



Social Protection spotlight

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ILO Social Security Standards: A global reference for social security systems

The ILO social security standards represent a unique set of legal instruments that give a concrete meaning to the human right to social security enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and in the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). ILO standards are negotiated and adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILC), often referred to as the world labour parliament, in which governments, workers and employers of the ILO's 187 member States are represented.

ILO social security standards, and notably the landmark Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), are globally recognized as a key reference for the design of rights-based, sound and sustainable social protection systems. They are also being used as a reference by human rights bodies to assess the implementation of the right to social security and, at the regional level, as a model for crafting regional social security instruments.

To date, Convention No. 102 is the only international treaty with a systemic vision of social security. It is grounded in a set of core financing, governance and administration principles that include:

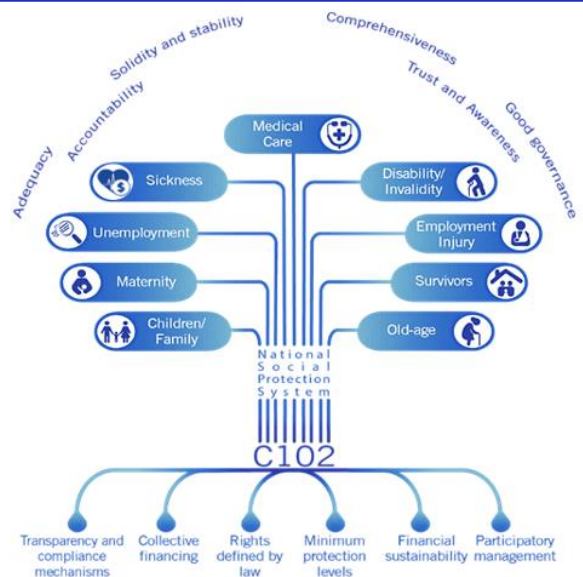
- ▶ Responsibility of the State
- ▶ Rights defined by law
- ▶ Minimum levels of protection for both contributory and non-contributory schemes
- ▶ Collective financing and financial sustainable
- ▶ Participatory management
- ▶ Transparency and compliance mechanisms

Convention No. 102 further sets out the minimum levels of protection to be guaranteed in relation to coverage, adequacy of benefits, conditions for entitlement and duration with respect to a set of nine social risks often referred to as the branches of national social security systems. These include medical care and benefits provided in case of sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, family responsibilities, maternity, invalidity and death of the breadwinner (see Figure 1).

Together, the principles and minimum quantitative standards upon the occurrence of one of these risks

contributes to ensuring adequate protection and the good governance of social security schemes and systems. Their observance guarantees solid and sustainable social protection systems.

Figure 1: Convention No. 102: Strong roots for sound and sustainable social protection systems



Importantly, recognizing that countries use different strategies to reach the objective of universality of protection, usually through an optimal combination of contributory and non-contributory schemes, Convention No. 102 is designed around the notion of flexibility and on the premise that there is no one-size-fits-all model for social security. Every country, irrespective of the social protection system in place, can evaluate the compatibility of all its components against the minimums and principles set out in Convention No.102. Ratifying and applying Convention No. 102 therefore allows building sustainable and progressively comprehensive social protection systems in a manner adapted to national circumstances.

Figure 2: ILO up-to-date Social Security Standards



Building on Convention No. 102, the ILO subsequently adopted a set of five thematic Conventions, which establish higher standards of protection for most of the contingencies by reference to persons protected, and the levels of protection to be provided (see Figure 2):

- *Employment Injury Benefits Convention*, 1964 (No. 121) and its accompanying Recommendation, 1964 (No. 121);
- *Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention*, 1967 (No. 128) and its accompanying Recommendation, 1967 (No. 131);
- *Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention*, 1969 (No. 130) and its accompanying Recommendation, 1969 (No. 134);
- *Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention*, 1988 (No. 168) and its accompanying Recommendation, 1988 (No. 176);
- *Maternity Protection Convention*, 2000 (No. 183) and its accompanying Recommendation, 2000 (No. 191);

