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WEC Positions

- The Road to Recovery Policy Paper
- The Road to Recovery – the European dimension
- WEC Social Impact Report

Upcoming Events

Due to the Summer months in the northern hemisphere, there will be less institutional or public affairs related events in August.

As in the past years, the Advocacy Report will also take a small break, with the next edition to be published in September.

Upcoming Events

In case you have questions on the Advocacy Report:

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The World Employment Confederation Social Impact Report 2020 has been published and is available on our website!

General and COVID-19 updates

WEC Social Impact Report 2020 "Protecting people through times of crisis"

In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, the shortcomings of current social protection systems in many countries have become blatant. The latest edition of the [Social Impact Report](#) by the World Employment Confederation, shows that an employment contract remains the key to formal social protection coverage and that self-employed workers are significantly more vulnerable than workers with an employment contract.

In 90% of the countries analysed, agency workers and workers in other forms of contractual employment enjoy full statutory access to unemployment and sickness benefits. Partial access to those benefits is available in the remaining countries. In only one-fifth of the countries represented in the analysis do self-employed have full statutory access to unemployment schemes in the same way as employees. Regarding statutory sick leave benefits, they receive full access in less than 40% of the countries surveyed.

The World Employment Confederation's Social Impact Report 2020 further establishes that one challenging feature of current social protection systems is the discrepancy between statutory and effective access to social protection benefits for employed workers. Eligibility criteria, such as thresholds in terms of working days to be reached, can prevent some groups to access benefits in case of unemployment and sickness. **The report's findings concur with various OECD analysis, which also point to the significant discrepancy in social protection coverage for workers in alternative work arrangements.** Self-employed workers and those on temporary or part-time contracts are said to represent up to 40% of total employment in sectors most affected by lockdowns across European OECD countries.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the private employment services industry has supported agency workers by providing additional social protection benefits for unemployment, sickness, healthcare or pension. As shown in the report, the private employment services industry can offer inspiration on how safety nets can be reformed to cover workers moving between jobs and across sectors based on the initiatives it has developed, notably through social dialogue. Protecting people through times of crisis goes beyond the provision of basic safety nets. Implementing lifelong learning mechanisms to facilitate speedy transitions between jobs and sectors, raising labour market participation, reducing unemployment, and fighting informal employment are key in delivering security to workers and people in general. The World Employment Confederation's Social Impact Report 2020 looks into how the private employment services industry contributes in those areas. For instance, the sector provides an entry point to the labour market for those out of employment. On average, one-third of agency workers come to the labour market from unemployment or inactivity. In the recovery of labour markets and economies, this role in boosting employment and growth through accelerating the matching of labour, supporting transitions and re-allocating workers across sectors, is crucial.

Assessment and next steps

The Social Impact Report is one of the main, flagship WEC publications and an important instrument to support public affairs at international, European and national levels. The topic of the 2020 edition is one of the main, pressing labour market issues. In the coming months, the World Employment Confederation will have several meetings and contacts with policymakers to present and discuss the report.

World Employment Confederation took over the lead in the 'Safely back to work in a new normal' Alliance

In July 2020, the World Employment Confederation took over the lead in the 'Safely back to work in the new normal' Alliance, which was initially launched by The Adecco Group, ManpowerGroup and Randstad. A World Employment Confederation Taskforce has been established to supervise and manage the next activities of the Alliance and Tom Hadley (former REC's Director of Campaigns & Policy) has been contracted as Project Manager to conduct the activities of the Taskforce. He will be supported by Manon Lespes from the Head Office who will act as Project Coordinator.

The World Employment Confederation Head Office has rebranded the main Alliance documents published so far with the WEC logo and created a [dedicated webpage](#) about the project. A first meeting of the Alliance Taskforce took place on Friday, 17 July as a webconference to take stock and plan the next activities.

The work of the Alliance under the leadership of the World Employment Confederation will last until end of December 2020 and will focus on two main dimensions, firstly to continue and conclude the work on the health and safety protocols and then to work jointly with all WEC members on a new positioning for the private employment services industry in the New Normal after the COVID-19 crisis.

Assessment

The 'Safely back to work in a new normal' Alliance will be a central element in the World Employment Confederation advocacy, communication and members engagement in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase and in positioning the private employment services industry in driving the economic recovery and the New Normal.

Joint Statement of the European employers' community on recovery after COVID-19

Jointly with the European, cross-industry employers' organisation BusinessEurope and 9 other, European sectoral employers' organisations, the World Employment Confederation-Europe worked on a joint statement to European policymakers on the economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. The joint text touches on a broad range of issues, including several key public affairs messages and topics of the World Employment Confederation-Europe. These include:

- The importance of short-time working schemes to react to economic shocks
- The emphasis on the role of social dialogue at national and European level to address the crisis (both at cross-industry and sectoral level)
- A strong recommendation focusing on the need to improve the agility of labour markets, avoiding too strict labour market regulations which have proven to act as a barrier to job creation.
- A focus on the EU Skills Agenda (and industrial policy) as a driver for the recovery and instrument to support workers in adapting to change.

The Joint Statement will be published on Friday, 24th July and be available on the World Employment Confederation-Europe website.

