

The Struggles of Migrant Delivery, Care & Agricultural Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the EU

BEST PRACTICES & POLICY DEMANDS



**WORKERS
WITHOUT
BORDERS**


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INTRODUCTION

Now is time to move on from precarious to solidary Europe

Europe depends on workers moving. Whether they are making deliveries, caring for elderly people, harvesting fruits and vegetables, working in construction, metal workers, lawyers, doctors, researchers, or in many other kinds of work. People who move country in Europe are essential to the wellbeing of everyone. At the same time, migrant workers are often at the frontlines of changes that are happening in the economy. So, it's not an accident that migrant workers are struggling first and the most as they are most affected by those changes in the economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities of these workers that preexisted the health crisis: mobile workers are more at risk of exploitation, less likely to be well represented by trade unions and national authorities, and have many specific needs when it comes to information, to social protection and access to health services, to secure housing and the possibility of crossing borders to care for their families. Regrettably, in the first months of the pandemic and in the summer of 2020, the priority of the European

Union was more on securing supply of labour and goods across borders, than reinforcing the rights and protections of vulnerable essential workers. In the second year of the pandemic, as Europe turns to recovery and rebuilding its economy, the priority needs to be removing precarity for workers who move.

The Social Pillar must ensure fair, decent and safe worker mobility in the EU

The Social Summit in Porto on the 7th May was an important occasion for the European Union to commit to building a Europe in which no one falls between the gaps, and show that it has learnt from a decade of crisis that indecent, insecure and underpaid work creates vulnerabilities for the whole society. The Covid-19 pandemic has especially put a spotlight on the conditions in the delivery, care and agricultural sector in Europe opening up a window of opportunity for policy changes in favor of migrant workers. The situations of third country nationals and undocumented migrants in Europe are particularly concerning, and no economy based on solidarity can be achieved without prioritizing the equal protection of these workers. The newly created European Labour Authority (ELA) should have a central role in



ensuring decent, fair and safe working conditions for all workers in the European Union, irrespective of their nationalities.

EU migrant workers' struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic

At European Alternatives in cooperation with our UK partner Another Europe Is Possible, as part of our European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM) funded project "Workers Without Borders", we ran a three-part series of online events from May to July 2021 to look specifically at the labour realities and struggles of migrant delivery, care and agricultural workers.

Based on the experience and knowledge of workers, researchers, organisers, representatives of unions and NGOs discussed during these events, this report offers insights into the legal vacuum of EU labour and social policy in three sectors which may exhibit some innovative practices but depend above all on a significant number of migrant workers: platform work, care work and agricultural work. This report also provides an overview of best practices in union organising of migrant and mobile workers and 12 concluding demands for labor and social policy changes at national and European level.

On the occasion of the recent launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) this report shows pathways to a future Europe of solidarity paying tribute to the rights of workers, migrants and EU mobile citizens.

DELIVERY WORKERS IN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY

Digital precarity in the Gig economy

»If you live in a big urban multicultural and multilingual center and you're a young person, you already have or will make this experience of digital precarity in what I call 'Erasmus Minus', an internship to precarious digital entrepreneurship.«

DR JOANNA BRONOWICKA

Sociologist, Activist & former Director of the Centre for Internet & Human Rights at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder

As lockdowns made grocery shopping more difficult during the Covid-19 pandemic, the hidden part of the digital platform economy quickly became visible on the empty streets: the riders delivering food, groceries and parcels to private households. It is these riders who are on the frontlines of the struggle for workers' rights in the digital age. They face a working reality which forces them to be self-employed and be paid per gig without minimum wage, vacation, sick leave, or the right to unionise and strike.

Indeed, the digital business models in the platform economy were made possible by exactly those gaps in labor protection law creating a new kind of 'digital precariousness'. But 'going solo' in this flexibilized digital work environment also draws on the new "digital spirit of capitalism" (Oliver Nachtwey) when workers are dreaming of being freed from their boss. What they find is very often not liberating, but symptomatic of a broken labor system where more and more jobs are done



by pseudo-autonomous 'self-entrepreneurs'. So, we have to face the fact that it is above all forced bogus self-employment which made the gig economy click.