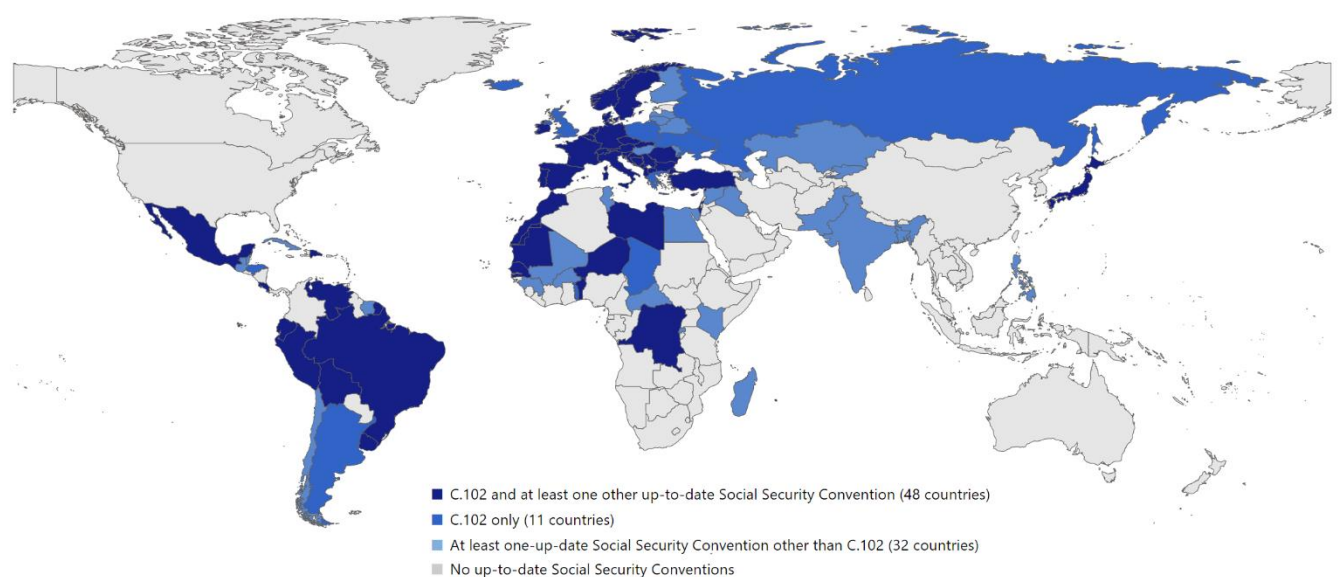
In addition, the ILO has adopted standards that focus specifically on equality of treatment between nationals and non-nationals in regards to social security rights, as well as the maintenance of these rights in cases of international migration:

- *Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention*, 1962 (No. 118)
- *Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention*, 1982 (No. 157) and its accompanying Recommendation, 1982 (No. 167)

In 2012, the ILO adopted a new instrument that marked a new milestone in the history of the international social security legal landscape. Considering that more than half of the world population still did not have access to any form of social security, the *Social Protection Floors Recommendation* (No. 202) guides the ILO and its Members towards the objective of reaching universal protection by prioritizing the establishment of nationally defined social protection floors as part of comprehensive social security systems. This objective was hence integrated into the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation No. 202 is important in that it sets the ILO's vision and strategy for the extension of social protection to all, and guides ILO member States in formulating and implementing their national social protection policies and strategies. In this context, it reaffirms the central role of Convention No. 102 as an essential ILO instrument for progressively building universal and comprehensive social protection systems and adequate levels of protection. The ILO Governing Body has called on ILO member States in 2011 and 2012 to consider ratification of Convention

Figure 3 : Map of ratification of ILO up-to-date social security conventions



- C.102 and at least one other up-to-date Social Security Convention (48 countries)
- C.102 only (11 countries)
- At least one up-to-date Social Security Convention other than C.102 (32 countries)
- No up-to-date Social Security Conventions

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No. 102, setting a target of 60 ratifications by the ILO's Centenary in 2019 (ILO, 2011, 2012).

So far, Convention No. 102 has been ratified by 58 Member States, namely Albania, Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cap Vert, Chad, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Libya, Luxembourg, Mauritania, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Niger, Norway, North Macedonia, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (see Figure 3).

A Toolkit was developed with the aim of raising awareness about ILO social security standards and promoting their ratification. By bringing together information and resources on these standards, the toolkit further serves to increase their impact and application in national contexts. The toolkit provides very practical and useful insights as to the ratification procedure, model instruments of ratification, as well as interactive information on the key provisions of these standards.

Visit the toolkit:

<http://standards.social-protection.org>



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This policy brief has been prepared by Kroum Markov and Maya Stern Plaza with inputs from Christina Behrendt, For more information, contact: Kroum Markov: markov@ilo.org and Maya Stern Plaza: stern-plaza@ilo.org

Social Protection Department
 ► socpro@ilo.org
 ► Social Protection Platform:
www.social-protection.org

International Labour Organization
 4 route des Morillons
 1211 Genève 22
www.ilo.org

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 ► ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus
 ► www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowWiki.action?id=62&lang=EN