

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

NATIONAL REPORT FOR GREECE

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UNIVERSITY OF
THESSALY

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DESK ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

There exist numerous definitions regarding the heterogeneous groups that are defined as migrants. Firstly, a relevant ILO report (2022) provides a rather broader definition of migrant workers, as foreign workers who are present in the country under study, independently of their permanent area of residence. Frontier workers on the other hand, based on the European Commission definition, are also considered migrant workers that “are employed in the frontier zone of an E.U. Member State but who return each day or at least once a week to the frontier zone of a neighboring country in which they reside and of which they are nationals” . Seasonal workers are also viewed as migrant workers but they are “third-country nationals who retain their principal place of residence in a third country and stays legally and temporarily in the territory of a Member State to carry out an activity dependent on the passing of the seasons, under one or more fixed-term work contracts concluded directly between that third-country national and the employer established in that Member State”.

The current number of foreign workers in Greece is not systematically recorded, therefore policy recommendations are mainly based on estimates of the immigrant pool in Greece. Still, 2022 estimates report that about 757,000 immigrants reside in Greece currently, constituting approximately 7% of the total population.

2. Overview of background literature on the issue of the frontier, seasonal and migrant workers and the different forms of collective representation of this heterogeneous category of workers.

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Much less is known about frontier and seasonal migrant workers in Greece and a large gap exists in the literature not only regarding their numbers but with respect to their demographic, socioeconomic and employment characteristics as well.

The collective representation of frontier and seasonal workers in Greece is rather nonexistent. While there is a large legislative and institutional framework covering these immigrant groups in Greece, their heterogeneous characteristics and possibly their lack of coordination, lead to rather individualized work relations and contract schemes. In addition, a large number of immigrants in Greece are working in atypical working arrangements, and frontier and seasonal workers in the primary sector of the economy are often working under no legal coverage⁵.

Maroukis (2016) also argues that temporary migrant workers are disproportionately concentrated in informal, temporary and insecure job positions in small and medium-sized businesses. In addition, as Papadopoulos and Ioannou (2022) underline, the crisis of 2008 and the associated austerity measures affected severely industrial relations in Greece, leading to a rapid decentralization of collective bargaining and individual working arrangements within the same sector, along with a marginalization of the trade unions. There is a growing precariousness and a shrinking of labour rights for workers in certain industries like the tourism sector and this is also affecting immigrant workers employed in Greece.

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Karasavoglou et al. (1996) found that in the prefecture of Kavala, 80% of the immigrants hold seasonal job positions. Karafolas and Alexandrakis (2014) also underline that the wage level is covered by labour institutions and cannot be lower than the minimum wage, whereas hours of work, job demands and the like are covered by the law and the collective agreement when it can be applied to the sector under discussion. They also support that the seasonal workers are primarily concentrated in the agricultural sector and they mainly hold job postings in the marginalized sector of the labour market (underpaid with demanding strenuous work) that are not desirable by the native unemployed workers.

3. The variety of institutional arrangements and types of employment relations and working conditions before coronavirus crises.

Until the previous decade, there was no specific legislative framework for seasonal and frontier workers in Greece, apart from the relevant E.U. rules. In general, the labour law and the migration laws in Greece cover the groups of frontier and seasonal workers as well. As the report of the EURES (2021) states, Law 4332/2015 modified the older Law 4251/2014 which was practically the immigration code for Greece, in order to modernize the Greek Law to European Directives (in specific Directive 2014/36/EU). In detail, seasonal work means is offered for six months maximum per year. The Law entails a more complicated, bureaucratic procedure for nationals outside the E.U., where the potential job vacancies per sector and season are announced by a ministerial decision, the work permits are issued by the Greek authorities and the employers have to request through an application process job candidates from third countries.

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The issue of frontier workers is rather neglected in Greece. Still, Greece and Bulgaria established a cross-border cooperation program in 2014 aiming, among other goals, to facilitate cross-border employment. Before that, in 2007, the two countries cooperated on the application of arrangements that could assist Bulgarian workers willing to work in Greece. Bilateral work agreements were also signed with Albania and Egypt since the entry of Bulgaria into the E.U. community means that the citizens of Bulgaria are no longer submitted to bilateral agreements with Greece. However, as Karafolas and Alexandrakis (2014) argue the legislative framework for seasonal workers discouraged the hiring of seasonal migrant workers since Law 215/2011 increased the insurance and hiring costs for employers.

