

NATIONAL RESPONSES TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Countries are taking steps to address the COVID-19 emergency and its negative effects on workers, the economy and society. Information about **national responses** can be found in the table below. For more details and the most recent updates, please check the information for each individual country under: <https://news.industrial-europe.eu/p/covid-19>

Country	Measures	Details
Austria	Tripartite Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 billion-EUR package to prevent insolvencies and unemployment. - Cancellation of the zero-deficit policy. - For parents taking up to three weeks off for childcare, the state will cover one third of the costs of the special childcare allowance.
	Short-time work model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 400 million euros for short-time work as part of the new 'Corona crisis fund' - Working time can be reduced to zero, meaning that companies can send their employees home and keep them employed.
Belgium	Lockdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies - regardless of their size - are obliged to organise telework for any function where this is possible without exception. - Companies that cannot do so will have to introduce social distancing measures in the workplace. If it is impossible to implement these obligations, companies will have to close down. - some workers are temporarily unemployed due to "force majeure" or for "economic reasons". In this case, they cannot go to work but their loss of income is partially compensated by an unemployment benefit (chomage partiel) of 70% of their salary. Both blue-collar and white-collar workers are entitled to this benefit. - Trade unions in industrial sectors are extremely concerned. The call for health to take precedence and allow for temporary unemployment for all workers.
Denmark	Tripartite Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The government offers to cover 75 percent of an employee's monthly salary, up to a limit of 23,000 DKK (3,400 U.S. dollars) per month, with the remaining 25 percent paid by the company. - For hourly workers, the wage compensation will be 90 percent of their salary, with a limit of 26,000 DDK (3,900 U.S. dollars) per month. - Companies are obliged to continue paying a full salary during the period and not fire any employee while retaining others to qualify for government help.

Germany	Law to facilitate short-time work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validity period: 1 March 2020 – 31 December 2021 - The request for short time working cannot be made solely by company management and must be negotiated and approved by the works council as part of a specific company agreement. - Companies will be able to benefit from this system as soon as 10% of their staff is affected by a marked drop in activity (30% at present). - Companies will be entirely exempt from paying social charges on hours not worked during periods of short time working. In 2019, these contributions were entirely the responsibility of employers. However, since 1 January 2020, and following the crisis in the automobile industry and the machine tool sector, the state has agreed to cover 50% of such charges. - Temporary workers are also eligible for short time working. - In companies with working time corridor arrangements backed up by time savings accounts with negative counting of hours, it will not be compulsory to wait for the hours accumulated to reach negative for short time working to be applied.
Italy	Memorandum of Understanding by social partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Industrial companies may resort to the so-called 'cassa integrazione' (technical unemployment) to reduce or suspend all or part of their business. - All employees who have a temperature above 37.5°C are prohibited from going to work. - Employers can measure the temperature of employees before they access company premises, while highlighting that this constitutes personal data which must therefore be processed in accordance with GDPR. - Companies must ensure daily cleaning and regular disinfection of production premises and sites and make hydroalcoholic gels available to workers. - If the organisation cannot guarantee the safe distance of one meter between workers, the company must provide masks, gloves, shirts, etc. - All services which are not directly linked to production (such as administration) will be closed or with employees working remotely. - Companies will have to set up a committee to guarantee the application and compliance with the protocol, with the participation of staff representatives.
	Decree Law ("Healing Italy")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extraordinary technical unemployment provisions that will apply nationwide (all workers, all sector, all regions). Affected companies will be able to access this provision for a maximum period of nine

