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### Azerbaijan and International Labour Organisation Relations in an Era of Shifting Paradigms: From Normative Alignment to Implementation Challenges



Ali Rzayev<sup>1</sup>  , Gafar Shamilov<sup>2</sup>  & Elshan Ahmadov<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> PhD candidate, Azerbaijan Khazar University, Faculty of Economics and Management, Bakü, Azerbaijan.

<sup>2</sup> PhD candidate, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, Center for Labor Market Supervision and Research, Bakü, Azerbaijan.

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, International School of Economics, Bakü, Azerbaijan.

#### Abstract

In this study, we examine Azerbaijan and International Labour Organisation relations considering the ILO's recent policy priorities, focusing on the alignment between international standards and national practices. Since joining the ILO in 1992, Azerbaijan has cooperated with the organisation in areas such as decent work, social dialogue, and inclusive employment. Our analysis is structured into three parts: Exploring the evolution of ILO policies; Azerbaijan's membership process; and recent collaboration. Using the ILO core documents, the study applies a critical, comparative approach supported by legal and policy data. Findings reveal that while Azerbaijan's normative framework aligns with ILO principles, significant challenges persist in its implementation, particularly regarding decent work, effective social dialogue, gender and youth employment, adaptation to new labour trends, informal employment, and practical accountability.

#### Keywords

National and International Labour Standards · Public Policies · International Organisations · Informal Labour Market

#### JEL Classification

F8 · F88 · F53 · J46



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✉ Corresponding author: Ali Rzayev [azcomu2018@gmail.com](mailto:azcomu2018@gmail.com)



## Azerbaijan and International Labour Organisation Relations in an Era of Shifting Paradigms: From Normative Alignment to Implementation Challenges

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) was established in 1919 because of the treaty concluded after the First World War. Its constitution, embedded in Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles, served as the foundation for the organisation, which functioned as a technical body under the League of Nations until 1940. With the adoption of the Philadelphia Declaration, appended to the ILO Constitution in 1944, the organisation acquired a renewed vision. In 1946, it became a specialised agency of the United Nations (Kott, 2019: 21). The Philadelphia Declaration not only reaffirmed the fundamental principles upon which the ILO was founded but also redefined the organisation's future direction. In this context, the concept of social justice was explicitly linked to universal values such as freedom and human dignity. The second article of the Declaration emphasises that every individual, regardless of race, gender, economic security, or equality of opportunity, must be able to pursue their spiritual development under protected working conditions. This provision aligns closely with the framework later articulated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, the Declaration strongly advocates the integration of social objectives into the core of national and international political and legal policies. This approach reflects the ILO's aspiration to evolve beyond a purely technical organisation into a normative actor fundamentally grounded in the pursuit of social justice (Perez, 2013: 117).

### Evaluation of ILO Policies within a Historically Changing Political Framework in the Context of a Literature Review

The period between 1945 and 1980 can be considered the most active and influential phase of the ILO. Between 1948 and 1958, five of the eight ILO Core Conventions were adopted, covering key issues such as the freedom of association and collective bargaining, equal remuneration, the abolition of forced labour, and the elimination of discrimination. During this period, the policy orientation within the ILO increasingly reflected the requirements of the prevailing capitalist accumulation system, along with the organisation's growing institutional and operational capacity. As a result, policies aimed at improving productivity began to take a prominent place within the ILO's agenda. Within this framework, decent living and working standards were often presented as outcomes of increased productivity (Ünlü Güler, 2024: 964).

The core missions of the ILO are to establish and promote standards, fundamental principles, and rights at work; to create greater opportunities for women and men to obtain decent employment and income; to enhance the scope and effectiveness of social protection for all; and to strengthen tripartism and social dialogue (ILO, 2025). Although the ILO's fundamental mandate is to ensure compliance with international standards and protect social justice, significant disparities in implementation exist across countries. In this regard, regulations have primarily proven effective in fostering competition among industrialised nations. Through comparable subsidies and regulatory measures, these countries have managed to level the conditions of their labour markets, thereby establishing a competitive environment among themselves. In this context, albeit unintentionally, the ILO has contributed to maintaining the existing structure of the international division of labour and has become a tool reinforcing the economic dominance of countries at the core of the global capitalist system (Standing, 2008: 357).

The 1980s marked a critical turning point for the ILO, as neoliberal ascendancy, welfare-state retrenchment, and a reconfigured global development paradigm narrowed the space for robust social justice agendas. Stagflation and crises following the second oil shock ended the full-employment era in industri-

alised economies, while the IMF and World Bank led structural adjustment in developing countries further weakened redistributive commitments. In response, the ILO largely adopted a diagnostic role, documenting job losses and social costs as a form of “social debt,” yet neoliberal dominance and internal divisions constrained its capacity to advance a coherent alternative (Rodgers et al., 2019: 195–198). From the mid-1990s onward, globalisation prompted an institutional and normative reassessment alongside a weakening of the Organisation’s standard-setting function: attempts to regulate evolving labour market forms (e.g., the Home Work Convention) gained limited traction amid employer opposition, and reform debates under Michel Hansenne emphasised a shift from binding conventions towards more flexible guidance instruments. Within this context, the 1998 Declaration reaffirmed core labour rights, while Somavía’s Decent Work agenda sought to reconcile economic integration and social justice through employment creation, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue; however, its reliance on voluntary compliance and “soft law” has been criticised for diluting regulatory capacity even as it successfully mainstreamed decent work within international development frameworks (Standing, 2008: 365–369; Perez, 2013: 119–123; Rodgers et al., 2019: 222–235). In general, the primary area of debate regarding international organisations recently has been the paradigm shifts experienced over time. Following the 2000s, international civil society actors have entered the scene alongside intergovernmental organisations. Consequently, the concept of “global social policy,” characterised by a focus on governance and cooperation in international social policy, has become widespread (Kayagil & Gökçe, 2021: 159). Following this shift, the ILO has also evolved into a global social policy actor, functioning as a soft power.

In the 2000s, the ILO pursued initiatives to address the widening gap between economic growth and social inequality. The 2008 ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation articulated a renewed normative framework for advancing social justice and decent work under globalisation, organised around four strategic objectives: employment promotion, strengthened social protection, fundamental rights at work, and reinforced social dialogue. The declaration also repositioned the ILO in global governance by emphasising technical assistance to member states, renewed normative leadership, and expanded cooperation with other international actors, thereby offering a roadmap for embedding social policy within globalisation processes (Somavia, 2008). Closely aligned with this orientation, the “Future of Work” initiative launched in 2013 under Guy Ryder addressed the accelerating transformation of work through three themes, namely, work–poverty–social protection, the internationalisation of production, and the quality of work, underscoring that change is shaped by stakeholder choices rather than occurring autonomously and reaffirming the ILO’s commitment to the decent work agenda (Delican, 2020: 104–110).

