



“Building Partnerships on the Future of Work” – Independent Final evaluation

QUICK FACTS

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This evaluation has been conducted according to ILO's evaluation policies and procedures. It has not been professionally edited but has undergone quality control by the ILO Evaluation Office.



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic, and structure

The "Building Partnerships on the Future of Work" project, implemented by the ILO in collaboration with the EU - Joint Research Centre (JRC), was designed to contribute to shaping the future world of work in line with the ILO Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work. The project aimed to fill knowledge gaps related to the future of work and promote policy dialogue based on research findings. The project was implemented from 1/Jan/2021 to 31/July/2023.

The project had two main components:

1. The "Fact-based Analysis" component focused on conducting research in areas such as i) **Platformisation of work and its impact on the logistics sector (R1)**; ii) **The effects of automation in the apparel and automotive sectors and their gender dimensions: case studies in selected EU and non-EU countries (R2)**; iii) **New labour market transition patterns (R3)**; and iv) **Shifts in employment structures in EU and non-EU countries (R4)**. This component aimed to provide evidence-based insights and inform future policies.
2. The "Strategic Alliance" component aimed to strengthen partnerships and dialogue on future-of-work issues. It sought to build the capacity of EU and non-EU countries, fostered debates on the future of work, and engaged in multilateral discussions. The main objective of the "Strategic Alliance" component was to strengthen the capacities of EU and non-EU countries on future-of-work-related issues and to foster evidence-based dialogue and international cooperation to promote sustainable economic development and decent work within and beyond the EU's borders, and in line with EU values. Activities under this component would allow for improvement in mutual understanding and exchange of evidence, experiences, and practices around each of the challenges identified in the "fact-based analysis" component. The non-EU countries' selection during the inception period of the project, between January and April 2021, included **South Korea, Canada, Mexico, and South Africa**.

The collaboration between the ILO and JRC in this project was founded on a partnership established during the planning phase and building on previous research initiatives. Operationally, this collaboration would be facilitated through close communication among staff at various levels: i) an overarching JRC/ILO Steering Committee was responsible for monitoring the project's progress and implementation. This committee would convene regularly with scheduled meetings; ii) Research teams composed of both JRC and ILO researchers worked closely together, harmonizing methodologies where feasible and cross-verifying research findings to ensure accuracy and reliability; iii) Part of the joint team was also dedicated to the strategic alliance component, developed a comprehensive work plan, and oversee its execution. On the ILO side, the project was backstopped by the Management and Coordination Unit (DMCU) of the Employment

	<p>Policies Department. Its implementation involved regular staff from two Departments: the Employment Policies Department’s DEVINVEST and EMPLAB Branches (and the DMCU) and the Research Department. two project positions were filled in the Employment Policies Department: a Technical specialist (project coordinator and researcher) and an Employment officer (research on automation).</p> <p>On the JRC side, the project was coordinated by the Employment and Skills team of the Human Capital and Employment Unit (B4). Initially, the project was carried out as a collaboration between two JRC units (B7 and B4), but all the staff involved in the project has been finally centralised in unit B4. Seven researchers from the JRC B4 unit were involved in the project and several external collaborators.</p>
<p>Present situation of the project</p>	<p>The project started on 01/01/2021 and finished on 31/07/2023.</p>
<p>Purpose, scope, and clients of the evaluation</p>	<p>The purpose of the Final Independent Evaluation was to assess the overall performance of the project in meeting its objectives, based on the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of project outcomes. The knowledge generated by the evaluation would also feed into the design of future intervention models and contribute to documenting management and delivery approaches. Regarding the scope, the evaluation would cover the entire duration of the project since its inception. As many stakeholders as possible would be assessed. The primary clients of the evaluation would be the ILO, the ILO constituents, the JRC, and the donor. Secondary clients will include other development partners active in the same field, other project partners, and indirect project beneficiaries.</p>
<p>Methodology of evaluation</p>	<p>The evaluation methodology includes examining the interventions’ Theory of Change, specifically in the light of the logical connection between levels of results, its coherence with external factors, and their alignment with the ILO’s strategic objectives, SDGs, and related targets, national and ILO country-level outcomes.</p> <p>The steps were: 1. Desk Review: Review of the project and its components materials, publications, and data, among others; 2. Interviews through a conference call and surveys with key stakeholders including (but not limited to) representatives from partners and entities who have participated in project activities; 3. Submission of an Inception Report with the final methodology and Work Plan, approved by the Evaluation Manager; 4. Additional documents review and analysis, data collection before or in parallel to the evaluation interviews as required by the proposed methodology; 5. Evaluation interviews (individual or collective) with stakeholders; 6. Debriefing with the ILO and the EU after submission of the draft final report.</p> <p>Cross-cutting issues were considered: The gender dimension has been considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables, and final report of the evaluation. The evaluation also includes International Labour Standards and environmental issues as a cross-cutting concern throughout its methodology.</p> <p>The methodology has a limitation in the survey because a minimum percentage of stakeholders have answered.</p>
<p>MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS</p>	<p>The comprehensive evaluation of the project reveals several key findings across various dimensions:</p> <p>Relevance (EQ1): The project demonstrates value, flexibility, and commitment to the Future of Work, Sustainable Development Goals, and gender equality. While relevant, enhanced consideration of ILO constituents’ National Development Plans (NDPs) could have maximized its impact.</p> <p>Coherence (EQ2): The project exhibits significant emphasis on</p>