Migrant workers who have often been the best educated in the communities of their home countries embody this mindset of self-entrepreneurship, as they are mobile, multicultural and multilingual, able to adapt to new environments and conditions, and migration itself can be seen as an 'enterprise'. Working anytime and anywhere without a boss seems to be one of the greatest myths of our time, and the one that migrant workers may be victim to the most. The situation is particularly difficult for those who are undocumented and can only defend themselves against these working conditions at great risk for fear of deportation.

'Algorithmic management' – the app as a boss – makes riders especially vulnerable when it comes to the use of technology for performance monitoring reasons. The data which is being collected 24/7 is used to control workers, e.g. to assign shifts and routes. At the same time riders often complain that they do not get any answers when they send an email to the office: "There's nobody listening to us."

Uniting migrant workers to strike back against the platform economy

»My typical shift was over 10 hours per day. With my own bike, I made about 100 kilometres. As the weather is not always sunny, I had to buy new equipment for my bike and my mobile phone very often – out of my pocket.«

ORRY MITTENMAYER

Former rider of Deliveroo & Foodora, Co-Founder of the "Liefern am Limit" rider campaign & Union Organizer at the Food & Service Workers Union in Germany (NGG)

In Germany, riders are organising themselves since 2017 in the trade union for food and catering workers NGG. The struggle began when the riders had nothing to lose as Deliveroo did not pay their salaries for two months in a row. One of the crucial experiences in the beginning was that a lot of those young workers have never experienced a 'normal work contract' and often they do not know anything about their labor rights which indicates a deterioration of values in the new world of work where self-employment is becoming the new norm.

Quickly, they learned that workers' resistance against big digital corporations is not futile. Nonetheless, especially the majority of migrant workers either did not know that labor unions could help or was afraid of organising and striking as union members in many dictatorships around the world face violence and persecution. In addition, labor unions still struggle to engage with migrants and self-employed workers.

On the one hand, it was union organisers who informed and educated the workers about their rights, and empowered them to organise. On the other hand, it were those workers themselves who had to build trust and solidarity in their community to found a workers council. The moment when they broke through the isolation in the workers' community was when they realized that the first task of organising was to organise meeting points in the cities and to communicate via WhatsApp groups to support each other.

Finally, they created public momentum through a social media awareness-raising campaign to alert and mobilise the public. At this point, the labor union started supporting them more strongly than before, pressuring decision-makers to make policy changes.



Now, as Lieferando is the major player in Germany, after Deliveroo and Foodora left the German market, the struggle goes on in different cities. Major learnings have been made when the riders and the union realized that they had to break through the language barrier by organising multilingual meetings and the fears of the riders to lose their job through collective trust-building work. As soon as the migrant riders got ownership over their unionising and started trusting that political participation is not a ‘rich man’s game’ they developed leadership capacity among themselves and built more collective power to challenge the system.

»We won in the courts against Uber. But there is still many things that are not given to these workers: minimum wage, safe and healthy working conditions, etc. This is not right. This system is exploiting precarious migrant workers in the gig economy.«

HENRY LOPEZ

General Secretary of the Independent Workers Union in Great Britain (IWGB)

Policy changes needed for mobile digital platform workers

In recent years, we see that more and more digital business models are only working on the backs of the workers. Enough court

rulings around Europe have shown that especially the new models of self-employment are bogus. Nonetheless, labor laws are still not keeping up with these new business models. Working conditions are still poor, labor unions, workers' collectives and some NGOs being the only ones trying to enforce the rights of the ‘unorganisable’, campaigning in the workplaces, in the streets, in the courts. Especially migrants often have no choice, because they need jobs to survive. During the Covid-19 pandemic it were those workers who kept countries running often without essential labor protection.