While the Legislative Content Act (A.D. 90/1.5.2020) exempted foreign nationals under seasonal employment schemes from visa requirements, the subsequent Law 4690/30.05.2020 permitted the automatic extension of the validity of work permits six more months after the permit expiration date. In 2021, a digital visa was implemented with the aim of attracting seasonal employees from other countries, targeting mainly highly skilled working groups.

4. Collective agreements at different levels (national, sectoral and company levels) played a role in managing the challenges posed by Covid-19 to mobile and seasonal workers.

Employment relations and working arrangements are applied for all members of the workforce and the national collective agreement, when applicable, covers frontier and seasonal workers as well (EURES, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated government policy measures affected the documented migrant workers in various ways. The lockdowns halted the mobility of these workers and the entry to the country to do seasonal work. In addition, the sudden stoppage of economic activity seriously affected their income resources and many of them experienced a significant loss of income from forgone work. National policy measures that were undertaken to provide a safety net for these workers included the extension and/or in the residence permits. (Sommaribas & Nienaber, 2022).

In order to soothe the devastating economic effects of lockdowns for migrant workers, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum established provisions related to the applications for residence permits, adopted measures to facilitate residence permit applications and established temporary arrangements to cover the labour market needs on temporary and seasonal workers (European Migration Network, 2021). For example, Law 4825/2021 allows seasonal workers to stay in the country and work for up to five years, depending on the employer's application. For example, certain extensions to work permits through fast-track procedures were granted for seasonal workers in agriculture.

While the Greek Government has provided benefits and subsidies for citizens who lost their jobs or stopped working because of the lockdowns, migrant workers were covered by these benefits only if they were legally employed and under certain conditions. Indicatively, a study found that approximately 60% of migrants in Crete were recipients of government subsidies due to the suspension of their employment, but they did not return to their previous economic position after the end of the lockdown in comparison to the native workers. In addition, since they are mainly working in low-skilled job positions they could not provide teleworking services, and this only increased their risk and insecurity. Unfortunately, as underlined before, the majority of these workers seem to be employed in informal job positions, so their rights were not properly covered by the benefits system provided during the pandemic, therefore they were more susceptible to income loss and insecurity. An interesting study that focuses on Albanian migrants who either work in seasonal jobs in Greece or cross-border work in the country, underlines the various job obstacles faced by migrants during the pandemic. The main sectors of the Albanian workers were the construction, the agriculture, the services, the cleaning, and the maintenance sectors which were adversely affected by the pandemic and the repeated lockdowns. In addition, most of these migrants are employed irregularly and without health insurance, thus they were not entitled to benefits during the lockdowns.

