

Labour recovery from the pandemic and developments in the European capitals

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Union Institute



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Report

23 and 24 February 2021, online

The 2021 conference of the European Capitals Trade Union Network (ECTUN) took place during the global Covid-19 pandemic, online, and not in the foreseen capital: Belgrade.

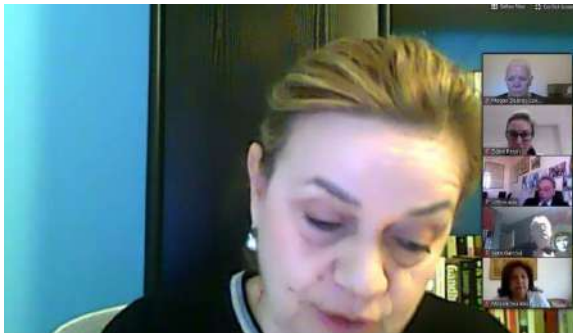
Trade Unionists from 13 European capitals (Athens, Belgrade, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Moscow, Nicosia, Paris, Rome, Sofia, Valletta) registered, representing 19 Organizations and were joined by Luca Visentini and Liina Carr (ETUC), and Vera Dos Santos Costa and Ulisses Garrido (ETUI). In total 42 people attended the Conference.

Some delegates suffered intermittently from a weaker wifi signal than ideal, but overall the technology (supported by conference technology company ICG) worked well.

Tuesday 23 February 2021

Christina Theochari, Coordinator of the Permanent Committee, welcomed delegates, saying it was a pleasure and a relief to see you! The conference is organised by the ETUI with the support of the ETUC and CGTP Lisbon.

Last year we left Helsinki with an action plan on climate change – we could never have imagined what would follow – a global pandemic and millions of lives lost, quarantine, lockdowns, masks



etc. Our sympathy and solidarity to all those who have suffered losses.

So now we look at the impacts on our capital cities from the view of trade unions and labour. We have honoured guests, and two workshops. We will develop plans and joint actions to ensure the future is not the same as the past and to reinforce our role to help our members to overcome the problems they face. The Action Plan we develop will be implemented until the next conference in Belgrade.

Christina then introduced **Vera Dos Santos Costa**, ETUI Director.



Vera said that we have to be very resilient to prevent austerity being the response to the pandemic. It may be an opportunity for a substantial rethink of approaches and there are signs things might be moving in that direction. Trade unions must be involved in the development of recovery plans.

So, ETUI has launched a series of actions to support trade unions in this work and this conference is part of these actions. Capital cities are central. What is next? ETUI is pleased to support the ECTUN network in envisaging how we can respond and turn new realities into new opportunities.

Christina thanked Vera and introduced **Liberio Domingues**, General Secretary of CGTP Lisbon.



Liberio welcomed delegates – we are separated physically and won't have the euphoria of meeting, in spite of communication tools, but we continue to defend the life and quality of life of workers. The period is very demanding and marked by the pandemic. But we can see that workers have been impacted most by pandemic on lives and working conditions. One thing that is critical is that we can see huge inequalities getting worse day by day.

The consequences are different according to regions but we can see the need from trade unions for stimulation, action and intervention to respond to new situations and conditions. Such as the generalisation and proliferation of homeworking and the impact of this – particularly in the capital cities. We need to control the many issues linked to this way of working – there is a huge impact on all including the lack of interaction with colleagues in the workplace. How can we continue to maintain contact? Our role as trade unions? How are we to continue to inform and defend the social and political aspect of work.

In the name of the common good governments are imposing the suspension of fundamental freedoms and rights and trade unions are increasingly targeted with a weakening of democracy and a subtle increase in authoritarianism – how can trade unions support health whilst maintaining democracy? We affirm that the social and economic consequences of the virus go beyond the virus itself.

We need to take our responsibilities seriously and highlight the disastrous consequences of policies that have increased precariousness so we have to

question the neo-liberal policies that encouraged lack of investment in public services like health and public transport.

The crisis has made us very vulnerable – coming out will involve fighting the pandemic and using evidence of changes as showing the urgency of the need for political change. We need to identify how we will do this.