Assessment

The Joint Statement of the European Employers Community on the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic lockdown is a strong political message to the European Commission, the EU Council and the European Parliament. The World Employment Confederation-Europe was one of the driving forces to start working on such a joint text in June and provided constant input in the drafting phase, liaising also with the other signatories. It is encouraging to see that key messages and recommendations put forward by the World Employment Confederation-Europe, as for example in our Road to Recovery Policy Paper, are fully supported and endorsed by the other European employers' organisations.

EU Recovery Fund Next Generation EU and WEC-Europe guide on access to EU funding in times of COVID-19

On 21st July and after a European Council meeting of 4 days, the EU Heads of State and Government reached a political agreement on the EU Recovery Fund Next Generation EU and on the next EU financial framework for the coming seven years.

For the EU Recovery Fund to address the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, financial support to those countries mostly affected **amounting to €750 billion** has been agreed. The division in the recovery plan between grants and loans was rebalanced in favour of loans (**€360 billion in loans and € 390 billion in grants**). The rebalancing between grants and loans was done to take account of four EU Member States (Netherlands, Austria, Denmark and Sweden) who were more critical on the direct support to countries.

For the first time in EU history, the recovery instrument will be financed through borrowing by the European Union on the financial market. With this agreement and the settlement of the EU budgets for the next seven years, the EU leaders have set the financial fundamentals for the coming years. Demands on the conditionality of EU funding to the respect of the rule of law have been criticised strongly by eastern European countries, with the result that the final wording on this conditionality remained fairly vague. The political agreement on the new funding instrument still needs to be approved by the European Parliament in July and by the national parliaments of all EU Member States.

In following-up on the webconference organised in April 2020, the World Employment Confederation-Europe has drafted a short guide for members on access to EU funding in times of COVID-19. The guide presents the main support and funding instruments, the policy objectives these are targeting and the main application channels. The main instruments presented in the guide are the European Social Fund, an overview on the European Recovery Fund and the EU SURE Initiative to support short-time working schemes.

Assessment and next steps

Providing access to liquidity and funding has been a major pillar of the European Union response to the Covid-19 crisis. Most instruments have a short to medium term perspective, as the European Union and the EU Member States have just concluded the negotiations on the next EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework, which still needs to be ratified by the European Parliament and the 27 national parliaments.. In 2021, new EU policies and programmes will be put in place based on the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework.

European Commission issued Guidance on seasonal work in times of COVID-19

The European Commission published in July Guidelines to ensure the protection of seasonal workers in the EU in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These Guidelines provide guidance to national authorities and social partners to guarantee the rights, health and safety of seasonal workers, and to ensure that seasonal workers are aware of their rights.

The Guidelines recall the rights of seasonal workers regardless of their status: whether they are EU citizens or third-country nationals, including those working regularly abroad on their own accord, or are posted for example through temporary work and recruitment agencies. It is essential that seasonal workers and their employers have all the information they need both about the protection they enjoy as well as the obligations they need to fulfil.

The Guidelines cover a range of aspects, such as:

- the right of seasonal workers to work in an EU Member State regardless of whether they are EU nationals or come from countries outside the EU
- suitable living and working conditions, including physical distancing and appropriate hygiene measures
- clear communication to workers of their rights
- the prevention of undeclared work
- social security aspects

More information and the Guidelines can be downloaded on the EU Commission website.

Assessment

The European Commission Guidance on seasonal work in times of COVID-19 follows a range of cases reported also in the media on the unsecure working and living conditions of seasonal workers. The European Parliament addressed the issue in a resolution, calling for a revision of the EU legal framework for cross-border and seasonal work, including a potential revision of the EU Directive on temporary agency work.

The World Employment Confederation-Europe Head Office and European Public Affairs Committee assessed the situation and provided feedback to the relevant civil servants at the European Commission/DG Employment. Based on this input and in coordination with the European, cross-industry employers' organisation BusinessEurope, a debate on the revision of the Directive on temporary agency work at the level of the European Commission could be prevented. Also the current, German EU Council Presidency confirmed in a recent European Parliament Employment and Social Affairs Committee meeting that while there is a need to ensure the protection of cross-border and seasonal workers, the revision of related Directives is not on the political agenda.

Global Public Affairs

Executive Summary

OECD publishes 2020 Employment Outlook

- The Outlook showcases the grim labour market fallout of the Covid-19 crisis. Employment, hours worked, and job postings tumbled collectively to unprecedented levels. In a one-wave scenario the OECD projects average unemployment to drop to 9.4% by the end of 2020 (from 5,3% in Q4 2019).
- Positive is the recognition of private employment services sector responses to Covid-19 as well as its role in recovering employment.
- The Outlook provides an update on the Employment Protection Legislation (EPL) Index showcasing an overall steady maintenance of hire and fire regulation across developed economies. Overall, hiring agency workers became a slight bit stricter because of restrictive regulatory change in (amongst others) Germany, Italy, and Denmark since 2013. While changes Slovenia, Turkey and Lithuania loosened the hiring of agency workers.
- The Outlook did an assessment on the adequateness of unemployment insurance schemes of workers that frequently transition in and out of employment. This shows that workers in temporary and part-time contracts have worse coverage. Remediating this would require rebalancing the costs and access to these schemes.
- The Outlook further assessed where middle-skilled workers 'went' following the decrease of middle skilled jobs. It finds the polarization to mostly a result of less young workers entering into middle skilled jobs rather than the displacement of middle skilled workers to high or low skilled jobs.

