

World Day for Decent Work: A New Social Contract for Recovery and Resilience



(7 October 2020 The pandemic created enormous challenges for all workers, both in the public and private sectors. But it also created a moment to stop and acknowledge the significant weaknesses in a system that prioritises profit over people, and an opportunity to build back better. That is exactly what this year's World Day for Decent Work is about: A New Social Contract for Recovery and Resilience.

The European Council adopted the EU recovery plan in June, which should help some 60 million workers across the EU who need rapid investment into the economy to avoid unemployment. But in order to build back better, it is necessary to ensure that the funds are not only invested in creating jobs, but in creating quality jobs, with the full involvement of unions so workers' interests are protected.

More than anything, the crisis demonstrated our total reliance on public health systems and health and care workers. It also put an immense strain on the health

systems which were already crippling due to staff shortages, deteriorating working conditions, and increasingly stretched resources. In care jobs especially, the mainly female workers are highly underpaid and overworked. Investments in public health systems cannot be delayed any more. EU recovery funds must ensure that health and care workers are paid and recognised for their role in society, and that problems with staff shortages and working conditions are addressed.

Funding of, and investment into public services can no longer be portrayed as an expense to society. The coronavirus crisis revealed how fragile our communities are after a decade of austerity, cuts and corporate greed. If we are to be more resilient to future crises, significant funding is needed for social protection systems, municipalities and other public services, and for the workers they depend on.

More money also needs to be made available for the Just Transition Mechanism, the scheme that will ensure no one is left behind as we transition into a green economy. This shift is without a doubt an important way to build back better, but millions of workers could lose their jobs as sections of the economy adjust and adapt, and the cuts to the Just Transition Mechanism may mean there is not enough funding for re and up-skilling workers.

The ITUC is making the 29th October an official day of action to promote investment in care work and demand an increase in pay for care workers. In this framework, this year EPSU is holding a European Action Week in Healthcare and Social Services from 26th – 30th October, to fight for health and care beyond the pandemic.

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