

VIRTUAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

ETUC\EC\243\EN\06b

Agenda item 06b

**A new ETUC strategy for social partners'
involvement in the Recovery Plan - upgrade of the
ETUC Semester Toolkit**

(information note)

The ETUC Executive Committee is invited to take note of this document.

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A new ETUC strategy for social partners' involvement in the Recovery Plan - upgrade of the ETUC Semester Toolkit (information note)

A NEW ETUC STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL PARTNERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE RECOVERY PLAN (UPGRADE OF THE ETUC SEMESTER TOOLKIT)

TRADE UNION (TU) INVOLVEMENT IN THE ASGS 2021 AND RRF GUIDELINES

1. Member States have to present draft guidelines for their national Reforms and Resilience Plans (nRRP) as from 15th of October and a full nRRP by April the 30th, 2021.
2. The guidelines to implement the Recovery Plan (see ASGS 2021), and namely the Recovery and Resilience Fund, state that Member States should put in place robust coordination mechanisms, both for the planning and implementation phases and guarantee a broad dialogue with social partners.
3. According to the ASGS, Member States should engage as soon as possible in a broad policy dialogue, which includes social partners, to prepare their nRRP. This would increase both the ownership and the quality of national plans.
4. The European Commission itself should cooperate with European social partners when helping member states.
5. National plans have to report on how the social partners have been consulted and involved in designing the reforms included in the plan.
6. The first level of involvement relates to the consultation on the overall National Plans (Oct – Dec 2020)
7. A second level of involvement relates to components of the nRRPs. (2021 – 2023). A component is a single project of investment or a reform.
8. The involvement of social partners should be a milestone of the components (reforms and/or investments) for which social dialogue is meant to increase ownership, transparency and consistency with other policy areas.
9. The concept of “milestone” within a specific component of the nRRP makes sure that the involvement is **factual and demonstrated by outputs** (like a tripartite agreement).
10. Trade union must have their own agenda to make sure that their involvement is meaningful and that they are the really able to improve position of workers as a result of the implementation of the Recovery plan. The Council (through EMCO) should be in the position to deliver recommendations to countries that do not properly involve social partners.

TU INVOLVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN SEMESTER. PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED.

11. Involvement of social partners was completely overlooked at the start of the Semester and improved in the course of time, however it is still largely ineffective. Most frequent deficiencies concern the involvement of social partners at national level.
12. Trade unions made a great effort to improve their degree of involvement. Today, it is in 8 countries that trade union involvement in the Semester is not happening or is very poor as compared to 13 in 2018. However, in 2019 we recorded only 2 best practices when normally, we have at least 5 best practices every year.
13. The main lesson is that good involvement at European level and cross-border coordination can improve involvement at national level.

14. The second lesson is that the level of involvement depends too much on the discretionary power of governments and this does not reflect the overarching common interest of making a proper involvement of social partners happening.
15. We also learned that major shortages concerning trade union involvement are:
 - a. Lack of engagement by the decision makers (normally the Government)
 - b. Inadequate time frame for consultation
 - c. Other important elements such as access to documents/information, format of the consultation, material and immaterial capacities of social partners.

TARGETED SUPPORT TO “AT-RISK” COUNTRIES AND EMCO RECOMMENDATIONS

16. Transferring this experience to the RRF, we can predict that trade unions risk not being involved in the following countries:
 - a. High risk of non-involvement: Spain, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Romania, Austria, Lithuania, Cyprus
 - b. Risk of insufficient or only formal involvement: Bulgaria, Hungary, Estonia, Finland,
 - c. Other Countries where during the last 4 years at least in one-year social partners were excluded from consultation: Germany, Belgium, Slovakia, Ireland.
17. Over the course of time, EMCO and European Commission engaged with social partners to monitor and correct the lack of involvement of social partners in the implementation of Country Specific Recommendations. As a result, specific recommendations were produced with the aim of mainstreaming social dialogue in so called “social” CSR and asking governments to make additional efforts to use social dialogue to implement specific reforms or to promote social dialogue itself. On the 13th of November EMCO has scheduled a peer review exercise on social dialogue in the economic governance.
18. This exercise has some merits but has also critical aspects that have not yet been solved. If this exercise will continue in the RRF, it is necessary that such exercise is framed into a *preamble* agreement with European Social Partners. Trade unions must have their own agenda and ETUC will have a Resolution in December.

STRATEGY

19. ACTION 1: country targeted actions to ensure proper involvement
20. This action will take place from now to 1st of December 2020.
21. It remains the priority for ETUC and its members to work together to ensure that social partners (and namely trade unions) are involved in the most effective way at national level according to national laws and practices.
22. As far as the COVID-19 situation does not allow national missions, ETUC proposes to co-organise, **on demand and in close cooperation with its national affiliates**, webinars with all relevant stakeholders that have responsibilities to design, adopt and implement nRRP in their own country. ETUC will ask the European Commission to support this process contacting national governments, also through ESO.
23. At least 10 webinars will be organised using a template agenda and will pursue precise predefined objectives that reflect the objective of the ASGS and the ETUC Agenda.
24. Priorities will be given to countries where the trade union involvement is non-existent or insufficient (see point 18) and assistance will be tailor-made for each country.

25. Results will be discussed at EMCO on November 13th and we will ask that EMCO conclusions will include recommendations for countries that are hesitate to involve social partners. Best practices will be flagged. EMCO Conclusions will be submitted to the Council for follow up.
26. ACTION 2: monitoring social partners involvement at national level to multiply best practices and remove obstacles or to put remedy to unsatisfactory situations. Governments are demanded to report in their draft nRRP when, how and on what social partners were consulted and how they took into account their opinion.
27. ACTION 3: For countries where social partners were not consulted, the European Commission - in cooperation with the ETUC - will organise country-specific consultations between January and March, when drafting the analytical documents assessing the substance of the recovery and resilience plans.
28. ACTION 4 End of March: peer-review exercise with European Commission on the involvement of social partners in the recovery plan (and EMCO ?)

A NEW TOOLKIT

29. We have to cope with a new policy framework (Recovery Plan), and a new process (Semester completely revisited) and a new interlocutor (central task force instead of DG EMPL).
30. The process remains country-centred responding to strict intergovernmental logistics.
31. Time is tight, we have to deliver quickly, in a coordinated manner, and develop a common field of work/language with the European Commission.

ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED:

32. Reinforcing the Trade Union Semester Liaison Officers' network with the Recovery and Investment Ad Hoc Group that will be permanently active as far as it will be necessary.
33. A trade union report on "TU Priorities for investments and reforms in the framework of the RRF, with a specific attention to just transitions". ETUC's Report will include investment gaps and needs with country-specific inputs for immediate use of RRF country desks. The first version to be available by mid-November and continuously updated.
34. ETUC will develop a tool to monitor, in real time, involvement at national level and its effectiveness.
35. Reinforcing the EST website to ensure a continuous exchange of and access to information.