

Editorial

Dear social partners and readers,

This newsletter is being released at a time when Europe faces an unprecedented crisis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, citizens are experiencing a severe public health emergency. Workers and companies have to confront its far-reaching social and economic impact.

On 13 March 2020, the Commission presented a first [response](#) to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. All available EU instruments are being mobilised to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic. To alleviate the employment impact and to protect workers from unemployment and loss of income, the Commission stands ready to support Member States, including by promoting short-time work schemes to preserve jobs and skills, as well as supporting upskilling and reskilling programmes that have proven effective in the past.

On 16 March 2020, European social partners, ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP, SMEUnited issued a **Joint Statement on the COVID-19 emergency** (see below). On 18 March, they had a video conference with Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People, Valdis Dombrovskis and Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit to discuss the crisis and policy responses. They reiterated their statements in view of the videoconference of the European Council on 26 March 2020. The Tripartite Social Summit planned for 25 was postponed.

On 2nd April 2020, the Commission adopted a **[COVID-19 - Economic package](#)**. It includes in particular (i) a new instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) that will provide up to €100 billion in loans to countries that need it to ensure that workers receive an income and businesses keep their staff; (ii) direct support to the healthcare systems of EU countries, with €3 billion from the EU budget, to fund the Emergency Support Instrument and RescEU's common stockpile of equipment; (iii) the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII) to redirect all available structural funds to responding to the coronavirus as well as to supporting farmers and fishermen, who will be the most deprived. All of these measures are based on the current EU budget and will make use of every available euro. They show the need for a strong and flexible long-term EU budget. The Commission will work to ensure that the EU can count on such a strong budget to get back on its feet and recover.

Several sectoral social partners have issued Joint Statements on COVID-19 (some reported below) and EU Member States are concluding tripartite protocols, such as in Italy.

All social partners' organisations are at the forefront, particularly within Member States, to define and implement the extraordinary measures to help enterprises and workers in facing this emergency.

With the outbreak of Covid-19, policy priorities are under a general review process.

News from the Commission

On 11 December 2019, the European Commission presented the [“European Green Deal”](#), a roadmap for making the EU’s economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all.

On 14 January 2020, in the communication [“A strong social Europe for Just Transitions”](#), the Commission invited all stakeholders, including **social partners, to present their views on further action and concrete commitments to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights**. The Commission will collect the [feedback](#) until November 2020 and will present an Action Plan in 2021. In addition, a dedicated social partner hearing is scheduled – according to the current planning - on 8 June 2020.

On 14 January 2020, the first-stage **consultation of social partners on a possible action addressing the challenges related to fair minimum wages** was also launched. The Commission is currently analysing the responses received from European social partners. A **second stage consultation** is expected to be launched (date to be decided).

On 17 January 2020, the Commission invited the social partners to present their views on the **update of the Skills Agenda**. This consultation meeting was held with a view to the announced initiative on skills, around topics: empowering workers to up/reskill, addressing skills mismatches, strengthening collective leadership, and modernising Vocational Education and Training. European social partners have been also invited to send written contributions.

On 19 February 2020, the European Commission unveiled its ideas and actions for a [digital transformation that works for all](#), reflecting the best of Europe: open, fair, diverse, democratic and confident. The European data strategy and the policy options to ensure the human-centric development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presented are the first steps towards achieving these goals.

On 20 February 2020, the social partners dedicated hearing took place on **reinforcing the Youth Guarantee**. Social partners provided their views on how to better support employability of young people in rural areas, how to provide young people with digital and green skills, and how social partners will contribute to the effective implementation of a reinforced Youth Guarantee.



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On 5 March 2020, the Commission adopted the [2020-2025 Strategy for equality between women and men in Europe](#). A [targeted consultation](#) of social partners on binding pay transparency measures aimed was launched (deadline: 14 May) to improve the enforcement of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women in the EU. The result of this targeted consultation will feed into the preparation of the Commission's initiative. A dedicated hearing with social partners is, according to the current schedule, also planned on 25 June 2020.

