2026

Employment and Labor Policy in KOREA

Ministry of
Employment and Labor

Contents

I Overview of the Ministry of Employment and Labor

1. Vision & Mission 05
2. Organization of MOEL 06

II Major Employment and Labor Policies

1. Fostering Job Market Participation and Revitalizing Labor Market 12
   1) Overview of Employment Policy 12
   2) Vocational Skills Development Policy 14
   3) Employment Service Policy 15
      - Employment and Welfare Plus Center, National Employment Support System 17
   4) Work-Family Balance Policy 19
   5) Youth Employment Policy 20
   6) Senior Employment Policy 23
   7) Employment Policy for People with Disabilities 25
   8) Sustainable Social Enterprise Development Policy 26

2. Protecting Working Conditions and Improving Employment Practices 28

3. Promoting Respect for Labor and Guaranteeing Fundamental Labor Rights 34
   1) Reducing Actual Working Hours 34
   2) Preventing the Misuse of the Inclusive Wage System 34

3) Promoting Respect for Labor by Protecting Vulnerable Workers and Fostering Mutual Growth Between Primary Contractors and Subcontractors 35
4) Full-Scale Resumption of Social Dialogue 38
5) Supporting Social Dialogue at the Regional Level 39

4. A Country Where All Working People are Healthy and Safe 40
1) Announcement of the Comprehensive Measures for Labor Safety 40
2) Industrial Accident Prevention Through Specialized Occupational Safety and Health Administration 40
3) Strengthening Cooperation With Local Governments and the Private Sector to Address Risk Gaps Across Small Workplace 41
4) Establishing a Safe Workplace with Labor and Management 42
5) Innovating the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance System, Including Faster Claims Processing 43
6) Protecting Working People from Emerging Risks 43

5. Promoting International Labor Cooperation 45

III **Appendix**

1. Labor Laws 52

2. Major Statistics 54

I



Overview of the Ministry of **Employment and Labor**

1 Vision & Mission

Establishing a Sustainable and Future-Oriented Labor Market



Establish a solid foundation for protecting vulnerable groups and revitalizing the labor market.

Build the groundwork for creating quality jobs by strengthening the private sector's capacity to generate employment and by reinforcing employment services and safety net.

Provide tailored job support based on gender and age.

Enhance vocational skills development to equip workers for the demands of the future labor market.

Achieve a significant reduction in serious industrial accidents by implementing site-focused occupational safety and health administration.

2 Organization of MOEL

(Headquarters)



(66 Affiliated Institutions)

- 50 Regional Employment and Labor Offices : 7 Regional Offices, 42 District Offices, 1 Branch office

- 15 Commissions: Labor Relations Commissions (1 National Labor Relations Commission and 12 Regional Labor Relations Commissions), Minimum Wage council, Employment Insurance Deliberation Committee

- 1 National Labor Consultation Center



Relevant Institutions

Korea Workers' Compensation & Welfare Service www.kcomwel.or.kr

- Provision of compensation for industrial accidents
- Promotion of rehabilitation and social reintegration of workers injured in industrial accidents
- Operation of employment insurance and industrial accident compensation insurance
- Implementation of projects for industrial accident prevention and workers' welfare improvement

Human Resources Development Service of Korea www.hrdkorea.or.kr

- Support for workers' life-long learning
- Promotion of national qualification tests and expert skills
- Introduction of foreign workers to Korea and support for overseas employment

Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency www.kosha.or.kr

- Guidance and education on occupational safety and welfare
- Research and development, and promotion of measures to prevent industrial accidents

Korea Employment Agency for the Disabled www.kead.or.kr

- Support for the employment of the disabled and their self-reliance
- Creation and maintenance of jobs for the disabled and building an environment friendly to their employment

Korea Employment Information Service www.keis.or.kr

- Provision of mid- and long-term prospect for labor supply and demand, and analysis of employment surveys
- Collection and provision of employment information and analysis of employment trends
- Operation of the national employment network

Korea Social Enterprise Promotion Agency www.socialenterprise.or.kr

- Creation of a friendly environment for social enterprises by certifying social enterprises and nurturing social entrepreneurs
- Support for sustainable business activities by providing business consulting services and support for entry into new markets
- Provision of monitoring results, analyses and surveys on social enterprises

Korea Polytechnics www.kopo.ac.kr

- Cultivation of a workforce for key national industries and new growth sectors
- Development of vocational competencies throughout the entire career of workers, including those at SMEs
- Support for the employment of the underprivileged and provision of technology guidance for SMEs

Korea University of Technology & Education www.koreatech.ac.kr

- Cultivation of vocational competency development teachers and HRD experts
- Provision of education and training for the life-long competency development of vocational training teachers and workers
- Provision of education on labor relations in the public sector and on-the-job education for officials in charge of employment and labor

Job World www.koreajobworld.or.kr

- Provision of materials and information related to jobs
- Establishment and operation of job experience programs
- Provision of career counselling and psychological testing

Construction Workers Mutual Aid Association www.cwma.or.kr

- Collection and payment of mutual benefit funds for retirement
- Support for stable employment of construction workers, and development and improvement of vocational competencies and employment support programs

Korea Labor Foundation www.nosa.or.kr

- Education on mutual prosperity of labor and management, and international labor exchanges and cooperation
- Support for (soon-to-be) retirees' reemployment and business startup
- Creation of jobs through cooperation between labor and management and of companies where workers feel happy to work

Korea Employment & Labor Educational Institute www.keli.kr

- Provision of education on employment, labor, and labor rights for employees and employers, employment and labor officials and staff, adolescents and young adults, and the general public.
- Research, development, and dissemination of employment and labor education programs, and training and management of field-specific experts
- Collection of domestic and international employment and labor education materials, compilation of statistics, and publication of materials



II

Major Employment and Labor Policies

1 Fostering Job Market Participation and Revitalizing Labor Market

1) Overview of Employment Policy

- 2025 saw continued favorable statistical trends, including solid growth in the number of employed persons, a record-high employment rate, and a low unemployment rate, and this trend has continued into 2026.

- However, difficult employment conditions have persisted in vulnerable areas such as youth employment and the construction sector, sustaining demand for support measures. In addition, the need for proactive responses has grown amid an accelerating great transition including demographic change driven by low birth rates and population aging, the rapid advance of AI technology, and the continuing shift toward decarbonization, all of which are expected to reshape the structure of jobs.

- Against this backdrop, the newly launched people-sovereign government has concentrated its employment policy capacity on building the foundation for "real growth" by tangibly improving the lives of all working people.

- First of all, in response to demographic change, the Ministry of Employment and Labor ("MOEL") has actively pursued employment measures tailored to the characteristics and circumstances of each target group, including young people, middle-aged and older workers, and working parents.

- First, to help young people enter the labor market with confidence, MOEL provides support tailored to their circumstances, whether not seeking work ("resting"), job-seeking, or already employed.

  - Working jointly across ministries, MOEL actively identifies young people who are

"resting", builds a database on them, and provides various forms of support, including psychological counseling, to help them return to the labor market. For job-seeking youth, MOEL supports AI literacy building, work experience to strengthen employability, and career-path design. In addition, MOEL is building an environment where working youth can remain stably employed through support for workplace adaptation, retention, and improved working conditions.

- Second, MOEL has established a support system to enable middle-aged and older workers to work as long as they wish. MOEL provides a package of customized employment services tailored to the characteristics of workers in their 40s, 50s, and 60s, including career design and job development. MOEL is also actively facilitating social dialogue to enable a phased extension of the retirement age that benefits both generations and labor/management, while preparing various measures to support intergenerational win-win employment.

- Third, to overcome the low birthrate by helping working parents balance work and childcare, MOEL has substantially strengthened support for working parents. To ease the financial burden of parental leave, the maximum monthly parental leave benefit has been raised to KRW 2.5 million, and various forms of support, including subsidies for hiring substitute workers and for workload-sharing among colleagues, are provided so that employees at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can use work-family balance programs without concern.

- MOEL is also actively building a foundation for responding to industrial transformation. To prepare for the digital and decarbonization transitions, MOEL is developing the "Basic Plan for Employment Security Amid Industrial Transformation," a mid- to long-term plan for a labor-inclusive transition that strengthens monitoring, career transition support, and safety nets. In addition, in response to demand for AI talent, MOEL supports a range of vocational training programs to train specialized personnel and strengthen the capabilities of existing employees.

- In response to the changing job structure, strengthening of the employment safety net is also on track. New forms of work, such as multiple job holding and platform work, are emerging, and job changes are expected to become more frequent amid industrial

transformation. In response, MOEL is building the legal and institutional foundation to more robustly protect workers by restructuring the standards for employment insurance coverage, contributions, and benefits from a working-hours basis to an actual-earnings basis.

- In addition, to minimize mismatches in the labor market, MOEL continues to strengthen AI-based job-matching employment services such as Work24.

- Finally, to promote balanced regional development, MOEL is strengthening support for regional jobs. MOEL has restructured the "Region-Customized Job Creation Project" to identify and support job creation initiatives suited to local circumstances. The project system has been reorganized around MOEL to enable more effective cooperation among local governments in areas such as workforce training and residential support, so that regional job projects can be pursued more effectively. In addition, the Youth Employment Leap Incentive is being provided to young people who take jobs at outstanding regional companies outside the Seoul metropolitan area, to encourage them to settle there.