ILO gathers virtually for the first time since Covid outbreak

- During virtual global summit the workers, employers and governments representatives met formally to discuss the Covid-19 crisis and the role of the ILO in its mitigation.
- Key priorities addressed were informality, social protection and the relevance of the ILO Future of Work declaration as guidance or mitigation.
- Beyond the shared priority on informality, Employers focused on private sector-led growth, SMEs and Skills as key elements for recovery. Unions mostly focused much of their attention on social protection, female workers, global supply chains and platform work. Governments focused their attention on Social protection, Skills, Migrant Workers and Tripartism.
- Key assessment is that many of the Pre-Covid priorities re-emerged. This is especially highlighted by the amount of ILO constituents addressing the relevance of the 2019 ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work as key ILO tool to for recovery from Covid-19. Still, remote working and social protection gained in relevance.

Business at OECD: 'Bringing jobs back after Covid-19

- In a response to OECD policy recommendations to mitigate Covid-19 labour market fallout, 'Business at OECD' put forward the comments to ensure businesses can optimally contribute to job and economic recovery.
- The Business integrate agency work and private employment services in general as key elements for recovery as well as the fix of social protection gaps that burden transition and activation.

OECD Publishes 2020 Employment Outlook

On 7 July the OECD published its 2020 Employment Outlook (hereafter: the Outlook). [The full Outlook can be found here.](#) This includes a website with extensive interactive charts and tables. **Key aspect of this Outlook is the recognition of the industry's effort to mitigate the crisis (including referral to WEC membership examples and the Joint recommendations agreed between WEC and UNI in Europe) and explicit appropriation of a role in bringing people (back) to the labour market next to public employment services.**

Focus: Covid-19 and Worker Protection.

The 2020 Outlook was originally structured around the 'worker protection' theme. The **Covid-19 outbreak** changed this, expanding the Outlook with an extensive assessment of the labour market impact of, and policy responses to, the crisis, as well as policy recommendation for recovery.

The original research on 'worker protection' is maintained and includes an update of the **Employment Protection Legislation Index (EPL)**, the **provision of unemployment benefits and job incentive schemes** to workers in frequent unemployment, a deep dive on the where **middle skilled workers 'went'** over the course of job polarization between high and low-skilled workers, and finally an analysis on the labour market outcomes for middle and low skilled workers that received **vocational education and training.**

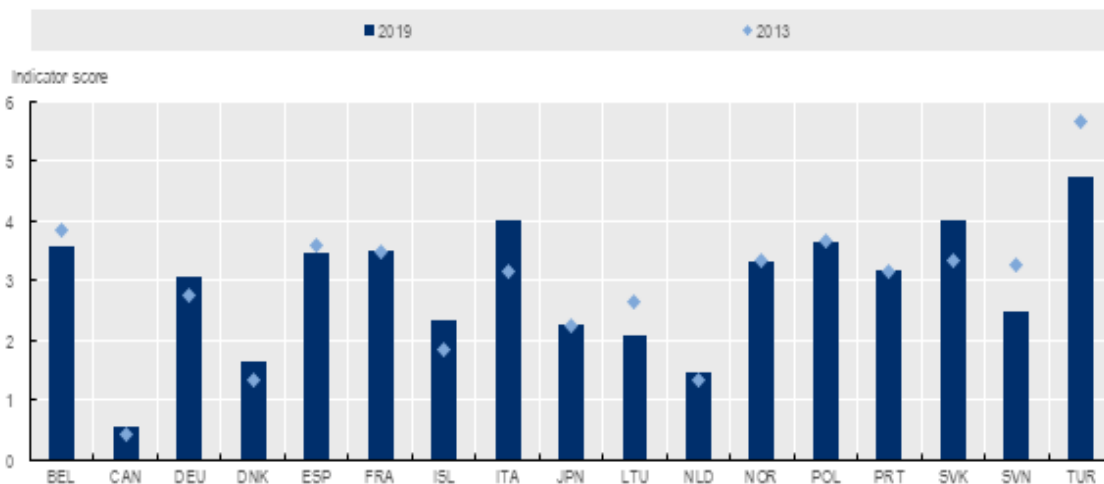
Main findings:

- OECD projects average OECD employment to rise to 9,4% by the end of 2020 and to reach 7.7% by the end of 2021. In case of a second Covid-19 wave, these numbers increase to 12,6% and 8.9% respectively.
- Compared to the 2008 global financial crisis hours worked dropped significantly deeper and faster. In the first 3 months following the 2008 crisis hours dropped by 1,2%. Three months into Covid crisis hours worked had dropped almost 12,2%.
- Job posting dropped 35% between February and May 2020 in the US and European OECD members.
- A second Covid-19 wave can be prevented without a vaccine by staying vigilant and implement more tailored public measures to optimize occupational safety and health, paid sick leave, remote working, job retention and business continuity.
- Job retention schemes have significantly helped cushion the impact of the Covid-19 crisis but now need to be deployed more targeted, incorporate a higher employer contribution and need to integrate measures for transition to jobs that are viable in the medium/long term.
- The crisis in particular hit low-paid, low-skilled, female, migrant, temporary, part-time, and self-employed workers, and young people.
- Public and private employment services need to scale up their capabilities to help jobseekers. Wage subsidies targeted to low-pay workers can further the activation effort.
- People with frequent labour market transition are inadequately covered for unemployment benefits. These schemes need to be reviewed to better tailor to specific labour market trajectories.
- The new Employment Protection Legislation Index more extensively integrates collective dismissals versus personal dismissal, and the ability for workers and business to agree on dismissal while sustaining unemployment benefits. Countries that restrict

dismissal of open-ended contracts tend to also be more restrictive for temporary employment. In comparing to the previous index, the OECD finds that - on average - open-ended contracts have loosened, while fixed term contracts have been evenly loosened and restricted across OECD member countries.

- The EPL ratings on agency work (below) overall increased very slightly by 0.02 points (eg. overall regulations for firms contracting an employment agency became slightly stricter) between 2013 and 2019 (see below chart). With extensive increases in Italy, Slovakia, Iceland, Denmark and Germany, but decreases in Slovenia, Turkey and Lithuania.

B. Temporary work agency contracts



- Job polarisation of low- and high-skilled workers was not the result of mid-career middle skilled workers moving up, down or out of the market, but mostly because fewer young workers entered a middle skilled job. The labour market trajectories of this former group remained steady. Those that would in past be in a middle skilled job (because of their middle-skill education) are now more often in a low skilled job.
- Low and middle skilled workers a Vocational Education and training (VET) background have a clear labour market advantage to their non-vocationally trained peers. Although, this advantage decreases over time and the labour market outcomes align. As such VET remains an important tool for upgrading labour market outcomes for low, but it will need to be updated to address the needs of new jobs and possibility to integrate older workers in VET schemes.

Assessment and next steps

Assessment

- Key feature in the Outlook is the explicit and front and centre recognition of the work of private employment services (including agency work, training and career guidance) in mitigating the labour market fallout of the pandemic, as well as their potential for (re-)activation of employment.
- This positive assessment allows to sector to rise to the occasion and show its role in economic recovery. Yet, considering the in-depth wording of the report, the highlight of PrES can be assessed as a political choice by the OECD, rather than a conclusion built on sturdy OECD findings. This raises the stake to deliver on the challenge.

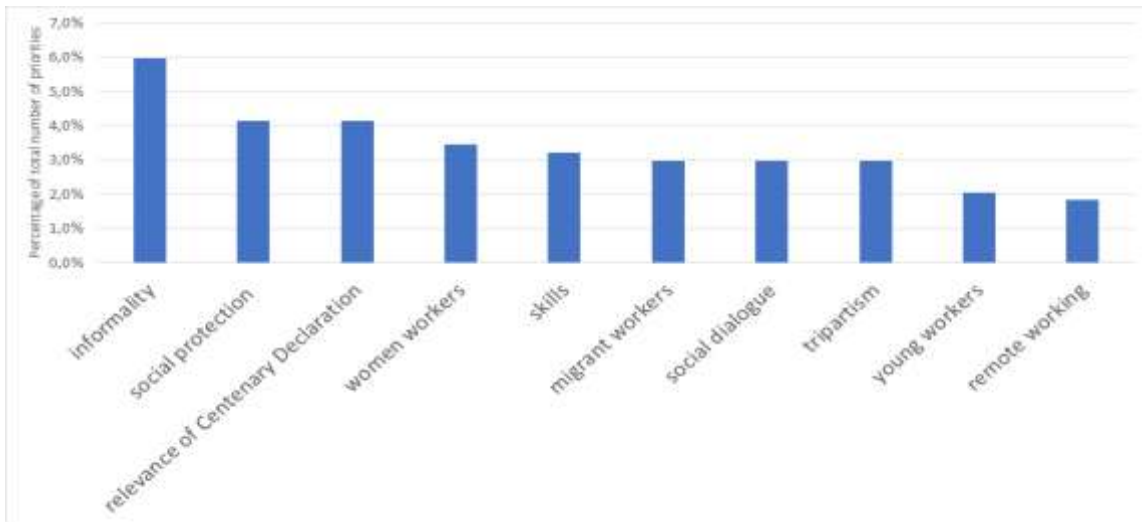
- The findings (and related communications) strongly focussed on the importance of social protection reform to better and more adequately cover temporary employed workers. As such, it aligns with existing calls by the WEC for Social Innovation.
- Especially, in the (re-)shaping of the EPL index industry interest were safeguarded as original proposals sought to water down the importance of agency work in the EPL rating.
- Analysis on unemployment benefits and job incentives showcases a worrying trend that a growing group of young, single and low paid workers with unstable work relations (three or more unemployment periods in three 36 months) is unable to get out of a revolving door of unstable, low-skill and low-wage employment on the one side and unemployment on the other. Moreover, unemployment safety nets for this group do not provide adequate benefit in terms of career or income support.
- Concerning is the increasing referral to social protection regulation on the national level that seek to differentiate social protection contribution between open-ended and fixed-term contracts to disincentivize temporary employment contracts.
- The OECD persists in the use of standard versus non-standard forms of work; although it does more often take granular approach by explicitly defining what contractual arrangement is meant.