Conclusions – Portugal took on the presidency of the EU at the beginning of this year – a presidency that has seen the progression of the recovery plan from the EU. CGTP will insist that subsidies are non-repayable and must continue to defend salaries, rights, and a fairer distribution of wealth – we must carry hope for a better future, the central importance of workers – for a Europe of peace, democracy and social justice.

Christina said the floor is open to colleagues for introductory remarks.



Kostas Koulouris, Athens. Workers have been at the forefront of the battle in hospitals and elsewhere. Trade union research has shown that 50% of workers report their income fell. Working at home has impacted on many aspects. The crisis can't be an excuse to change the laws for workers, so we seek to strengthen such laws and develop them to deal with the new issues exposed by the crisis.

Megan Dobney, London. Now in third lockdown with over 14,000 deaths in London alone. Directive continues to be work at home "when possible", but many can't. The real meaning of "key workers" has been clarified – many are low paid workers.

The reality of the gig economy has been exposed yet again. Black and ethnic minority Londoners have died in greater proportion exposing the real meaning of a racist society and the impact of poverty on our children is shown more clearly.



Jorge Maeso Carmona, Madrid. A massive labour crisis has particularly affect women and insecure jobs. Workers have supported working from home but it has highlighted real problems including the lack of social contact. Smart working has led to a loss of jobs – canteens have closed for example. One solution would be to reduce working hours whilst keeping wages stable.

Jason Deguara, La Valletta. Malta had seven years of economic growth and a Labour government – this helped. In March a Covid wage supplement was introduced. 70,000 work directly in tourism – many were foreign workers – between 7,000 and 10,000 went to their country of origin so we are now discussing how to get them back for June/July. The vaccination programme is going well.

Mikhail Antonsev, Moscow. Russian trade union leader Shmakov said that any enterprise that isn't interacting with trade unions is threatening the life of the people, and 2021 has been designated as the year of strengthening trade union organisation. It is still a critical situation – teachers' workload increases and working on computers all day is tiring. MTUF membership



stays at about one million and 35% are young people, so youth initiative projects are developing. Trade unions need new ideas alongside proven effective techniques.



Jacques Borensztein, Paris. The risks of instability and individualisation in work relations grow whilst trade unions defend collective rights. There is a 31% increase in unemployment in under-25s as unemployment in restaurants and hotels accelerates. Our role is to defend collective rights but demonstrations have been forbidden and hospitals have closed beds when they are needed. We need to support workers internationally – the vaccine must be for the common good.



Nuno Almeida, Lisbon. Thousands have been made redundant and 1,000s of families have lost their income. Workload on those providing public

services is huge impacting on work/life balance. We had to work to counter measures that would be a real detriment to workers such as the suspension of collective bargaining. 1st May 2020 was attacked as an attack on health and there were attempts to criminalise workers.



Panikos Kadis, Nicosia. Impacts on retail and tourism – shops were closed but rents had to be paid. We are developing a plan to save jobs through social dialogue – protecting collective agreements is vital. New working methods like teleworking have been implemented and home working has increased. Now most companies and schools are open. Airports open 1 March so we hope for less poverty.

Luis Miguel Lopez, Madrid. Supermarket workers were not praised as much as hospital cleaners – we pay homage to all these workers. In Madrid we have three right wing parties (including one far right) and they seek to avoid measures agreed in other parts of Spain. Track and trace is inadequate as is the health service. 150,000 hospitality and tourism workers are furloughed – precarious jobs and many are women. The government sent 150 million euros to Madrid – we don't know how this money has been used. We are arguing for collective agreements for homeworkers so workers have a choice.

Olivier Clement, Paris. Auto production around Paris has been heavily affected, plus the aeronautical sector, airports and hotels – leading to large numbers of workers unemployed or furloughed. We have had a successful outcome to negotiations in the health care sector with a salary increase. We are monitoring regional aspects of the government recovery plan and looking for help



for people facing job losses in heavily polluting industries. We want to set up an observatory on remote working.