		<p>weeks. In addition, employment terminations will be suspended from the moment the decree-law comes into effect, for a period of 60 days, and the legislation will include those whose employment contracts were terminated after 23 February.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees who continue to turn up to work, despite the pandemic situation and whose annual gross income is under €40,000 will receive a State-paid €100 tax free bonus payment for March (the amount will be paid on a pro rata basis depending on the number of days worked in March). The decree-law also specifies that those in Covid-19 related quarantine (in contact with the virus or a confirmed victim) should transition to sick leave provisions. - extraordinary parental leave of two weeks paid at 50% of salary has been put in place for one of a parental couple and only for children under 12 years of age. If children are aged between 12 and 16, then this leave can still be taken but will be unpaid. This measure will not apply if one of the parents is unemployed or not working. As an alternative to this extraordinary leave, families will be able to receive €600 for child care (rising to €1,000 for those in front line medical and law enforcement and public order services). These measures also apply to independent workers registered with their specific INPS scheme. - Compensation of €600 tax-free for March will be available for several independent and self-employed workers, of whom there are maybe up to 5 million according to a government statement and include independent workers not registered with professional associations. A specific €300 million fund is also being set up for those not eligible for the €600, such as those in liberal professions (freelance workers). - The decree law intends for significant emergency measures to bolster the health system, and support SMEs and small businesses, and shoring up other companies. In particular, taxation levies and social contributions have been suspended for both March and April for the most affected sectors (tourism, transport, catering, culture, sport, entertainment, etc.). - Tax breaks in the form of tax credits will be available for all businesses in all sectors undertaking 'deep-cleaning' measures and those endeavoring to keep workers safe.
	Social Partners' Joint Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available in Italian under: https://news.industrial-europe.eu/p/covid-19

Norway	New Crisis Measures: improved regulation for temporary lay-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - workers who are under the relevant, public support scheme (“permittering) receive unemployment benefits, but maintain their connection to their companies. This scheme only applies to companies in crisis because of reduced sales and activity. - workers keep full pay for the first 20 days. Their employers will only have to pay the first two days of their salaries, while the state will pick up the rest of the bill for the next 18 days. All employees will receive full pay for the first four weeks of a layoff with an upper limit of NOK 600,000 a year (60,000 EUR with a normal exchange rate). - Later, if Covid-19 is not contained and closures continue, laid-off workers will be receiving 80% of their pay up to around NOK 300,000 a year and 62.4% of the remaining amount up to NOK 600,000. - Earnings above NOK 600,000 a year won’t be compensated, but the state will cover a larger percentage of sick pay. Employers will only have to cover the first three days, with the state taking over the rest. - The minimum income required to be entitled to employment benefits is halved to NOK 75.000 the last twelve months. Apprentices who lose their jobs due to Covid-19, will have their remuneration upheld. - Sole proprietors and freelance workers, many of whom have seen their income vanish overnight, will now also qualify for state-financed sick pay after the fourth day, instead of after the sixteenth day, and they can apply for the equivalent of unemployment benefits amounting to 80 percent of their average earnings over the past three years, up to NOK 600,000. - The Norwegian government will set aside at least NOK 100 bn. in loan guarantees, credit line and other types of aid for impacted industries.
Poland	Fast-track legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recourse to telework can be made widespread during quarantine and suspected case monitoring situations. In addition, in order to anticipate and counter the spread of Covid-19 within a company or business, employers can require staff to work remotely, from home. - If schools are closed then parents can access specific childcare allowances if they are unable to work, albeit the allowance is restricted to a period of 14 days.
Portugal	Simplified short time working scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction of working time to 0% and no longer as a termination of the employment contract. This