WEC follow-ups

- WEC will create a dedicated comparison on the agency work elements of the Employment Protection Legislation Index
- WEC will work more intensely with the OECD Activation team to promote the PrES role in labour market activation and transition.
- WEC will continue to collaborate with the 'Business at OECD' Community to lobby OECD priorities, research and work. In this, existing WEC priorities diverse forms of work, social innovation, skilling and labour market participation remain the driving advocacy priorities.

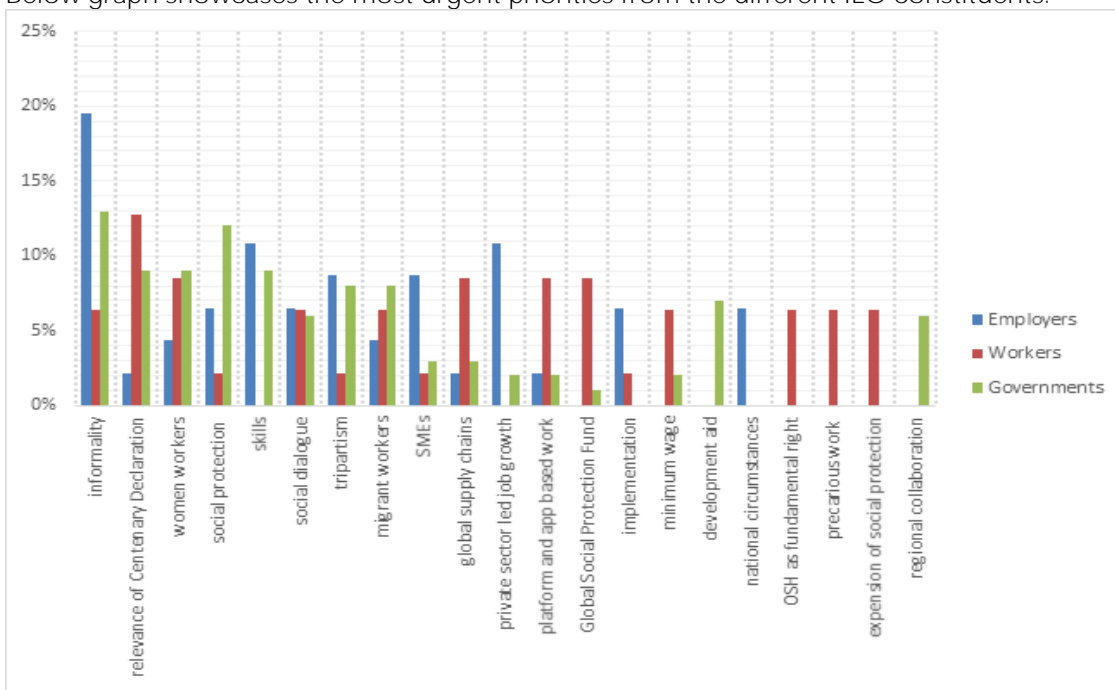
ILO gathers virtually for the first time since Covid outbreak

For the first time since the Covid-19 outbreak, the ILO constituents (representatives from workers, employers & governments) gathered to discuss the response of the ILO to support its members. During the 'ILO Global Summit' heads of states, ministers of labour and of course worker and employer representatives gathered (online) over several days to list their priorities for tackling the labour market fallout of Covid-19. WEC attended the final session of the Summit.



Comparing the priorities of Governments, Workers and Employers

Below graph showcases the most urgent priorities from the different ILO constituents.



