-term unemployed. As such, these institutions highlight and help correct labour market imbalances and promote equality of opportunity and treatment.

Public employment services provide guidance and training to any worker who is looking for a job or new career options – or who wants to run their own business. They provide support in dealing with labour market transitions, relocating for work – whether within the country or abroad – and gaining new skills or work experience. Another important task of public employment services is to help young people prepare for their first job and those interested in becoming apprentices or trainees. Public employment services also support people facing barriers to work such as lack of skills, mobility challenges, or constrained access to social services.

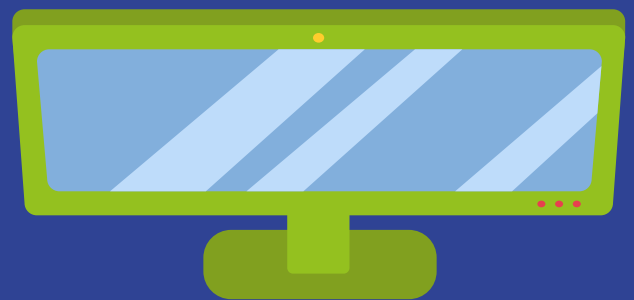
For employers

Public employment services support employers that are looking to hire needed talent. They help them respond to increasingly frequent changes in market conditions and in reskilling staff to cope with sectoral changes. The employment services can also assist enterprises that want to recruit apprentices or trainees, are considering incentives to hire young people or older workers, or plan to employ people with disabilities.

In the **Philippines**, people use public employment services offices to learn how to safely search and apply online for vacancies and prepare for video interviews with potential employers.

In **Germany**, the public employment service and the Federal Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth jointly manage an online job portal dedicated to helping women find jobs following career breaks.

Brazil and **Ecuador** have connected their public employment services with public and private training providers to provide free online courses aimed at developing jobseekers' skills and employability.



For national economies

National economies also benefit when governments invest in public employment services as a way of increasing participation in the labour market. These services have become a particularly useful tool for governments during and after economic downturns and crises, serving as a reliable source of labour market information, matching jobseekers with opportunities, developing skills, and encouraging transitions towards sectors and occupations with high employment potential.

The ILO can conduct assessments to help member States enhance the efficiency of their public employment services, as well as to explore how they could extend employment services to workers and enterprises in the informal economy to facilitate their transition to the formal economy. It can also support emergency employment services in post-crisis recovery plans following natural disasters, civil unrest, pandemics, or other disruptive events.

In **Colombia**, government employment counsellors collaborate with local employers to promote green job vacancies.

As part of measures to cushion the impact of COVID-19, **Denmark** adopted an “upskilling instead of dismissal” strategy that provides targeted online training to avert layoffs and reimburses employers for the salaries of workers they continue to employ under this scheme.

Public employment services can support a sustained, job-rich recovery and help governments to:

- ▶ Ensure everyone has the opportunity to work, facilitate the growth of formal employment, promote decent work, and improve the speed and quality of job matching through cost-free services.
- ▶ Promote fair recruitment practices and ensure transparent access to information on jobs and skills.
- ▶ Encourage collaboration with relevant public and private bodies to solve skills mismatches and bottlenecks to recruitment.



How the ILO can help

The ILO is prepared to assist member States in improving their public employment services and moving towards ratification.

Specifically, it can help to:

- ▶ **Understand** the scope and reach of C88, including the opportunities and obligations under the convention.
- ▶ **Improve** the responsiveness of public employment services to the needs of jobseekers and employers.
- ▶ **Implement** effective labour market programmes adapted to regional and local labour markets.
- ▶ **Modernize** public employment services so they can adapt to different phases of economic cycles.
- ▶ **Assist** trade unions and employer's organizations in efforts to make the most of public employment services.
- ▶ **Strengthen** the role of public employment services in member States' efforts to improve the collection and dissemination of labour market information.
- ▶ **Establish** regulatory frameworks and collaborative arrangements with private employment agencies, linked to national employment policies and ILO Decent Work Country Programmes.
- ▶ **Support** coherence between employment policy objectives and delivery of targeted employment services and active labour market policies.
- ▶ **Promote** regional and cross-border policy coherence in making employment central to social, economic and international development strategies.



Support the ratification of Convention No. 88 in your country!

In calling on ILO member States to provide free nationwide public employment services, C88 is an essential component of a human-centred pandemic recovery that benefits all through optimally functioning labour markets. The ILO's global campaign to build support for C88 invites ILO constituents (governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations) and other actors to get involved, both at national and international levels.

Wider ratification and effective implementation of the Convention in every part of the world is crucial to support a rapid, sustainable recovery and resilient labour markets that are better prepared to attain the strategic objective of full and productive employment and decent work.

Here's how to get involved....

- ▶ Find out if your [country has already ratified C88](#)
- ▶ Guidance on [Ratification](#) and [FAQs](#)

For assistance with ratification, contact: normes@ilo.org

