Guide for using the *Managing international labour standards reporting* website and tools

The International Training Centre of the ILO [ITCilo], in collaboration with the International Labour Standards Department of the ILO [NORMES], offers a new product for ILO constituents involved in International Labour Standards [ILS] reporting. The product comes in the form of a website with practices, tools and resources, and an approach to “manage” ILS reporting obligations. This product is described and explained in this Guide.
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1. Introduction

The International Labour Organization [ILO] sets and supervises ILS. Its members have different obligations vis-à-vis ILS, including that of periodically reporting on the application of Conventions that have been ratified. The Secretariat of the Organization – the International Labour Office [Office] – is mandated to support ILO member States in these efforts by offering information and technical assistance. As a result, the Office provides a variety of supports to member States tailored to address the different challenges they face in meeting the ILS-related obligations.

Each year, the Office requests more than 2,000 reports from member States about the steps taken to implement ratified Conventions. The ILO, acting through a committee of experts as well as a tripartite committee bringing together employers’, workers’ and government representatives, supervises ILS application on the basis of these reports. Although governments generally are successful in meeting their reporting obligations, sometimes they are not. Experience shows that governments are sometimes challenged by systematic weaknesses that prevent their fulfilling their obligations or by an insufficient knowledge of the supervisory mechanisms and how they works.

A new methodology has been added to the Office's offerings to help governments manage their ILS reporting obligations. It is based on a management systems approach to the work of putting together elements required for reporting and delivering the ILS reports requested, on time and with informative and responsive content. It complements current approaches to capacity building and development that are designed to improve knowledge and skills of ILS reporting.

This Guide describes what a management systems approach is and how it complements existing support offerings from the Office, including from the ITCILO.

2. The approach

*Management is the activity of getting things done with the aid of people and other resources.*

To be able to produce informative, responsive and timely reports, the responsible government officials need to bring together – manage – information, human resources, time, materials, and sometimes financial resources.

*A systems approach to management means the study of an enterprise – like a government bureau charged with reporting on ILS – in its totality so that the human and material resources of that enterprise can be organized to realize its overall objectives – like ILS reporting – as efficiently as possible.*

Sustainably resolving challenges to doing this requires seeing the preparation and delivery of reports as an exercise in managing these human and other resources. It also requires building and developing the skills of the persons involved to be able to identify and correct weaknesses in that management. Doing this ultimately improves their ability to manage resources in order to meet the reporting goal. Continuous improvement becomes possible.

Working to instil a management approach to reporting can help those involved to reflect on and identify weaknesses, take measures to correct them and, in the end, permanently resolve the challenges faced by a national administration in providing informative and responsive reports on time.

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Managing ILS reporting obligations is about getting informative and responsive reports written and delivered on time by drawing on skilled and knowledgeable human resources and other resources.

A systems approach thus means looking beyond the idea of “getting the reports for this year” to thinking about how reports are being prepared and what can be done to improve that process with a view to the objective of using available resources efficiently to get informative and responsive reports in on time. The cycle reflected below in Figure 1 captures that essence.

- **Plan** what needs to be done to meet the ILS reporting objective.
- **Do** what is planned.
- **Check** to see that what was planned was done and actually met the objective and that it was done in the most efficient manner possible.
- **Act** to improve the process, with a view to planning, doing, checking and acting again to improve the process.

3. The product

A set of resources and tools for ILO constituents to use with a view to instilling a management systems approach to ILS reporting has been created.

3.1. Website

The Managing international labour standards reporting website appears at: [http://managing-ils-reporting.itcilo.org](http://managing-ils-reporting.itcilo.org). The site serves as a two-way communication channel by both collecting and disseminating good ideas, experience, and examples, and providing management systems tools for supporting ILO constituents.
The website is designed to be used on an ad hoc basis according to the needs of the ILO 
constituents. It proposes an approach to resolving challenges to ILS reporting; it is not a training 
course.

The website can be seen as a “toolbox” divided into 4 compartments.

*Practices* coming from ILO constituents are presented in a compartment bearing that name. Two 
methods are used to display the collection of practices: by country and by subject. The subject 
method presents good examples in 4 groupings: human resources, contacts with other ministries 
and agencies, communications and consultations with social partners and other non-governmental 
actors and management. In addition, there is a collection point in this area of the website where 
ILO constituents can bring good examples to the attention of the website managers for possible 
inclusion in it.

*Tools* is the second compartment. Interactive checklists, downloadable documents, and other tools 
are placed in this area for ILO constituent use in improving ILS reporting thanks to a management 
systems approach.

*Helpdesk* is the third compartment, where ILO constituents can address specific questions on ILS 
reporting. A collection of questions of general interest with answers can also be found here.

*Resources* is the final compartment, containing a glossary giving definitions of reporting-related 
terms and jargon, as well as key ILO documents, publications and links relevant to ILS reporting.

### 3.2. Tools

The tools on the website have several forms and orientations. Forms include interactive checklist 
web pages and downloadable checklist documents. Orientations include both traditional knowledge 
transferring tools – such as the annual calendar for reports on ratified Conventions– as well as 
tools for supporting a management systems approach to ILS reporting. Most of the tools are new 
and have been specifically developed for this website.
Checklists

Entire year checklist for reports on ratified Conventions (national administrations). This is a “to do” and “to know” checklist organized by months during a reporting year (January to December). The intention is that it be used by the public administration personnel to check that reporting-related tasks are prepared and accomplished within the proper time framework during the reporting calendar year to assure that reports are ultimately sent in on time.

Entire year checklist for reports on ratified Conventions (social partners). This is a “to do” and “to know” checklist organized by months during a reporting year (January to December). The intention is that it be used by representatives of the social partners to participate in the reporting process in a timely and efficient way.

Knowledge transfer resources

Annual calendar for reports on ratified Conventions. A specific calendar of action for national administrations, covering a reporting year.

Procedure for reports on ratified Conventions (detailed and simplified reports). A document on different steps to be taken according to the type of reports to be prepared, i.e. simplified or detailed.

Commentary on report forms for ratified Conventions. A document that gives explanatory comments on standard elements of article 22 report forms approved by the Governing Body for each Convention.

Calendar of action on international labour standards. A generic calendar of action called for by national administrations on international labour standards.2

Management systems tools

Root cause analysis: the fishbone diagramme. A document, adapted from a World Bank Evaluation Group tool, that explains to national administrations the fishbone analysis to identify the causes of a problem.

Identification of obstacles, solutions and indicators of progress: the PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACT process. A tool that briefly describes the Plan-Do-Check-Act model to national administrations and includes three indicative checklists: a checklist of possible obstacles, a checklist of possible solutions, and a checklist of indicators of progress. The document is modelled on the organization used in the Managing international labour standards reporting website.

3.3. Idea and experience exchange

The reporting practices collected in the Managing international labour standards reporting website are offered in the spirit of sharing ways of approaching reporting challenges that can be quite common between different countries. The practices are offered as potentially useful, good ideas of what could be taken up and done by other users elsewhere. There are videos as well as short descriptive examples, all associated with an individual country and one, or more, of the 4 broad categories of human resources, contacts with other ministries and agencies, communication and consultations with social partners and other non-governmental actors, management. All these examples can be used in interventions as well as on an ad hoc basis by ILO constituents to prompt discussion of potential local solutions to similar challenges dealt with elsewhere.

2 The calendar comes from the Handbook of procedures, pp. 57-58.

http://managing-ils-reporting.itcilo.org