Fighting against bogus self-employment and factual fixed-term contracts, increasing pay, and ensuring democratic participation and co-determination in the workplace should be the main objectives for national and European legislators. But we need to extend labor policies beyond fighting bogus self-employment. Because if there is a spread in self-employment and low-paid work, we are all paying the price as there is less money going to the social security and pension funds. For this reason, the right to unionise and to strike should be granted to all self-employed people, even without formalised trade union organisation.

For black, indigenous and people of color and especially undocumented migrant workers labor anti-discrimination laws should ensure safe and healthy work conditions protecting workers from harassment and deportatation. As Dr Joanna Bronowicka said: “The fear of deportation is the thing that makes people accept the worst working conditions that are in place.” This goes both for EU citizens and non-EU citizens alike.

CARE WORKERS IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

A system of transnational exploitation of care workers

Care work is one of the longest-standing forms of work in human history, even though it is still largely performed invisibly and unpaid, mainly by women. When the Covid-19 pandemic is discussed as a global public health crisis, the underlying cause is often pushed into the background: the massive crisis of underfunding and austerity policies in care work in our societies. That is why it is not only female but predominantly migrant labor that keeps the health and care systems in the global north running. For decades, the public and even workers themselves have considered care work as something outside the "real economy", which has ultimately contributed to a massive devaluation and precarisation of the work done.

»People in richer countries became painfully aware that we have 'outsourced' a considerable share of their care work to temporary migrants. But despite being symbolically categorized as essential workers, they remained undervalued and precarious workers.«

DR SARAH SCHILLIGER

Migration & Gender Researcher at the University of
Bern & Activist in the Migrant Care Workers
Network "Respekt", Bern

Even if at some point in our lives all of us will need care and many people clapped for the care workers, the vulnerability of the system the Covid-19 crisis has shown did not lead to better working conditions for care workers and an improvement of the care infrastructure which is under extreme pressure.



Quickly national governments and the EU Commission re-established free movement of migrant essential workers. Especially care workers from Eastern Europe were flown in to Western European countries. These measures were presented as being in favor of the workers, but essentially their objective was to ensure the constant supply of a pan-European workforce, as there is not only a labor shortage in Western European care sectors but also an increasing number of elderly people needing care over the next decades.

On the side of live-in care workers, for example, the expanding transnational market of care leads to massive exploitation and isolation. The acute crisis at the beginning of the pandemic even worsened the situation which was already critical before. In Switzerland almost exclusively migrant care workers are employed as live-in carers in private households of elderly people, usually shuttling between their home countries and their workplaces in foreign countries. The initial travel restrictions disrupted many of those transnational care arrangements and threatened the continuous provision of care.

An increasing number of private transnational care placement agencies enforce short-term circular migration from Eastern European countries. Migrant care workers are either employed by those commercial profit-oriented leasing companies or directly in the private households. At the same time, especially self-employed care workers suffer because they are left unprotected by labor law regulation and often face extended working hours, restricted free-time, physical and emotional overwork, exposure to the virus, little or no access to health care, no sick leave, stress, anxiety, and loneliness while being on call around the clock.

Basically, Covid-19 lockdowns meant for those 'immobilised' migrant workers to be locked down in the workplace: stay at home meant to stay at work.

Not to mention that temporary care migrants were excluded from state-funded pandemic support. Even if many of those care workers would have liked to be around their families and friends in their home countries, this female EU care migration is fuelled by miserable working conditions and women's rights in CEE which makes very often even high-qualified women (teachers, researchers, NGO workers, artists, etc.) move to work as carers in other EU countries, but also domestic violence and homelessness push CEE women to move and to stay. In total, this dynamic leads to what Christa Wichterich calls the phenomenon of "care extractivism": the transnational "offloading" of social costs of the care crisis.