In 2019, during the International Labour Conference celebrating its centenary, the ILO adopted the *Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*. This declaration reaffirmed the principle of “decent work” while concretising the concept of the “future of work.” Emphasising a human-centred approach, the ILO underscored the importance of strengthening the vision of social justice, promoting the effective use of social dialogue, and ensuring fair working conditions. The declaration, which included more resolute language regarding the adverse effects of globalisation, addressed both classical issues, such as gender inequality, forced labour, child labour, the employment of disadvantaged groups, and informality and contemporary challenges, including sustainable development, technological transformation, lifelong learning, and labour migration (ILO, 2019). In addition to advocating for the support of entrepreneurship, it explicitly emphasised the need to reinforce the regulatory and guiding role of the public sector.

The political and economic principles that shaped the ILO’s foundation reflect continuity with the order established in the 2000s, largely due to the support of dominant political powers, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. The political regimes and economic policies that dominated the early 20th century along with the competitive environment induced by the Cold War, globalisation, technological advance-

ments, and societal transformations ultimately led to the triumph of political and economic liberalism. In this respect, the early 20th century and the first quarter of the 21st century exhibit similarities in terms of their political and economic structures. However, notable differences exist between the ILO's approach to labour issues in the 20th and 21st centuries. Entering its second century, the ILO has undergone a scale transformation; the facts, institutions, and policies of working life have acquired a distinctly global character. Although policies are globally accepted, their implementation at the national level remains problematic. Nation states continue to be the primary actors in the international political system. Nevertheless, the ILO continues to regard social dialogue as an effective mechanism for addressing challenges at the national and international levels (Delican, 2020: 109–110).

After 2020, the ILO adapted its policy framework in response to the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent global economic challenges. In May 2020, the ILO introduced four main policy areas to mitigate the pandemic's impact on global and local labour markets: supporting affected economies and labour markets, assisting enterprises, protecting workers' health and safety at the workplace, and preserving social dialogue mechanisms in employment relations. These were presented as effective tools for resolving the social consequences of the pandemic. To guide recovery from the pandemic, the ILO released a *Strategic Plan for 2022–2025*, emphasising that the resolution of current challenges must be achieved through human-centred approaches (ILO, 2020: 7–8). During the 109th session of the International Labour Conference, the ILO highlighted the need for a comprehensive policy transformation in the post-COVID-19 era that focuses not only on economic growth but also on social justice, equality, and resilience. In this context, the ILO reaffirmed its central role in multilateral cooperation based on international norms (ILO, 2021: 24).

The ILO has consistently framed social justice as a cornerstone of universal peace and, accordingly, has advanced international norms, policy guidance, and multilateral partnerships. In the Director-General's Report to the 111th International Labour Conference, the Organisation underscored the need to reconfigure social justice in response to overlapping global crises, reaffirming a human-centred approach and identifying three priorities: ensuring “just transitions” that leave no one behind amid digitalisation, climate change, and demographic change; strengthening social dialogue as a mechanism for both conflict resolution and collaborative policymaking; and expanding universal social protection to enhance resilience and support skills and capability development (ILO, 2023: 20–26). Building on this agenda, the ILO in 2024 advanced the call for a renewed “social contract,” conceived as an informal societal consensus defining responsibilities between individuals and institutions, and again positioned decent work as the principal instrument for achieving social justice in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. This framework integrates enduring objectives (universal fundamental rights, formalisation, universal social protection, and employment promotion through decent work) with emerging priorities such as full employment under digital and green transitions, with particular emphasis on climate-related labour market impacts, green jobs, and digitalisation (ILO, 2024).

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design supported by historical-comparative analysis and uses document analysis to assess the trajectory of Azerbaijan–ILO relations. Document analysis is a systematic process that involves the examination of printed or electronic materials. Within this approach, relevant documents are reviewed and subjected to content analysis to extract meaning, develop understanding, and draw inferences from the information they contain (Bowen, 2009, pp. 27–32). The analysis follows a document-based strategy whereby legal texts and policy reports are systematically coded to identify areas of alignment and divergence between ILO standards and labour practices in Azerbaijan. To situate Azerbaijan's convention ratification performance and institutional capacity within broader international trends, the

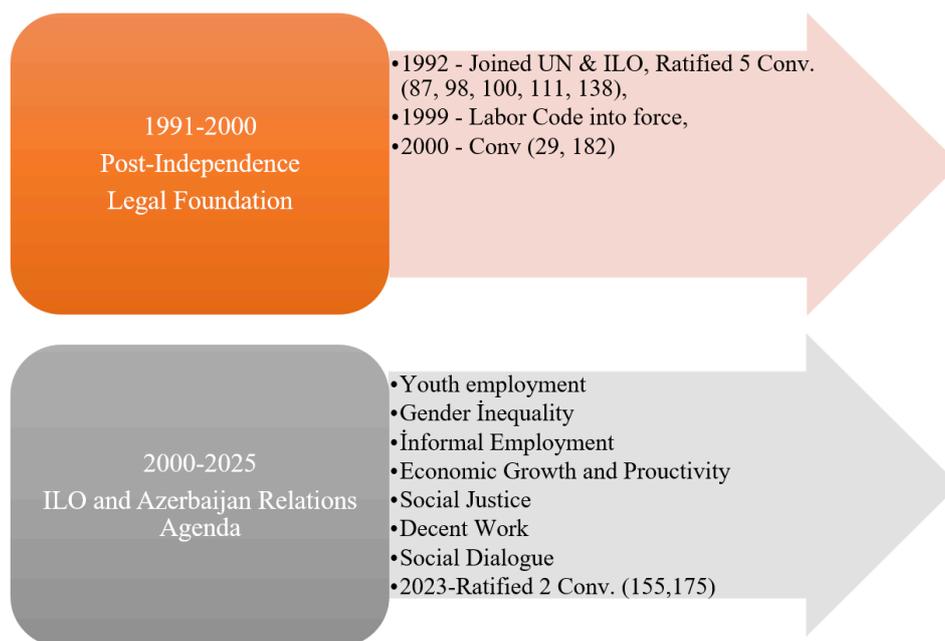
study also incorporates comparative assessments with selected regional countries (Turkey, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia). The methodological framework emphasises critical evaluation by linking international labour norms to national implementation outcomes while highlighting structural challenges such as informality, gender inequality, and youth unemployment. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research question: “In what direction have the institutional and policy relations between the Government of Azerbaijan and the ILO evolved over time, in light of historically changing ILO policy orientations?”

## Evaluation of the Historical Relationship Between the ILO and Azerbaijan

The ILO, which aims to protect human and labour rights under the conviction that social justice is essential for lasting global peace, currently has 187 member states. These countries range from less developed nations to those with advanced levels of development. Given this diversity, developing universally applicable policies poses a considerable challenge and requires significant responsibility. Within the ILO’s operational framework, member states are bound by conventions and recommendations. Countries that ratify ILO conventions commit to implementing the necessary legal and institutional reforms within their jurisdictions. On the other hand, the recommendations proposed by the ILO on technical matters are non-binding and are voluntarily implemented by member states.