Carlo Costantini, Rome. Around 100,000 deaths in Italy. Telework has allowed many workers to keep their jobs, but it has to be regulated. We are concerned we will lose contact with workers working from home. Jobs have been lost – particularly fixed term contracts and in the gig economy. Schools and nurseries have been closed and many mothers had to give up their jobs. The EU will provide billions of euros and we are focusing on training, healthcare, reducing labour costs and taxes on workers, and a benefits structure to cover all workers.



Yann Garroui, Paris. The pandemic has worsened existing unfair conditions – with more foodbanks

for instance – and has led to an economic crisis and an increase in poverty and precariousness. Some businesses have benefitted and implemented redundancies whilst receiving tax credits. Working from home is new to many companies but can't become the norm; workers require more protection – environmental and mental health. The lockdown and police violence are preventing us from expressing ourselves and trade unions are struggling to make ourselves heard.



Natale Di Cola, Rome. The categories most strongly hit are young people – the education system is outdated and schools closed for a long time with a worsening situation in terms of violence and suicide. There have been a number of cases of women being killed. Tourism is very important – we expect to get back to where we were by 2025 so businesses are changing. Wages are dropping and more people are asking for food parcels. We need a contribution from the population as a whole.

Luca Visentini, ETUC General Secretary spoke on “The European dimension of the crisis and consequences for the European workers. Challenges and strategy for exceptional times. Pandemic and Democracy: a hidden threat?”

The ETUC and ETUI strongly support your network and at this time in the pandemic – I've followed very intently the exchanges so we understand what's going on on the ground – so we can support you well and so your knowledge is heard. This helps the union strategy.



We have pushed forward many proposals towards the different institutions – I will try and mention them briefly.

Essential workers – means a lot of things – healthcare sector at the forefront of the pandemic – called heroes of the pandemic. Flattering but essential workers have not been protected properly. Also food deliveries, and goods delivery, transport, shops – all needed. They've seen their working conditions deteriorating over time and salaries decreasing, and their health at risk. It is an emergency in terms of protecting these people.

All the workers who have been obliged to work from home and many suspended from work. But also those sacked from work. In some cases we don't even have statistics for these. People with traditional contracts have employment protection, but many in the gig economy have lost jobs with no protection or benefits. Even emergency measures supporting those suspended have reached only part of the people in need. 15-20 million workers unemployed in Europe but many not in official figures. 44m workers in EU and associated countries suspended. We might need to increase these figures by 20-30%. So 100m people in difficulties. Only 60-70% have benefited from some kind of income support. Emergency measures that have covered those must be appropriate. So in France 84%, but in general, income compensation is around 60% and covers only part of the people needing it.

An additional problem: some countries are tempted or pushed to withdraw these support measures. Countries have seen incredible

increases in public debt added to previous debt from financial crisis.

There will not be a normal economic situation – not before the end of this year – so measures must be extended and increased and improved.

This is a huge battle for the European trade union movement. We must ensure workers are not left behind or killed by the pandemic. It is the most important emergency we are dealing with and the ETUC is at your disposal for assistance.

We must reflect on what shape the recovery should take. We need to prepare for this and ensure it is not back to business as usual – no austerity or cuts that created so much damage in the previous period. Must be built on a more sustainable economic model – social justice, increasing social protection systems, a just transition to a greener economy, and ensuring social partners including trade unions are at the centre of this.

We need to be consulted and included in all the recovery plans in each country – in and outside of the EU. Only a few governments are including trade unions in their discussions. So we are insisting that money from EU should be conditional on trade union involvement and workers' rights, as well as social justice and environmental rights.

To make sure we need to participate in shaping the recovery model, at the same time we need to ensure we can introduce new rules and obligations for companies and governments to protect workers' rights. We have to defend our social model. Teleworking – the right to disconnect – vital now as the number increases dramatically and half will continue to do at least some teleworking in the future. We need Health & Safety guarantees for working from home – no increase in hours without salary compensation. So new laws and new European directives – a new European compact for workers' social rights.

The European Commission is pushing an Action Plan next week on the European Pillar of Social

Rights. We want it to be binding so an Action Plan will be discussed in Portugal in May, our role will be super important to ensure new legislation to improve working and living conditions across Europe.

These three elements are the three big pillars in our strategy.