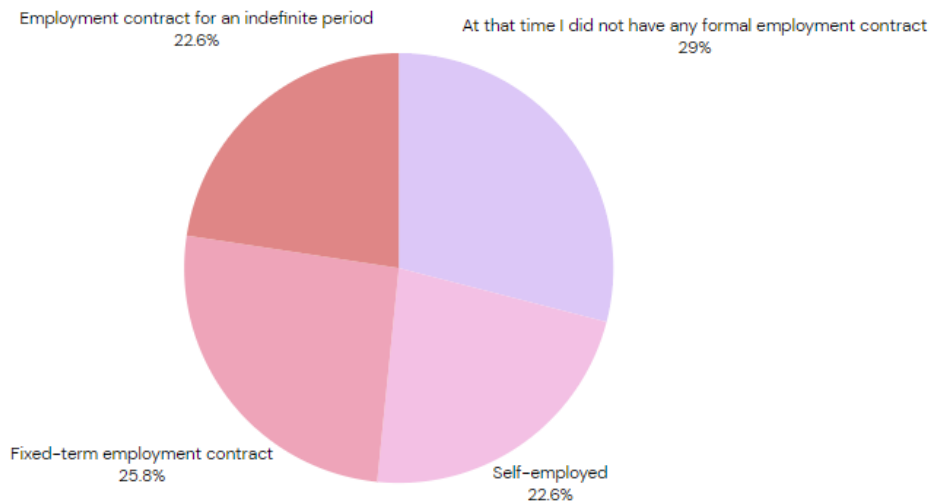
SURVEY ANALYSIS

Upon scrutinizing the survey data, it becomes evident that the participant count stood at thirty-one individuals. Notably, 41.9% of the respondents identified themselves as seasonal posted workers, constituting a significant proportion. Subsequently, the second largest group comprised migrant and frontier workers, collectively amounting to 25.8%. The remaining categories displayed comparatively smaller percentages.

Shifting focus to the primary professional engagements of the surveyed posted workers, it is clear that 29% were active in the construction and infrastructure sectors, along with the services sector. The food and beverage sector closely followed, representing 19.4% of the respondents. Subsequent categories, including informatics, demonstrated more modest percentages.

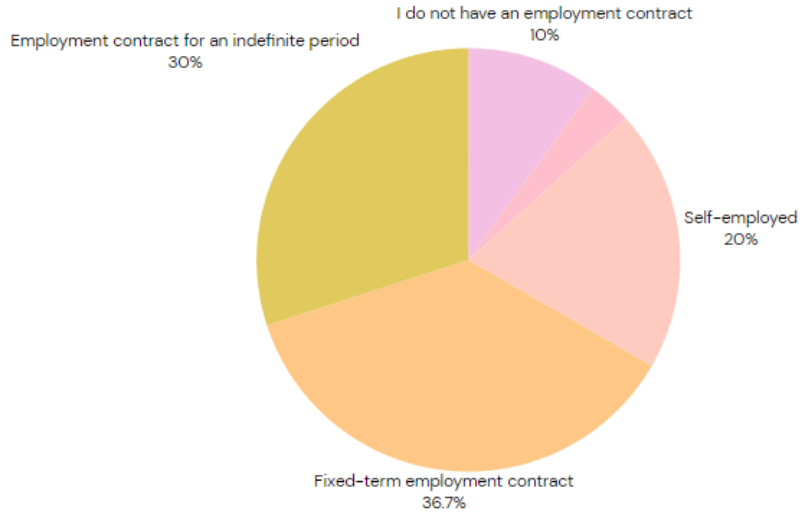
A visual representation, as portrayed in the graphic below, sheds light on a notable aspect of the respondents' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, a majority, accounting for 29%, indicated a lack of any formal employment contract during this period. This finding underscores a nuanced dimension of the challenges faced by the surveyed population in navigating the uncertainties brought about by the pandemic.

WHAT TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT DID YOU HAVE (IF ANY), DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



The graphic below illustrates participants' responses regarding their current employment contract status. A significant majority, specifically 36.7%, reported having a fixed-term employment contract. Notably, there is a discernible trend wherein the number of individuals with fixed-term contracts increased post the COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by a notable 19% decrease in those without any employment contracts.

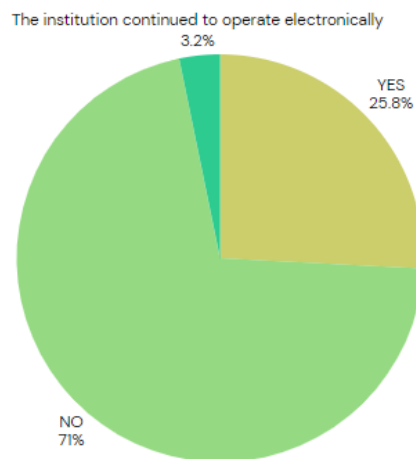
WHAT TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE (IF ANY)?



A notable majority of posted workers, specifically 80.6%, reported that they received an explanation of their contract before signing it. Only a small fraction, 3.2%, indicated otherwise, and the remaining respondents did not possess a formal employment contract. Additionally, among those with a contract, a significant 77.4% affirmed that their working conditions align with the terms and conditions specified in their employment contract. Participants disclosed various time periods during which they were posted, with the most commonly chosen durations being one year, two years, four years, and five months.

In assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on participants' workplaces, a substantial majority indicated that their workplace did not face serious difficulties during the crisis, as depicted in the accompanying graphic.

DID YOUR WORKPLACE FACE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES DURING THE CRISIS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



The predominant majority of workers, accounting for 83.9%, reported no alterations to their employment contracts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, a smaller percentage, 16.1%, indicated that their contracts had been terminated.

In terms of weekly working hours amid the pandemic, responses varied, with the most common range being forty to forty-five hours per week. A subsequent inquiry into their current weekly working hours yielded a consistent majority reporting forty to forty-five hours per week.

Concerning the impact on working conditions, 64.5% of respondents stated that they did not experience any reduction in working hours and pay during the pandemic. Conversely, 29% affirmed facing such reductions, while the remainder reported company closures during that period.

When queried about problems related to social protection at work during the pandemic, 36.4% responded negatively, while 24.2% encountered issues with taking paid time off. Additionally, 9.1% faced problems with health insurance, pension insurance, and taking paid sick leave, respectively. Presently, 30.2% reported no problems related to social protection in their work, with 16.3% encountering issues with taking paid leave, 11.6% facing problems with paid time off, 9.3% with pension insurance, and 4.7% with health insurance.

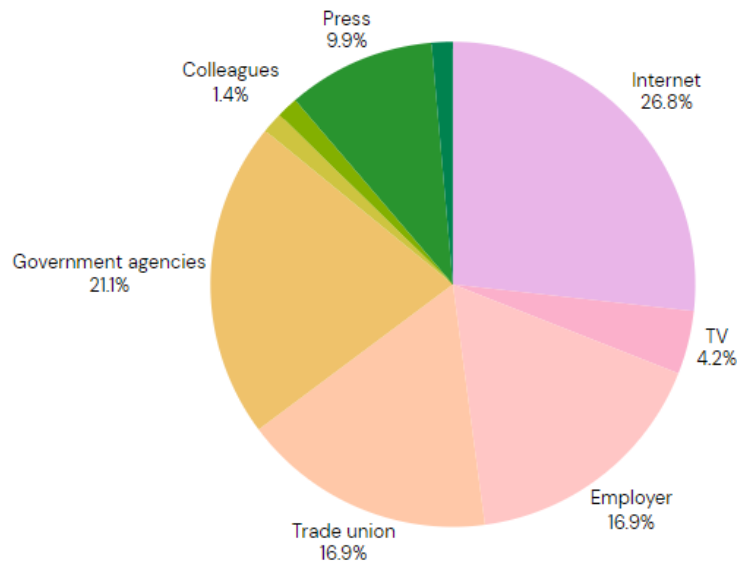
Examining awareness of employment rights, 41.9% expressed partial awareness, 32.3% claimed to be fully informed, 22.6% reported being minimally informed, and only 3.2% indicated no awareness at all about their employment rights, as depicted below.

IN YOUR OPINION, ARE YOU SUFFICIENTLY INFORMED ABOUT YOUR EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS?



As depicted in the graph below, posted workers predominantly rely on several key sources for obtaining information about their rights. The primary channels include the Internet, government agencies, information from their employers, and guidance from trade unions.

WHERE DO YOU GET INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS?

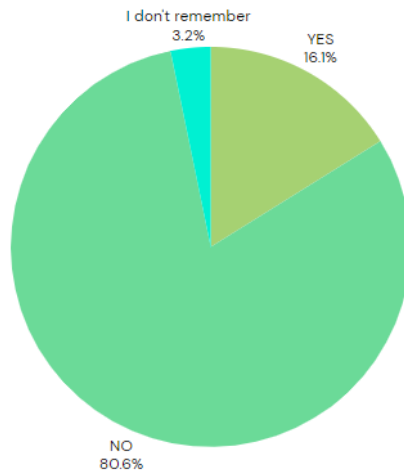


A significant majority of workers, totaling 61.3%, reported an absence of problems in commuting to and from work during the COVID-19 pandemic, with approximately 32% acknowledging challenges. In terms of being informed about their rights pertaining to residence, education, personal security, legal status, and interactions with law enforcement and border agencies, 74.2% indicated a lack of information, while 25.8% affirmed having received such guidance.