**Figure 1**

*Evaluation of the Historical Relationship Between the ILO and Azerbaijan*



**Source:** Prepared by the author.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan regained independence and became a member of the United Nations on 2 March 1992. In its early years of independence, Azerbaijan faced significant political, economic, and social challenges and lost approximately 20% of its territory because of the Nagorno-Karabakh War. Under such circumstances, gaining international support and membership in United Nations (UN) affiliated organisations became a strategic priority (Azərbaycan Respublikası Prezidentinin Kitabxanası, 2025). Azerbaijan has been a member of the ILO since 1992. The ILO’s mission in the country is to promote decent work and social justice, strengthen social dialogue, and establish a visible presence through international partnerships ([www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)). Immediately after joining the ILO, Azerbaijan initiated the ratification of several core ILO conventions. In 1992, the country ratified the following conventions:

*Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, Convention No. 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration, Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), and Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age* (ILO, 2025). These conventions are among the ILO's core labour standards and indicate the areas Azerbaijan prioritised in its early engagement with the organisation. Through the adoption of these conventions, it is evident that Azerbaijan recognised the importance of the ILO's mission related to social justice and social dialogue.

While struggling with internal and external challenges, the newly independent Azerbaijani state also undertook efforts to establish a legal framework essential to its national development. Although the country gained independence in 1991, its first comprehensive labour law, the Labour Code, entered into force on 1 July 1999. This legislation established a modern national legal framework reflecting the fundamental principles of several ILO conventions. The Labour Code includes key provisions related to the types and regulation of employment contracts, working and rest hours, wage regulation and the principle of equal pay, occupational safety and health, the protection of women, youth, and persons with disabilities, trade union rights and freedom of association, collective bargaining and collective agreements, the resolution of labour disputes, procedures for dismissal, and job security (Əmək Məcəlləsi, 1999).

The first decade of the 2000s marked a period of frequent change and structural policy-driven recovery for Azerbaijan. The country's growth model, based on the exploitation of natural resources, led to high rates of economic expansion and strengthened the foundation for decent work opportunities. Foreign investments in the oil and gas sector—particularly with the commissioning of the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline and the South Caucasus gas pipeline—have contributed significantly to the expansion of the national economy. During this period, the average annual growth rate was around 15%, reaching a record high of 35% in 2006. However, with the onset of the global financial crisis, growth rates fell to approximately 5% by 2010. To prevent resource-driven revenues from undermining macroeconomic stability, the government established the State Oil Fund of Azerbaijan (SOFAZ), aiming to ensure the sustainable management of oil and gas income. Public policies were developed to reduce poverty, enhance infrastructure, and strengthen social protection mechanisms (ILO, 2011: 1). In the context of ILO policies, this period also witnessed a series of important developments in Azerbaijan. The ratification of core ILO conventions, such as *Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour* and *Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, occurred during this period. As a result, by the end of the decade, Azerbaijan had ratified 8 of the 10 core ILO conventions (ILO, 2025).

From the early 2000s onward, the ILO provided various reports and policy recommendations tailored to the Azerbaijani labour market. Particular attention was given to issues of productivity, social justice, and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. A handbook published in 2006 through collaboration between the ILO and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers) of Azerbaijan emphasised the need to raise awareness among employers regarding competitiveness and productivity, highlighting that this could only be achieved through a human-centred approach. The handbook identified employment generation, support for entrepreneurship, quality education, and a safe working environment as priority areas. It also highlighted key structural challenges, such as limited access to finance, excessive tax burdens, problems with regulatory oversight, and the underdevelopment of digital infrastructure. To improve productivity, the report recommended the active involvement of employers' organisations, the continuation of social dialogue, and the expansion of educational and training services (Mammadov, 2006).

One of the key areas of the ILO labour market policy recommendations for Azerbaijan concerns youth. As the most dynamic segment of society, the protection and inclusion of young people are essential to maintaining social dynamism and ensuring sustainable development. In the early 2000s, the ILO prepared a roadmap style report to guide Azerbaijan in developing youth employment policies. The report contributed

to the development of a national action plan on youth employment. The first part of the report identified major challenges faced by young people in Azerbaijan. According to data from 2005, young women, particularly those living in rural areas, along with rural men, experienced significant disadvantages in the labour market. Even highly educated youth faced difficulties in securing employment, and the proportion of young people not in education, employment, or training was notably high. Many rural youth were employed under poor conditions in the agricultural sector, while unemployed youth often resorted to labour migration abroad. In the policy section, the ILO proposed preventive and remedial strategies for Azerbaijan. Preventive measures included policies to stimulate labour demand (e.g., support for small enterprises, regulation of foreign work permits, and public expenditure initiatives), expanded access to information and advisory services, and comprehensive education reform. Remedial strategies were centred on the implementation of active labour market policies, such as public works programmes, credit and subsidy schemes, training opportunities, wage subsidies, and the promotion of social entrepreneurship (Godfrey, 2005).

It is also important to note that in 2008, the ILO recommended that member states develop and monitor indicators of “decent work.” This concept encompasses key expectations that individuals across the globe associate with working life, such as fair income, equal opportunity, respect for rights, personal development, justice, and gender equality. The ILO framework identified four fundamental pillars of decent work: employment promotion, rights at work, social protection, and social dialogue. In this context, the ILO published the first *Decent Work Country Profile: Azerbaijan* in 2012. This was the first country specific programme addressing the decent work agenda. The report assessed Azerbaijan’s performance within the decent work framework using statistical indicators and legal analysis. According to the findings, between 2000 and 2010, Azerbaijan achieved significant socioeconomic progress, particularly due to high economic growth rates driven by the oil and gas sectors (with an average annual GDP growth of 15%) and a sharp reduction in poverty (from 49% in 2001 to 9.1% in 2010). However, the report also found that the benefits of economic growth had limited impact on employment. The structural composition of employment became increasingly imbalanced. Informal employment rose, and female employment was concentrated in vulnerable and low-paid sectors. Only one-third of women were engaged in paid employment, whereas the majority worked as own-account workers or unpaid family labour (ILO, 2012).

In its 2012 report, “*Decent Work Country Profile: Azerbaijan*,” the ILO identified income inequality and gender-based wage gaps as key structural issues. As of 2009, women in Azerbaijan were earning 56.8% less than men. Despite an overall increase in average wages, the proportion of low-paid workers reached 40%. Although the legal framework for combating child labour and human trafficking had improved, implementation remained insufficient. The digitalisation of the social security system contributed to greater coverage and transparency; however, regional and class-based disparities in access to healthcare persisted. While social dialogue was legally protected, weak trade union representation and limited collective bargaining mechanisms reduced the effectiveness of social partners. Overall, Azerbaijan had made progress in transitioning towards decent work, yet substantial challenges remained, particularly regarding regional inequality, gender-based discrimination, youth unemployment, informality, and the strengthening of social dialogue. In this context, the ILO proposed seven key policy recommendations for the country: (ILO, 2012).