But also other things – vaccination policy... it is becoming a real problem.

What's going on is a scandal. We called for vaccines to be universally accessible and prioritised, free of charge, no excessive profits for companies. Exactly the opposite has happened. We are putting enormous pressure on all institutions to ensure obstacles are overcome, each must mobilise on the ground to resolve the problem – and our health care systems must be reinforced in each country. The pandemic has shown that previous austerity cuts have been wrong and health care systems have not coped.

The problem of democracy – it is at risk as are trade union rights. Too many governments have misused the pandemic to undermine workers' rights.

A limitation of liberties was necessary to sort the pandemic, but demonstrations have been suppressed in many countries. This will boost the far right if we don't react in each country. The trade union movement cannot be indifferent in defence of democracy.

Christina thanked Luca for his contribution and opened the floor to comments and questions.

Dragan Todorovic, President of CATUB in Belgrade, regretted that the conference hadn't been able to take place in his city as planned. And the sun is shining in Belgrade! They have, of course, been working every day throughout the pandemic and in contact with members.

The crisis had offered some positives as well as negatives – the opportunity to increase the number of members, working to protect workers



in the city. Experience showed that when workers are organised in their trade union they are less badly affected than those not so protected.

In Belgrade we are hoping and looking forward – free market and liberal responses are not the answer. What will the next crisis be? We have had a new definition of labour and new ways of working.

We have had financial support from the state; on the other hand the large multinational companies like Amazon are making larger profits – bigger than the budgets of many countries.

We highlight the importance of solidarity between trade unions – this was very important at the start of the pandemic. As an accession country, Serbia is hoping for help on vaccinations from the EU – currently 15% of the country is vaccinated.



Jason Deguara, La Valletta. You mentioned the European Pillar of Social Rights – now is the right time to make this happen. How will the ETUC push this? Binding agreements need to be implemented – how shall we ensure they are?

Laurent Pagnier, Paris. Whilst the capitalists are profiting there is the issue of the regression of democracy. In what framework can we speak of



democracy when it's receding? And for universal vaccination – we need a campaign to remove the patents on vaccines so they can be rolled out across the world.



Jaime Cedrun Lopez, Madrid We need unity and solidarity in the ETUC – the pandemic hasn't affected all countries the same – we don't need a two or three tier Europe. I would like Luca to talk about participatory systems – not all countries are involving trade unions in their recovery plans. We want reforms in some sectors, for instance healthcare, not enough resource to cope with the pandemic.



Pier Luigi Talamo, Rome. Luca referred to trade union consultation and the management of funds – this is not happening in Italy or Rome. How can national unions and the ETUC better cooperate?

Luca replies: Some points will be dealt with by Liina Carr this afternoon. On EU money to countries not yet in the EU – there are some funds earmarked for candidate countries – for both recovery and vaccines.

Regarding the European Pillar and how to make it binding. We need to get all governments to vote to make the Action Plan binding – so trade union confederations must work on this. But the Action Plan is not enough – we are asking for clear legislative initiatives on a wide range of measures.

Regarding democracy – we are trying to mobilise with PERC and the ITUC to make it a global campaign – particularly now they are affected by the pandemic. The Lisbon conference in July will be a good opportunity to discuss this.

The same for vaccines – at global and European levels. They should be free and available globally, no excessive profits, and release the patents.

Jaime from the CCOO is correct – not all countries are affected the same. We are monitoring closely what is going on in Spain. The European Commission is pressurising the Spanish government to implement harsh measures to get the money. We are working with UGT and CCOO nationally on this imposition of controls on the Spanish government.

Trade unions at national level are working together to ensure the involvement of trade unions at national level with government recovery plans; restructures relating to the pandemic must be a just transition – and we need to be vigilant on the processes.

Christina thanked Luca for his presence and continuing support.