»For many Hungarians, it is much better to be a migrant carer in the UK than to be a local woman in Hungary.«

KINGA MILANKOVICS

Migrant Care Worker, Researcher, Trainer, Co-Founder at the Hekate Conscious Ageing Foundation & Coordinator of Osmosis CareNet in Hungary

Organising migrant care workers to foster mutual support and policy reform

Around Europe, there are a lot of grassroots initiatives, networks of solidarity and mutual support groups supported by labor unions trying to bring up policy reform in the migrant care sector. Especially in the German-speaking countries they are sharing information about their rights in WhatsApp and Facebook groups, discussing everyday challenges in weekly Zoom meetings, organising their communities in church meetings, and claiming their rights through strategic lawsuits. The "Respekt" network in Basel also uses "Know your rights" workshops, German classes as well as Forum theatre methods to build trust, develop leadership capacity and empower the female migrant



care workers in order to step out into the public sphere.

Unpaid overtime work and countless hours of night attendance are most often the main reasons to raise voice and file a lawsuit, as it happened in Switzerland in the cases of Agata Jaworska and Bozena Domanska who were supported by the local union vpod, their lawyers, other care workers, and even their clients. Establishing legal precedents, gaining publicity, empowering other care workers, and fighting against the devaluation of migrant care work are the main goals of this tactic.

»Nearly 90% of live-in care workers continue to be employed illegally, and even formal arrangements are very often irregular.«

MADLEN NIKOLOVA

Researcher at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Sheffield & Member of the Collective for Social Interventions, Sofia

In Austria, where around 50000 live-in care workers are migrants and only 900 non-migrants, grassroots initiatives like DREPT for Romanian care migrants or IG24 organise migrant care workers to fight indecent working conditions and build networks of

solidarity in case of abuses, violence and threats. For example, they collect donations on social media, hide colleagues if there are problems with agencies and clients, and provide psychological crisis intervention.

»Live-in care workers are registered as self-employed in Austria, but in fact it is a fake self-employment, because the care workers do not have any autonomy and independence. Everything is done without them having a say.«

FLAVIA MATEI

Architect working at the University of Art and Design, Linz, & Activist in the migrant live-in care workers Initiative "IG24" in Austria

IG24 was founded to organise live-in care workers to build an organising structure across nationalities, as Flavia Matei says: "An informal activist movement is not enough, as we want to have access to the negotiation table." On the one hand, workers need to inspire and support each other, on the other hand the existing deep sense of solidarity and the huge capacity for organic activism have to be transformed in order to impact political institutions and reforms.

Migrants like Flavia who already left their home countries a longer time ago and are well-integrated in the Austrian society can

play a crucial role not only to cross the language barrier but also with their capacity to act and influence political actors. At the same time, these nation-wide networks during the Covid-19 pandemic have experienced an urgent need for transnational grassroots networks consisting of NGOs, unions, researchers, activists, workers and migrants having connections to different countries.

Policy changes needed for migrant care workers

During the pandemic the extent of abuses took on a completely different scale (blackmailing, violence, threats, etc.), as reported by all our panelists. The EU should not only address those everyday life issues with its legislations, but also build a road to a caring Europe from a pan-European perspective. Because it is essentially the inequalities between East and West, bad health care systems and women's rights under attack in CEE & SEE that lead a transnational care system based on unsafe and unfair working conditions.

Bogus self-employment, continuous short-term contracts, extremely low wages as well as physical and emotional overwork require policy changes leading to a European social security and care system providing safety and health to everybody. But it is not only union organising, transnational feminist networking and organisation like "Faire Mobilität" in Germany which help care migrants to step out of the isolation to social and political participation. It is also political institutions on the national and European level which have to ensure a de-commercialisation of social security and public health systems in all countries around Europe.

If Europe wants to build a future care infrastructure providing care to everyone who needs it, this system should not drain out workers afraid of not being paid or losing

their jobs. A European public care infrastructure would then lead to the abolishment of unaccountable placement agencies and their often opaque and unaccountable chains of subcontractors around Europe making profits on the backs of the care workers.

AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

Seasonal work migration in agriculture during the Covid-19 pandemic

»The pandemic made seasonal labour migration in agriculture much more visible for all Europeans. In Italy or Spain it has been a public issue already for a much longer time.«

DOROTHEA BIABACK ANONG

Migration & Labour Researcher at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Hildesheim

One of the main problems which occurred at the beginning of the pandemic was the question how to ensure the harvesting of food and vegetables. Coordinated charter flight actions by German government, police and agricultural organisations brought workers from EU and non-EU countries to Germany. Other EU countries also established bilateral agreements with third countries like Georgia, despite the fact that the legal regime on season labor migration is embedded in several EU legislations.

What was striking is that the political discourse on seasonal work in agriculture shifted strongly during the Covid-19 pandemic. Even if agricultural businesses have been complaining about the lack of labour forces as an effect of work travel restrictions, the issue became even more visible during the pandemic. Surprisingly, this time migrant agricultural workers were not just seen as an economic factor, but also as exploited workers in the public. This led to the following political paradox: “During the



pandemic no one was against those workers to come to Germany”, as Dorothea Biaback Anong said.

The main reasons why there were a lot of arguments in favour of seasonal labour migration even from right-wing parties and politicians in the media are that seasonal workers are not seen as regular migrants with access to the welfare system. These often low-skilled workers suffer under a structural economic racism which legitimizes their exploitation. Especially third-country nationals like students from Ukraine who were covered by several guidelines on seasonal work issued by the EU have tremendous problems on the farms. Ukrainians, for example, very often come as students on an internship model which does not even guarantee minimum wage.

Even though there were more mentions of the miserable working conditions, the measures mostly targeted the employers' interests to flexibilize the labour law regulations further. The high lobbying power of agricultural businesses leads to a system of 'just-in-time migration' and 'work on demand' that enforces the businesses' needs for specific amounts of workers not being paid per hour but per piece. Often those workers either work far beyond 10 hours per day or they have to pause as long as the employer asks them to do so, when there is not enough work to be done.

Migrant agricultural workers and their support from labour unions

Even if there are crucial disparities in the EU, as in Southern Europe those workers are very often undocumented, whilst in Western Europe they are mostly employed for a short term, the problems of migrant agricultural workers are low wages with legal and illegal forms of deduction for accommodation, occupational health and safety, and the lack of social security and health insurance.

»During the pandemic we reached out to over 2500 agricultural workers through our joint field actions at airports and on farms.«

BENJAMIN LUIG

Campaign Coordinator for “Fair Mobility” and “Initiative Faire Landarbeit” by the European Migrant Workers Union (EMWU)

The “European Migrant Workers Union” (EMWU) led by the German trade union IG BAU offers legal advisory service for migrant agricultural workers as an attempt to respond to the massive problems for vulnerable migrant workers in agriculture. Joint coordinated field actions are conducted to establish first contacts and inform migrant workers about their rights. Through hotlines those workers can get advice and support for free in different languages. The IG BAU was the first labour union to introduce a new membership model especially tailored for mobile workers. It consists of a low membership fee for just one year and – crucially – a legal insurance from day 1.

Beside publishing a [German report by the “Initiative Faire Landarbeit”](#) the EMWU organises online events and advisory sessions with organisations in Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia etc. to reach out to migrant workers at the point of recruitment. This is necessary as the Covid-19 pandemic also alerted the media and civil societies in the sending countries. For example, an outcry in the Romanian public about the exploitation of Romanian workers in Germany led to a complaint by the Romanian labour ministry. Another example is Georgian workers documenting their working conditions on video which were published on Georgian media.

But public and media attention is not enough. As in different other sectors cross-border networks of solidarity between the workers are a crucial factor to break the depoliticising



and disempowering effects of isolation. For this reason, not only unions but also civil society organisations and partly even governmental institutions can play an important role to inform, support and connect workers already in the sending countries.

Policy changes needed for migrant agricultural workers

The EU Commission issued guidelines on seasonal work which only target third-country nationals, but EU citizens are also very often not covered by social protection and health care. National rules for occupational health and safety (e.g. work quarantine for workers from high-risk Covid-19 countries) and social security and health insurance are still insufficient after 1,5 years of the pandemic. A crucial problem is that there are very few joint inspections of the working conditions in agricultural businesses being carried out. The ELA should take a leading role in organising and coordinating those joint inspections around Europe against violations of workers' rights, human trafficking, etc. The ELA could also play a major role in supporting EU member states to cooperate more by sharing data about the social security and health insurance status of workers across borders.