#### Promotion of youth employment and entrepreneurship

1. Increase in women’s labour force participation
2. Protection of disadvantaged groups
3. Combating informality,
4. Strengthening social dialogue
5. Combating child labour,

6. Expanding social protection coverage In the same year, the study *“The Gender Dimension of Youth Transitions to Decent Work through Education in Azerbaijan”* emphasised that gender-based barriers continued to limit young women’s access to education and employment. Consequently, it called for developing gender-sensitive, targeted policy measures (Baskakova, 2012: 59–61).

The ILO has periodically produced situation assessments and policy recommendations on critical issues specific to Azerbaijan. One such example is the report *“Maternity Protection and Childcare Systems in Azerbaijan.”* Despite high economic growth, the report noted that social spending remained low, and access to essential services, especially in rural areas, was limited. The legal framework lacked clear distinctions between maternity protection, work–family balance, and employment policies for women, leading to implementation challenges, protection gaps, and indirect discrimination against women. Non-mandatory postnatal leave, pressure to resign from employment, and the exclusion of informal workers from social assistance schemes have led many women to exit the labour market. The lack of accessible childcare services further intensifies this trend. The report also identified the absence of gender-disaggregated data as a major barrier to the effective implementation of gender equality, maternity protection, and family-friendly policies. It emphasised the lack of coordination between government agencies and social partners. In line with *ILO Recommendation No. 202*, Azerbaijan was urged to expand its social protection floor and develop inclusive policies—especially those covering women working in the informal economy (ILO, 2014: 28–29).

Between 2004 and 2014, Azerbaijan’s economy experienced rapid growth and achieved significant progress, ascending into the category of upper-middle-income countries. This success was largely driven by substantial foreign investment, particularly in the oil and gas sectors. However, circumstances changed considerably in 2014, when global oil prices sharply declined. This downturn led to a significant reduction in Azerbaijan’s oil and gas revenues. In response, the government implemented two devaluations of the national currency, the Azerbaijani manat. As a result, new risks emerged in maintaining fiscal stability, and the financial burden of debt repayment increased (Rəhmanov & Süleymanov, 2021: 21–22). During this period, the ILO also examined the impact of the front-loaded fiscal consolidation strategy on growth and employment. The analysis questioned whether the short-term adverse effects of such a strategy could be offset by long-term gains in macroeconomic stability. In Azerbaijan’s case, fiscal consolidation has remained a constant theme in national policy discourse, often shaped by the recommendations of international financial institutions. ILO findings revealed that large-scale, front-loaded fiscal consolidation measures tend to slow economic growth and reduce employment opportunities. The report argued that these negative outcomes are not easily compensated for by long-term macroeconomic gains or private sector-led diversification (Islam, 2016: 21–26).

As discussed in earlier sections, the ILO had previously provided a comprehensive assessment of Azerbaijan’s decent work profile through its 2012 *Decent Work Country Profile*. The partnership between the ILO and the Azerbaijani government continued beyond that report. Notably, in 2016, the ILO and the government of Azerbaijan adopted and launched the *Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for 2016–2020*. The programme emphasised alignment of Azerbaijan’s labour legislation with ILO standards and the strengthening of institutional cooperation. The four foundational pillars for ensuring decent work—employment promotion, protection of workers’ rights, enhancement of social protection, and development of social dialogue—remained central to this initiative. According to the 2016 report, Azerbaijan still faced several persistent challenges: the resolution mechanisms for labour disputes were limited, informal employment remained widespread—especially in sectors like agriculture and services—and the economy’s dependence on natural resources constrained sustainable employment generation. Furthermore, the limited participation of civil society in tripartite social dialogue and the inadequacy of sustainable job creation mechanisms

were identified as key factors undermining the programme's effectiveness (Beynəlxalq Əmək Təşkilatı, 2016). Preparatory work for the *third phase of the Decent Work Country Programme (2022–2026)* was jointly carried out by the ILO and the Azerbaijani government. However, as of 2025, the programme had not yet been formally adopted or launched. In a media statement made in April 2025, Azerbaijan's Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Anar Aliyev, announced that the third-phase DWCP was expected to be signed within the year (Report İnformasiya Agentliyi, 2025).

In its report titled "*Achieving SDG 8 in Azerbaijan: The Challenges of Economic Transformation and Job Creation*," ILO analysed Azerbaijan's economy in four distinct phases up to 2019 and underscored the persistence of structural issues. The 1991–1995 period was marked by war and economic crisis. From 1996 to 2004, oil agreements and foreign investment became dominant themes. The years 2005–2014 were characterised as a "petroleum boom" period, during which Azerbaijan experienced high growth, a significant reduction in poverty, and major infrastructure investments. However, after 2015, falling oil prices, dual currency devaluations, rising inflation, and economic uncertainty came to the forefront. In 2018, for example, non-oil growth remained limited at just 1.8%, and GDP showed a downward trend (Valiyev, 2020: 3–6).

The report emphasised that institutional capacity deficits, a centralised governance structure, and regional disparities hinder Azerbaijan's progress towards achieving SDG 8. Although the 2019–2030 Employment Strategy introduced some positive measures, the limited financial backing for structural reforms has restricted their effectiveness. The report identified four core policy recommendations: promoting economic diversification, combating informality, implementing active labour market policies, and strengthening social dialogue mechanisms. Ultimately, the report concludes that Azerbaijan's progress towards SDG 8 is contingent upon transforming its existing economic model and institutionally adopting inclusive employment policies (Valiyev, 2020: 31–32).

Historically, the ILO has consistently highlighted the disadvantaged status of women and youth in Azerbaijan's labour market and provided targeted policy recommendations. These concerns were reaffirmed in the ILO's 2020 report, which documented that women remain heavily concentrated in low-paid sectors, such as health and education, while occupying only 38.1% of managerial positions. Among young women, the NEET (not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate is particularly high, with 85% unemployed for over a year—indicating that gender-based inequalities begin at a young age and significantly elevate the risk of social exclusion. Despite generally high levels of educational attainment among women, their representation in vocational and technical fields remains low. Women account for less than 30% of employment in high-income sectors such as engineering, technology, and economics. The gender-based segregation in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines intensifies structural inequalities in the labour market. Furthermore, women's concentration in agriculture and service sectors often leaves them excluded from social protection schemes (ILO, 2020).

According to the ILO, achieving equal access for women and young women to Azerbaijan's labour market requires multidimensional and long-term policy reforms. Measures such as promoting the participation of girls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, expanding access to childcare services, and transforming tax and social support systems into individualised schemes could significantly enhance female employment. The ILO's 2020 report on gender-based youth employment emphasised that both the effective implementation of legal regulations and the development of educational policies aimed at transforming societal attitudes are essential to reducing gender-based discrimination in the labour market (ILO, 2020).

The ILO has also consistently identified informality as a central challenge for developing countries and has addressed this issue in numerous reports. In a recent comparative study covering countries such as

Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, the ILO assessed national strategies for transitioning from informal to formal economies and provided integrated policy recommendations. In the case of Azerbaijan, the government's previous objective to "reduce informality" has evolved into a broader and more strategic goal: "formalising the informal economy." Within this framework, the government has adopted several performance indicators as benchmarks, including an increase in the number of formal employment contracts, a rise in the number of individuals registered in the social security system, and growth in social insurance revenues. In this comparative analysis, the ILO identified Azerbaijan as the country with the most advanced and systematic strategy in the region for addressing informality (ILO, 2021).