Tuesday 23 February in the afternoon

The conference broke up into four language-based workgroups (IT/EN, SP/PT/FR, FR/EN, EN) to consider the “Situation and consequences for workers in European capital cities and regions” looking at the following points:

- Thinking about the situation created in your capital cities due to pandemic, which are the most critical problems?
- How has the pandemic affected labour rights, employment, social dialogue and collective bargaining?
- How have you tackled the impact on labour income, the widespread impoverishment and the deepening of inequalities?
- What was the impact on precarious workers, the gig economy and the self-employed?
- How unions responded to the accelerated digitalization and teleworking regarding labour rights, EU Directive and labour code implementation, working conditions, the right to disconnect etc?
- What is the impact on public services: health, transport, distribution and supply, cleaning etc?
- How are unions dealing with all these challenges?

Each group reported back their discussions – there was much overlap of course and key issues reported were: problems with the health services and delays in the treatment of non-Covid illnesses such as cancer; PPE and food supply issues; increase in unemployment; tourism, as a key industry, affected in many capitals; rise of telework/working for home with few new protections; restrictions on travel and to public transport; migrant workers unable to return to work or leave for home; furlough schemes; precarious and low-paid workers very badly affected; employers changing contracts; a disproportionate impact on women, Black, and young workers; growth of delivery industry.

The work that ECTUN did on sharing experiences and trade union responses at the beginning of the pandemic was extremely useful and well received by all delegates.

The chair then introduced **Liina Carr** ETUC Confederal Secretary to speak on “The EU Recovery Plan and Multiannual Financial



Framework 2021-2027, the ETUC campaign and the capitals/regions' needs".

Liina said she was in listening mode – the ETUC gets national information, but it is good to hear what your needs are at the regional level.

Recovery and Resilience Facility and MFF – what is happening? It's the usual EU instrument that comes along every seven years – and is being debated as usual. The Recovery Plan has been put in place as an exceptional emergency measure – additional to the MFF. What are the aims for the ETUC? It aims to mobilise billions of euros – for us it is to counteract the economic recession from the Covid crisis, and to obtain a fair and green transformation for the economy.

The Recovery Fund is to kick start the European economy. All member states have to submit national recovery plans by the end of April – so there is very little time.

When the initial regulations were proposed we were quite critical – there were many problems so we started working with the European Parliament to get amendments in on collective bargaining, to strengthen the social dimension, and getting social partners in to the plans.

We wanted macroeconomic conditionalities out of it – they could have limited member states' abilities to invest – unfortunately it has stayed in there but it is softened. It may not be used but the threat is there. There are also some numerical obligations on member states – they must allocate at least 37% of their national plans to the climate challenge. Another one is 20% for digitalisation.



But no requirement on the socialisation unfortunately.

Christina thanked Liina and invited London and Moscow to make presentations on Recovery Plans in their countries as they are not part of the EU.



Mikhail Antonov reported on actions taken by MTUF during the Covid crisis. They had seen the rise of populism and extremism which destabilises the situation in many countries.

In Moscow – we had an important mission last spring to acknowledge Covid as a professional illness. Acknowledged by the president so now medical personnel are included in the disability factor list.

All trade union committees started to operate online. It complicated our work but working online brought new evolution, worked more closely with young people. Can easily contact our workers.

It is important that MTUF has concluded agreements with several organisations – this may help set up more progress for Moscow workers. Now employers often shorten work duration and shifts reducing workers' wages and bonuses so we

can see a rising conflict so we are speaking in favour of a Moscow arbitration court for pre-trial reconciliation.

Medical workers are being put in a forward situation. We initiated solidarity actions and stocked up on supplies for them and the Russian Sputnik vaccine is provided for these heroic people.

A million people have had the vaccine free of charge. From the beginning the city authorities have been supporting Moscow business – online and telephone services. In spring four packages of support measures have been adopted helping many businesses to survive.

Want to thank Christina and Luca – for the helpful information from ECTUN and the ETUC.

We support the proposals made by Luca – we need a roadmap for transition to a new economy without austerity measures.

We need a joint programme of activity – it is important to inform each other of what is going on – no fake news or creating fake enemy images – it distracts us from our struggle for workers' rights.