In a broader framework, temporary short-term employment should be fought as far as possible, as it puts migrants in the situation to 'come and leave' without health insurance and other social rights. National (structurally racist) working hierarchies in the public discourse worsen this situation: now workers in Western Europe do not want to work in agriculture anymore, and this role shall be taken by low-skilled temporary migrants. But temporary migration schemes are not meeting the needs of migrant workers as they are a lot more vulnerable to exploitation, as wage differences inside and outside Europe force people to move for work – even if working conditions are miserable.

Moreover, it should be critically assessed where new seasonal labour projects emerge which cut down the opportunities to move to work in the EU with guaranteed social rights and safe legal status. If not, migrant workers will stay more susceptible and vulnerable to exploitative work schemes. A very good approach by the EU would be to protect and enforce the rights of seasonal migrant workers by linking EU subsidies for agricultural businesses not only to ecological criteria but also social and labour standards. If employers violate fundamental labour law, the EU should cut subsidies. It must be ensured that seasonal workers are not cut out of this social conditionality mechanism.

BEST PRACTICES IN MIGRANT WORKERS' ORGANISING

Many trade unions have worked for decades on building solidarity between workers coming from different countries, developing practices to ensure workers wherever they come from are adequately protected, can access their rights and can take part in collective bargaining to ensure their interests are advanced. Newer trade unions and other forms of workers organisation have developed in newer and highly mobile parts of the economy, including platform work and Tech workers, and have brought important innovations in forms of collective action and organisation.

There is an important need to share this knowledge of best practices between trade unions and increase collaboration across borders in a Europe where workers move. This includes:



Ensuring multilingual information on rights and possibilities of participation in union activities



Understanding and addressing intersectional forms of discrimination and risk arising from the combination of migration status, class, gender, sexual orientation, race, and cultural background



Introducing specific consultation and participation structures inside trade unions and in works councils for migrant workers to address their specific concerns



Assessing the specific accommodation needs of mobile workers and whether employer provided accommodation is adequate



Ensuring workers know where they are paying social security contributions and have an A1 certificate to prove their rights to social security protection, as well as helping mobile workers address any problems with claiming social security, or access to support measures of the government (such as paid furlough)



Enforcing work and health protection

measures in the COVID-19 crisis



Providing information to workers at the point of recruitment, as early as possible and preferably prior to their arriving in the country where they will work



Building solidarity and understanding between workers of different cultures, nationalities and backgrounds



Understanding residency requirements and the problems for mobile workers of low paid or temporary work and forms of self-employment when it comes to their residency rights



Strengthening the unionization of young workers and students (also from non-European countries) who increasingly work in unregulated and often also pseudo self-employed jobs



Advocating for an EU-wide adjustment of the living standard and an EU unemployment insurance preventing workers being played out against each other in the economic race to the bottom



Organising transnational campaigns and strikes against multinational corporations which have established particularly exploitative working conditions



Using strategic litigation to challenge discriminatory work practices and knowledge of relevant European legislation and avenues of redress

POLICY DEMANDS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS IN THE EU

In order to prevent moving to work meaning exposing oneself to more risk, the European Union should:

01 **Assess specific risks to mobile workers in the EU and take early action**

Many of the risks faced by mobile workers in Europe in the pandemic could have been identified and addressed prior to the emergency if adequate risk assessment had been done, and if workers and their trade unions representatives had been asked. The newly created European Labour Authority has a responsibility for risk assessment and should specifically assess risks to mobile workers, take these risks into account in joint inspections, and be swift in proposing action to mitigate risks for mobile workers to national authorities.