In the section of the study up to this point, Azerbaijan's policy trajectory from the process of accession to the ILO through 2020 has been assessed. Over this period, the ILO's normative and institutional transformations in the global context have reshaped its engagement in Azerbaijan from an approach centred on compliance and alignment with binding standards towards a model that increasingly prioritises technical cooperation, policy frameworks, and soft-law instruments. This evolution suggests that, as in its relations with many other member states, the ILO's interaction with Azerbaijan has largely followed broader organisational trends. The ratification of ILO conventions and their incorporation into Azerbaijan's legal framework during the 1990s, followed in the 2000s by agenda-setting and advisory policy orientations emphasising decent work, the reduction of informality, the protection of disadvantaged groups, and the concurrent pursuit of productivity and social justice, constitute salient illustrations of this shift.

### Ongoing Practices in ILO–Azerbaijan Relations

In its periodically prepared reports tailored to current national and global circumstances, the ILO has continuously assessed Azerbaijan's labour market, identified persistent challenges, and provided concrete policy recommendations. Azerbaijan has achieved notable economic success by capitalising on its resource endowments. Despite experiencing periodic crises triggered by domestic and international dynamics, the country has generally followed a trajectory of sustained growth. Most recently, the global COVID-19 pandemic, regional conflicts, and their economic repercussions have also impacted Azerbaijan. In particular, the country successfully regained control of territories that had been under Armenian occupation for nearly three decades. Efforts are now underway to reconstruct liberated areas, ensure the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and improve infrastructure in these regions.

From a labour market perspective, Azerbaijan continues to face structural and administrative challenges. In nearly all of its reports, the ILO has advocated a human-centred approach, emphasising the need to expand employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups, enhance social protection systems, promote employment through active policies, and develop mechanisms of social dialogue, all of which are foundational for achieving industrial peace. The Azerbaijani government has taken these recommendations into account and has undertaken various initiatives in line with them. The improvement of employment conditions, protection of workers' rights, and expansion of social protection have remained constant priorities for the Azerbaijani government. These issues have been addressed through strategic roadmaps, national employment strategies, and general collective agreements. These documents also express commitments to strengthening cooperation with the ILO.

When the 30-year trajectory of ILO–Azerbaijan relations is assessed, it is evident that the partnership has evolved positively. Because of ongoing social reforms, Azerbaijan has ratified 59 ILO conventions including all 8 fundamental and 4 priority conventions—and continues to work towards ratifying others. Most recently, in 2023, Azerbaijan ratified *Convention No. 155 on Occupational Safety and Health*. However, 37 ILO conventions remain unratified, many of which pertain to agricultural employment, social protection, and occupational safety and health. Given the increasing flexibility of labour markets—particularly in the

aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic—Azerbaijan has not yet ratified *Convention No. 177 on home work*, *Convention No. 175 on part-time work*, and *Convention No. 181 on private employment agencies*. Considering current labour market trends, this represents a significant gap in aligning national legislation with evolving global standards (ILO, 2025). To offer a comparative perspective, [Table 1](#) presents the ratification status of these conventions among countries in the region. This comparison helps contextualise Azerbaijan's current level of engagement with the ILO and offers insights into the strengths and limitations of its labour policy framework in a regional setting.

**Table 1**

*Ratification Status of ILO Conventions in Regional Countries*

Convention Category	Azerbaijan (1992)	Turkiye (1932)	Russia (1954)	Georgia (1993)	Armenia (1992)
Fundamental Conventions	8/8	8/8	8/8	8/8	8/8
Governance Conventions	4/4	3/4	3/4	2/4	3/4
Technical Conventions	46/178	46/178	64/178	9/178	18/178
Unratified Conventions	38	44	29	57	48

**Source:** ILO, 2025

According to [Table 1](#), Azerbaijan, Turkiye, Georgia, Russia, and Armenia display varying levels of ratification of ILO conventions across the categories of fundamental, governance, and technical conventions. All five countries have ratified the eight fundamental ILO conventions, thereby committing to the universal standards concerning trade union rights, the elimination of forced labour, the eradication of child labour, and non-discrimination in employment. In terms of governance conventions, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia have ratified all relevant instruments, while Turkey has yet to ratify one convention from this category. Georgia, on the other hand, has ratified only a limited number of governance conventions, indicating partial alignment in this area. Regarding technical conventions, Russia leads with 64 ratifications, followed by Azerbaijan and Turkiye with 46 each. In contrast, Armenia (18) and Georgia (9) demonstrate notably low levels of engagement in the technical domain. When assessed in terms of unratified conventions, Georgia and Armenia have not ratified a substantial number of governance and technical conventions, suggesting more limited integration into the ILO's normative framework. Although Turkiye fully complies with fundamental conventions, it displays gaps in governance and technical dimensions. Azerbaijan and Russia, by contrast, show relatively high compliance with the ILO normative system, having both ratified several conventions and left fewer outstanding. In conclusion, from a regional comparative perspective, Azerbaijan presents a more balanced and positive profile, whereas Georgia and Armenia appear to operate within a narrower normative framework due to their more limited engagement with ILO standards.

Within Azerbaijan, the General Collective Agreements are among the most significant policy documents guiding national labour relations. expressed through the mechanism of social dialogue, these agreements define priority areas concerning labour relations at the national level. They are negotiated and signed with the participation of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Confederation of Trade Unions of Azerbaijan, and the National Confederation of Employers' (Entrepreneurs') Organisations of Azerbaijan. These agreements cover a broad range of issues, including economic policy implementation, remuneration of labour, population income and living standards, labour market development, employment guarantees, strengthening social protection, safeguarding of labour rights, occupational safety and health, technical and environmental safety, social dialogue, and coordination of activities among social partners. In this regard, the agreements reflect a noteworthy alignment with the ILO's recommendations, particularly in the Azerbaijani context. Since 1999, these agreements have been systematically prepared on a three-year basis.



To date, 12 such agreements have been concluded, with the current agreement covering the period 2023–2025.

