



European Federation
of Building
and Woodworkers



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Worker involvement in managing the Covid-19 crisis

Joint statement of the European Trade Union Confederation ETUC and the European Trade Union Federations industriAll Europe, UNI Europa, EFFAT, EPSU, ETF, EFBWW

Time is running out: Concrete and rapid actions needed to enforce rights to worker involvement in anticipating and managing the COVID-19 crisis impact

Three months after the COVID-19 health crisis hit the world and thousands lost their lives, the European Union is now facing massive restructuring processes in different sectors.

Social dialogue, collective bargaining and worker involvement in the workplace are key to shape responsible restructuring processes.

Workers' rights to information, consultation and participation stemming from EU and national law must be enforced and complied with, as restructuring will affect their health, their working conditions and their jobs, and thus, before any decision is finalised.

This is a prerequisite for any restructurings to be properly anticipated and managed in a socially responsible way. Implementing the EU social partners' agreement on information and consultation rights for workers and civil servants in central government administrations by a Directive has become all the more urgent.

Unfortunately, business practice shows very limited to no involvement of worker and trade union representatives in strategic decision-making, if any.

It is unacceptable that – in this dramatic crisis – companies and managements do not comply with their legal obligations to inform and consult workers' representatives before taking decisions which will impact jobs and working conditions.

It is unacceptable that public authorities do not intervene to ensure that workers' rights in this area are fully enforced.

At one of the most critical times for European workers, their workplace representatives must – both at the national and the European level, and before any decision is taken – have:

- timely access to meaningful and comprehensive up-to-date information about the likely impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the company economic performance, on jobs and working conditions;
- enough time and resources to run in-depth assessment of the information provided with the support of economic/financial experts to work on alternatives to redundancies, closures, and any other measures which would negatively impact workers' interests;
- the genuine opportunity to discuss those alternatives with real decision-makers, including top management and board members (if any), who must provide a motivated response to the proposed alternatives and justification for the final decision which will be made;
- the guarantee that non-compliance with information, consultation and participation obligations warrant deterrent sanctions, i.e. the suspension of the management decision until workers' rights are properly respected.

We call on the European and national institutions to deliver concrete and rapid actions to guarantee the effective enforcement of workers' rights to be informed, consulted and to participate in decision-making before any decision is adopted. It must be clarified that the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis sparks the obligation for management to launch national and transnational information and consultation processes with worker representatives at the earliest convenience.

Time is running short and we insist on the urgency of the situation: the COVID-19 related massive restructuring plans have already started. Timely and quality social dialogue in the workplace is a necessary pillar to ensure a way out of the COVID-19 crisis in a socially responsible manner.

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