

## **Single Market Emergency Instrument: SMEI Regulation**

Isabelle Schömann – ETUC Confederal Secretary

*(To be checked against delivery)*

- Workers, trade unions, collective bargaining and social dialogue all play a key role in the successful management of any crisis. Therefore, these rights must be respected as part of any crises response.
- Looking back at the lessons learnt from COVID, the sectors most concerned were often highly dependent on mobile and cross-border workers. But in spite of being recognised as essential and frontline workers, most of them are still the least protected.
- Also social partner organisations played a key role during the COVID crisis, often involved in the elaboration and implementation of emergency measures on the ground as well as the dissemination of information to workers and business.
- This essential role of workers and trade unions must be clearly reflected in the SMEI Regulation. A crisis can never be an opportunity to downgrade fundamental rights, including labour rights. For this reason, a Monti Clause should be included in the SMEI, to make clear that a strike action can never be considered as a crisis, and that an emergency response cannot be used to circumvent or undermine collective bargaining or action.

### **Competition Policy**

- to promoting sustainability and social progress, fair competition and a level playing-field in the internal market are essential. Competition policy needs to play its part in reaching these fundamental EU objectives.
- Competition policy should address not only business and consumers needs, but should include workers. Socially responsible antitrust, merger and State aid control should assess workers needs and the impacts on labour markets.
- Merger proceedings must respect workers' information and consultation rights.

- Only companies that respect workers and trade unions and collective bargaining rights should have access to public contracts and funds. Clearly, with 14% of EU GDP, public procurement with strong social conditionalities could be a real driver for social sustainability.
- When it comes to State aid, the EU should get inspired by the US Inflation Reduction Act, which seeks to tackle the climate crisis while lifting up workers' rights and set social conditionalities.
- our plea: The green deal and twin transition will only succeed, if it is linked to a strong social deal.