- While maintaining solid employment momentum, the government will continue to closely monitor structural changes in the labor market in response to the great transition, and will respond swiftly to implement employment policies that make a real difference in people's daily lives.

2) Vocational Skills Development Policy

- To proactively respond to industrial transformation driven by AX (AI transformation) and to demographic changes such as low birth rates and population aging, MOEL is focusing on the following key tasks to build a lifelong vocational skills development system.

- First, MOEL supports customized AI capability building so that job seekers and employees in the labor market can develop their understanding, application skills, and specialized expertise in AI. Since announcing the "AI Talent Development Plan for the Labor Market" (the AI+ Up Project) in December 2025, MOEL has focused support on AI vocational education and training so that no worker is left behind amid the AI transition.

- Second, MOEL is strengthening customized vocational skills development for vulnerable groups in the labor market, including young people, middle-aged and older workers, and SMEs. In consideration of the harsh youth employment situation, MOEL launched the K-New Deal Academy in 2026, a large-company-led vocational training program for young people, and has also expanded training for middle-aged and older workers through public training institutions such as Polytechnic colleges.

  - To enhance the capacity of SMEs to respond to industrial transformation, MOEL has expanded customized on-site vocational training (S-OJT) delivered directly to companies, and has also expanded infrastructure for SME-customized training, such as joint training centers for industrial transformation and AI.

- Third, MOEL is strengthening support for lifelong vocational skills development so that anyone can develop vocational skills and build and utilize a career over their lifetime. To this end, MOEL is working to close coverage gaps by expanding the National Tomorrow Learning Card, a voucher for vocational training, and supports e-learning, VR, and other training free of time and place constraints through the Smart Training Education Platform (STEP).

  - In addition, the Job Competency Bank system enables integrated management and certification of an individual's education, training, qualifications, and career history to support lifelong career development and the qualification system is also being reorganized to make eligibility requirements more flexible and better reflect real-world job needs.

3) Employment Service Policy

- Employment service policy smoothly connects employers seeking workers with job seekers, and comprehensively provides related services such as job information for both employers and job seekers, career guidance, and vocational training. By quickly matching talent with the companies that need them, these services support the efficient use of human resources at the national level and contribute to the growth of both individuals and companies.

- In particular, as job changes become more frequent amid demographic and industrial structural change and diversifying employment and hiring patterns, the role of employment services in connecting job seekers with jobs is becoming increasingly important, and the Korean government is focusing its capabilities on upgrading employment services from this perspective.

- First, MOEL provides advanced, one-on-one customized employment services to job seekers and companies, and cooperates closely with related institutions to directly design job policies suited to regional industry characteristics and job market conditions.

  - Since August 2022, MOEL has operated the "Job Seeker and Company Leap Guarantee Package," centered on one-on-one customized diagnosis, consulting, and tailored service support for job seekers and companies. Since August 2025, the Company Leap Guarantee Package has been reorganized into a Comprehensive Corporate Support Service to consolidate the channels for corporate support, while the Job Seeker Package has been expanded to 54 employment centers nationwide in 2026. Together, these services help companies fundamentally resolve hiring difficulties by improving employment conditions, and help job seekers move up to better jobs by strengthening their vocational competencies.

  - Since 2026, to respond swiftly to industrial restructuring that differs by region and to support job placement and hiring suited to local job market conditions, MOEL has operated seven "Region- and Industry-Specialized Employment Centers" (in Seoul, Incheon, Suwon, Daegu, Jeonju, Busan, and Gwangju) that allow the regions with the best on-the-ground knowledge to take the lead in designing and delivering customized services suited to local industry and job conditions.

- Second, MOEL operates 103 Employment Welfare Plus Centers nationwide to provide one-stop employment and welfare services for job seekers who need both types of support.

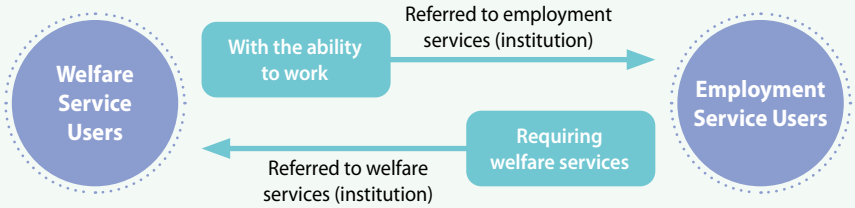
  - Employment Welfare Plus Centers began with 10 locations in 2014 and have expanded to 103 locations by 2026. Since 2023, the centers have been upgraded into "integrated employment service" institutions to provide not only employment and welfare services

but also financial services and local employment services on a one-stop basis. Currently a total of eight Employment Welfare Plus Centers (Seoul Bukbu, Siheung, Pyeongtaek, Jinju, Asan, Seoul, Gyeongsan, and Goyang) have strengthened their intake counseling functions and provide one-stop employment, welfare, financial, and mental health services in cooperation with the Financial Services Commission, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and local governments.

Employment and Welfare Plus Center

- Employment Welfare Plus Centers were established to address the inconvenience of citizens having to visit multiple institutions for employment and welfare services, which had each been provided separately across different locations.

  - Centered on the Employment Welfare Plus Centers, employment and welfare service institutions provide demand-tailored services to users within a single, shared space.



* Beginning with the establishment of the Namyangju Employment Welfare Plus Center, MOEL established 10 centers in 2014, 30 in 2015, 30 in 2016, 28 in 2017, 4 in 2021, and 1 in 2026, bringing the total to 103 centers currently in operation.

National Employment Support System

- Since January 1, 2021, the National Employment Support System, a Korean-style unemployment assistance program, has been in operation.

  - The National Employment Support System provides customized employment support together with livelihood stability support to employment-vulnerable groups not covered by unemployment benefits, including low-income individuals, unemployed young people, and career-interrupted women.

  - Based on their willingness to work and competency level identified through in-depth counseling, participants develop a job-seeking activity plan, under which they receive various employment support services, including vocational training, work experience, resume and interview consulting, and job information.

  - In particular, individuals with a household income at or below 60% of the median income and assets of KRW 400 million or less (for those aged 15–34: income at or below 120% of the median income and assets of KRW 500 million or less) received a job-seeking promotion allowance of KRW 500,000 per month for six months, provided they carried out job-seeking activities under their job-seeking activity plan; starting in 2026, the monthly allowance was raised to KRW 600,000.

- In addition, since 2023, an additional job-seeking promotion allowance of KRW 100,000 per month has been provided for each dependent (aged 18 or under, aged 70 or over, or persons with severe disabilities), up to a combined monthly limit of KRW 400,000 per participant, to ease the burden of supporting dependents and enable participants to engage in job-seeking activities more fully.

  - Furthermore, since 2024, the system has been improved to allow the job-seeking promotion allowance to be paid even when participants engage in income-generating activities such as part-time work, in order to encourage participants' job-seeking activities and support stable livelihoods.

4) Work-Family Balance Policy

- MOEL is pursuing various maternity and childcare support programs to expand women's participation in the workforce and support work-family balance.

  - To protect pregnant and postpartum workers, MOEL operates various systems, including: pre- and post-natal leave (90–120 days) and related benefits; a reduced working hours system during pregnancy (2 hours per day); a system allowing adjustments to clock-in and clock-out times for pregnant workers; spousal paternity leave (20 days) and related benefits; and fertility treatment leave (6 days) and related benefits.

  - To support employees with childcare, MOEL operates parental leave and related benefits, as well as reduced working hours during the childcare period and related benefits. Starting in 2025, to encourage shared parenting, the maximum monthly parental leave benefit was raised to KRW 2.5 million, and where both parents use parental leave, the maximum leave period was extended from 1 year to 1 year and 6 months. The eligible child's age and the usable period for reduced working hours during the childcare period were also expanded.*
    * (Eligible child's age) Age 8 or 2nd grade of elementary school or younger → age 12 or 6th grade of elementary school or younger (Usable period) up to 2 years → up to 3 years

  - To support maternity and childcare for working women in non-standard employment, including fixed-term and dispatched workers, artists and persons providing labor services, and self-employed individuals, MOEL operates benefits equivalent to pre- and post-natal leave pay for fixed-term and temporary agency workers, pre- and post-natal benefits for artists and persons providing labor services, and maternity benefits for those not covered by employment insurance.

  - To help SMEs create an environment conducive to work-family balance, MOEL provides an employment stabilization incentive to employers that adopt reduced working hours, flexible work arrangements, and maternity/childcare support programs. In particular, to ease the burden of workforce gaps caused by the use of parental leave and similar programs, MOEL provides a placement service for substitute workers, and has expanded subsidies for hiring substitute workers and for workload-sharing among colleagues.

- MOEL is also working to strengthen workplace childcare support, including operating public workplace daycare centers (37 centers in 2026) and providing subsidies for the installation costs of workplace daycare centers.