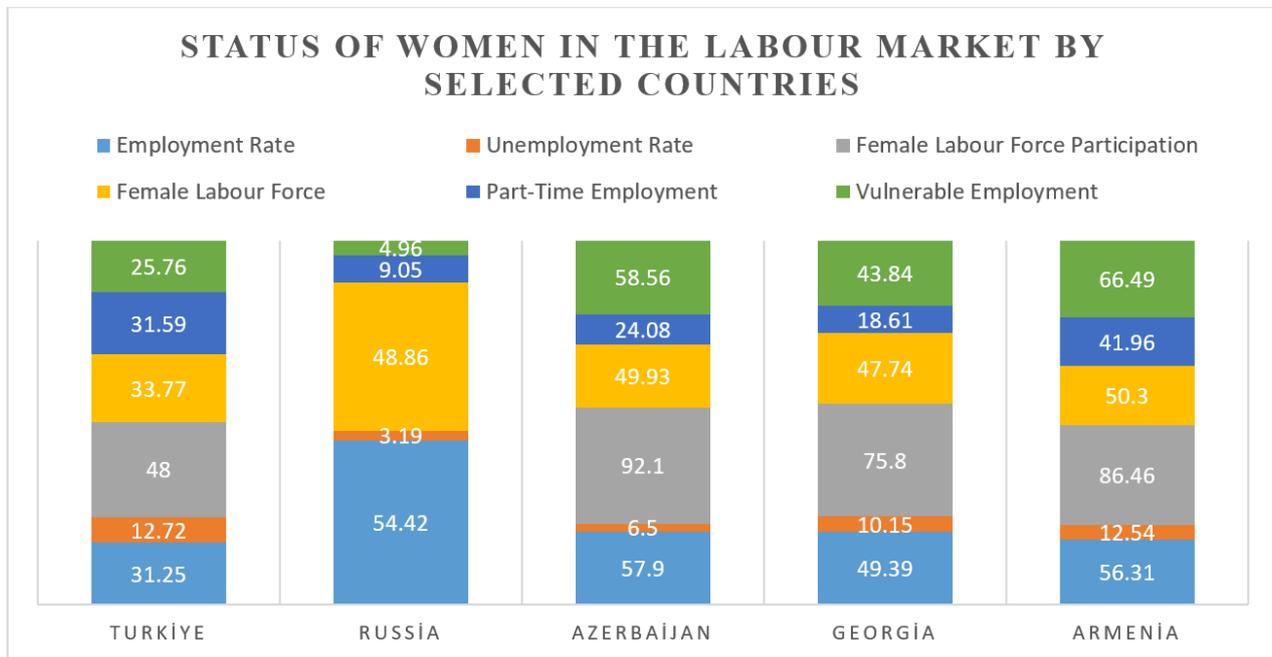
One of the key policy documents aimed at improving employment conditions in Azerbaijan is the “2019–2030 Employment Strategy,” which entered into force in 2018. The strategy outlines a range of priorities, including strengthening legal and institutional frameworks, enhancing labour force skills, improving labour productivity, implementing active labour market measures, integrating disadvantaged groups, ensuring the sustainability of social dialogue, and monitoring labour market trends. Within this framework, the strategy emphasises a shift from quantitative to qualitative employment policies, aligning with ILO standards through a focus on “decent work.” It was designed to be implemented in two phases (2019–2025 and 2026–2030), although no official evaluation report has been published on the progress of its implementation to date (*Məşğulluq Strategiyası*, 2018).

As highlighted in previous sections of this study, the ILO has offered issue-specific assessments for Azerbaijan, considering its development level and policy context. From a historical perspective, the ILO’s evaluations have consistently been framed through the concept of *decent work*. Recurrent themes include informal employment, gender inequality in employment, expansion of employment opportunities, improvement in youth and female labour force participation, and development of social dialogue mechanisms.

There are no official data on informal employment in Azerbaijan, making only indirect estimations possible. As of 2024, the total population stands at 10.2 million, with 7.3 million in the working-age group and 4.56 million employed. Based on these figures, it is estimated that approximately 1.69 million people—around 35%–40% of the employed population—are working informally. Agricultural employment constitutes the largest share of total employment, accounting for 35% of the workforce; however, only 3.4% of these workers have formal employment contracts. The majority is either unpaid family workers or self-employed individuals. In the agricultural sector, the average wage is 556 ₼, significantly lower than the national employment average of 993 ₼. This indicates that wages below the minimum threshold (345 ₼) are common, which further underscores the prevalence of informality (*Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi*, 2024: 27–61). For comparison, the informal employment rate stands at 31.4% in Turkey and 44.9% in both Georgia and Armenia (World Bank, 2024).

From a gender perspective, the share of women employment has declined from 43.1% in 2010 to 40.4% in 2023. Sectorally, women are heavily concentrated in health and social services (77.9%), education (73.4%), and arts, entertainment, and cultural activities (61.1%), whereas their representation is minimal in construction (8.1%) and mining (12%). These figures highlight persistent gender inequality in the Azerbaijani labour market (*Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi*, 2024: 31). Furthermore, the average monthly wages for women stood at 735 ₼, compared to 1,069 ₼ for men, underscoring a significant gender pay gap (*Dövlət Statistika Komitəsi*, 2024: 67–68).



**Figure 2***Status of Women in the Labour Market by Selected Countries*

Source: (World Bank, 2025)

ILO country assessment reports emphasise the issue of women's employment and gender inequality in Azerbaijan. In this context, the following comparative analysis examines the status of women in the labour market across Azerbaijan and its neighbouring countries, Turkiye, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia, based on a set of key indicators. The focus areas of the analysis include employment rate, labour force participation rate, unemployment rate, the share of women in the total labour force, part-time employment, and vulnerable employment. The data were compiled based on statistics provided by the World Bank. When examining employment rates, it is observed that, with the exception of Turkiye, the levels of female employment among the regional countries are relatively close to each other. Azerbaijan is the country with the highest female employment rate (57.9%), while Turkiye ranks the lowest at 31.25%. Labour force participation rate, which reflects the proportion of the working-age female population (aged 15 and over) actively participating in the labour market (including both employed and unemployed), was analysed across four countries. Note that neither national nor international data sources provide relevant information for Russia on this indicator. Among the countries examined, Azerbaijan has the highest female labour force participation rate (92.1%), while Turkey again records the lowest rate (48%). In terms of female unemployment rates, Russia has the most favourable figure (3.19%), whereas Turkiye and Armenia report the highest female unemployment levels. Regarding the proportion of women in the total labour force, Azerbaijan, Russia, Georgia, and Armenia show similar figures, while Turkiye lags behind the regional average. According to ILO definitions, individuals working fewer hours than the standard full-time workweek are considered part-time employees. It is commonly observed that women, particularly due to work-life balance considerations, tend to opt for part-time work during certain periods of their careers. In this regard, Armenia registers the highest rate of female part-time employment (41.96%), whereas Russia reports the lowest (9.05%). One of the most pressing issues for women in the labour market is their higher likelihood of being employed in insecure and unprotected forms of work—such as self-employment or unpaid family labour. From this perspective, Armenia demonstrates the most alarming situation with a vulnerable employment rate of 66.49%, whereas Russia has the most favourable outlook at only 4.96%. Within the scope of this comparative review, Azerbaijan appears to perform

relatively well among the countries analysed. However, it is also observed that the rates of part-time and vulnerable employment among women in Azerbaijan remain considerably high. This may be interpreted as an indicator of widespread informal employment among women, which poses a challenge in the context of Azerbaijan's compliance with ILO standards and norms.