02 **Ensure decent working conditions for all**

The pandemic has revealed that in a number of sectors where mobile workers are particularly present working conditions and access to contractual rights like sick pay are often unacceptable and out of line with national and European standards. In addition to promoting decent wages, the European Union must put binding

requirements on member states to address these problems and take determined enforcement action against unscrupulous employers and employment agencies. The EU should consider introducing conditionality of European funding for farms and other employers where labour rights are not respected.

03 **Collect adequate data on migrant and mobile workers**

Adequate policy making starts from adequate data, but the European Union has a poor quality of data on how many of its workers have moved country and in what sectors.

04 **Protect both European Union citizens and third country nationals**

Unequal treatment of European and third country nationals creates downward pressure on rights and standards in the European economy, and risks setting workers against each other. The European Social Pillar and European Labour law should prevent discrimination in labour law with regard to origin and residence status.

05 **Respect women's labour rights in particular**

The pandemic has revealed the greater risks and burden often faced by female workers, particularly if they have moved country. The European Union should work not only towards equal pay for men and women, but equal rights and opportunities between genders, because women are at a significantly higher risk of having to do underpaid or unpaid work that is not legally regulated, and more often take responsibility for caring for children and parents outside of their paid work.

07 **Introduce an initiative on safe and healthy accommodation standards**

The pandemic has revealed inadequate and unsafe accommodation provided to many mobile workers. The European Commission should introduce an initiative on decent accommodation for mobile workers to ensure that where accommodation is provided by the employer, it meets binding minimum health and safety standards. Compliance with these standards must be strictly controlled.

06 **Assist young mobile workers who are particularly vulnerable**

The pandemic and the recession it has caused disproportionately affect the job prospects of young people, and many young people who have moved country for work have faced specific difficulties in the context of lockdowns and travel restrictions. European Union initiatives to boost employment and mobility need to appreciate that young workers have specific vulnerabilities arising from their stage of life, and ensure that they are adequately supported when looking for and taking up a job in another country with information and resources and a means to enforce their rights.

08 **Coordinate social security across EU member states**

Social security coordination in Europe remains one of the most complex areas of European employment law, and abuses by employers are frequent, leading to workers who do not know where they have social security rights or missing out on their rights altogether. The European Union must accelerate social security coordination and make it straightforward for workers to know what social security rights they have. The issuance of A1 certificates by employers to workers to prove their rights must be adequately enforced.

09 **Prevent abuses of agency workers' rights**

In many sectors such as care and construction work, the use of agency workers is increasingly common. Often workers are recruited by an agency in their home country before being sent to another country to work. This market is still largely unregulated and can lead to multiple abuses, with employment relationships being highly unclear. The European Union should introduce a legal instrument on agency and placement recruitment, based on Convention 181 of the ILO to ensure minimum standards, prevent abuse and ensure all workers are adequately made aware of their rights and nature of their employment contract at the point of recruitment. The European Commission could lead by example by ensuring that its own EURES job service has the highest standards and provides the most support possible to workers at recruitment stage and throughout the employment.

10 **Fight bogus self-employment**

The European Union should fight against bogus self-employment, building on the work of the Platform against Undeclared Work, ensuring coordination between European countries and proper enforcement, and ensuring the burden is put on the employer to correctly recognise employment relations rather than on individual workers.

11 **Support small-business owners, mini-jobbers and freelancers**

The COVID 19 crisis shows that small-business owners and solo freelancers in the arts, culture and creative industries have been particularly hard hit because they have had highly restricted income and at the same time are often overlooked by assistance programmes. The same applies to students, who are insufficiently socially protected in mini-jobs. At the European level, there should be a stronger fight for the rights of these workers alongside all other workers and as playing essential roles in culture in Europe.

12 **Ensure the right to unionize across borders**

Trade Unions play a crucial role in defending the rights of workers. In addition to ensuring all workers have the right to be helped by trade unions, the European Union should encourage the unionisation of workers in the most precarious parts of the economy, strengthen transborder unions and collaborations between unions.

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Workers Without Borders advocates for the European Union institutions to protect the rights of workers who move. In particular, it calls on the newly established European Labour Authority to take initiative to protect the rights of young workers and people in precarious forms of employment.

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