Concerning health and safety issues at work amid the pandemic, 64.5% reported no problems, 32.3% acknowledged issues, and the remaining respondents mentioned workplace closure during the critical period. In terms of information and training provided by employers to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, 35.5% received some information, 32.3% received crucial information, and 16.1% received no information. Regarding the provision of suitable protective equipment by employers, 51.6% answered affirmatively, while 29% reported a lack of such provision.

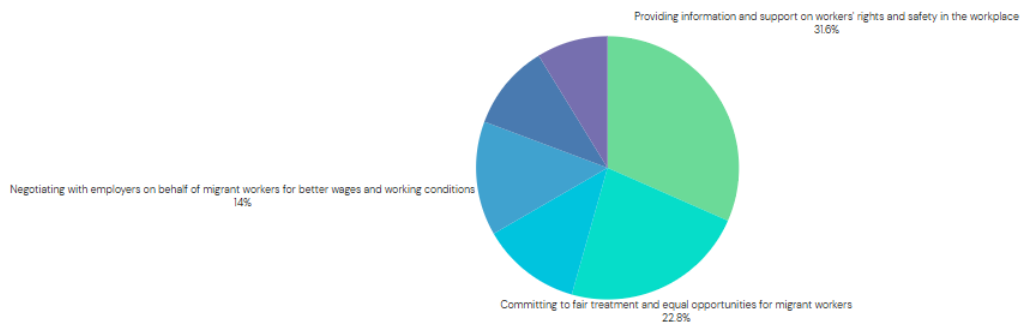
As depicted below, a majority of posted workers indicated a lack of access to financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DID YOU HAVE ACCESS TO ANY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



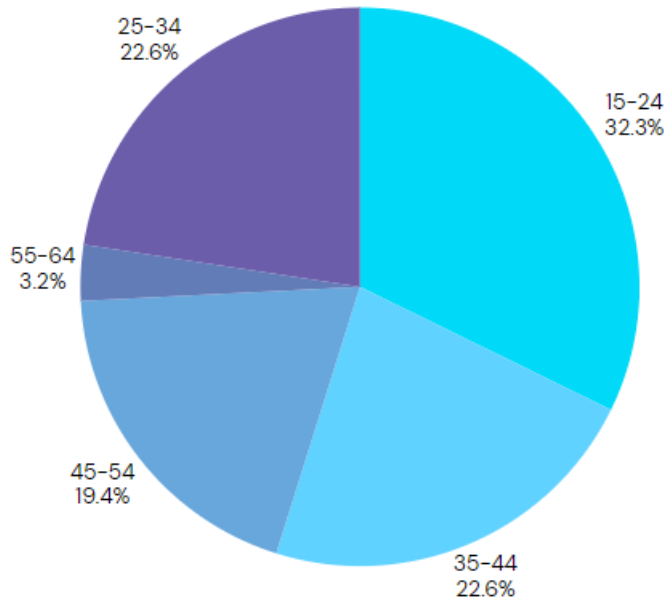
Regarding the ways in which unions can extend assistance to migrant workers, predominant responses from the latter group highlighted that trade unions could offer valuable support by providing information and assistance regarding workers' rights and workplace safety. Additionally, respondents emphasized the importance of unions committing to fair treatment and equal opportunities for migrant workers, along with the role of negotiating with employers to secure improved wages and working conditions on behalf of migrant workers.

IN YOUR OPINION (REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU ARE A UNION MEMBER OR NOT), IN WHAT WAYS CAN UNIONS OFFER HELP TO MIGRANT WORKERS?