Megan Dobney London, reported we don't have a national recovery plan – or not as you would know it. We have, from last night, a "roadmap" as presented by the prime minister (a plan for the removal of current restrictions on society brought in to control the pandemic). Next week we will have a presentation from the Chancellor of the Exchequer of his budget for the next period. This will have to deal with two massive items relating to the pandemic: whether the government will continue the furlough scheme – the current scheme is scheduled to finish at the end of April. The second is whether the government will increase the pathetic level of state support for workers who are off work because of sickness, or because they are instructed to isolate when they have been in contact with people with Covid. It may be an extraordinary idea to comrades here that one government, the UK government, deals with these issues separately – but they do.

There is a nationally organised London Transition Board chaired by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Its role is to coordinate the emergence from the lockdown. Trade unions are not represented on it.

The Mayor of London has a Recovery Board – and the TUC Regional Secretary sits on it – and it is looking at all the wider issues such as good work for all Londoners, a green recovery, the creation of new jobs to replace those lost – and so on.

At national level the TUC has submitted its "Workers' Budget" to the Chancellor demanding that the furlough scheme is extended to the end of the year and that sick pay should be increased. They are also demanding changes to the benefits system – shown to be totally inadequate – and that key public workers should get a pay increase.

The demands are also to the real economic future of the country – including green infrastructure spending and an aid package to assist industry struggling with the reality of not being in the single market and the trade barriers that creates.

Finally, commenting on the fact that the pandemic has revealed (again, what we knew all along) the depth of inequalities in the country – the structural racism, sexism and discrimination against disabled people that has been shown up more clearly by the pandemic – measures to overcome this.

Under the cover of the pandemic (and Brexit), our government closed parliament for a period, promoted laws that were contrary to international law, and abused its powers within law. It misused emergency powers to spend billions of pounds illegally – that is without the proper oversight – and gave many and massive contracts to its political and personal friends.

Christina opened the floor to questions and comments.

Jorge Maeso Carmona Madrid – a question with regards to the presentation. Luca declared that there is pressure from the EU on Spain for Spain to

develop austerity measures. Is it true? The trade unions are concerned – where will the cuts come? If there are to be budget cuts we need to know where they will be applied. Will we need to pay this back or will there be a debt in perpetuity? This will have consequences for the EU – we don't want austerity as we have seen in Spain or Greece.



Isabel Vilabella Tellado Madrid – will there need to be proof that there has been dialogue with the trade unions?

Liina responded – we are having a meeting tomorrow morning to discuss this issue with Spanish unions. The pressure from the EU is to issue the country specific issues from 2019 to 2020. It is in the guidelines as to how national governments have to compose their actions in their resilience plans.

There is no pressure as far as I know from the EC for budget cuts. Even the eurocrats realise that if you go out now with demands for budget cuts you will be politically dead. Conditions for macroeconomic conditionality are complex and many bodies have a say in it. So it would take a long time for such conditionalities to be applied. The danger lies in the country specific recommendations from 2019 and 2020. There is also a positive recommendation to Spain to implement to reduce the number of short contracts. There is much available in grants and also money available in loans that would have to be paid back. Some economists argue it should be a loan not paid back as interest rates are so low, others say inflation will eventually cancel out the debt.

So at the moment there are no direct demands for budget cuts from the EC to Spain.

Wednesday 24 February

The conference began in the same workshop groups to consider “The future cannot be the same: what has to change in European capitals”

- What is our vision?
- What are our priorities?
- What are our proposals?
- What ECTUN joint actions could be undertaken?

Following the workshops, moderators met with the Permanent Committee to draw up an Action Plan for discussion by participants.



But first, **Luca Visentini** made his final comments to the conference:

First, we must mobilise to protect essential workers – and encourage at local level to do whatever is possible to reinforce public investment in public services

Recent cases in courts – riders delivering food – been recognised as not self-employed in some courts. EC will launch today a social partners' consultation on a new legislative initiative for platform workers to get a legal framework at European level so all precarious workers are protected and stabilised.

The second element is what we can do to regulate teleworking – we have a directive on teleworking at European level – but it was established 10 years ago when the situation was different. Now it's endemic and will stay so and we must improve

national legislation to improve the situation. And include the “right to disconnect” as central.

It must include those who work both at home and in the office and we need to enforce the Working Time Directive, including it in collective bargaining at local and national levels.