- To improve the environment for gender equality in employment, including work-family balance, MOEL monitors whether workplaces provide sexual harassment prevention training and implement maternity protection programs through workplace guidance and inspections. MOEL also works to remedy the rights of victims of sexual harassment and gender discrimination through employment equality counseling support.

  - MOEL conducted guidance and inspections (at 1,821 workplaces in 2025) of workplaces suspected of violating maternity protection laws, such as dismissal during maternity leave or failure to grant parental leave, and operated online and offline maternity protection reporting centers to promptly remedy violations of maternity protection programs.

  - To raise awareness of workplace sexual harassment, MOEL produces and distributes sexual harassment prevention training videos and standard training materials.

  - Since May 2022, MOEL has implemented a corrective action system that allows workers who have suffered disadvantages such as employment discrimination to directly seek redress through the Labor Relations Commission.

5) Youth Employment Policy

- The employment situation for youth remains challenging due to the dual structure of the labor market and employers' increasing preference for rolling recruitment and experienced hires.

  - In response, MOEL implements youth employment policies tailored to the diverse characteristics and circumstances of young people, including support for early career exploration and career preparation beginning during their university years.

  - Furthermore, MOEL utilizes a database of unemployed youth and strengthens collaboration among youth support organizations to directly reach out to unemployed

young people in need of assistance.

1 Customized Employment Services for University Students to Proactively Strengthen Employability

- (Customized employment services for current students) Supports lower-year students in exploring careers based on their major and interests, and provides upper-year students with customized training and hands-on work experience.

Target	Major Details		Channel
Lower-Year Students	Build-up project	• Individualized career guidance and career exploration capacity building * Providing information on jobs of interest → designing a job portfolio → offering diverse career exploration opportunities	University Job Plus Center
Upper-Year Students	Jump-up project	• Diagnosing employability → setting a target occupation → developing an individualized job-seeking activity plan * Supporting job competency-building programs linked to the plan, such as training and work experience	

*Operated at 53 universities in 2024 → expanded to 64 universities from 2025

2 Expanding Work Experience Opportunities to Enhance Employability through Public-Private Cooperation

- (Work experience) Provides quality work experience opportunities, developed jointly by the public and private sectors, for unemployed young people who need job experience, and identifies and disseminates outstanding programs to support youth in exploring jobs, setting career paths, and building job competencies.

  - (Youth work experience support project) In response to the intensifying trend of as-needed and experienced hiring, provides various types of work experience (internship, project-based, ESG-support, and social-value types) to substantively improve young people's job competencies.

  * 2026 Target: Support for 45,000 young people

3 Strengthening Specialized Services for Vulnerable Youth Facing Employment Difficulties

- (Boosting motivation to seek work) Expands* scale of the "Youth Challenge Support Project" to help young people who have given up job-seeking, among others**, enter the labor market.

  * (2025) 12,000 → (2026) 14,000

  ** Young people who have given up job-seeking, youth aging out of care, youth entering/leaving youth welfare facilities, North Korean defector youth, humidifier disinfectant victim youth, etc.

- (Preventing "resting" status) Provides youth-friendly infrastructure and various programs to unemployed young people to support job-seeking activities and prevent transition into "resting" status.

  * Number of participating local governments: 30 in 2024, 54 in 2025, 64 in 2026

- (Employment incentives for vulnerable youth) Restructured the Youth Employment Leap Incentive program to give preferential support* to areas outside the Seoul metropolitan area, so that young people can settle, find jobs, and grow in the regions.

  * Companies: (Seoul metro area <SMEs> · non-metro area <SMEs, mid-sized companies>) up to KRW 7.2 million in corporate incentive over 1 year

  * Young people: (non-metro area <SMEs, mid-sized companies>) up to KRW 7.2million in youth allowance over 2 years

4 Promoting a Fair Recruitment Culture Embraced by Both Youth and Companies

- Selects targets* for guidance and inspection under the Fair Hiring Procedure Act by focusing on workplaces suspected of violating the law and workplaces employing large numbers of young people, to improve the effectiveness of inspections.

  * 2024: 1,245 workplaces; 2025: 1,214 workplaces; H1 2026: 600 workplaces

- Supports companies in voluntarily improving their hiring culture through fair-hiring training for companies* and by identifying and rewarding outstanding fair-hiring practices.**

* (Fair hiring training) 200 sessions in 2024 → 200 sessions in 2025 (with added content and customized in-house training)

** (Awards for outstanding companies) 22 companies in the private and public sectors recognized through cooperation among 5 relevant ministries and 2 economic organizations

6) Senior Employment Policy

- Korea became an aged society (with those aged 65 and over accounting for 14% of the population) in 2018, and entered a super-aged society (20% or more) in December 2024, undergoing rapid demographic change.

  - While most people wish to continue working until age 73.4, they often face early, unprepared retirement from their main job, followed by long and frequent job transitions and re-employment periods.

  - Accordingly, tailored support is required for: (in their 40s) prepared retirement; (in their 50s) smooth job transitions; and (in their 60s) creating conditions for continued employment.

- MOEL has supported prepared job transitions and re-employment for people in their 40s and 50s.

  - Through the Middle-aged and Older Tomorrow Centers, MOEL has expanded lifetime career design and career transition school services for employees of SMEs and others.

* (Lifetime career design program) 56,102 participants in 2024 → 60,236 in 2025 (+4,134, +7.4%)
(Career transition school program) 24,328 participants in 2024 → 26,424 in 2025 (+2,096, +8.6%)

- MOEL has designated additional Middle-aged and Older Tomorrow Centers* and established dedicated middle-aged and senior service windows within employment centers,

* ▲(Middle-aged and Older Tomorrow Centers) 38 in 2025 → 40 in 2026 (+2) ▲(Dedicated windows) 61 → 71 (+10) ▲(Consultants) 322 → 334 (+12), with expansion completed by April 2026

- and through Regional Middle-Aged and Senior Employment Networks*, MOEL has provided a comprehensive re-employment support package ("Middle-Aged and Senior Job Package") covering everything from identifying suitable jobs for middle-aged and older workers to lifetime career design, training and work experience, and job placement.

* (Regional Middle-Aged and Senior Employment Networks) Integrate and link employment centers with Tomorrow Centers, involve related institutions, 15 pilot network operating centers selected in 2025 → target of 40 in 2026

- In addition, MOEL has developed measures to improve re-employment support services so that employees can prepare for and manage their own job transitions, and has encouraged companies to provide re-employment support services through corporate consulting and career design support for employees.

* Since 2020, companies with 1,000 or more employees have been required to provide re-employment support services to employees aged 50 and over who are due to retire (1,041 companies in 2022 → 1,053 in 2023 → 1,080 in 2024)

** ▲ Corporate consulting: 360 companies in 2024 → 252 in 2025 → target of 300 in 2026
▲ Career design for employees: 966 persons in 2025 → target of 950 in 2026

- MOEL has supported social dialogue and voluntary adoption of measures such as a phased extension of the retirement age to create conditions for continued employment for those in their 60s and older.

- To encourage labor and management to voluntarily adopt continued-employment systems such as retirement age extension through mutual cooperation, MOEL has eased the requirements for the continued employment incentive and continued to expand its support level.*

*(2025) Recognized additional adoption of continued employment systems, included employees hired after the system's effective date as eligible for support, and rationalized re-hiring criteria, among other improvements
(2026) Raised the continued employment incentive for companies outside the Seoul metropolitan area (from KRW 300,000 to KRW 400,000 per person per month)

- MOEL has also strengthened publicity efforts around successful re-employment stories among workers in their 50s and 60s from the second baby-boomer generation, including by supporting production of the EBS documentary "The Era of Lifelong Active Worker", which features successful re-employment cases, and by producing influencer content spotlighting companies recognized for excellence in senior employment.

- Through the "Special Committee on Retirement Age Extension for Recovery and Growth" (since April 2025), which brings together labor, management, young people, and experts, MOEL has continued social dialogue on a phased extension of the retirement age, and plans to develop measures to support intergenerational win-win employment.

7) Employment Policy for People with Disabilities

- As of May 2025, the employment rate for people with disabilities (aged 15–64) stood at 48.3%, lower than the United Kingdom (52.8%, ages 16–64, 2025) but higher than the United States (37.4%, ages 16–64, 2025).

- The 2026 budget was increased by 8.2% year-on-year, with the disability budget exceeding KRW 1 trillion for the first time (KRW 1,013.7 billion), and the mandatory employment rate for the private sector was raised (from 3.1% to 3.5%) to expand job opportunities for people with disabilities. Alongside the higher mandatory rate, MOEL is also providing employment support in the form of assistance for employers and strengthened working conditions for employees.

- MOEL has eased the burden on companies by improving the basis for calculating late-payment charges on the employment levy (from a monthly to a daily basis) and expanding installment payments for SMEs. MOEL has also introduced an employment improvement

incentive that provides financial incentives to SMEs that fail to meet their employment obligations, encouraging them to hire people with severe disabilities.

- To support compliance with the mandatory employment obligation for people with disabilities, MOEL provides employment consulting to public institutions and large companies with low disability employment rates, and has developed and disseminated 40 jobs suited to people with disabilities, centered on future strategic sectors such as digital, AI, and green industries. MOEL has also rationalized the requirements for establishing standard workplaces operated as subsidiaries, allowing joint investment among affiliated companies, for companies with low disability employment rates.

