



Ministers of Employment
Ministers of Social Affairs
Members of the Employment, Social Policy,
Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO)

Mr. Nicolas Schmit
Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

Bucharest, 4 May

Dear Presidency, Dear colleagues, Dear commissioner Schmit,

It was with great pleasure that I attended our first EPSCO videoconference this March and I look forward to better coordinate our efforts in fighting this pandemic in order to protect and reassure our citizens and restart our economies. This virus has no borders and does not pertain to one nationality or another. Therefore, we are all vulnerable and we can get through this only if we come together in strength and solidarity.

The crisis has changed all our lives in unimaginable ways, but some citizens have been more affected than others. We have many workers who are highly exposed to the virus as they are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response, putting themselves at risk for the benefit of the whole society. It is not only our medical staff, transport and delivery workers, waste disposal workers, supermarket sellers, social care workers, but also the seasonal workers.

Seasonal workers are an essential part of our labour market, with critical functions both during the crisis and the recovery period. They are also more vulnerable to abuses and mistreatment as well as to unstable health, sanitary and social security conditions, given the transient nature of their employment.

We all acknowledge that ensuring workers' rights, including of seasonal workers or others in precarious working conditions, is of great importance. In this regard, it is crucial to make sure that the existing legislation is properly enforced on the ground, in order to prevent our workers from being in a position of having to fight for their own rights.

I commend our tremendous effort in securing more protection for the workers through the adoption of the *Transparent and predictable working conditions Directive* last year. I believe that we should now look for a swifter transposition in order for this legislation to fulfil its goals, very much in demand these days.

Also, we sent a very strong message through the establishment of *the European Labour Authority*. Romania would like to see ELA operational and well-functioning as soon as possible.

At the same time, I would like to recall that we still have to make a collective effort in order to reach agreement on the revision of the *EU rules on the coordination of social security systems*. All these instruments will greatly facilitate labour mobility and safeguard the rights of workers in cross-border situations during the recovery period.

As we recently marked the World Day for Health and Safety, I would underline once more Romania's commitment to ensuring the highest standards of health and safety at work. Now, more than ever, we understand the importance of occupational safety and health. Therefore, we should do our best to prioritise it and enforce the existing legislation in our Member States after the significant drop in workplace inspections due to the pandemic.

Additionally, we should ensure the introduction of specific protective measures and equipment for workers exposed to COVID-19, as we cannot afford to reverse all the efforts that we have invested thus far. We must adjust to “the new normal” working environment, at least for the near future.

These measures should be enforced especially in key sectors, including those where seasonal workers or those involved in precarious work are employed, as they do not have the choice of working from home or teleworking. Seasonal workers, like many others, are especially vulnerable right now, and it is our duty to protect them adequately.

On this note, I would like to welcome the Commission’s Guide for a safe return to the workplace and the most recent letter from commissioner Schmit calling for the protection of seasonal workers’ rights.

Romania stands ready to participate actively in a constructive dialogue with the European Commission as well as Member States and the European Parliament on how to strengthen the principle of free movement of workers whilst adequately securing their rights.

This also means that we need to address the application of the current legislation and see if there is a need to make it more fitting for seasonal workers, as well as for other categories, which up until now have been more vulnerable to injustice and inadequate working conditions, such as platform workers or domestic workers.

Therefore, allow me to once more appeal to the European Commission, the Presidency and the Member States to come together in this difficult and uncertain time and use the power that our citizens have entrusted us in order to protect them and give them reassurance about the future. We must look closely at the situations of the most vulnerable workers, as this should be the starting point in consolidating our standards for appropriate working conditions.

I trust that you will join me in this endeavour to better protect European workers and I would like to assure you of my utmost availability.

Yours Sincerely,

Violeta Victoria ALEXANDRU

Minister

