



GREECE

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2022

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED DURABLE RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Greek government introduced a range of measures to mitigate the economic impact of the lockdowns, including protecting workers through adequate income support and job retention interventions, and supporting businesses to stay afloat. The Greek recovery and resilience plan “Greece 2.0” was agreed in 2021. It mobilises EU funds to further mitigate the economic and social impact of the pandemic; addresses productivity and investment gaps; and enhances growth potential, job creation and economic and social resilience.

Trade unions call on the Greek government to sustain and strengthen the capacity of the under-funded public healthcare system. There is a need to enhance the social protection system and extend the scope of public intervention for those workers whose needs are currently met insufficiently or not at all. The government should also further secure liquidity support for companies, particularly small and medium enterprises, which form the backbone of the Greek economy and are significantly affected by the Covid-19 crisis. Social objectives must constitute the integral guiding principles of the country’s recovery strategy, prioritising closing the employment gap over closing the output and investment gap.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

In 2017, Greece endorsed a set of eight overarching national priorities encompassing all 17 SDGs, in line with the National Growth Strategy adopted in 2018. The strategy aims to reinvigorate the Greek economy, promote social wellbeing and justice without exclusions, ensure environmental protection and safeguard the country’s unique ecological wealth. The Inter-Ministerial Coordination Network coordinates national efforts to achieve the SDGs from a long-term perspective. Line ministries, together with the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) carried out three rounds of consultations and mapping to identify the most adequate indicators for tracking progress at the national level. Resources have been allocated in national plans for SDG implementation by using existing financial tools also coming

from the European Union (European Partnership Agreement 2021-2027, Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, Next Generation EU, etc.).

The government occasionally involves employers and workers’ representatives in SDG implementation. Stakeholder consultation is not mandatory, and no structured participation has been established, at least in terms of trade union involvement. Trade unions stress the essential role of effective and meaningful social dialogue in helping to achieve a broad national consensus on policy, strengthening labour market resilience and achieving the country’s recovery. The government should also ensure the implementation of labour laws and collective agreements.

TRANSPARENCY



Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



Informal or ad hoc consultation

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners contribute individually to government’s SDG national plan



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Even though Greece has a “very high” level of human development (UN Human Development Index of 0.888 in 2019), challenges remain on **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty for all people)**. After social transfers, 18.4 per cent of the population aged 18 to 64 and 10 per cent of the employed population are at risk of poverty. A range of measures are in place under **target 1.3 (appropriate social protection systems)**, with 64 per cent of the Greek population covered by at least one benefit. Total expenditure on social protection, including health, is 23.8 per cent of GDP (**target 1a - ensure significant mobilisation of resources**).

Progress is still required to meet target **5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**. In 2014 (last available data), women were estimated to spend approximately 18 per cent of their time on this work. The government has implemented targeted employment programmes and childcare services for women, and recent legislation provides for shared parental leave regardless of employment status. To help meet **target 5.5 (ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels)**, a quota of 40 per cent for women in local government and parliamentary positions is now in place. In 2018, 27.5 per cent of managerial positions were held by women. Gender mainstreaming is applied in the fields of education, health, and social solidarity, and in public budgets.

Indicators show that significant challenges remain to meet **target 8.3 (formalisation)**. The size of the undeclared economy is commonly estimated to be 25 per cent of GDP. By 2018, the share of low paid work had increased to 16.4 per cent and the share of precarious work remained steady at around one quarter of total employment. Regarding **target 8.5 (achieve full and productive employment and decent work)**, unemployment stands at 12.7 per cent for men and at 18.8 per cent for women. The unemployment and underemployment rates for young people aged 15 to 24 are the highest in the EU (35 per cent and 46.5 per cent respectively); the **proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (target 8.6)** also remains one of the highest in the EU at 13.2 per cent. Further efforts are also needed to meet **target 8.7 (end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour)**: in 2014, it was estimated that some 100,000-150,000 children under the age of 18 work in Greece, and in 2018 an estimated 89 000 adults were living in modern

slavery. There have been setbacks under **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**. Collective bargaining used to take place at national, industry and company level, and the national collective agreement provided a basis from which improvements could be negotiated. However, changes introduced following the 2010 crisis and the provision of IMF and EU financial support fundamentally altered the bargaining structure. Although some of the crisis measures were reversed in 2018, collective bargaining has not yet been completely re-established and the minimum salary is determined by ministerial decision.

Significant challenges remain to meet **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies and progressively achieve greater equality)**. Labour share of GDP decreased to 50.3 per cent in 2017, the share of top and bottom income earners in overall GDP has stagnated, and the statutory minimum wage has decreased.

To meet **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and plans)**, a new climate bill introduced in November 2021 sets quantitative targets to reduce greenhouse emissions, in line with the EU target of aiming for climate neutrality in 2050. Goals will be reviewed every five years and will include seven sectors of the economy: electricity and heat production, transportation, industry, buildings, agriculture and animal husbandry, waste, and land use and forestry. Funds, plans and initiatives are being implemented to achieve a just transition, and social partners are involved in its design under the National General Collective Labour Agreement 2021.

There has been moderate improvement on **SDG 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice for all, and effective institutions)**. In the ITUC Global Rights Index 2021, Greece is classified in category 4 - systemic violations of rights (previously category 5).

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

To ensure an SDG-led recovery and resilience from the crisis, trade unions urge the Greek government to:

- ensure all 17 SDGs continue to be prioritised in national planning, in line with national priorities and the National Growth Strategy;
- ensure public consultation on policy development to meet the SDGs, including a structured process of social dialogue; and
- implement policies to meet the SDG targets, ensuring Greek recovery is guided by social objectives.

**WORKERS
DEMAND A NEW
SOCIAL CONTRACT
FOR RECOVERY AND
RESILIENCE**



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of TUDCN/ITUC and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.