- MOEL has also strengthened individualized, customized employment support for people with disabilities, and raised the job-seeking promotion allowance (from KRW 500,000 to KRW 600,000 per month, for up to 6 months) to support active job-seeking by low-income people with disabilities. In addition, MOEL has pursued phased AI training (for 3,600 people) to support people with disabilities in entering new job fields amid the development of AI technology, and training for employed workers with developmental disabilities (400 people) to encourage stable, long-term employment.

- In addition, to help workers with severe disabilities maintain stable working lives, MOEL is phasing in an expansion of job assistant support, and is working to create a more accessible working environment for people with disabilities, including by expanding eligibility for commuting cost support (from 13,000 to 15,000 people).

8) Sustainable Social Enterprise Development Policy

- Since the enactment of the Social Enterprise Promotion Act in 2007, social enterprises have achieved sustained quantitative growth through government-led expansion of support for their development and growth. However, a support structure centered on government-led, direct support has had limits in securing the sustainability of this policy.

- Accordingly, MOEL has reestablished its policy direction to ensure that social enterprises can continuously create social value and spread its benefits to local communities. While

substantially expanding the support budget, MOEL has proposed a strategy centered on value, cooperation, innovation, and sustainability.

- First, moving away from the existing uniform support approach, MOEL will pursue customized support that reflects a company's life cycle, from identify (startup support) to incubation (wage support for vulnerable groups) to growth (market access and funding support), based on social value.

- In addition, moving beyond support centered on individual social enterprises, MOEL will support cooperative ecosystems to ensure that social value spreads across the wider region. MOEL will also support social solidarity economy organizations, including social enterprises, in building cooperative ecosystems with diverse local actors, such as local governments, private institutions, and civil society, so that they can define and solve challenges facing their communities, such as jobs for vulnerable groups and caregiving. MOEL will also pilot a project that measures the social value created by social enterprises in monetary terms and provides incentives proportional to their performance.

- In addition, MOEL will transform its support system into a balanced public-private cooperation framework, while pursuing legal and institutional improvements as well as stronger publicity and education to ensure that social enterprises can continue to create social value.



2 Protecting Working Conditions and Improving Employment Practices

- The Korean Labor Standards Act establishes minimum standards for working conditions, including wages, working hours, holidays, and leave, to guarantee and improve workers' basic standard of living. Working conditions may not fall below the minimum standards prescribed in the Labor Standards Act, and any part of an employment contract that sets working conditions below these minimum standards is invalid to that extent.

- MOEL also operates a minimum wage system to guarantee a minimum wage level, thereby promoting workers' living stability and improving the quality of the workforce. Following deliberation by the Minimum Wage Council, the minimum wage to apply from January 1 of the following year is determined by August 5 of each year; the minimum wage applicable in 2026 is KRW 10,320 per hour. MOEL works to foster a culture of minimum wage compliance on the ground through publicity and workplace guidance and supervision.

- MOEL convened a “Government-Wide Task Force to Eradicate Wage Arrears” to discuss goals and comprehensive measures for eliminating wage arrears together with relevant ministries, and announced “Measures to Eradicate Wage Arrears” on September 2, 2025. Since October 23, 2025, MOEL has strengthened economic sanctions, such as credit sanctions, restrictions on government subsidies and support, and disadvantages in public procurement bidding, for employers designated as habitual wage-arrears offenders, and has completed revisions to administrative rules to ensure consistent enforcement.

- To ensure on-the-ground compliance with working-conditions standards and realize a just labor society, MOEL is conducting effective labor inspections to protect vulnerable workers and more effectively prevent harm such as wage arrears.

- With respect to establishing basic labor order, MOEL has conducted intensive inspections of workplaces with repeated or habitual wage arrears, and has focused on spreading a culture of compliance with basic labor order through labor inspections centered on prior

guidance and voluntary correction at small and micro workplaces (16,530 workplaces as of December 2025).

- In addition, for workplaces with fewer than 30 employees and other vulnerable sectors with weak labor management practices, MOEL supports employers in voluntarily checking and improving their labor management practices with the help of labor management experts such as certified public labor attorneys, prior to workplace inspections conducted by labor inspectors, while also providing training on key labor laws and consulting support to micro employers.

* ▲ Voluntary improvement support (workplaces): 8,468 (2021) → 8,487 (2022) → 8,985 (2023) → 7,691 (2024) → 7,297 (2025)

▲ Consulting for vulnerable sectors (workplaces): 500 (2021) → 300 (2022) → 300 (2023) → 400(2024) → 400 (2025)

Improving the Quality of employment and labor Services through AI

- MOEL is progressively building labor administration services that use generative AI, including AI labor law consultation, self-check AI, and an AI labor inspection assistant, to establish a culture of compliance with labor law and better protect vulnerable workers.

- The AI Labor Law Consultation service is a customized digital administrative service that allows anyone to receive guidance on labor-related laws and systems anytime, anywhere. To enhance the reliability of the service, 173 certified public labor attorneys participated in training and verifying the AI to ensure accuracy, and the service has also been made available as a smartphone app to improve public accessibility.

- The service currently supports 34 languages and was used 117,000 times in 2025. It has been shown to reduce the time citizens spend searching for labor law information by 87.5%, and recorded positive responses* in a public satisfaction survey.

* Public satisfaction survey (Nov. 17–Dec. 12, 2025; 669 respondents): Very satisfied (33%), Satisfied (34%), etc.

- The Self-Check AI is a service that helps individuals and workplaces check and improve potential industrial accident risk factors and possible violations of labor-related laws on their own. Built in-house using an AI coding agent, the service analyzes on-site photos or HR/labor-related documents submitted by users to identify industrial safety risk factors and propose necessary corrective actions, and provides guidance on possible legal violations and needed improvements.

- The AI Labor Inspection Assistant is an administrative support service that, within a secure internal work environment, supports the analysis of data containing personal information and the drafting of documents. By having AI assist with repetitive, time-consuming tasks, the service allows personnel to focus more on higher-value work such as reviewing results, responding on-site, and making ethical judgments, thereby enhancing the expertise and efficiency of on-the-ground administration.

- MOEL is also strengthening the protection of working conditions for non-regular employees (8.568 million as of August 2025, or 38.2% of all wage workers) under the Act on the Protection of Fixed-Term and Part-Time Employees and the Act on the Protection of Temporary Agency Workers.

  * (Fixed-term) 2-year limit on employment period; (part-time) premium pay for work exceeding contracted working hours; (temporary agency) restrictions on the types of work eligible for dispatch and on the dispatch period

  - Accordingly, MOEL conducts workplace guidance and inspections to protect the working conditions of non-regular employees, and takes corrective action, such as orders for direct employment, when illegal dispatch is found.

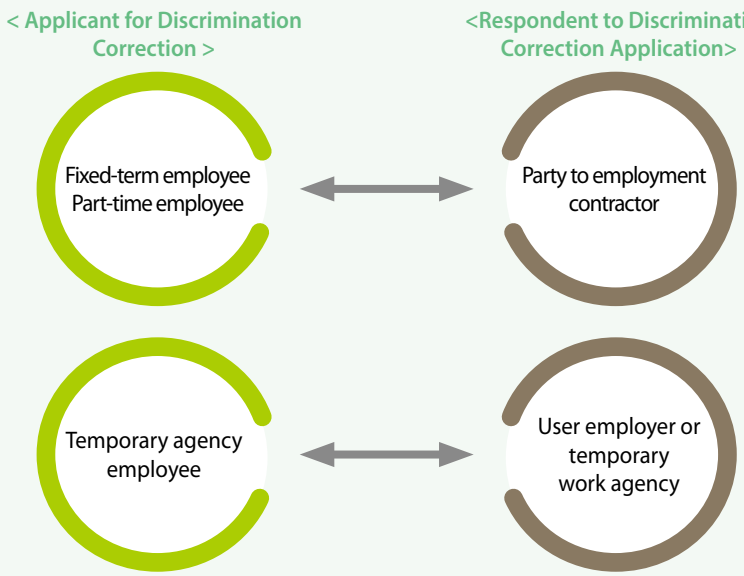
- In particular, MOEL operates a discrimination remedy system and provides education, counseling, and consulting to eliminate discrimination between regular and non-regular employees.

  - MOEL has also developed guidelines for preventing discrimination and encouraging voluntary improvement, in order to foster a fair labor market and support workplaces in voluntarily addressing employment-related discrimination.

Discrimination Correction System for Non-Regular Workers

- With respect to wages, regular bonuses, performance-based bonuses, and other matters relating to working conditions and welfare benefits, non-regular employees performing the same or similar work may not be treated less favorably than comparable regular workers without reasonable justification.
- A non-regular employee who has experienced discriminatory treatment may apply for a discrimination correction order within six months of the date the discriminatory treatment occurred (or, for continuing discriminatory treatment, within six months of the date it ended).
- The cases are handled by the Regional Labor Relations Commission or the regional employment and labor office having jurisdiction over the location of the workplace where the discriminatory treatment occurred.
  - If a party involved disagrees with a corrective order or dismissal decision issued by the Regional Labor Relations Commission, that party may apply for a review by the National Labor Relations Commission; if the party disagrees with the outcome of that review, it may file an administrative lawsuit.

