



Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Charles Michel
President of the European Council

Prime Ministers/Head of State

David Sassoli
President European Parliament

Andrej Plenković
President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

Mario Centeno
President of the Eurogroup

Christine Lagarde
President European Central Bank

Letter sent by e-mail :

ec-president-vdl@ec.europa.eu;

ec.secretariat@european-council.europa.eu;

David.SASSOLI@europarl.europa.eu

predsjednik@vlada.hr;

hugo.coelho@mf.gov.pt

office.president@ecb.europa.eu

Concerns: Emergency measures to save jobs and protect workers' rights in the European Union

Dear Presidents, Dear Prime Ministers, Dear Head of State,

The EU institutions and many Member States' governments have put in place over recent weeks extraordinary measures to support workers and companies facing the COVID-19 emergency.

Despite of these efforts, working people still suffer large-scale redundancies, unpaid salaries and income losses, unsafe working environments and violations to their rights and protections.

The most important measure social partners have been pushing for – short-time work and income compensation arrangements – the only measure that can keep people in their jobs and avoid massive unemployment and recession – is operational only in some Member States and with many limits.

In some countries it does not cover all workers in all sectors, in some countries it stops after few weeks and compensates only a limited part of salary, in some countries the resources available are not sufficient to reach all affected workers, and in some countries this measure simply does not exist and is not planned to be introduced.

Even in countries where the measures could address the emergency, not all employers are using it – either because the companies cannot survive the crisis due to a lack of liquidity and close down, or because they cannot access the measure (often the case for SMEs), or because they just prefer to lay off workers rather than engage in negotiations to apply short-time work arrangements.

The result of this situation is that trade unions at national and sectoral level are facing hundreds of thousands of workers becoming unemployed or losing their income without compensation. This is creating a dramatic social crisis that will very soon turn into an economic crisis from which it will be very difficult for Europe to recover.

The situation is even worse for non-standard and self-employed workers, who do not benefit from any support measures in most Member States. Not to mention frontier, migrant and undeclared workers. Sick leave payments very rarely compensate income losses for the whole period of recovery from the virus.

On top of this, some governments are introducing legislative initiatives to reduce trade union rights and workers' rights and protections, particularly related to dismissals, working time, minimum wages, collective agreements and social dialogue. The action put in place by national trade unions with the support of the ETUC has stopped so far these attempts, but we are not confident they will not be tried again.

Finally, we witness several attempts from unscrupulous employers to misuse the COVID-19 emergency to dismiss workers, cut their salaries and reduce their rights and protections.

In this context, we ask the institution you represent to take urgent action.

In particular:

- **We ask Member States** to refrain from any initiative aimed at reducing wages, rights and protections of workers, or to undermine social dialogue.
- **We ask Member States** to put urgently in place measures for short-time work and income compensation arrangements, covering all workers including non-standard/self-employed/precarious/undeclared workers – and all companies of any size and in all sectors.
- **We ask Member States** to provide access to unemployment benefits without restrictions or waiting periods, extend sick leave duration, extend its coverage to all workers and increase the level of income compensation.
- **We ask the European Commission** to urgently establish a European Scheme for Unemployment Reinsurance (SURE) to intervene not only in support of unemployment systems, but particularly for short-time work and income compensation arrangements, to enable such measures to be established, operational and universally accessible in all Member States.
- **We ask the European Council, the Eurogroup and the European Commission** to make sure that such a European Scheme is supported by sufficient financing, through the establishment of a common debt instrument.
- **We ask the ECB, all EU and national financial institutions, the European Commission and Member States** to set clear conditionalities for all types of funding provided to companies, the banking and financial sectors and services of general interest: no worker lay-offs, no reduction of wages and rights, no distribution of dividends to beneficiaries of public funding.

We are all living in a situation of unprecedented emergency. We have to take responsibility to protect people first and now, and to avoid massive unemployment, poverty and recession, which will put our democracies and the European Union at risk over the decade to come.

We thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,



Luca Visentini
General Secretary