On 10 March 2020, the Commission adopted its new [Industrial Strategy](#). The new Strategy aims to help Europe's industry lead the twin transitions towards climate neutrality and digital leadership. The package of initiatives outlines a new approach to European industrial policy that is firmly rooted in European values and social market traditions. It sets out a range of actions to support all players of European industry, including big and small companies, innovative start-ups, research centres, service providers, suppliers and social partners. A dedicated Strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) aims to reduce red tape and help Europe's numerous SMEs to do business across the single market and beyond, access financing and help lead the way on the digital and green transitions.

COVID-19: Joint responses by the EU social partners

Cross-industry social partners, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), BusinessEurope, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of general interest (CEEP) and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEUnited), on 16 March 2020, [jointly supported the measures announced by the European Commission and the European Central Bank on the COVID-19 emergency](#). The European social partners urged the European Council to approve the measures proposed by the Commission so far and called the governments to approve in particular measures envisaging the temporary full use of the built-in flexibility in the Stability and Growth Pact targets. They stressed that all efforts needed to be undertaken to help workers, enterprises, economic activities and public services to survive the crisis, so that they would be able to come back to their activities when the crisis ends. They also recommended to keep workers in their jobs in the meantime, to protect them from unemployment and loss of income, and to alleviate financial losses. The Commission and Member States must ensure that financial support reaches enterprises, especially all types of SMEs, and all workers, including the self-employed and those with precarious jobs who are most vulnerable.

Banking and Insurance EU social partners, the European Banking Federation - Banking Committee for European Social Affairs (EBF- BCESA), the European Savings Banks Group (ESBG), the European Association of Co-operative Banks (EACB) and UNI Europa, on 30 March 2020, adopted a [Joint Statement on the COVID-19 Emergency Crisis](#). In their statement, social partners thanked finance sector workers for their continued commitment in these difficult and uncertain times and reaffirmed that the health and safety of workers, customers and the general public were and would remain a priority.

Civil Aviation EU social partners, the Air Traffic Controllers' European Union Coordination (ATCEUC), the Airlines for Dialogue (A4D), the Airline Coordination Platform (ACP), the Airport Council International - Europe (ACI Europe), the Airport Services Association (ASA), the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation - Europe (CANSO Europe), the European Cockpit Association (ECA) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), on 26 March 2020, launched a [joint appeal to the EU Institutions and the Member States regarding the effects of COVID-19 and need for action in European Aviation](#). The signatories called upon the EU institutions and Member States to enforce the EASA information bulletins and safety directives as well as to establish further coordinated hygienic protocols; to enable connectivity and use travel bans only as a last resort, to promote economic measures including state aid to retain the integrity of the sector; to protect the workers from unemployment and loss of income and abolish taxes to aid the sector's future recovery; to support the relaxation of the slot allocation rules, and to reaffirm the key role of social dialogue at European, national and company level.

Food and Drinks industry EU social partners, the European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors (EFFAT) and FoodDrinkEurope, on 25 March 2020, signed a [Joint Statement to call for support of the workers](#) in the industry to provide for their protection. They highlighted the essential strategic role of the food industry. Fair access to safety equipment and harmonised protocols for workers should be ensured to guarantee the safety of workers in the industry. They welcomed the flexibility around the implementation of the state aid rules by the Commission and called for further support for the industry to maintain jobs.

Inland waterways, Ports, Maritime transport, Shipbuilding and Railways EU social partners, the European Barge Union (EBU), the European Skippers' Organisation (ESO), the Federation of European Private Port Operators (FEPORT), the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA), the European Shipyards & Maritime Equipment Association (SEA Europe), the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), the European Rail Infrastructure Managers (EIM) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), on 23 March 2020, co-signed the [Joint industry Statement on COVID-19: Transport keeps us going](#) to highlight the key role transport and logistics are playing for the supply of essential goods in this critical period. The signatories of the statement expressed their support for workers in the supply chain who ensure continuity of transport services and reiterated the importance of protecting health and safety of transport workers. They highlighted the importance of facilitating cross-border mobility, which includes the repatriation of the transport work force.