* Where an application for discrimination correction has been filed with a regional labor office, if the respondent fails to comply with a labor inspector's request for correction, the case is referred to the Regional Labor Relations Commission.



- To promote worker welfare, MOEL provides various forms of support, including Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), livelihood stabilization loans, and credit guarantee programs. As part of its corporate welfare initiatives, MOEL operates the Employee Stock Ownership Plan, which enables workers to acquire company shares, build assets, and promote labor-management cooperation. It also operates the Joint and Intra-Company Labor Welfare Fund Support programs, under which employers contribute a portion of their profits to fund employee welfare programs. To strengthen workers' retirement income security, MOEL operates a retirement pension system under which employers set aside funds equivalent to employees' retirement benefits with external financial institutions. These funds are paid to workers as either a pension or a lump-sum benefit upon retirement. In addition, the SME Retirement Pension Fund System was introduced in April 2022.

Livelihood Stability Loan

<Livelihood Stabilization Fund (Loan)>

- Provides low-interest livelihood stabilization loans to low-income workers, among others, to support living stability.
- **(Loan terms)** Annual interest rate of 1.5%; a 1-year grace period followed by equal installment repayment over 3 or 4 years; a maximum of KRW 20 million per person (limits vary by loan category)

(Loan categories) Medical expenses, wedding expenses, funeral expenses, elderly parent support, childcare expenses, small living expenses

<Livelihood Stabilization Fund (Loan) (Interest Subsidy)>

- Provides interest subsidies on livelihood stabilization loans to low-income workers, among others, to support living stability.
- **(Loan terms)** Subsidy of up to 3.0 percentage points off the individual's personal credit loan interest rate; a 1-year grace period followed by equal installment repayment over 3 or 4 years; a maximum of KRW 20 million per person (limits vary by loan category)

(Loan categories) Wedding expenses, childcare expenses, elderly parent support, funeral expenses

Employee Stock Ownership Plan

- Enables workers to acquire and hold shares in the company they work for through an employee stock ownership association using funds contributed by either the workers or the employer, thereby promoting asset formation, fostering cooperative labor-management relations, and enhancing corporate productivity.

Joint and Intra-Company Labor Welfare Fund Support programs

- Promotes mutually beneficial cooperation between large enterprises and SMEs while enhancing the welfare of workers in vulnerable groups by providing financial support to subcontractors through the Intra-Company Labor Welfare Funds of large enterprises (prime contractors) and by supporting Joint Labor Welfare Funds established by two or more companies, including SMEs.

Retirement Pension and SME Retirement Pension Fund System

- A retirement benefit system under which workers set aside retirement benefit funds with external financial institutions in advance to ensure that workers receive their retirement benefits securely. Benefits may be paid as either a pension or a lump sum. The system consists of the Defined Benefit, the Defined Contribution (introduced in 2005), and the SME Retirement Pension Fund System (introduced in April 2022).

Type	Defined Benefit	Defined Contribution	SME Retirement Pension Fund System
Form of payment	Pension or lump sum	Pension or lump sum	Pension or lump sum
Features	Workers' retirement benefits are predetermined, while the employer's funding obligation varies depending on the investment performance of the pension fund.	Employer's contributions are predetermined, while the worker's retirement benefits vary depending on the investment performance of the accumulated pension fund.	Employer's contribution is determined in advance, while the worker's retirement benefit varies depending on the investment performance of the fund.
Management of accumulated pension fund	Employer	Worker	Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service

3 Promoting Respect for Labor and Guaranteeing Fundamental Labor Rights

1) Reducing Actual Working Hours

- On December 30, 2025, the Actual Working Hour Reduction Roadmap Task Force, a consultative body comprising representatives of labor, management, government, and experts, announced a joint declaration and specific tasks for reducing actual working hours, with the goal of bringing Korea's annual working hours down to the OECD average level (approximately 1,700 hours) by 2030.

  * Preventing the misuse of the inclusive wage system, enacting the Act on Support for Reducing Actual Working Hours, designating Labor Day as a public holiday, and promoting the use of annual leave, etc.

- In January 2026, the Task Force was reorganized as the Actual Working Hour Reduction Roadmap Implementation Monitoring Team to monitor the progress in implementing specific tasks under the Roadmap and continue discussions on measures to reduce actual working hours.

2) Preventing the Misuse of the Inclusive Wage System

- The Government is committed to eliminating "free labor" resulting from the misuse of the inclusive wage system and fostering workplaces where workers are fairly compensated for the work they perform. To ensure appropriate compensation based on actual hours worked, the Government is pursuing amendments to the Labor Standards Act that would require employers to record and manage working hours.

- MOEL provides guidance to workplaces based on relevant guidelines and offers consulting services and electronic workforce management systems to small workplaces to help prevent the misuse of the inclusive wage system. In addition, anonymous reporting centers are linked with labor inspections to ensure strict enforcement against violations.

3) Promoting Respect for Labor by Protecting Vulnerable Workers and Fostering Mutual Growth Between Primary Contractors and Subcontractors

a. Protecting Labor Rights and Interests of "All Working People"

- Led by innovation in AI and the expansion of the platform economy, the world is undergoing a profound transformation. Korea's labor market is evolving in the same way, with new forms of employment, including platform workers and freelancers, continuing to grow rapidly. However, labor laws designed primarily for traditional forms of employment face challenges in providing protection for these emerging forms of work.

- To address these challenges, the Government is analyzing gaps in the protection provided under existing labor laws and pursuing policies to strengthen protections for workers who fall outside the current legal framework.

< Blind Spots in "Employee"-Centered Labor Law >

Type	Traditional "Employees"	"Workers in Blind Spots" (i.e., platform workers, freelancers)
Remedy for Rights Violations	Regional Employment and Labor Offices (wage arrears, unfair dismissal, etc.) Labor Relations Commission (harassment, discrimination, labor relations adjustment, etc.)	**Civil Resolution**
Social Insurance	Employment Centers, Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service (social insurance for some dependent self-employed workers)	**Private Insurance**
Employee Welfare	Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service	**Private Mutual Aid Associations**
Rights Protection	Korea Labor and Employment Service	**Limited Government-funded Projects**

- First, the Government is pursuing the enactment of the Framework Act on the Rights of Working People.

- The proposed Act aims to ensure the constitutional fundamental labor rights of all working people, regardless of their employment status or working arrangements.

- The Act would apply to all working people, including platform workers and freelancers, rather than being limited to employees. It defines the responsibilities and obligations of the State and employers to protect workers' rights to fair contracts, safe and healthy working environments, and freedom from sexual harassment and workplace bullying.

- The bill is currently pending before the Climate, Energy, Environment and Labor Committee of the National Assembly, with substantive deliberations expected to take place in the second half of 2026.

- Second, the Government is promoting programs to protect the rights and enhance the welfare of workers engaged in new forms of employment through a range of government-funded initiatives.

- For rights protection, initiatives include developing and disseminating standard contracts, providing government-funded legal assistance to freelancers seeking unpaid remuneration, and offering legal support through employment and labor offices.

- For welfare protection, initiatives include establishing rest facilities for mobile workers, providing drinking water during the summer and cold-weather protective gear during the winter, and operating shared laundry facilities, among other support measures.

b. Improving Working Conditions for Non-Regular Workers in the Public Sector

- As an exemplary employer, the Government is taking the lead in improving the working conditions of workers in the public sector.

- To this end, the Public Sector Workers Committee was established through legislation (effective September 2026), providing a formal framework for systematically discussing and promoting improvements in the working conditions of non-regular workers in the public sector.

- Furthermore, on April 28, 2026, the Government announced the Measures for Improving Working Conditions of Non-Regular Workers in the Public Sector. The Measures introduce a fair compensation system that appropriately reflects the value of work performed and employment insecurity, with the aim of improving the working conditions of non-regular workers and reducing disparities.

c. Expanding Industry-and Region-Specific Win-Win Models Between Primary Contractors and Subcontractors

- The Government has proposed a new win-win paradigm by providing financial and administrative support to primary contractors and subcontractors that voluntarily work together in solidarity to develop mutually beneficial solutions.

- Through the Shipbuilding Industry Win-Win Cooperation Council, meaningful progress has been made in narrowing welfare gaps between primary contractors and subcontractors and strengthening employment security for subcontracted workers. Key achievements include higher wage growth for subcontracted workers, the introduction of escrow accounts, the establishment of mutual aid funds for new employees, and the expansion of joint employee welfare funds.

- Building on the 2024 Shipbuilding Industry Win-Win Agreement, efforts to conclude and implement win-win agreements between primary contractors and subcontractors have expanded to additional industries and regions.

