



**COVID-19:  
WORKERS DEMAND  
JOBS, INCOME AND  
SOCIAL  
PROTECTION**

## COVID-19: WORKERS NEED RESPONSES FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

The containment measures in France began on 17 March 2020 and included: a government plan for businesses (such as state guarantees for loans to businesses or a solidarity fund for micro-enterprises); the waiving of 'waiting days' for paid sick leave for public servants and employees with COVID-19; measures to protect income in the event of unemployment (such as compensation for short-time working, an extension of the rights of unemployed persons reaching the end of their eligibility period); a one-off solidarity payment for recipients of minimum social benefits and specific assistance for self-employed persons without work. The deferral of certain tax and social security payments and an extension of the wintertime eviction truce were also announced. It should, however, be pointed out that despite the measures taken, the impact of the crisis on jobs and businesses is still likely to be very harsh. March 2020, for example, saw a 7.1 per cent rise in unemployment. It is, therefore, essential that additional measures be taken without delay, in consultation with the social partners. The CFDT is already discussing ideas with various civil society actors, under the umbrella of the "Pact for Living Power" (Pacte du Pouvoir de Vivre), with a view to promoting a different development model allying concern for the environment and social progress.

### ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

France published its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) roadmap in 2019. The document is the result of a major consultation process organised by state departments to take on board the views expressed by a large section of organised civil society. The process, which lasted around eight months, culminated in the presentation of its roadmap at the SDG Summit held in New York at the end of September 2019. Trade union organisations played an active role in the construction phase of the document. Although a number of their contributions were taken into account, some challenges have nevertheless been underestimated or met with a lack of ambition. And despite their positive

assessment of the state's approach to consultation during this process, the trade union organisations continue to be wary about the application of the roadmap, which will require coherent policy action and solid implementation strategies.

In addition, aside from the specific work on the SDGs, it remains to be seen to what extent the trade union positions are taken on board within the framework of policy decisions or the implementation of action plans. While openings have been observed, much remains to be done to make way for substantial change.

#### TRANSPARENCY



Regular access to limited information

#### CONSULTATION



Structured multi-stakeholder platform

#### SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners contribute individually to the government's SDG national plan



# IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

The French trade unions stress that although France's human development index value was 0.891, in 2019, placing it in 24th place globally, improvements are still needed on several key indicators for the country to achieve the SDGs.

With regard to **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty)**, the indicators for 2018 show that an estimated 14.7 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line (defined as 60 per cent of the national median income), and while this is relatively low for Europe, the percentage is particularly high among certain population groups, such as young people. The poverty rate is kept relatively low thanks to social protection covering key areas (health, old age, disability, family, housing, unemployment), as well as guaranteed minimum incomes and pensions. It should, however, be pointed out that the current 'social minimums' are not, in themselves, enough to enable people to escape poverty. In 2017, France allocated 31.7 per cent of GDP to social protection, the highest rate in Europe, enabling it to perform relatively well (although it could still do better) on **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors)**. The COVID-19 crisis has also highlighted the flaws in the public health system, which has suffered significant damage over the last few years, with spending restraints affecting health professionals' working conditions and the quality of the care provided.

Progress needs to be made towards meeting **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**, bearing in mind that, according to the figures for 2009 and 2010, women spent nearly twice as much time (4 hours 1 minute) as men (2 hours 13 minutes) on unpaid work per day.

There are numerous concerns regarding the targets set under **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. Regarding **target 8.3 (promote**

**policies that support productive activities and decent job creation)**, 7.4 per cent of jobs were estimated to be precarious in 2018, and the poverty rate (income below 60 per cent of the median) was 7.1 per cent among salaried workers and 17.2 per cent among self-employed workers. As regards **target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all)**, a gender pay gap of 23.7 per cent persists. The rate of unemployment was 8.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2019, and young people aged between 15 and 24 were the worst affected (19.2 per cent). The indicators on young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** was 12.9 per cent in 2018. A number of concerns have emerged in relation to **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** in light of the major decisions taken regarding the labour legislation, in recent years, without proper consultation with the social partners, resulting in a lowering of labour protections.

Progress is still required to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality)** as, in 2017, the income share of the top 10 per cent of income earners was 25.8 per cent while the share of the bottom 20 per cent was 8.1 per cent. Moreover, the evolution in the GINI coefficient (0.294 in 2018) shows that, despite a slight fall in 2016, inequalities in living standards have seen the largest rise since 2010 and are wider than they were around 20 years ago.

As regards **target 16.3 (promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all)**, the proportion of the incarcerated population being held without a conviction was 30 per cent in 2018.

## TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The SDGs have been put at the centre of the 2020 cycle of the European Semester – linked to the European Pillar of Social Rights – to guide the EU's economic governance for the next decade. Greater coherence is therefore needed in terms of the action taken at international, European and national level to reach the targets under the SDGs. France's trade union organisations call on the French government to integrate the SDGs within national policies in an effective manner, insisting on the centrality of SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) as well as the particular importance and relevance, in the current context, of the following SDGs:

- **SDG 3 (Good health and well-being):** strengthen the capacity to respond to the current and future health crises, and support public health and care systems by breaking with austerity.
- **SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls):** limit the greater impact that the health crisis has on women.
- **SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture):** address the inherent limitations of the current model of globalisation in light of the dependence on global supply chains for essential goods.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the persistence of inequalities and the need to achieve the SDGs as soon as possible – particularly in the knowledge that meeting these goals would contribute to making our societies more resilient and to limiting the socio-economic impact of crises such as these on workers and their families.



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