Live performance EU social partners, the Performing Arts Employers' Associations League Europe (Pearle*), the EURO-MEI-UNI-Europa Media, Entertainment and Arts division, the International Federation of Musicians (FIM) and the International Federation of Actors (FIA), on 12 March 2020, adopted a Joint Statement [Covid19: State of emergency in the live performance sector!](#). They urged governments to take emergency measures to support of the live performance sector in response to the epidemic, which led to prohibition of large gatherings of people. Without appropriate support measures, these decisions will have devastating economic and social consequences on the live performance sector. Exceptional measures must be taken and funding allotted as soon as possible to alleviate the adverse effects of these sudden income losses. At EU level, a Corona Response Initiative, "directed at the health care systems, SMEs, labour markets and other vulnerable parts of our economies" and mobilising a €25 billion public investment was announced on 10 March 2020. It is essential to make sure that this initiative benefits also the live performance sector.

Ports EU social partners, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the International Dockworkers Council (IDC), the Federation of European Private Port Operators (FEPORT), and the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), on 19 March 2020, called [jointly on workers and employers to strictly respect health and safety measures during the Covid-19 pandemic](#). Companies should ensure that such measures are effectively implemented and provide all necessary means to protect employees in workplaces. All port workers should strictly respect health and safety measures that have been set to face this serious emergency.

Professional football EU social partners, the European Club Association (ECA), the European Professional Football Leagues (European Leagues) and the International Organisation of Professional Football Players' Associations (FIFPro), on 17 March 2020, adopted, together with UEFA, a [joint Resolution of the European football family on a coordinated response to the impact of the COVID-19 on competitions](#). The Parties agreed on the principles of a contingency plan regarding the 2019-20 sporting season, among which postponing the final tournament of the UEFA EURO 2020 and setting up two working groups to examine and devise solutions to the challenges raised by the COVID-19 pandemic in the field.

Sea Fisheries EU social partners, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), Europêche and the European agri-cooperatives (COGECA), on 27 March 2020, appealed to the European institutions and the Member States in a [joint letter calling for urgent measures to tackle restrictions on the free movement of fishers, imposed through the COVID-19 crisis management](#). The social partners urged to secure free movement of fishing crews and protection of fishermen's health to ensure survival of the sector and continue the much needed supply of fish to consumers.

Other joint contributions by the social partners

A project by **cross-industry social partners'** (ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP and SMEUnited) on the **circular economy** aims to analyse the impact of the transition to the circular economy on creation of jobs, on changing jobs and tasks, and on working conditions. It evaluates the impacts in the last years and includes a forecasting/analysis of expectations for the coming years. The project focuses on the role of social partners and collective bargaining for the provision of and access to training; on new technologies and approaches to identifying skills needs; and on financial incentives for research and development and skills to foster innovation and up-skilling.

Education A project by EU social partners (European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE)) aims to [promote the effective integration of migrants and refugees in education](#). This project sheds light on the richness and opportunities that newly arrived migrant and refugee children could bring to Europe. A [research report](#) and [documentary film](#) show the importance of support-based inclusion and the need to value children's past experience and first language. Outcomes include [Joint ETUCE/EFEE Practical Guidelines](#) and [ETUCE/EFEE Quality Framework](#) to support migrant and refugee children in their educational integration.

Local and Regional Governments EU social partners CEMR and EPSU finalised a project on [How to involve local social partners in the European Semester](#). They concluded that the European Semester needs to be democratised through a bottom-up approach actively involving social partners of the local and regional government sector. The project has led to a [declaration](#) addressed to the EU institutions and national governments and to a [Handbook for social partners](#) as practical guide to help them engage with the European Semester.

Postal Sector EU social partners, PostEurop, Uni Europa and the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI), agreed on two Joint Statements at the end of 2019: a [joint contribution on the potential revision of the postal directive](#) and a [Joint Declaration on "Training in the Digital Era"](#). The latter underlines the role of digitalisation on postal sector's functions and work environment confirming that a lifelong learning perspective is essential for employees to acquire the necessary skills and develop new competences.