  * **[By Industry]** Automotive (Apr 2024), Petrochemicals (Jun 2024)
    [By Region] Gyeongnam - Aerospace (Jul 2024), Chungbuk - Food (Sep 2024),
    Incheon - Petrochemicals (Aug 2025), Gyeongbuk - Automotive (Sep 2025)

- In 2026, the Government expanded the support ceiling for matching contributions by primary contractors and subcontractors and developed new win-win models across nine regional and industry sectors, including shipbuilding, cement, defense, and hotels and resorts, to promote the wider adoption of mutually beneficial cooperation throughout diverse industries and regions.

d. Improving a Rational Job-Based Wage System

- The Government is promoting the transition to a fair and rational job-based wage system in response to changes in the labor market, including low birth rates, population aging, and slower economic growth.

- To provide wage and occupational information necessary for wage system reform, the Government established the Wage and Job Portal (wagework.go.kr).* The portal provides annual wage distribution data by company size, industry, occupation, work experience, age, gender, educational attainment, and years of service.

  * The portal integrates wage and occupational information that was previously provided through separate systems. The Government plans to expand the scope of wage information in phases, moving from the current medium- and small-group occupational classifications to more detailed occupational classifications.

- The Government also provides support for SMEs in introducing fair and rational job-based wage systems, particularly those that lack established wage systems or the capacity to develop them independently.

  - Since 2024, the Government has operated support programs to promote the introduction and dissemination of industry-specific wage systems with the aim of establishing rational job-based wage systems across industries.

4) Full-Scale Resumption of Social Dialogue

- The Government worked to create the conditions necessary for fostering social dialogue by convening a meeting chaired by the President with the leaders of the two major national labor confederations, followed by visits to both confederations in September 2025 and a meeting with the Korea Federation of Micro Enterprise (KFME) in November 2025.

  - In February 2026, a deputy representative-level labor-management consultative body was launched, establishing a regular communication channel and building a foundation of

trust to support the development of practical and broadly supported labor policies.

- In addition, efforts were made to restore social dialogue through the Economic, Social and Labor Council (ESLC) by promoting agenda-setting discussions and building public consensus. Key initiatives included a joint labor–management–government workshop in January 2026 and meetings of the Agenda Development Subcommittee and the Operating Committee in February 2026.

- Building on these full-scale discussions among labor, management, government, a plenary session of the ESLC was held on March 19, 2026. At the session, the participants agreed to adopt a joint tripartite declaration and launch one Special Committee on Public Dialogue, five agenda-specific committees (including occupational safety, employment, etc.), one industry-specific committee (petrochemicals), four research groups (including real income improvement and K-culture), and one forum (shipbuilding), marking a significant milestone in the full-scale resumption of social dialogue.

5) Supporting Social Dialogue at the Regional Level

- The Government supports regional social dialogue involving representatives of labor, management, civil society, and local governments to discuss and resolve local labor and social issues. These efforts contribute to regional economic development, stable labor-management relations, and the revitalization of local labor markets.

- In 2026, the Government is supporting social dialogue initiatives in 57 local governments to address national policy priorities, including narrowing workplace safety gaps, eliminating "free labor," and reducing actual working hours, as well as issues reflecting regional characteristics and needs.

4 A Country Where All Working People are Healthy and Safe

1) Announcement of the Comprehensive Measures for Labor Safety

- In Korea, traditional types of industrial accidents, such as falls, entanglements, and collisions, continue to occur repeatedly across workplaces. Under the guiding principle of "No Compromise on Safety," the Government announced the "Comprehensive Measures for Labor Safety" on September 15, 2025. Led by MOEL as a control tower and coordinated among relevant ministries, the Measures aim to identify and improve fundamental, as well as structural causes.

- To ensure the seamless implementation of the Measures, the Government allocated KRW 1.6 trillion, the largest-ever budget for industrial accident prevention and compensation, in 2026. The budget has been used to provide proactive support for small workplaces through facility improvements and technical assistance. In addition, legislative efforts have been advanced to strengthen workers' rights as the subject of industrial accident prevention and to address gaps in workplace risk management, thereby establishing a foundation for reducing serious industrial accidents.

2) Industrial Accident Prevention Through Specialized Occupational Safety and Health Administration

- In July 2025, immediately following the appointment of the Minister of Employment and Labor, the Safe Workplace Project was launched under the Minister's leadership. As part of the initiative, the Minister visited high-risk workplaces for inspection. In addition, occupational safety and health inspectors nationwide conducted unannounced inspections at about 16,000 high-risk workplaces. As a result, 25,000 workplace hazards were addressed and improved at 7,000 workplaces.

- In October 2025, the Government Organization Act was amended to ensure more thorough administration for labor safety by elevating the Occupational Safety and Health Deputy Minister position to the Vice Minister level. Also, the organizational capacity of regional employment offices was expanded, and the number of occupational safety and health inspectors was increased by 1,200 from 895 in 2025 to 2,095 in 2026.

- Building on these efforts, the number of workplaces subject to occupational safety and health inspections increased significantly from 24,000 to 50,000. When violations are identified, a zero-tolerance policy is applied, with strict administrative and judicial proceedings.

3) Strengthening Cooperation With Local Governments and the Private Sector to Address Risk Gaps Across Small Workplaces

- To address risk gaps at workplaces, MOEL has prioritized the allocation of industrial accident prevention resources since 2025. In 2026, for the first time, KRW 43.3 billion was allocated exclusively to support workplaces with fewer than 10 employees, helping them improve hazardous and dangerous facilities and equipment.

- In 2026, MOEL launched the Regional Project for Closing Gaps in Industrial Accident Prevention with a budget of KRW 14.3 billion. Under this project, local governments receive full government funding to plan and implement industrial accident prevention programs tailored to regional industrial characteristics and workplace risk profiles. In addition, 932 Safe Workplace Guardians were recruited and appointed from among experienced private-sector professionals to support workplace safety management and conduct regular patrol inspections at small workplaces.

- On July 17, 2025, the Rules on Occupational Safety and Health Standards were amended and entered into force, establishing five basic rules for safe work during heatwaves. The amended Rules require “at least 20 minutes of rest every two hours during heatwaves,” a key measure for preventing heat-related illnesses and strengthening workers’ rights to health.

- Furthermore, MOEL is preparing to introduce economic sanctions (i.e., administrative fines) for workplaces with multiple or repeated fatal industrial accidents. MOEL is also expanding capacity-building programs for occupational safety and health inspectors and accident investigation organizational capacity to enable prompt and rigorous investigations of serious industrial accidents.

4) Establishing a Safe Workplace with Labor and Management

- Effectively reducing serious accidents requires ensuring workers' rights to information, participation, and the right to refuse dangerous work, as workers are most familiar with the risks present at their workplaces.

- To this end, MOEL amended and promulgated the Occupational Safety and Health Act on February 19, 2026, introducing the Occupational Safety and Health Disclosure System. Under the amended Act, companies are required to disclose information on their industrial accident records and OSH activities, while Accident Investigation Reports, including the causes of accidents and measures to prevent recurrence, must also be made publicly available.

- Furthermore, new provisions introducing sanctions for non-compliance with risk assessment requirements were established, providing institutional framework necessary to strengthen industrial accident prevention. Following consultations with labor, management, and relevant experts, the regulations also enable on-site workers to be appointed as honorary occupational safety and health inspectors.

- In addition, MOEL is pursuing legislative amendments to expand workers' right to suspend work in dangerous situations, thereby strengthening their right to safely avoid hazardous work.

5) Innovating the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance System, Including Faster Claims Processing

- On September 1, 2025, MOEL announced the Measures to Reduce the Processing Time for Occupational Disease Claims, with the goal of reducing the average processing period from 228 days to 120 days by 2027.

- To address delays in processing industrial accident compensation claims caused by unnecessary administrative procedures, MOEL introduced the principle of presumption for diseases and occupations with a high likelihood of work-relatedness. Under this principle, a disease is presumed to be work-related in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, thereby streamlining the industrial accident recognition procedures.

- Furthermore, MOEL is pursuing the introduction of an advanced compensation system under which partial insurance benefits are paid in advance when the processing of a claim exceeds the statutory accident investigation period. MOEL is also introducing a public defender system that provides free legal assistance from attorneys and labor attorneys to workers who face difficulties in filing and pursuing workers' compensation claims.

- Beginning in March 2026, MOEL established the "Comprehensive Support Team for Industrial Accidents, Compensation, and Return to Work," comprising primarily specialists in occupational and environmental medicine and legal experts. The Team is responsible for advancing institutional reforms to facilitate the rehabilitation and successful social integration of workers who have suffered industrial accidents.

6) Protecting Working People from Emerging Risks

- MOEL is strengthening the framework for protecting the health of workers engaged in night-time and holiday delivery services. In 2025, MOEL provided financial support for health examinations for dependent self-employed workers, including delivery drivers, who are at high risk of developing cerebrovascular and cardiovascular diseases due to night work. In addition, MOEL conducted inspections to assess employers' implementation of protective measures for emotional labor workers, including call center employees.

Guidance was also provided on health protection measures, such as posting audio and written notices prohibiting abusive language by customers and establishing customer service manuals.

- A nationwide network of 24 Occupational Trauma Centers is in operation to provide psychological counseling to workers experiencing mental distress resulting from witnessing industrial accidents or being subjected to workplace bullying.

- Going forward, MOEL will continue to expand the scope of legal protection for dependent self-employed workers who remain outside the coverage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act.



