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Collective bargaining for mobile workers in Europe under the COVID19 – cases of frontier, seasonal and migrant workers

Challenges and Solutions: Collective Bargaining for Migrant Workers in Europe during the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges to collective bargaining for migrant workers in Europe. These challenges have affected migrant workers, unions and employers alike, and have required creative and adaptive solutions. Below are some of the key challenges and possible solutions in this context:

Challenges:

Communication difficulties: Travel restrictions and social distancing measures made face-to-face communication between migrant workers and their union representatives difficult, complicating organizing and collective bargaining.

Precarious working conditions: Many migrant workers in Europe found themselves in precarious employment, making them more vulnerable to job loss and dangerous working conditions during the pandemic.

Limited access to health care: Some migrant workers faced barriers to accessing health care services due to language barriers, lack of health insurance, and fear of retaliation from employers.

Rising unemployment: The pandemic led to business closures and job losses in several sectors, especially affecting migrant workers who often held low-paid, temporary jobs.



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Solutions:

Use of technology: Trade unions and migrant worker organizations used technology, such as video calls and social media, to stay in touch and organize virtual meetings. This allowed for continued communication despite travel restrictions.

Strengthening union solidarity: Unions intensified their efforts to unite migrant workers and local workers in the fight for better working conditions and job security. Solidarity between different groups of workers was essential.

Promotion of training and education: Online training and education programs were offered to migrant workers, allowing them to improve their skills and, in some cases, shift to sectors more resilient to the pandemic.

Legal support: Labor rights organizations and specialized lawyers provided legal advice to migrant workers facing labor or health problems. This helped ensure that their rights were respected.

Government policies: Some European governments implemented specific support measures for migrant workers, such as extending unemployment benefits or providing personal protective equipment in workplaces.

Pressure on employers: Unions pressured employers to comply with safety guidelines and provide safe working conditions. This was done through collective bargaining and, in extreme cases, public reporting of labor violations.



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