		<p>concerns companies that cease their activity due to a break in the supply chain as well as those whose business records a 40% drop in turnover compared to the same period in 2019.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies that commenced business less than a year ago will be eligible for exceptional financial support for a maximum of six months. - Workers can be taken off work for one month, which can be renewed six times, for a maximum of six months. - The procedure provides for a reduction in salary. Workers will receive 66% of their salary up to a limit of €1,905. 70% of this reduced salary will be covered by social security, and the remaining 30% by the employer.
	Specific measures for companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Companies may opt to organise training during the quarantine and the period of short time working. A supplement of €131.64 per month will then be allocated to the worker. - Companies whose activity is suspended following a decision by the health authorities will be eligible for training aid. - If necessary, the state will support the payment of wages during the phase when activities are being resumed after closure by the health authority or at the end of the period of short time working by paying €635 for one month to each worker. - The last measure to support the production sector is the suspension of employers' social security contributions during the period of crisis.
	Green receipts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green receipts cover work on a task or assignment and correspond to a link of subordination that is not formalised through a contract. - The state has decided to grant aid of up to €438.81 per month to such workers who apply for it.
	Special measures for childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to the closure of schools, parents of children under 12 years old will be allowed to stay at home. - They will then receive 66% of their gross salary, as if they were on short-time work. - The 'green receipts' will in this case be able to receive 1/3 of their average income calculated on the total received during the 12 months prior to the suspension of their work.
Romania	Plan of economic measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The government will finance a state aid scheme of 300 million lei (approx. 62 million euro) to support the national strategic companies CFR (railway) and TAROM (airlines) - Exemption from the payment of social and healthcare contributions for a period of 3 months for employees of companies active in the fields of tourism, transport and entertainment.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the persons in isolation / quarantine, the payment of the utility bills and the suspension for 3 months of their monthly loan payments to banks will be ensured. Also, the budgets of the city halls will be supplemented by transfers from the state budget to ensure a minimum basket of food for those in isolation at home. - In case the coronavirus epidemic reaches the third stage (over 2000 confirmed cases), the payment of the monthly payment of bank loans for the entire population will be suspended for 3 months. - Employees of SMEs in sectors heavily affected by the negative impact of the coronavirus crisis will be exempted from paying contributions and income tax.
Spain	Decree law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for flexible work: employees can adapt their working time, reducing it to 0%. Teleworking is the primary method ahead of partial unemployment. If physical presence is required then legally compliant risk evaluations must be undertaken by the worker himself/herself. - More flexible mechanisms for partial unemployment: temporary employment regulation plans – the equivalent of partial unemployment – can be implemented through a shorter (5-7 days for companies / representation bodies to enable; 7 days for authorities to confirm) and more simplified procedure. - Partially unemployed workers to be fully covered: employees will receive full unemployment benefits, including those who do not fulfill the regular required conditions. This extraordinary unemployment benefit will not impact any future rights to regular unemployment benefits. - For reduced working situations, companies will pay the salary element corresponding to the time worked, and the public employment services will pay the rest (the actual compensation amount is calculated on the basis of 70% of a specific contribution basis for the first 180 days, and 50% thereafter). - Public schemes will fully cover social contributions for small businesses (independent workers with a small number of employees) and SMEs, and they will cover 75% of the contributions for companies with 50 or more staff. - Social contributions exemptions. Entrepreneurs will be exempt from some or all of the social contributions related to partial unemployment. The exemption is 100% for independent workers and SMEs (< 50 employees) and 75% for all others

		<p>that apply the partial unemployment procedures and commit to not terminating employment contracts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business access to loans. The decree law also provides credit guarantees and approvals of up to €100 billion that will enable between €150 billion and €200 billion to be made available to maintain operations for businesses in difficulties due to the health crisis. An additional €2 billion is being directed towards exporting businesses especially smaller, weaker companies such as SMES.
Sweden	Crisis package by the government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short-term layoffs: This proposal means that employers' wage costs can be halved, in that central government will cover a larger share of the costs. This model is similar to short-time work, but the subsidy level is significantly increased. The employee receives more than 90% of their wage. The proposal can be applied from the 16th of March and it runs throughout 2020. - The central government will assume the entire cost of all sick pay during April and May. Self-employed persons will also be compensated, as they can receive standardised sick pay for days 1–14. To reduce the risk of the virus spreading in society, the qualifying day for sick pay will be discontinued between 11 March and 31 May, in that central government will pay sickness benefit for the first day of sickness. - Companies can defer payment of employers' social security contributions, preliminary tax on salaries and value added tax that are reported monthly or quarterly. - Company payment respite covers tax payments for three months and is granted for up to 12 months. It is proposed that the new regulations take effect on 7 April 2020, but can be retroactively applied from 1 January 2020. This means that companies that have paid into their tax account for January to March can receive repayment of the tax from the Swedish Tax Agency. Payment respite will not be granted to companies that mismanage their finances or are in some other way unethical. Nor will respite be granted to companies that have large tax debts.
	Riksbank extends loans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Riksbank has announced that it is loaning up to SEK 500 billion to companies via the banks to safeguard credit supply.
	Finansinspektionen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Swedish financial supervisory authority has announced that it is lowering the countercyclical

		capital buffer to zero to safeguard a well-functioning credit supply.
United Kingdom	Measures as part of the new budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £7 billion (€7.9 billion) would be directed to helping businesses and private individuals - £2 billion (€2.3 billion) was being put aside to compensate companies with under 250 staff paying out Covid-19 related sick leave compensation, and that up to 2 million SMEs could well need access to this. - in line with the emergency legislative change, employees having to isolate (even is not presenting any symptoms) will receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) as of the first day of absence from work - workers in the gig economy have no access to SSP, the government intends to facilitate easier access to other social benefits, in particular the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) that will be eligible for claim as of the first day of quarantine. - Trade unions are outraged about the measure which leave millions of workers without safety.