



EN RLMM Anthology 2021

Transformations of Local and Regional Labour Markets across Europe in Pandemic and Post-pandemic times. Challenges for regional and local observatories

The EN RLMM publishes an Anthology of papers annually. The topic for the next call is „Transformations of local and regional labour markets across Europe in pandemic and post-pandemic times”. Several papers from the Anthology will be presented at the Annual Meeting of EN RLMM that will take place on 22 – 24 September 2021 in Timisoara, being the 16th in a series of successful conferences on the Regional Labour Market Monitoring.

The COVID-19 health crisis has turned into a global economic crisis, putting at risk the health, jobs, and incomes of millions of people around the world. The real economic impact dimension of the pandemic is unknown yet, but what we already know is that the impact is already different at the national, regional, and even local levels (Bailey et al., 2020). Implicitly the consequences for the labour market will follow the same pattern, having heterogeneous effects according to the different industrial branches (with some branches losing and others gaining and growing), the size of enterprises affected (SMEs seems to be the hardest hit by the confinement measures¹), the level of jobs affected by restrictive measures (lower-skilled jobs have a much higher risk of dissolution) and so on.

ILO (2020) shows that workplace closures are disrupting labour markets around the world, leading to working hour losses. Thus, the estimated total working-hour losses in the second quarter of 2020 (relative to the fourth quarter of 2019) was 17.3 %, or 495 million full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with lower-middle-income countries being the hardest hit, experiencing an estimated decline in working hours of 23.3 % (240 million FTE jobs). At the same time, Fana, Tolan, Torrejón, Urzi Brancati, and Fernández-Macías (2020) show that „The restrictions are having an important impact in nearly all European labour markets. The outcomes in different countries will vary depending on the specific restrictions imposed, but also on the design and characteristics of their institutions and their employment and economic policies. All these factors will result in unequal impacts, in terms of overall employment effects but also in terms of the types of jobs and workers affected.” We think that even more important in that context are the state aid programmes. The main findings of Fana et al. (2020) revealed that: „The impact of the COVID crisis is likely to concentrate on the most vulnerable segments of the working population. Restrictions on economic activity are mainly affecting workers with lower wages and worse employment conditions. The impact also appears to be significant for women and young workers. It is important to notice that these segments of the working population are also probably the ones with fewer resources available to face unemployment and sudden income losses. The challenges for unemployed people are likely to be quite significant in the short and medium term, since they will have to look for jobs in a context of subdued economic activity and employment scarcity.”

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/coronavirus-covid-19-sme-policy-responses-04440101/>



Digitalization and globalization have sparked radical shifts in how we live and work, but the pandemic crisis has accelerated these beyond anything we could have imagined². Pouliakas and Branka (2020) created a Covid-19 social distancing risk index (COV19R) based on skills descriptors that categorize jobs by their level of physical proximity to others and their digital intensity, and they estimated that about 45 million jobs in the EU-27 labour market (23% of total EU-27 employment) are faced with a very high risk of Covid-19 disruption and another 22% of the EU workforce – mostly medium to lower-skilled service provision – is exposed to some significant risk.

These changes raise essential questions about the precarity of our jobs, the support available if we're unable to work or retire, the skills we need for current and future jobs, the quality of those jobs, and what voice we have in shaping these outcomes, shows OECD³. Thus, many labour market stakeholders and organizations are raising the question “how the future of work will look like?” and are searching for solutions to tackle this global crisis impact (e.g. ILO Global Summit on COVID-19 and the World of Work - Building a better future of work⁴)

The different level and speed of labour market disruption at the regional and local level requires different measures and adaptive policies based on real-time evidence. For that purpose, regional and local labour market observatories are most appropriate instruments to further provide broad, reliable, and targeted information on the current and future developments of the labour markets in their region or locality for policy decision makers, taking into account all the topics mentioned above but not limiting to them. Thus, there is a need to rethink and adapt those tools to almost instant labor market disruptions caused by the pandemic for seeing how far can be observed these developments in the regional and local labour market observatories.

Consequently, we are looking for contributions trying to answer to the main questions of the moment:

Regional and local disparities in unemployment, economic inactivity, and job quality

- What unprecedented changes the pandemic crisis brought to regional and local labour markets? How far can be observed these developments in the regional and local labour market observatories?
- What is the level of disruption caused by the pandemic crisis considering different industrial branches, economic sectors, businesses, and job losses at the regional/local level? How impacted the state programmes these developments?
- What strategies for tackling this health and economic crisis and for supporting workers and employers were adopted by public employment services and policy decision makers at national, regional, and local levels? How the state aid programs impacted regional and local labour market? How much have inequalities deepened in the labor market at the regional and local level during this period?
- What categories of workers were more affected by confinement measures?
- How were/will be affected women by labour market disruption in the pandemic/post-pandemic times?
- In what way were and/or will be affected young workers by labour market disruption in the pandemic/post-pandemic times? How difficult it is for them to find quality jobs in these disruptive times? Do skills supply still matter for youth employability?

² <https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/#what-is-the-future-of-work>

³ <https://www.oecd.org/future-of-work/#what-is-the-future-of-work>

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/events/WCMS_747476/lang--en/index.htm



Pandemic and digital future

- How will the future of work look like after the pandemic times?
- What skills will be necessary for economic recovery after the pandemic?
- Is the accelerated digitalisation of labour market we are facing in this period a medium and long-term solution for the pandemic crisis? In what way?
- What is happening with workers that don't have digital skills or jobs that demand that type of skills?
- Is the pandemic deepening the digital divide? Which are the branches that lost or gained economically the most during the pandemic?
- How the pandemic has accelerated the shift towards a more digital world and what structural changes triggered on economic activities? What are the learnings from different perspectives (organisations, employees, labour market observatories)? How will they prepare themselves for the next uncertain situations?
- Which changes/effects will rest for a longer future? Which changes will only be during the pandemic?
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If you would like to submit a paper, please send the preliminary title of the contribution and a short abstract to Jenny Kipper (info@drkipper.de) by 20th January 2021. The full papers should be submitted to Jenny latest by 09th April 2021. If you have any further questions, please contact Jenny. We look forward to your contributions!

References

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- ILO (2020). ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Sixth edition. [ILO](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications-and-resources/working-papers/WP-102020-01-01-en)
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