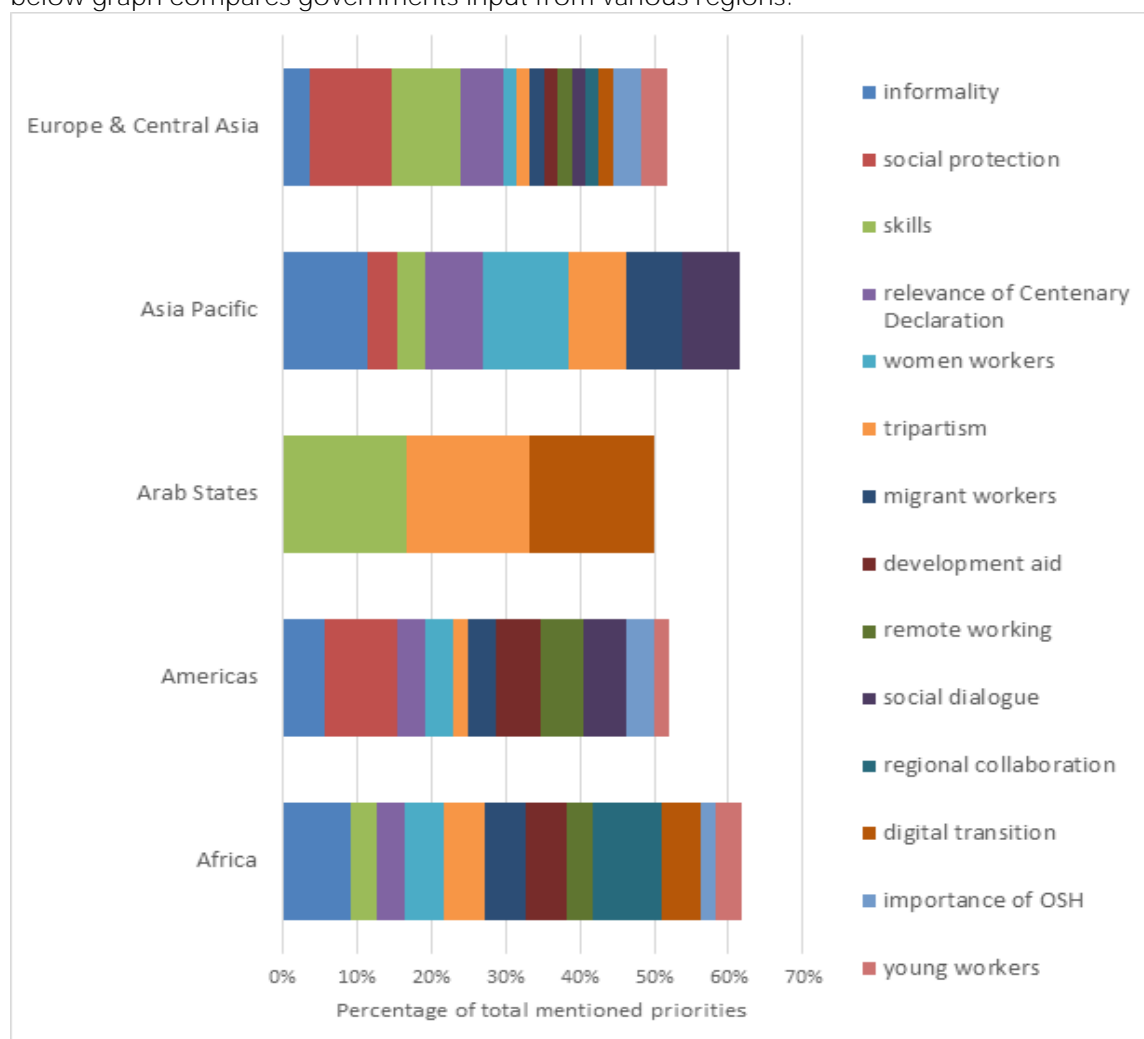
- The ILO Constituents clearly aligned on three priorities for mitigating the Covid-19 crisis: **Informality, Women Workers** and **Social Dialogue**.
- Clear priority differences between workers and employers were exposed on Skills, SMEs, global supply chains, the role of the private sector growth for recovery and platform work.
- Governments and Workers mostly aligned on the relevance of the Centenary Declaration.
- While employers and governments aligned on the focus on Informality, skills, social protection and tripartism.

- Workers and Employers aligned on the focussing on social dialogue, women workers and migrant workers.
- In general worker representatives across the were aligned in their messaging and pushing for an extensive set of topics for the ILO to prioritize upon

Remote working was identified as one of the main overall priorities, but neither group appropriated it to their most urgent issues for the ILO to address.

Comparing Regional Priorities

below graph compares governments input from various regions.



- The **African**, **American** and **Asian** regions predominantly focused on informality. These regions also focused most on the role of women on the labour market as an issue for the ILO to work on.
- Countries from the **European** and **central Asian** region focused predominantly on Skills and Social Protection
- Arab countries** provided a limited number of ILO priorities mainly focusing on skills and tripartism.

- Social protection as predominately brought forward by the **European, Central Asian** and **American** regions
- All regions but the Arab region consistently highlighted informality and the relevancy of the Centenary Declaration as priorities for the ILO response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Assessment

- Clear take away is that from these discussions the 'new ILO normal' strongly resembles the 'pre-Covid-19' one. Social Partners appear very far apart looking at their priorities, and governments do not seem to be clearly aligned with either side. The constituents mainly come together on institutional elements such as tripartism and collaboration on regional or international level. The biggest point of attention would be the rising number of constituents that have addressed 'social protection' as ILO priority.
- There was a lot of attention on the role of the Centenary Declaration for the Future of work that was agreed in 2019. Of course, highlighting the relevance of this document, but also signalling that ILO Constituents do not feel the Covid-19 crisis to be as game-changer for the overall labour market framework. In fact, many highlighted the crisis to exacerbate trends and issues the Centenary Declaration sought to mitigate.
- Key concern is also what is not (elaborately) put forward by constituents in their intervention in the debates. Topics like Activation, New ways of working and Rigid labour markets are only seldomly addressed. Also, Employers stood mostly alone in their call for private sector led growth. The biggest employer priorities gaining support was the topic of informality, skills, social dialogue and tripartism.
- Based on these inputs the ILO Office will start to prepare a new Programme and Budget. This draft as well as the negotiations between ILO constituents will start in October as the next Governing Body (the Board of the ILO) is set to be held.