5 Promoting International Labor Cooperation

- International cooperation in the fields of employment and labor encompasses a wide range of activities, including exchanges with foreign governments and international organizations, official development assistance (ODA) for developing countries, the negotiation and implementation of FTAs, support for foreign-invested companies and Korean companies expanding overseas, and measures to assist businesses through the employment of foreign workers.

- Korea is committed to complying with international labor standards by faithfully implementing ILO Conventions and Recommendations, while upholding and promoting labor rights. Furthermore, through the Korea-ILO Partnership Programme, Korea supports capacity-building in developing countries in the areas of employment and labor, thereby fulfilling its role as a responsible member of the international society.

- In addition, the Korean government has ratified three fundamental ILO Conventions to align with international labor standards (Convention Nos 87 and 98 on freedom of association, and Convention No. 29 on forced labor). The three conventions took effect in April 2022 and have the same legal status as domestic laws under Article 6(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea.

- In response to the evolving global employment crisis, there has been a growing need for policy coordination and exchanges in employment and labor. Korea is actively participating in international conferences such as the ILO, OECD, G20, and APEC, where it shares its successful policy cases and fosters opportunities for policy exchanges and cooperation with other countries.

- MOEL also actively participates in discussions on labor standards and employment issues in the context of international economic and trade relations, including FTAs and the UN. Korea's FTAs with major trading partners include dedicated labor chapters that promote internationally recognized labor rights and strengthen international cooperation on labor issues.

- Korea has significantly expanded its ODA efforts, increasing its total budget from 1.3487 trillion won in 2010 to 6.5 trillion won in 2025. To ensure effective implementation, the Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC), chaired by the prime minister, has been systemized and aligned with major diplomatic policies. In line with these efforts, MOEL has strengthened its ODA projects to share Korea's policy models and experiences in development employment and labor systems with developing countries.

- ODA projects in employment and labor are divided into bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects. Bilateral cooperation projects at MOEL include "policy consultation project," "vocational training capacity-building project," and "occupational safety and health capacity-building project." Multilateral cooperation projects at MOEL includes Korea-ILO Partnership Programme and others.

  - Among the bilateral cooperation projects, the "Policy Consultation Project for Developing Countries" was launched in 2012 with a goal to assist partner countries in building and improving their laws and systems by sharing Korea's experiences in employment and labor policies. A public-private joint advisory group, composed of experienced policy experts, carries out these consultations through seminars, workshops, and expert dispatches. The project has provided policy consultation in areas such as vocational skills development, employment services, and occupational safety and health to ten countries, including Vietnam, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, and Peru.

- Furthermore, the Vocational Training Capacity-Building Project, one of Korea's traditional areas of strength, shares Korea's experiences and expertise in advancing vocational training with developing countries, supporting the development of vocational training systems and cultivation of a skilled workforce. The OSH Capacity-Building Project also contributes to strengthening safety and health awareness and promoting safer workplaces in developing countries.

- Among the multilateral cooperation projects, the Korea-ILO Partnership Programme aims to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to implement international labor standards and create decent jobs through improved policies and systems. This program supports the development of social safety nets in areas such as labor administration, occupational safety, and social insurance. It also responds to cooperation requests from developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region, sharing Korea's expertise and knowledge in advanced human resources development.

- To address labor shortages while protecting the domestic labor market, the Government has operated the Employment Permit System (EPS) for foreign workers since August 2004.

  - In 2025, the quota for E-9 foreign workers was set at 130,000 based on labor market demand and the economic outlook. In addition, the scope of the EPS for the service sector was expanded by relaxing eligibility requirements, including the addition of "restaurant servers" as an eligible occupation to better reflect actual workforce needs.

- Furthermore, as the number of foreign workers in Korea has reached 1.1 million, MOEL has strengthened its efforts to protect their rights and interests. MOEL provides pre-departure and post-arrival education and vocational training, including instruction on Korean culture and labor-related laws and regulations. In addition, employment and labor offices nationwide provide multilingual counseling services for foreign workers. MOEL also conducts workplace guidance and inspections to ensure appropriate working conditions and to safeguard the rights and interests of foreign workers.

Employment Permit System (EPS)

- A system that allows small and medium-sized enterprises that cannot recruit domestic workers to lawfully employ non-professional foreign workers by receiving employment permits from the government
- Introduction of general foreign workers – Employment Permit System (E-9)

Korean language proficiency test, listing up job seekers (sending country ↔ HRD Korea) → Employment permits issued to employers (Ministry of Employment and Labor) → Employment contract (Employer ↔ Foreign worker) → Issuance of visas and entry into Korea (Ministry of Justice) → Assigned to business sites after employment training

* Foreign workers are not allowed to transfer to a different category of business. Transfer between different business sites is only allowed as per the reasons specified under the relevant law, up to three times over the first three years and twice over one year and ten months upon re-employment (transfers attributable to employers, e.g. due to business shutdown or closure not included)

- Employment of overseas Koreans – Working Visit System (H-2)

Issuance of visas and entry into Korea (Ministry of Justice) → Vocational training and registration as job seekers (HRD Korea, Ministry of Employment and Labor) → Issuance of special employment allowance certificates (Ministry of Employment and Labor) → Employment contract (autonomous job seeking or job placement) → Report of start of work/ employment (Ministry of Employment and Labor, Ministry of Justice)

* Overseas Koreans can be employed after entry into Korea and can freely change industries and businesses.

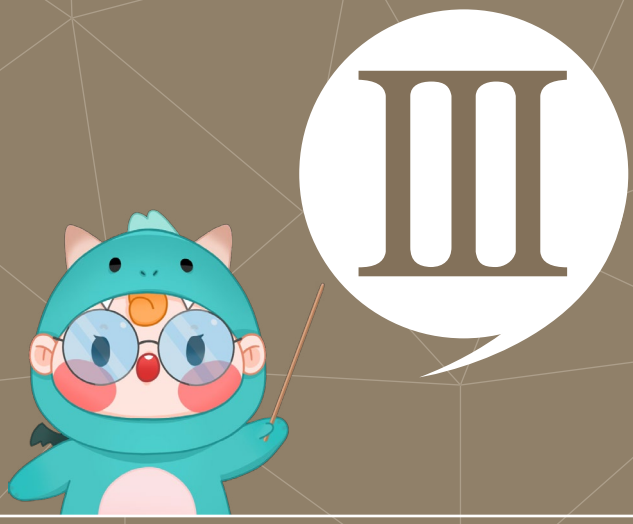
Support for Foreign Workers's Stay in Korea

- Consultation services are provided for grievances of foreign workers who entered Korea under the Employment Permit System (under E-9 visa) and visiting overseas Koreans (H-2 visa), and support for their stay in Korea is provided, e.g. through education of the Korean language and legal knowledge for everyday life.

- **Foreign Workforce Consultation Center:** Prompt grievance resolution through calls (contact for the call center: 1577-0071).
- **Employer Training:** Workers who transferred to a different business encouraged to work for a longer term, support for conflict resolution with employers, education for enhanced awareness for management of foreign workers provided, etc.
- **Vocational Skills Development Training for Existing Workers:** Support provided to help adaptation of currently employed foreign workers to business sites and vocational skills development training provided to support enhanced productivity of businesses.
- **Foreign Workers Support Center:** Operate 19 centers nationwide to provide residency support services, such as region-specific training and grievance counseling.



2026 Employment and Labor Policy in KOREA



III

Appendix

1 Labor Laws

Laws under the rule of MOEL: 50 in total

Area	Title of Law
Employment Policy	Framework Act on Employment Policy
	Act on the Employment Improvement of Construction Workers
	Act on Responses to and Support for Changes in Trade Environment
	Employment Insurance Act
	Act on the Collection, etc. of Premiums for Employment Insurance and Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance
	Special Act on the Promotion of Youth Employment
	Act on the Employment of Foreign Workers
	Employment Security Act
	Social Enterprise Promotion Act
	Act on the Promotion of Economic Activities and Prevention of Career Interruption of Women
	Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act
	Act on Prohibition of Age Discrimination in Employment and Elderly Employment Promotion
	Act on the Employment Promotion and Vocational Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities
	Fair Hiring Procedure Act
	Act on Special Measures for Promotion of Reporting of Employment Insurance and Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance Contractual Relationship Establishment
	Act on the Encouragement of Employment of Job Seekers and the Support of Their Livelihood Stability
	Act on the Employment Improvement of Domestic Workers
	Act on Employment Security Support following Industrial Transformation
	Act on Assistance to and Commemorative Programs for Miners, Nurses and Practical Nurses Sent to Germany
Skills Development	Vocational Education and Training Promotion Act
	National Technical Qualification Act
	Act on Encouragement of Skilled Crafts
	Framework Act on Qualifications
	National Lifelong Vocational Skills Development Act
	Human Resources Development Service of Korea Act
	Act on Work-Study Combination at Industrial Sites