Graph 1 demonstrates that the data across the former Soviet Union countries—Azerbaijan, Russia, Armenia, and Georgia—exhibit a relative consistency. In contrast, Turkey shows notable divergence from the other countries included in the analysis. This discrepancy raises questions regarding the reliability of the data and the extent to which they reflect actual labour market conditions. For the purposes of this study, data were obtained from the World Bank. Note that the majority of these data are sourced from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and national statistical authorities and subsequently published on the World Bank's data platform. Therefore, these figures are recognised as official statistics. Nevertheless, the degree to which the data reflect reality is largely contingent upon the level of transparency and openness maintained by each country in data dissemination. From a scientific perspective, the available official data are treated as the basis of analysis. These data also provide valuable insight into the state of gender equality in the region. From the perspective of gender disparities, Turkey appears to be the most vulnerable country, while Russia and Azerbaijan demonstrate the most favourable indicators.

Young people in developing countries often face structural disadvantages in the labour market. In Azerbaijan, youth are defined as individuals aged 14–29, though definitions vary across institutions. The State Statistical Committee reports a youth labour force participation rate of 94% and an unemployment rate of 5.5%. In contrast, the National Employment Strategy (2018) defines youth as aged 15–24, with unemployment at 12.9% and a NEET rate of 23%, aiming to reduce it to 15% by 2030. Rzayev and Dönmez Kara (2020) argue that rising education levels are not translating into employment due to a mismatch between education and labour market needs. Despite policy efforts, youth employment outcomes remain poor, underscoring the importance of cross-country comparisons. Table 2 presents such an analysis.

**Table 2**

*Labour Market Status of Youth in Selected Countries*

Indicator	Azerbaijan	Turkiye	Russia	Georgia	Armenia
Labour Force Participation Rate	33.36%	45.52%	29.21%	38.87%	39.16
Unemployment Rate	13.50%	16.80%	11.50%	30.40%	19.10%
NEET	23.00%	22.40%	8.70%	24.90%	21.90%
Informal Employment	-	32.00%	24.50%	50.50%	52.60%

**Source:** World Bank, 2025)

Table 2 presents a comparative overview of labour market conditions for youth aged 15–24 in Azerbaijan and its neighbouring countries, based on World Bank data. Among the countries analysed, the highest youth labour force participation rate is observed in Turkiye (45.52%), whereas the lowest is in Russia (29.21%). In terms of unemployment, Georgia ranks highest with 30.4%, whereas Azerbaijan records the lowest youth unemployment rate at 13.5%. NEET (not in employment, education, or training) rates remain one of the most critical challenges for youth. Russia appears to perform the best in this regard, with a NEET rate of 8.7%, while Turkiye (22.4%) and Azerbaijan (23%) have the highest proportions. Regarding informal employment, no official data are available for Azerbaijan. Among the remaining countries, the highest informal employment rates are found in Georgia and Armenia, while Russia again demonstrates the most favourable outcome. Taken together, Russia emerges as the country with the most advantageous indicators regarding youth integration into the labour market.

As for social dialogue in Azerbaijan, there is a notable lack of official reports or publicly available data. The International Trade Union Confederation also classifies Azerbaijan among countries for which no data are available. The most comprehensive source on this topic is the ILO's 2024 report entitled "*National Social Dialogue Institutions–Selected Countries from Central Asia and the South Caucasus*." This report outlines the structure of the Tripartite Commission on Social and Economic Issues established in Azerbaijan in 2016, which is based on tripartite representation. Although the report does not offer direct criticism, it highlights several structural weaknesses, including the absence of publicly available meeting outcomes, lack of transparency, infrequent convening of meetings, and overall limited effectiveness. For instance, the Commission convened only twice during 2021–2022. Unlike other countries that sustained continuity via online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, such digital adaptations were not observed in Azerbaijan (Pritzer & Zemlyanskiy, 2024).

The report also suggests institutional capacity problems within the Commission. The secretariat comprises only three representatives, one each from labour, employers, and the government, thus limiting administrative support. Furthermore, the ILO implicitly indicates that the effective participation of tripartite actors in policymaking processes is weak. This appears to be related to the limited effectiveness of both employer and worker organisations, and the dominant role assumed by the state. Lastly, the report underlines that neither Azerbaijan nor the other countries examined adequately incorporate contemporary global priorities into the social dialogue agenda, such as green transition, digitalisation, or the future of work.

Analysing the trade union organisation in Azerbaijan through the lens of "State Corporatism" is of paramount importance for understanding the country's unionisation dynamics. The "Corporative Approach," as conceptualised by Schmitter (1974) within political science, functions through units that are limited in number, functional, compulsory, hierarchical, and licenced by the state. Corporatism operates within both the state and the social structure. State corporatism, however, is a state-centric model in which the state designs all institutions and oversees their operations. From this perspective, trade unions and employer associations emerge as institutions with limited functional units under the state corporatist framework. Lehmbruck (1977) evaluated corporatism through a liberal lens, bridging the gap between the state and society and defining it as a model of voluntary participation. This structure is more aligned with Western democracies and is frequently referred to as "neo-corporatism." Regarding unions, the liberal corporatist structure integrates them into the system specifically when their cooperation is required. Voluntary participation typically occurs during distributive conflicts arising between labour and capital. Crouch (1993) associated liberal corporatism with "bargained corporatism," explaining it through the concept of "articulation." In this context, it is argued that the central organisation's ability to ensure the rank-and-file's compliance with its decisions is strictly contingent upon its bargaining power. In the case of Azerbaijan, the Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation (AHİK) and the National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (ASK) are structures whose foundations were laid during the Soviet era. The state remains at the centre of these structures' operational processes; thus, the representational monopoly is legally guaranteed by the state. Although labour and employer representatives exhibit a limited presence, the state's active participation as an actor and the management of the process through tripartite commissions and general collective agreements alludes to the liberal approach. However, when evaluating Azerbaijan's social dialogue mechanism through the bargained corporatist lens, it becomes evident that bargaining power is considerably weak. The state remains the dominant party in negotiations. The state's role as the legislative and regulatory authority ensures that the bargaining power resides with the state and that the market is protected by it. Consequently, while the Azerbaijani social dialogue mechanism exhibits partial institutional features of liberal and bargained corporatism on the surface, it is more closely aligned with the "state corporatist approach."

In the action plan presented by the ILO in 2021 to mitigate the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasis was placed on inclusive growth and employment, the protection of all workers, global social protection, and social dialogue, with a specific focus on the necessity of safeguarding disadvantaged groups in these areas. In this regard, the primary step should involve accessing robust and reliable data concerning the relevant segments of the population (Çelen, 2021: 265). Statistical data from 2024 reveal that despite the period of global economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic, structural issues persist. Although the emergency action plan emphasises the inclusion of all disadvantaged groups in the protection process, several factors indicate a misalignment between the labour market policies implemented in Azerbaijan and the ILO's emergency action plan. These include sectoral inequalities in female employment, skills mismatches in youth employment, high NEET (not in education, employment, or training) rates, unequal participation of stakeholders in the social dialogue process, the limited scope of collective bargaining, and a lack of data regarding the prevention of informal employment, leading to speculative evaluations. Moreover, while the Emergency Action Plan underscores the importance of a healthy data flow, obstacles in obtaining fundamental employment data—particularly regarding formal employment—create significant difficulties in the identification and resolution of these problems.