Business community responds to OECD Covid-19 employment policies

Business at OECD (BIAC) has come out strongly on a pushed for diverse forms of work as a key solution for recovery from Covid-19. In a response to employment policy recommendations from the OECD, it put forward its priorities for the OECD to focus their labour market work on.

The Business statement furthermore called for the abolishment of unjustified restriction to the use of forms of work and highlighted the importance of the collaboration of public and private employment services including agency work and career management for successful activation policies. Also, the HR services alliance to promote a safe return to work was mentioned as key business practice to support going back to work.

Business at OECD: "Bringing jobs back after Covid-19"

BIAC listed the following recommendation:

- Leverage and facilitate access to all forms of employment
- Embed crisis resistant flexible work arrangements
- Promote a business-led return to work
- Close gaps in safety nets to cover various forms of work
- Set reskilling and upskilling high on the agenda
- Address the growing burden of informality
- Spur Youth employment

- Unlock inclusive labour markets

Key red threat is the support of business-led job growth beyond the maintenance of Short Time Working and other Job retention schemes. Beyond the strong emphasis on creating the framework for people to access work in diverse ways, (targeted) activation and skilling were put forward as key policy directions for the OECD to support through their analysis and advice. Finally, the Statement pointed out crucial policy pitfalls for the OECD to avert. These mainly highlighted the importance of respecting the national level and ensuring the OECD doesn't push for one-size-fits-all solutions for its member countries, businesses or workers.

Assessment and next steps

WEC and its membership engaged intensively with the development of this statement in order for it to align with the WEC 'Road to Recovery' position paper. Crucial in this respect is the recognition in this broad business paper of the need for social innovation to repair gaps in safety nets the WEC Social Impact report recently identified.

European Public Affairs Update

Executive Summary

In July 2020, two key initiatives in the area of employment and social affairs have been launched by the European Commission:

- The European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience set out the European Commission policies in the area skills and training. The main activities proposed that are of interest to the private employment services industry focus on skills intelligence, apprenticeships, and individual learning accounts.
- The European Commission youth employment support initiative also launched on 1st of July centers around providing a bridge to jobs via a renewed youth guarantee, a focus on vocational education and training aiming at more agile, modern and attractive vocational training policies, a renewed impetus for apprenticeships via the European Alliance for apprenticeships and further measures to support youth employment.
- The European Network of public employment services issued an opinion on platform work, focusing on regulation governing platform work, the employment status of platform work labour suppliers, challenges for the welfare state, the need for a monitoring framework and the inclusion of platform workers in training schemes.

At the level of the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue, the work on the joint project on Social Innovation in the temporary agency work industry is progressing with a workshop and steering committee to be held as webconferences in September and a concluding project conference in December 2020.

European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience published by the European Commission

On 1st of July 2020, the European Commission published a European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience. The European Commission Communication aims to set a policy framework for skills and training in the context of the green and digital transition and with a few to build resilience. This Communication will provide the overall framework for the EU policies on skills and training in the coming years.

The Skills Agenda builds on five main building blocks, as it:

1. Calls for collective action mobilising business, social partners and stakeholders
2. Identifies the financial means to foster investment in skills
3. Defines a clear strategy to ensure that skills lead to jobs
4. Helps people build their skills through live in an environment where life-long learning is the norm
5. Set ambitious objectives for up- and reskilling to be achieved in the next 5 years

Linked to the 5 building blocks, the Commission agenda sets out a number of actions, namely:

- I. Working together under a new pact for skills, involving education and training providers, business, social partners and other stakeholders
- II. Skilling people for a job and aligning policies to deliver results. Here, a focus is laid on strengthening skills intelligence, including a focus on working with private employment services to promote the early identification of skills shortages and trends
- III. Offering EU support for strategic national upskilling actions
- IV. Proposing an EU Council Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience
- V. Rolling out the European University initiative and upskilling scientists
- VI. Skills to support the twin transitions, namely the green and digital transition
- VII. Increasing STEM graduates and fostering entrepreneurial and transversal skills
- VIII. Skills for life and adult learning
- IX. An initiative on individual learning accounts aiming to close existing gaps in the area of access to training for working age adults
- X. A European approach to micro-credentials, aiming to support the quality, transparency and take up of micro-credentials
- XI. A new Europass platform aiming to support to manage their careers in a fast-changing labour market.

Assessment

The private employment services industry is explicitly mentioned in the EU Skills strategy with regard to its role in offering skills intelligence, improve the matching of demand and supply and prevent labour shortages. The WEC-Europe Public Affairs Committee reviewed the EU Skills Strategy and assessed it overall positively. A position paper to react to the Skill Strategy will be published in Autumn 2020. The planned EU actions on skilling people for a job, including the focus on skills intelligence, the role of skills in managing transitions and the planned EU action in individual learning accounts are of interest to our industry and will be followed-up in contacts and meetings with EU policymakers in the Autumn.

European Commission Youth Employment Initiative presented in July 2020

On 1st of July 2020, the European Commission launched a Youth Employment Support initiative, aiming to provide a bridge to jobs for the next generation. The initiative aims to giving young people all possible opportunities to develop their full potential and thrive green and digital transitions. The European Commission underlines that the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the often-difficult start of young people in the labour market.