Picture: Mr. Francesco Barbaro Costa, Chair of the SDC Training, Health & Safety working group (left) and Mr. José Oliveira, SDC Vice-President (right)

Private Security EU social partners, the Confederation of Security Services (CoESS) and UNI Europa, adopted on 5 November 2019 a [Joint Statement on the Need to Safeguard Cash](#). The Declaration raises awareness on the trend to increase electronic and cashless payments, and calls on the European Union to strictly enforce the legal tender status of cash. It describes the consequences of cash reduction for the private security sector and the negative impact on the poorer sections of society.

Road transport EU social partners, the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), adopted a [Joint Statement for a New Decade of Ambitious and Cooperative EU Sectoral Social Dialogue in Road Transport](#) on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the EU Social Dialogue Committee for Road Transport. The event on 18 February 2020 in the European Parliament was hosted by MEP Ismail Ertug with the participation of the Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, the Chair of the EP TRAN Committee, Ms. Karima Delli, and the Director General of DG MOVE, Mr. Henrik Hololei. ETF and IRU reminded that driver shortage was alarmingly increasing in the EU, with 20% of unfilled drivers' positions in passenger and goods transport in 2019. They both acknowledged that working conditions undeniably make driving a less attractive profession. They stressed that enforcement and digitalisation would be key in the upcoming years and proposed the development of more safe and secure parking areas for truck drivers and efficient enforcement of social rules in road transport.

Road – Public Urban Transport EU social partners, the International Association of Public Transport (UITP) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), renewed their Joint Recommendations on "[Combating Violence and Insecurity on Urban Public Transport](#)". These recommendations refer notably to the [European inter-professional social partners' Framework Agreement on harassment and violence at work](#).

UITP and ETF are also implementing a project on **digital transformation in urban public transport and its impact on the workforce and on social dialogue**. The aim of the project is to anticipate, prepare and manage changes in the sector and in the workplace in order to shape the digital transformation. To reach this objective, UITP and ETF are collecting information on the technological developments in operations, maintenance, HR management and customer services in the sector and the induced changes in jobs, competences, training, etc. A related workshop took place in March with representatives from key public transport companies and trade unions. The [Conference](#) to present the outcomes of the project will be postponed to mid-October.



Picture: Raluca Marian, IRU General Delegate to the EU and Roberto Parrillo, President of the ETF Road Transport Section at the European Parliament, 18 February 2020



Picture: Brigitte Ollier – UITP Senior Advisor on Social Affairs and Sabine Trier – ETF Deputy Secretary General @ the Workshop in Vienna

Temporary Agency Work EU social partners, the World Employment Confederation-Europe and UNI Europa are working in 2019/2020 on the joint project “**Social Innovation in the temporary agency work industry**”. Social innovation is the implementation of new solutions for working, learning and social protection to the benefit of workers, companies and society at large. In workshops, concrete practices of social innovation, their benefits, challenges, scalability and transferability have been assessed. A conference will conclude the project.

FURTHER NEWS FROM SOCIAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI)

- On 9 December 2019, the European Policy Centre (EPC), CESI, the World Employment Confederation (WEC) and Zurich Insurance, held a high-level conference as part the completion of a joint project on “[The future of work: Towards a progressive agenda for all](#)”, together with the [publication of a study](#) on the same topic. The event also saw the participation of Commissioner Nicolas Schmit.
- CESI’s project PULSER, “[Performing public services and performing public service personnel for the best possible implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights](#)”, officially kicked-off in January 2020. The objective of the project is to provide knowledge on the European Pillar of Social Rights in public administrations and raise awareness about the role that public sector workers have in implementing it. There will also be an expert study about this project.
- CESI, together with Bertelsmann Stiftung and euObserver, plans to host in the second edition its [public Summer Days](#) on the Future of Work on 17-18 June 2020, after a very successful first edition,. The event, composed of multiple topical workshops, will focus on different aspects related to the future of work, aiming to reflect on topics such worker’s rights, social security, challenges for occupational health and safety and the work organisation of trade unions.

