

"IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYEES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL – RESPONSE OF TRADE UNIONS TO THE NEW CHALLENGES"

Subjects:

Impact of Covid-19 on local society and economy

- What was the effect of the pandemic on the fur industry? Do you think it will be able to recover? What solutions do you suggest?
- What was the effect of the pandemic on the other sectors of the economy in Kastoria? What perspectives do you see?
- What was the effect of the pandemic on the society of Kastoria? Psychology, employment, education, immigration, etc.

Impact of Covid-19 on employer-employee relations and information and consultation

- What position did employers and unions take on the objective problems that the pandemic brought to Kastoria?
- How do you judge the quality of dialogue and consultation between employers and unions during the pandemic?
- How did communication between employers and employees take place?
- If the dialogue had positive results, why do you think this happened?

How did trade unions respond to the challenges of the pandemic?

- How did the trade unions communicate the problems they faced to the local community? To the public administration, OBES, GSEE etc.?
- What solutions did they choose in order to solve these problems?
- How did the local community, self-government, public administration, OBES, GSEE etc. help?

ANSWERS

GROUP 1

Impact of Covid-19 on local society and economy

The main effect was the non-participation of companies in international exhibitions, in which case no orders were placed. Recovery depends on international conditions, e.g. the war and the energy crisis. The continuous training of workers should be intensified as well as their financial support, if the crisis continues.

The effects on the fur sector were also catalytic for the rest of the sectors, because without the fur sector the businesses of the other sectors (e.g. tourism) have also problems.

In the early stages of the pandemic, the population went through a big shock, they were psychologically affected, while distance learning was also used.

Impact of Covid-19 on employer-employee relations and information and consultation

Some employers laid off staff due to seasonality before the pandemic and these workers could not benefit from the paid suspension allowance of €534 per month.

Some employers took advantage of the measures to comfort the unemployed, by illegally asking workers under suspension of their work contracts to work without being paid.

Unions used press releases to inform workers of their rights during the pandemic.

Dialogue and consultation during the pandemic period were virtually non-existent, while contacts were made by telephone.

There were no positive results. In essence, employers used workers as leverage to achieve to finance their businesses (a refundable working capital, much of which became non-refundable).

How did labor unions respond to the challenges of the pandemic?

Visits were made to the ministries. The information and discussion with OBES, GSEE, the local community was done using digital media.

The following solutions were chosen: continuation of suspension, extension of the unemployment benefit by 2 months. A local integrated program for the fur industry (still waiting) and training in new trades was also requested.

Excellent communication with OBES, support for direct access to Ministries, financial support, participation in European programs of the trade union's management members.

GROUP 2

Impact of Covid-19 on local society and economy

As in all economy sectors, the impact of the pandemic on fur has caused an increase in unemployment, because it is a job that cannot be done online and because it relies on exports. There was no direct contact and therefore no orders.

Through various processes, will and effort on the part of both the workers and employers we believe that gradually the sector will be able to recover.

The impact of the pandemic on other sectors of the economy is like a chain, if one link is broken the chain is broken, so the impact passed on to other businesses as well. The perspective is that if there is no fur industry, which for so many years kept the economy of

Kastoria alive, there will be no development and especially of tourism, which is very important for our city.

The effect of the pandemic on the society of Kastoria brought insecurity due to unemployment and consequently the psychology also fell, since we cannot make ends meet. On the other hand, the education of the students was incomplete and not at all essential and objective. As for immigration, the fur crisis played a key role, which pushed some citizens to look for work elsewhere, such as in tourism on the islands.

Impact of Covid-19 on employer-employee relations and information and consultation

Employers and trade unions took a positive position on the suspension of work and the extension of the unemployment benefit.

There was no communication between employers and employees during the pandemic.

How did trade unions respond to the challenges of the pandemic?

Any successes were of the workers' union and not of the employers. Employers benefited financially by being supplied with working capita,l but did not support workers who were forced to leave their jobs. If this situation continues, more and more workers will leave the fur industry. The local government and society did not effectively help the fur workers.

The workshop is co-financed by the European Commission