Area	Title of Law
Labor Standards	Labor Standards Act
	Certified Public Labor Attorney Act
	Act on the Guarantee of Employees' Retirement Benefits
	Framework Act on Labor Welfare
	Wage Claim Guarantee Act
	Minimum Wage Act
	Act on the Protection of Fixed-Term and Part-Time Employees
	Act on the Protection, etc. of Temporary Agency Workers
	Act on Designation of Essential Work and Protection and Support for Essential Workers
	Act on Public Holidays
Labor Relations	Economic and Social Development Commission Act
	Act on the Designation of Labor Day
	Act on the Promotion of Employees' Participation and Cooperation
	Act on Support for the Improvement in Labor-Management Relations
	Labor Relations Commission Act
	Trade Union and Labor Relations Adjustment Act
	Act on the Establishment and Operation of Public Officials' Labor Unions
	Act on the Establishment, Operation, etc. of Teachers' Unions
	Korea Employment and Labor Education Institute Act
Occupational Safety & Health	Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance Act
	Occupational Safety and Health Act
	Act on the Prevention of Pneumoconiosis and Protection of Workers Suffering from Pneumoconiosis
	Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency Act
	Serious Accidents Punishment Act

2 Major Statistics

1) Employment Trend

* Source: Statistics Korea (http://kostat.go.kr) [Economically Active Population Survey]

Overall

(Unit: 1,000 persons, %(Compared to the previous year))

	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
Aged 15 and older (+/-)	44,182 (252)	44,504 (322)	44,785 (281)	45,080 (295)	45,260 (180)	45,407 (147)	45,570 (163)	45,762 (192)
Economically Active Population	27,895	28,186	28,012	28,310	28,922	29,203	29,399	29,599
Employed (+/-)	**26,822 (97)**	**27,123 (301)**	**26,904 (-218)**	**27,273 (369)**	**28,089 (816)**	**28.416 (327)**	**28,576 (160)**	**28,769 (193)**
Unemployed (+/-)	1,073 (50)	1,063 (-10)	1,108 (45)	1,037 (-71)	833 (-205)	787 (-46)	823 (36)	830 (7)
Economically Inactive Population	16,287	16,318	16,773	16,770	16,339	16,204	16,172	16,164
Labor Force Participation Rate(%)	63.1	63.3	62.5	62.8	63.9	64.3	64.5	64.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.8	3.8	4.0	3.7	2.9	2.7	2.8	2.8
Employment Rate(%)	**60.7**	**60.9**	**60.1**	**60.5**	**62.1**	**62.6**	**62.7**	**62.9**

Men

(Unit: 1,000 persons(Compared to the previous year))

	'24					'25					'26
		1/4	2/4	3/4	4/4		1/4	2/4	3/4	4/4	1/4
Aged 15 and older (+/-)	22,459 (97)	22,433 (99)	22,441 (96)	22,467 (103)	22,496 (92)	22,575 (115)	22,539 (105)	22,557 (116)	22,579 (112)	22,624 (128)	22,687 (149)
Economically Active Population	16,375	16,270	16,539	16,368	16,325	16,408	16,239	16,563	16,433	16,398	16,301
Employed (+/-)	**15,924 (-29)**	**15,753 (61)**	**16,033 (-23)**	**16,006 (-61)**	**15,903 (-91)**	**15,943 (20)**	**15,721 (-32)**	**16,062 (30)**	**16,041 (35)**	**15,949 (46)**	**15,762 (41)**
Unemployed (+/-)	452 (18)	517 (31)	506 (56)	361 (-22)	422 (7)	465 (13)	518 (1)	501 (-6)	392 (30)	449 (27)	539 (21)
Economically Inactive Population	6,084	6,164	5,902	6,099	6,171	6,167	6,300	5,994	6,146	6,226	6,386
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	72.9	72.5	73.7	72.9	72.6	72.7	72.1	73.4	72.8	72.5	71.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	2.8	3.2	3.1	2.2	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.0	2.4	2.7	3.3
Employment Rate (%)	70.9	70.2	71.4	71.2	70.7	70.6	69.8	71.2	71.0	70.5	69.5

Women

(Unit: 1,000 persons, %(Compared to the previous year))

	'24					'25					'26
		1/4	2/4	3/4	4/4		1/4	2/4	3/4	4/4	1/4
Aged 15 and older (+/-)	23,111 (66)	23,089 (66)	23,103 (70)	23,118 (68)	23,134 (60)	23,188 (77)	23,154 (64)	23,176 (72)	23,199 (81)	23,223 (89)	23,248 (95)
Economically Active Population	13,023	12,750	13,175	13,107	13,061	13,191	12,957	13,327	13,268	13,212	13,126
Employed (+/-)	**12,652 (188)**	**12,308 (233)**	**12,806 (169)**	**12,827 (207)**	**12,667 (143)**	**12,826 (174)**	**12,494 (186)**	**12,984 (178)**	**13,009 (182)**	**12,816 (149)**	**12,636 (142)**
Unemployed (+/-)	371 (18)	442 (11)	369 (20)	280 (-18)	394 (60)	365 (-6)	462 (20)	343 (-26)	259 (-21)	396 (3)	490 (28)
Economically Inactive Population	10,088	10,339	9,929	10,011	10,073	9,997	10,197	9,849	9,931	10,011	10,122
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	56.3	55.2	57.0	56.7	56.5	56.9	56.0	57.5	57.2	56.9	56.5
Unemployment Rate (%)	2.9	3.5	2.8	2.1	3.0	2.8	3.6	2.6	2.0	3.0	3.7
Employment Rate (%)	54.7	53.3	55.4	55.5	54.8	55.3	54.0	56.0	56.1	55.2	54.4

Youth (Aged 15~29)

(Unit: 1,000 persons, %(Compared to the previous year))

	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
Aged 15 and older (+/-)	9,149 (-133)	9,060 (-88)	8,911 (-149)	8,770 (-141)	8,567 (-203)	8,390 (-177)	8,152 (-238)	7,953 (-198)
Economically Active Population	4,312	4,331	4,133	4,203	4,269	4,142	3,990	3,809
Employed (+/-)	**3,904 (-3)**	**3,945 (41)**	**3,763 (-183)**	**3,877 (115)**	**3,996 (119)**	**3,899 (-98)**	**3,755 (-144)**	**3,578 (-178)**
Unemployed (+/-)	408 (-18)	386 (-22)	370 (-16)	326 (-45)	272 (-53)	243 (-30)	235 (-8)	231 (-4)
Economically Inactive Population	4,837	4,729	4,778	4,567	4,299	4,248	4,162	4,145
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	47.1	47.8	46.4	47.9	49.8	49.4	48.9	47.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	9.5	8.9	9.0	7.8	6.4	5.9	5.9	6.1
Employment Rate (%)	42.7	43.5	42.2	44.2	46.6	46.5	46.1	45.0

2) Minimum Wage

(unit: won)

Year	Minimum Wage/Hour	Daily Wage (8 hours)	Monthly Wage (40-hour work week)
2020	8,590	68,720	1,795,310
2021	8,720	69,760	1,822,480
2022	9,160	73,280	1,914,440
2023	9,620	76,960	2,010,580
2024	9,860	78,880	2,060,740
2025	10,030	80,240	2,096,270
2026	10,320	82,560	2,156,880

* Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor ((http://moel.go.kr)

3) Wage

(unit: 1,000 won)

Year	Nominal Wage	Real Wage	Consumer Price Index (unit: 2020=100)
2020	3,527	3,527	100.00
2021	3,689	3,599	102.50
2022	3,869	3,592	107.72
2023	3,966	3,554	111.59
2024	4,079	3,573	114.18
2025	4,205	3,606	116.61

* Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor [Labor force survey at establishments], Statistics Korea[Consumer Price Survey]

4) Working Hours

(unit: per month, hour)

Year	All employees				Temporary & daily employees
		Regular employees			
			Contractual hours of work	Overtimes hours	
2020	160.6	166.9	158.6	8.3	97.6
2021	160.7	167.0	158.7	8.3	99.0
2022	158.7	165.1	156.8	8.3	98.1
2023	156.2	163.6	155.6	8.0	90.0
2024	154.9	162.7	154.6	8.1	86.0
2025	153.8	161.3	153.3	8.1	84.1

* Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor [Labor force survey at establishments]

5) Labor Disputes

(unit: In case, thousand days)

Year	No. of Disputes	No. of Work Days Lost
2020	105	554
2021	119	571
2022	132	344
2023	223	355
2024	131	457
2025	123	393

* Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor

6) Industrial Accident

(unit: In person, %)

Year	No. of employees (in thousand)	No. of the injured	No. of deaths	Accident rate (%)	No. of deaths per 10,000 people
2020	18,974	108,379	2,062	0.57	1.09
2021	19,379	122,713	2,080	0.63	1.07
2022	20,174	130,348	2,223	0.65	1.10
2023	20.637	136,796	2,016	0.66	0.98
2024	21,420	142,771	2,098	0.67	0.98
2025	22,754	147,130	2,248	0.65	0.99

1) Accident rate : (no. of injured / no. of workers) X 100
2) No. of deaths per 10,000 workers : (no. of deaths / no. of workers) X 10,000
* Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor



2026

Employment and Labor Policy in Korea

Published in 2026
International Cooperation Division Ministry of
Employment and Labor, Republic of Korea

National Labor Consultation Center
Domestic 1350 (ext. 5)
Overseas +82-52-702-5089 (ext. 5)
http://www.moel.go.kr/english