NEWS FROM THE EU AGENCIES/INSTITUTIONS

EUROFOUND

EUROFOUND addresses the COVID-19 crisis, last publications:

- [COVID-19 could permanently change teleworking in Europe](#) (26 March 2020)
The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents unprecedented health, social and economic challenges for Europe, and has profound implications for the way people live and work across the globe. One of the changes that it already led to is the increased proportion of people working from home, as governments put in place social distancing and isolation measures. Eurofound research shows which countries already had the highest rates of people doing telework, or ICT-based mobile work, in Europe.



- [Europe's pre-existing household debt condition likely to be exacerbated by virus crisis](#) (24 March 2020) The coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis and the economic and social challenges that it entails come at a time when many vulnerable groups in Europe were already exposed to debt and arrears, according to EUROFOUND's new research on household indebtedness. The pandemic could exacerbate an already divergent situation in the EU, with some countries in Southern and Eastern Europe disproportionately affected.
- [EUROFOUND Executive Director's blog post on the coronavirus crisis](#) (24 March 2020) The worldwide Coronavirus outbreak is unprecedented and has affected people and societies at all levels. In a blog post, EUROFOUND Executive Director Juan Menéndez-Valdés addresses the crisis and reflects on the impact it will have on the work and lives of Europeans, and people beyond Europe. He outlines the role of EUROFOUND in the aftermath of this crisis in responding to the critical information needs of policymakers.



EU-OSHA

- **COVID-19: guidance for the workplace** [Access the guidance](#) for employers and businesses in providing advice to staff in non-health-care settings. It explains how to help prevent the spread of respiratory infections such as COVID-19 and what to do if someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in the workplace. It includes advice on travel and meetings and links to further information and resources.
- Digital technologies are transforming the workplace, but what does this mean for workers' safety and health? A new [brochure](#), "**How is digitalisation affecting safety and health at work?**", provides an overview of our ongoing work on digitalisation — including a recent foresight project — and its impact on occupational safety and health (OSH).
- A campaign on **Musculoskeletal disorders – new Healthy Workplaces Campaign** will be launched in 2020. It will start in October 2020 and run until the end of 2022, **Healthy Workplaces Lighten the Load** tackles musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), a persistent problem affecting millions of workers across Europe. Stay tuned and discover our new campaign website at the end of April at <https://healthy-workplaces.eu>
- **Musculoskeletal health of hairdressers: understanding the risks and looking at prevention strategies.** Evidence concludes that numerous tasks of the work of hairdressers put them at significant risk of developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). A [new article](#) explores the relation between MSDs and the hairdressing sector, and summarises the findings of a review undertaken as part of the social dialogue [ergoHair project](#), which aims to promote a healthy and safe working environment for hairdressers.
- A recent [OiRA case study](#) shows how a multinational car manufacturer has adapted EU-OSHA's Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) platform for its own needs. The result? A highly individualised, cost-efficient solution for company-wide occupational safety and health risk assessment.



Social Dialogue Meetings

With the outbreak of Covid-19, restrictions on travel and the rules for social distancing, meetings of social dialogue committees have been suspended. Instead, social partners are encouraged to look into the possibilities of teleconferencing.

Calls for proposals

As a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Commission informed the social partners of measures to reduce the impact of the crisis on the implementation of their grant agreements, notably the possibility to cancel or reschedule events and other activities/actions. We also offered guidance on the possibility to suspend and/or extend the project duration to the social partners.

Two out of the three calls for proposals have been published recently:

VP/2020/002 – Information and training measures for workers’ organisations

- The deadline for the submission of applications is **06 May 2020**
- Webpage: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=583&furtherCalls=yes>
- Queries: empl-vp-info-training@ec.europa.eu

VP/2020/001 – Support for social dialogue

- The deadline for the submission of applications is **25 May 2020**
- Webpage: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=629&langId=en&callId=581&furtherCalls=yes>
- Queries: empl-vp-social-dialogue@ec.europa.eu

Send us your contribution

You have a contribution for the next edition of the newsletter? Please contact the [editor](#).

We also look forward to your comments and suggestions.

Disclaimer

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