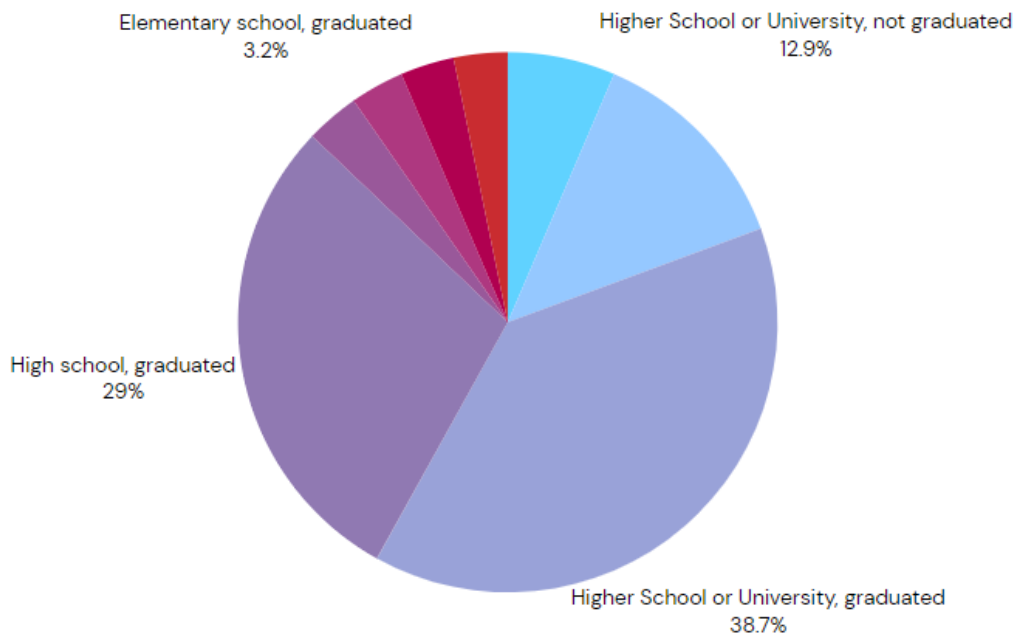
The posted workers in question had diverse origins, including individuals from Albania, some respondents who did not provide their origin, and also Greeks who were posted to other countries. As illustrated below, the majority of posted workers fell within the age brackets of 15-24, 25-34, and 35-44.

WHAT AGE CATEGORY DO YOU BELONG TO?



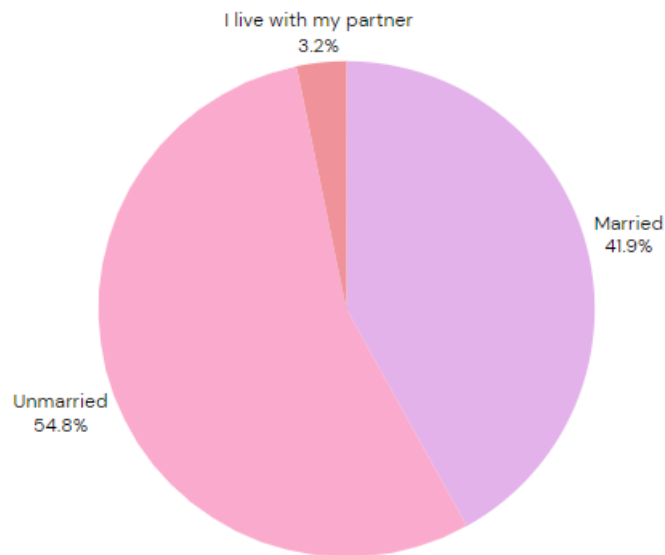
Regarding the educational background of the respondents, as depicted below, 38.7% reported having graduated from higher school or university, 29% had completed high school, and 12.9% had enrolled in higher school or university but did not complete their education. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the majority of respondents were male, constituting 77.4%.

WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION?



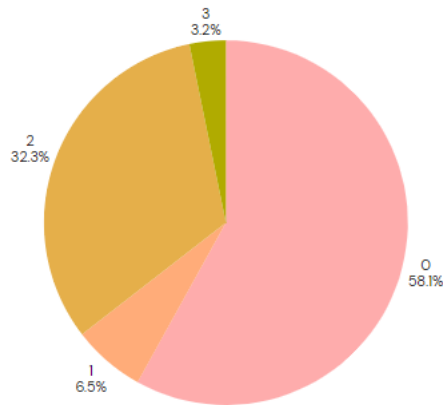
Regarding their family or partner situation, the majority, accounting for 54.8%, mentioned being unmarried, while 41.9% reported being married, and a minor percentage of 3.2% indicated living with their partner. Notably, among those participants who stated they were married or had a partner, the distribution revealed that 66.7% had their partner living with them in their home country, another 26.7% lived in a host country while their partner resided in their home country, and a further 6.7% cohabited in the country hosting them.