synergies, aligning well with ILO initiatives and international projects related to the Future of Work.

Validity of Design (EQ3): The project's design is innovative, well-structured, and aligned with its objectives. Evaluative evidence affirms its logical coherence, transparency, and commitment to addressing gender disparities, yet a more comprehensive focus on gender equality across all research activities is recommended.

Effectiveness (EQ4): Despite challenges, the project contributes substantially to addressing Future of Work issues, effectively delivering outputs in Component 1. Component 2 progressed slower than projected, reaching partially the targeted goals. Challenges in organizing Policy Dialogues reflect the need for enhanced engagement with the partner countries from the project's inception.

Efficiency (EQ5): The project demonstrates good performance and cost-efficiency, receiving acclaim for its balance of resource optimization and high-quality deliverables. The findings also underscore the project's ability to maintain adequate operational structures that facilitate the achievement of planned outputs, fulfil gender-related objectives, and adapt to repurpose financial resources effectively, particularly in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project's balanced approach to mitigating these effects reflects its adaptability and resilience.

Effectiveness of Management (EQ6): Effective management, gender expertise, and robust support from partners and the ILO are evident strengths. Adequate communication, political, technical, and administrative support contribute to the project's success.

Impact and Sustainability (EQ7): The project makes substantial progress toward long-term objectives, with potential sustainability. Refining communication strategies can strengthen the project's legacy, ensuring enduring benefits for stakeholders.

Cross-Cutting Issues:

- The project emphasizes Tripartite Engagement, Strategic Alliances, International Labor Standards, and Social Dialogue, and acknowledges the importance of Environmental Sustainability.
- Commitment to International Labor Standards and Social Dialogue is evident during the implementation, with recognized importance placed on environmental sustainability.
- Environmental Sustainability: While not explicitly defined as a project goal, stakeholders acknowledged the significance of environmental sustainability in the context of technological advancements, highlighting its integration with human rights and public awareness.
- Gender Equality was included, particularly in the design and the implementation of Component 1, considering the challenge that gender equality represents for the Future of Work.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Recommendations

EQ1. Relevance

1. Enhance the project's alignment with national development plans and incorporate a broader range of comprehensive tools and approaches, including ILO decent work national diagnostics and similar complete tools. By taking this step, the project can achieve a more precise alignment of its goals and outcomes with the changing needs and priorities of partner institutions and ILO constituents.

2. Enhanced Knowledge Sharing and Partnership Building: To

capitalize on the project's networking potential, foster even stronger relationships with stakeholders, and maximize its lasting impact, prioritize knowledge sharing and partnership-building activities. These efforts can extend beyond the project's duration and create a legacy of collaboration and information exchange.

EQ2. Coherence

3. Capitalize on the project's evident focus on synergies and alignment with international initiatives and donor-supported projects related to the Future of Work. To further enhance this aspect, consider fostering closer collaboration and knowledge-sharing mechanisms with relevant stakeholders, including other donor-funded projects. By engaging in partnerships and exchanging insights, the project can harness collective expertise and resources, maximizing its impact and effectiveness in advancing the Future of Work agenda. This collaborative approach can lead to a more integrated and holistic response to the evolving challenges and opportunities in the world of work.