The Youth Employment Support Initiative is built on several key pillars:

- The EU Commission proposed an investment of at least €22 billion on youth employment support. The investment shall help to foster youth employment at national level and to create a competitive, resilient and inclusive labour market for tomorrow.
- The European Commission furthermore underlined that youth employment policies at national level should be linked to a reform of the support measures offered to the young people, offering them the best opportunities to develop their full potential.
- The EU Youth Guarantee, which aims at offering every young person a job, training, education, or an apprenticeship within four months shall be reinforced by a Council Recommendation on a Bridge to Jobs. The age range targeted by the youth guarantee has been extended to 15 – 29. The new bridge to jobs initiative aims to be

more inclusive and avoid any form of discrimination. This includes a wider outreach to more vulnerable groups, such as young people of ethnic minorities.

- The European Commission furthermore proposes a Council Recommendation on vocational education and training, aiming to make systems more flexible, modern, attractive and fit for the digital and green economy.
- Building on work of the previous European Commission, the EU will give a renewed impetus for apprenticeships, which shall benefit both employers and young people. The renewed European Alliance for Apprenticeships will promote national coalitions for apprenticeships and dual learning and reinforce the involvement of social partners.
- Additional initiatives include employment and start-up incentives, as well as capacity building, a young entrepreneur network and inter-company training centres.

The NextGenerationEU recovery fund and the future EU budget will provide further funding schemes, such as start-up grants and loans for young entrepreneurs, bonuses for SMEs hiring apprentices, training sessions to acquire new skills needed on the labour market, capacity building for public employment services, career management training in formal education and the investment in digital learning infrastructure and technology.

Assessment

The European Commission Youth Employment Support initiative is a welcomed policy approach that is much needed in the current economic context. From a private employment services industry point of view, the focus on digital and green transitions and on apprenticeship and dual learning are certainly welcomed. On the individual learning accounts, the Commission initiative might provide added value, while a lot will depend on the form and approach taken to individual learning accounts. This systems are so far only established in a very limited number of European countries and to make them work, it is important to embed these in the national skills and training policies, thus there will not be a one size fits all approach. In this context, it is encouraging to see that the European Commission refers to individual learning accounts (plural), rather than one single system of an individual learning account.

EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Project "Social Innovation in the temporary agency work industry"

Despite the Covid-19 crisis, the work on the WEC-Europe/UNI-Europa project on Social Innovation in the temporary agency work industry is progressing. The project looks at and examines examples of social innovation in the areas of training, working conditions and social protection.

On 1st and 3rd of September, the final project workshop on "Social Innovation in the area of social protection" will be held as webconference, jointly with a further steering committee. National experts of the temporary agency work industry will present national practices in enhancing the social protection for temporary agency workers.

After the workshop, the CEPS/KU Leuven research team will finalised the research report, which will include a compendium of social innovation case studies. On 1st December 2020, the project results will be presented and discussed during a pan-European Conference. Whether this conference can be held in Brussels or will be turned into a Webconference will be decided in September.

Assessment

The WEC-Europe/UNI-Europa project on “Social Innovation in the temporary agency work industry” is instrumental to advance the reflection, information gathering and discussion on social innovation in the temporary agency work industry. The case studies and examples identified in the area of training, working conditions and social protection can be a source of inspiration for national labour market reforms, improving the acceptance of temporary agency work and the recognition of its role to better functioning and more inclusive labour markets.

European Network of public employment services publishes opinion on platform work

The European Network of Public Employment Services published in July an opinion on platform work and the working conditions for platform workers to contribute to the EU level debate on the topic.

The Public Employment Services Network opinion calls for:

1. national and European (legal) frameworks within which digital platforms can operate – such frameworks should include business regulations, provide transparency and give workers control over their own online reputational data.
2. initiatives to define the employment status of platform workers – in order to provide legal certainty for platform workers and clarify the support to which they may be entitled.
3. intensified discussions on the challenges and risks for the European welfare state – which currently tends to favour those in traditional forms of employment.
4. a monitoring framework for future developments of the platform economy – to improve transparency, analysis and understanding of this growing sector; and
5. the inclusion of (potential) platform workers in training schemes – given the importance of upskilling activities to meet current and future labour market needs.

Assessment

From a World Employment Confederation-Europe point of view, this opinion includes both positive and critical elements. On the positive side, the public employment services network calls for clarity on the employment status of online platform labour supplies, for assessing the impact of platform work on the European welfare state and for monitoring future developments linked to platform work, as well as for including platform labour suppliers in training and upskilling policies. These recommendations are actually very close to the WEC-Europe/UNI-Europa Joint Recommendation on platform work. The call for national and European (legal) frameworks within which digital platforms can operate, which should include business regulations, provide transparency and give workers control over their own online reputational data are to be assessed more critically. Rather than calling for new regulation on platform work, the World Employment Confederation-Europe has been calling for a correct classification of workers and for applying existing European and national law to platform work labour suppliers.

This being an opinion of the EU Network of public employment services, the World Employment Confederation-Europe was not consulted or involved in the drafting phase of the opinion.

Abbreviations

CEPS	Centre for European Policy Studies
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KU Leuven	Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized enterprises
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (skills)
VET	Vocational education and training