DESCRIBE YOUR FAMILY/PARTNER SITUATION



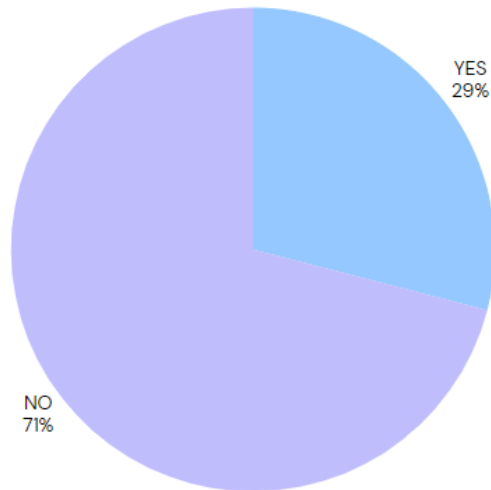
As illustrated below, when considering the number of children reported by the surveyed workers, a significant majority, amounting to 58.1%, indicated that they had no children. Among those who did have children, a noteworthy distribution emerged: 40% of the children resided collectively in the home country of the posted worker, 33.3% lived together in the host country of the worker, and 26.7% lived with the posted worker in the host country while the other parent resided in their home country.

HOW MANY CHILDREN DO YOU HAVE? (IF YOU HAVE NO CHILDREN, PLEASE FILL IN 0)



As depicted in the graph below, a notable majority of survey participants, comprising 71%, were not affiliated with any professional association, while the remaining respondents were members.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION?



INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP

The thirty-five interviews were conducted in two ways, ten of them were personal/individual interviews and the rest took place as an online focus group.

INTERVIEWS

Five out of the ten interviewees (group 1) were affiliated with trade unions, working in the services and social protection sectors. The remaining five interviewees (group 2) included a director from a private company, three representatives from a sectoral employers' association, and one legal entity of public law.

In response to the first question “To the best of your knowledge, what is the most common (predominant) form of employment of mobile workers (border, seasonal or migrant workers), (a) In your country, (b) In your economic sector (in your country)?”, one interviewee noted that in their country, tourism and agriculture were prevalent, particularly in the culinary and service sectors for tourism, and seasonal work in agriculture. Another interviewee mentioned that agricultural work dominated in their country, while the last one stated that rural employment/work is common in Greece.

The second group of respondents highlighted that prevalent forms of employment for mobile workers in Greece include jobs like worker, cleaner, and assistant. Mobile workers in Greece often find employment in seasonal industries such as agriculture and tourism. For both cases (a, b), the primary sectors are seasonal industries like agriculture, tourism, and agro-processing, along with year-round employment in industry and construction. The employment relationships are typically fixed-term, and part-time employment is common for both categories.

In response to the question “To the best of your knowledge, how do the rights of mobile workers and local workers differ in your country (if any)?”, the answers highlighted a prevailing context where all workers, regardless of origin, enjoy fundamental rights such as equality, health and safety at work, and adherence to working hours. However, the responses acknowledged specific challenges faced by mobile workers, including legal issues related to residence status and reception. Another response emphasized the absence of a clear distinction in rights between mobile and local workers, emphasizing that legal employment ensures equal rights for both. The last one referred that mobile workers have low wages and are uninsured.

The second group of respondents noted that labor law generally applies to all workers, irrespective of nationality, with no differentiation in labor legislation and rights between mobile and local workers. The importance of obtaining work permits was emphasized, and it was mentioned that migrant workers may face fewer rights in cases of undeclared work.

Regarding the question “What challenges (in general) do mobile workers face in terms of job security, benefits, social protection, and more, compared to local workers in your country?” we received the following answers. Legal status and rights emerged as a concern, with potential difficulties in recognition and limited access to social and labor rights compared to local counterparts. Occupational safety was identified as another challenge due to insufficient information on labor rights and safe working conditions,

potentially exposing migrants to risks. Additionally, limited access to social protection systems posed problems for migrant workers concerning health coverage and other social needs. Another interviewee succinctly pointed out challenges such as difficulty adapting, language understanding, and limitations in accessing social benefits. Somebody also mentioned that mobile workers work uninsured at a higher rate than locals. One participant also stated that being uninsured is an obstacle to all these privileges.