EQ3. Validity of Design

4. For future projects, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure the validity of the Design:

a. **Periodically Reevaluate the Theory of Change:** It is advisable to conduct periodic reviews and updates to adapt to changing circumstances, evolving insights, and the dynamic nature of the Future of Work. This flexibility will maintain the project's responsiveness and adaptability.

b. **Strengthen Risk Management:** Building upon the project's transparent approach to addressing critical assumptions and risks, ongoing risk assessments should be conducted. Mitigation strategies should be regularly reviewed and adjusted to enhance the project's preparedness and resilience in facing unforeseen challenges.

c. **Review and Fine-Tune Indicators:** It is recommended to periodically review these indicators to ensure their continued relevance and alignment with emerging trends and project objectives. This will guarantee that the project's impact assessments remain meaningful.

d. **To add targets to any activity.**

e. **Sustain Commitment to Gender Equality:** This commitment will further advance gender equity within the Future of Work discourse.

f. **Harness Innovation:** To maintain its role as a thought leader in the field, the project should actively participate in knowledge-sharing platforms, collaborate with academic and research institutions.

EQ4. Effectiveness

5. Refine Communication: As recognized in Key Finding 14 and suggested by one of the interviewees, the project's communication strategy is commendable but can be enhanced. To maximize its reach and impact with diverse stakeholders, the project should develop more concise and accessible communication strategies. This may include creating easily digestible summaries of project findings and outputs for broader dissemination.

EQ5. Efficiency

6. Strengthen Feedback Mechanisms: Key Finding No. 19 highlights the project's monitoring, evaluation, and reporting improvements. The project should establish regular feedback loops with stakeholders and beneficiaries to further enhance these mechanisms. This will provide valuable insights for ongoing adjustments and improvements, ensuring the project remains responsive to evolving needs and challenges.

7. Maintain Flexibility: Building on the project's adaptability, as highlighted in Key Finding No. 18, it should remain prepared to respond to unforeseen challenges, including potential future crises. This may involve developing contingency plans and strategies for

resource repurposing to ensure that project objectives are consistently met.

EQ6. Effectiveness of Management

8. Maintain rigorous monitoring and evaluation practices to track the project's progress and assess its impact post-conclusion. This ongoing assessment will help identify areas for improvement and provide valuable insights for sustaining positive outcomes.

EQ7. Impact and Sustainability

9. Design and execute a successful Exit Strategy. Execute the exit strategy effectively; ensure that all aspects of the exit plan, including knowledge transfer and capacity building, are carefully managed to facilitate a smooth transition and long-term sustainability.

By implementing this recommendation, the project can further solidify its legacy as a lasting and positive force in the Future of Work discourse, contributing to sustainable development goals and continued progress in gender equality.

10. On Cross-Cutting Issues

Considering the critical findings related to the Tripartite Issues Assessment, International Labour Standards Assessment, and Environmental Sustainability, there are some recommendations to enhance the project's effectiveness and impact further:

- a. **Explicitly Integrate Environmental Sustainability and Enhance Environmental Standards:** While environmental sustainability is implicitly acknowledged, consider formally incorporating it as one of the project's goals. Also, Conduct training or awareness programs within the project team and among stakeholders to highlight the intersections between environmental sustainability, labor standards, and the Future of Work. Discuss how environmentally friendly practices can align with the project's objectives.
- b. **Strengthen Collaboration on International Standards:** from the collaboration with ILO, OECD, and other organisations develop common standards related to platform work and different Future of Work aspects. Ensure that the project actively participates in discussions around labor standards and policy responses at the international level.
- c. **Expand Social Dialogue Initiatives:** Recognize the value of social dialogue in addressing technology and automation-related challenges. Consider organizing workshops or forums facilitating discussions among social partners, workers' organisations, employers' organisations, and other stakeholders to develop regulatory frameworks that balance worker protection and productivity.
- d. **Regularly Review and Update:** Periodically review the project's alignment with international labor standards, environmental sustainability goals, and social dialogue initiatives—update project strategies and activities to stay coordinated with evolving standards and priorities.

Main lessons learned and good practices

The **lesson learned** is the Project – especially on the methodology aspect – was an add-on project, allowing ILO to do something additional and providing ILO with a different analysis tool. The methodology applied throughout the project is to build new and strengthen existing partnerships through new and innovative research and the distribution of its findings through capacity building and dialogue. Partner countries would be able to make policy decisions on recent findings. The fact that the implementing partners are the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and the ILO contributed to this Lesson Learned.

The **good practice** is in the implementation of the project. The ILO implemented it in collaboration with the JRC, with the primary goal of developing intelligence around the Future of Work. It also would

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