Third element – ensure all forms of unemployment and employment protection are paid timely and in a decent manner. In many areas workers have received little compensation when suspended from work – particularly so for precarious workers.

Fourth element – we need to make sure that when governments, national and local, decide how to spend money that we as trade unions are involved in that discussion. Which sectors will investment be made in? Investing for the future – and including public services not only private companies. We need a voice on this. And there must be social and labour conditionalities – companies must respect workers’ rights, environmental considerations, no excess profits etc.

These are the fundamental elements required.

For reflection...

This network – keeping active and cooperating with us is fundamental as the voice on the ground – you can walk the talk. Remain in contact, coordinate strongly at all levels with ETUC.

Good luck for ECTUN network to remain so active. ETUC and ETUI will always remain at your side.

Christina thanks Luca and presents the Action Plan – no timeline yet, but will be developed shortly.

In brief, the main objectives are:

- To be known as an actor, to build alliances
- Ask for and participate in regional social dialogue about recovery
- To inform, to perform, to train, to sensitize
- From the generic to the concrete and local/regional



Concrete actions and commitments (all participant organisations):

- Organize a common ECTUN act for May Day 1 May, Workers’ Memorial Day 28 April, Decent Work Day 7 October
- The previous Action Plan and priorities are still alive, updated with the pandemic reality
- Do a survey of the capitals touching specially on the application of the Capitals Recovery Plans, looking for possible coordinated actions
- Prioritize vaccination for all; relaunch of tourism; teleworking; mobility/transport; support and reinforcement of health services

Plus (the Permanent Committee):

- Share information regularly between PC and members (both ways)
- Collect reports from members on regional recovery, vaccination plans etc and produce synthesis
- Organize training course with and for members and ETUI
- Organize regular online meetings of the PC
- Consider more online plenary sessions of ECTUN for coordination
- Develop contacts with capital trade union organizations that have not recently participated in ECTUN
- Develop ways of PC speaking to regional ECTUN groups
- Prepare the next conference and PC elections
- Prioritize topics from the recovery
- Organize ECTUN conference (either Belgrade or online)

Christina welcomed comments on the Action Plan.



Liberio Domingues Lisbon – two comments... We need to isolate the question of the recovery of tourism. In Lisbon the recovery of tourism is not a peaceful subject – the effects of this pandemic alongside the questions of investment and the city’s economy, which is heavily dominated by tourism. The recovery of tourism is desirable, but if we only focus on this question trade unions will develop a direct link with tourism – doesn’t seem a good idea.

The second point, question of the respect of trade unions’ role. In particular with respect to the way in which public contracts are awarded. We will enter a period when governments will focus on recovery and we need to ensure that labour rights and collective agreements are respected. In Lisbon that seems to be a priority. We are living in a phase in which workers’ struggles and claims are almost considered to be a crime. There has been a campaign by media organisations in Portugal. It feels like such claims have been criminalised. We need to ensure democracy is not left outside our workplaces. Need to defend the full exercise of workers’ rights.

Jacques Borensztejn, Paris – in total agreement with Liberio on this. Ensure the maintenance of freedom of expression in the business world and outside. Limitations on public protests and demonstrations – 1 May demonstrations in 2020 were small with more police than demonstrators.

Sara Canavezes, Lisbon – I support what Liberio said. In terms of rights we should encourage the return of activity in many sectors. The non-application of collective bargaining is common. The word “workers” does not appear in our action

plan – we should ensure the word workers appear. The focus must be on the recovery of good working and living conditions for workers.

Christina Theochari, Athens – certainly we must have tourism from the perspective of workers as there is a high degree of precariousness in this “industry” – and not from the perspective of investment or other issues.



Celia Portela, Lisbon – many workers in the restaurant sector were working illegally and are not entitled to government support. A large number of workers in this sector have no links with trade unions. A question – regarding teleworking, was it in our conclusions? Our workshop said we should struggle against the extreme roll out of this practice and the move to reduce the number of in-person jobs. Another question is the danger around the individualisation of working relations – the worker is no longer working as an employee but as a false freelancer. They will struggle to claim and negotiate better working conditions.

Ulisses Garrido – it is included (although not detailed).