One of the key issues to be emphasised is that neither the ILO nor the main employment reports adequately address topics that are essential to the requirements of the current era. For instance, themes that are central to contemporary debates on the future of work, such as the impact of digitalisation on employment relations, labour market flexibilization, sustainable development, the green economy, and the sharing economy, are either entirely absent from Azerbaijan's core legal texts and policy reports or treated only superficially. In this respect, it is imperative to respond to the demands of time. As early as 2018, the ILO's Commission report identified the principal factors that would shape the future of work. In particular, regarding technological progress and the transition towards a knowledge-based economy, the report argues that outsourcing will become increasingly attractive as technological development accelerates and investment in the knowledge-based economy expands. The report further suggests that globalisation and deindustrialisation processes are likely to strengthen outsourcing networks, while the redesign of work may heighten the risks of inequality and polarisation between highly educated individuals and disadvantaged groups (Çelen, 2019: 230-231). In this context, it can be anticipated that existing social risks within Azerbaijan's labour market may intensify further. Elevated social risks, in turn, increase the state's burden in terms of social protection. Therefore, it is essential for Azerbaijan to undertake improvements in the areas highlighted in ILO reports and to place greater emphasis on key future-of-work agenda items, including digital employment relations, flexible work arrangements, the green economy, and the platform economy.

In terms of ongoing practices, it appears that the ILO's role in Azerbaijan's system of labour relations continues to operate primarily through a soft-law regime, sustaining the perception of limited enforceability. Although the "decent work" approach is frequently invoked, persistent constraints such as the lack of reliable data for identifying informality, widespread informal employment in agriculture, sectoral gender segregation and wage differentials, and the markedly limited functioning of social dialogue mechanisms reinforce the view that alignment with the ILO's evolving policy agenda remains low in practice. Moreover, the absence of substantive engagement with labour-market priorities such as digitalisation, flexible work arrangements, green transition, and green employment, namely "future of work" themes, in national policy documents and monitoring reports indicates that the scope of the relationship remains narrow and underdeveloped. In this respect, Azerbaijan's policy alignment with ILO frameworks appears largely symbolic and selective, rather than comprehensive and implementation-driven.

## Conclusion

This study examined the relations between the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Azerbaijan within a historical and normative framework, evaluating the current state of "decent work," social dialogue, gender equality, and informal employment in the country. The findings indicate that while Azerbaijan exhibits a superficial alignment with ILO standards, this compliance remains largely formalistic in practice. Within the framework of neoliberal economic policies, the ILO has placed the protection of "Decent Work" standards, the assurance of social justice for the social protection of the labour force, and the enhancement of social dialogue to ensure industrial peace among labour, management, and the state at the centre of the global agenda. The fundamental problem of this research is to assess the extent to which ILO objectives in the areas of "Decent Work," "Social Justice," and "Social Dialogue" have been internalised at the national level, utilising legal and socioeconomic indicators.

Regarding the synthesis of policy transformation and institutional alignment, the new strategic direction established by the ILO—particularly through the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation—has been a decisive factor in Azerbaijan's labour market reforms. Azerbaijan's rapid ratification of core conventions following its membership and the establishment of a normative process through the 1999 Labour Code demonstrate a state-led protective approach where social rights are ostensibly aligned with the market economy. However, evaluations suggest a pressing need to further develop the normative sphere. Within the theme of the "Future of Work," there is a requirement to legalise flexibility and integrate new labour standards into the normative framework. Although these issues hold visionary significance in strategic policy documents, substantial gaps remain in their translation into political action.

The second part of the study analysed Azerbaijan-ILO relations in the context of ongoing practices and economic indicators. Data suggests that while employment exhibits a dynamic growth in both quantity and quality over time, chronic issues persist. Evaluations regarding various disadvantaged groups within the scope of "Decent Work" reveal that structural resistances—particularly in informal employment, gender inequality, and effective social dialogue—hinder progress. Key challenges to the implementation of ILO standards include sectoral gender disparities, the concentration of women in low-wage, precarious, and informal sectors, and the high rate of youth in the NEET (not in education, employment, or training) category. Furthermore, the lack of decline in unemployment rates despite rising education levels highlights a significant mismatch in youth employment. Regarding social dialogue, despite the existence of an institutional presence, the functional failure of collective bargaining remains a major obstacle to establishing a true tripartite structure. The dominant role of the state in this tripartite mechanism substantiates the existence of a "state corporatism" approach, which impedes alignment with contemporary ILO policies.

The present study provides an original contribution to the literature by analysing the relations between Azerbaijan and the ILO not only from a legal perspective but also through the lens of global social policy paradigms. The core findings demonstrate that while normative alignment has been achieved, areas such as informal employment, decent work, and the functioning of social dialogue mechanisms remain limited. This evidence confirms a persistent discrepancy between global standards and national implementations.

This research evaluates Azerbaijan-ILO relations not merely chronologically but also through the lens of the policy transfer capacity of international organisations in transition economies. The analyses, supported by regional comparisons, provide a critical dataset for the modernisation of labour standards in the region. By rigorously evaluating themes such as "Decent Work," "The Future of Work," "Social Justice," and "Social Dialogue" through institutional reports, this study fills a significant academic void in the examination of labour relations in Azerbaijan and serves as a vital resource for future research. To promote gender-based

employment, gender-sensitive incentive policies must be revised. In particular, the principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" must be implemented in practice, rather than existing solely in legal texts. Furthermore, the state must expand its sphere of responsibility in eliminating policies that hinder women's participation in the workforce. Regarding youth employment, the primary issue is the mismatch between skills and labour market demands; thus, it is imperative for the government to revise human capital policies through an educational lens. Expanding the scope of active labour market measures for disadvantaged groups will be instrumental in addressing these issues. Both the ILO and national reports indicate significant barriers to strengthening social dialogue; therefore, the bargaining power of all social partners must be increased equitably. Finally, in terms of economic diversification, the Azerbaijani government should incorporate themes such as green employment, flexible labour relations, and the digital labour market into its political action plans in line with the "Future of Work" agenda. Failure to adopt a proactive approach in these areas will relegate the framework provided by the ILO to a merely symbolic reference.



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#### Author Details

##### Ali Rzayev

<sup>1</sup> PhD candidate, Azerbaijan Khazar University, Faculty of Economics and Management, Bakü, Azerbaijan.

 0000-0003-0883-0263  azcomu2018@gmail.com

##### Gafar Shamilov

<sup>2</sup> PhD candidate, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, Center for Labor Market Supervision and Research, Bakü, Azerbaijan.

 0000-0003-0897-5067 

##### Elshan Ahmadov (Dr.)

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Azerbaijan State University of Economics, International School of Economics, Bakü, Azerbaijan.

 0000-0002-8282-4999 

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