Jose Maria Fernandez, Madrid – I wanted to talk about homeworking. The Spanish government has developed a law to regulate homeworking and we could send it to you for information. Need to work it out in the business by business collective bargaining.

Vera Dos Santos Costa gave her final remarks.



I am impressed by the work you have been doing in the conference. “The future cannot be the same” is your focus – behind that are many areas of actions and concerns.

Capital cities are of great importance so it is urgent for the EU to strengthen the capital cities. I heard the working groups speaking of the recovery plans and how important it is that trade unions are included in the implementation of the recovery plans.

The challenges are not only huge, but also very complex. This will be included in your next training activity. What we in the ETUI understand is that we develop a strategic approach to the new world of work, turning difficulties into opportunities. Using basic training and skills and combine with competences on values, understanding the various elements and ability to understand change.

Education is key to supporting TU actions. We don't want to learn by shock – ETUI promotes innovative learning. As soon as the Covid crisis emerged we wanted to innovate and develop new forms of learning. This conference is also part of this training plan.

The future cannot be the same – as Luca said, you can count on the ETUI support for the future.

Christina thanked Vera for her support and the conference unanimously validated the action plan – revised in light of the comments.

Final session on internal matters

Christina presented a report of actions during 2020, including information circulated, 1 May 2020, and solidarity expressed to and by members.

She said the next conferences would (all being well) be in Belgrade 2022 and Madrid 2023.

Regarding the renewal of the Permanent Committee she said the mandate started in Malta in 2018 and finishes now. However, many trade unions have continued their mandate during the pandemic. There are two obvious options: one to stop now, the other is to prolong to the next conference. She asked conference for any comments or other possibilities.

Laurent Pagnier, Paris – support extending the mandate and organise elections at the next conference when hopefully we will be together. Thanks for all the PC's work over the past three years.



Diana Agostinello, Rome - we agree with extending the mandate until Belgrade so we can discuss it in person.

Patrick Aracil, Paris – in favour of the extension of the current team that has worked excellently.

Jose Maria Fernandez, Madrid – thanks to all – this has been a training session for some of us new to this technology! I agree with previous comments. Better to be together and postpone elections when I hope we will be able to be together.

Jaime Cedrun Lopez, Madrid – thanks to Christina for her work and everyone else involved. Agree with extending the mandate. We will be able to get together in Belgrade and discuss and negotiate. This will be my last time here as I moving on – so I wanted to take the opportunity of being here with many trade union organisations – I have learned a lot with you at these conferences

and I had and pleasant and friendly relations. It's really important that Luca Visentini recognises this and thus the ETUI. We have a golden opportunity with the recovery and resilience plans in Europe and to fulfil our green and social plans.

Dragan Todorovic, Belgrade – we thank you for the organisation of this excellent conference – it was really useful for us. We are delighted to collaborate at the very least online but sincerely hope we can see each other face to face next year.

Miryam Fuentes, Rome – thank you and my gratitude to everyone – excellently organised. This is not the right moment to change the Permanent Committee.



Luis Miguel Lopez, Madrid – also in favour of extending the committee's mandate.

Pier Luigi Talamo Rome – thanks to Christina and the organising committee for the excellent work in these difficult times for union organisations. Very much in favour of the extension of the mandate until the next conference.

Ulisses Garrido, ETUI – we have the financial support from ETUI for the next conference. ETUI's year is April to March. This year to December everything will be online, next year we will see. We hope for a face to face conference but we are not sure how the pandemic will go. Secondly there will be a lot of trade union activities in the early part of the year. We don't know – if it is face to face it will be January or February. The course will definitely be online in October to December. We cooperated with CGTP in Lisbon this year, if we are online next year Belgrade will need to be cooperating with us – we know they can do this.

Christina Theochari, thanked delegates for their support and it was agreed that the Permanent Committee would be extended until the Belgrade conference where elections would take place for the next three year mandate. She thanked Sara and Liberio from CGTP once more for their help in organising the online conference, and wished good health to all ECTUN members and their families.

Conference closed.

Please note:

This is not a verbatim report. It aims to capture the essential discussion and decisions taken.

April 2021