The responses from the second group indicated that mobile workers may not have the same legal protection as local workers, as laws governing their rights may be less favorable or insufficiently enforced. There's a possibility of discrimination and exploitation by employers due to the workers' inability to assert their rights and relatively lax state control procedures over employers. In many cases, lower benefits, partially undeclared work, and a lack of social welfare were also identified as challenges.

Regarding the question “Are there specific sectors or industries in which mobile workers in your country tend to have more or less favourable rights and conditions (compared to local workers)?”, the responses indicate certain trends:

- Construction: In some instances, the construction industry can involve challenging working conditions.
- Cleaning services and the hotel industry: Mobile workers may hold positions with lower wages and fewer social benefits.
- Catering/Food services: Jobs in restaurants and food services might offer lower wages and limited social benefits.
- Cleaning/Housekeeping: Migrant workers may engage in cleaning or domestic work roles where working conditions may not consistently be favorable.
- Land workers: Mobile workers may hold positions with lower wages and fewer social benefits (e.g. manual work and not the operation of machinery such as tractors, etc.)

The second group responded affirmatively, stating that typically, agriculture, construction, and tourism are the sectors where exploitation is more likely to occur. They emphasized an increased risk of exploitation in agriculture and tourism due to the ease of disguising the employment of migrant workers in these sectors. On the contrary, the likelihood of exploitation is perceived to be lower in industry and construction, where employment is more structured. Additionally, the potential for occupational accidents with significant consequences for employers is noted in these sectors. The response also highlighted that technical construction and digital migrants may be more favored in terms of reduced vulnerability to exploitation.

Concerning regulations for mobile workers at both the EU and national levels, the responses highlight that Greece's national legislation oversees the rights and working conditions of mobile workers. Collective labor agreements further contribute to defining conditions and pay, extending their coverage to mobile workers. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, both the European Union and its member states have implemented measures addressing the labor market's impact, featuring flexibilities in areas such as working hours, job security, and unemployment. The general sentiment expressed is that

these regulations are deemed effective. Two out of five didn't have any knowledge of the matter.

The second group wasn't familiar with any regulations.

When asked about the role of trade unions in supporting mobile workers, the interviewees emphasized the significance of trade union action in defending rights and safeguarding the interests of workers, including migrants. They highlighted several ways in which trade unions can contribute:

- **Information and Education:** Trade unions can offer training and information sessions on labor rights, laws, and working conditions in the host country, ensuring migrant workers are informed and empowered.
- **Legal Support:** In cases of labor rights violations or breaches of agreements, trade unions play a crucial role in providing legal support to affected workers.
- **Negotiations and Collective Agreements:** Through negotiations, trade unions can advocate for improved wages, better working conditions, and additional benefits on behalf of their members, including migrant workers.
- **Social Protection:** Trade unions extend support through services such as insurance, healthcare, and other benefits, contributing to the overall social protection of workers.
- **Community Empowerment:** By fostering a sense of community, trade unions offer psychosocial support and solidarity, helping migrant workers integrate and find support among their peers.
- **Supervision:** To ensure the protection of workers' rights, promote fair working conditions, and address their specific needs.
- **Political Influence:** Trade unions actively participate in political efforts aimed at enhancing laws and policies that affect migrant workers, contributing to the broader improvement of their rights and social treatment.

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In response to the second group's answers, they suggested that trade unions could play a crucial role by providing training and information to mobile workers about their rights and legal protections. This includes:

- Continuously informing migrant workers about their labor rights.
- Offering legal support to address any issues they may encounter.
- Intervening with competent authorities to increase oversight of employers.
- Organizing initiatives aimed at fostering acceptance and inclusion of migrant workers within local communities, informing them of their rights, and supporting them in asserting those rights. They emphasized the need to explore new approaches to effectively reach out to and engage migrant workers.

When asked about the measures taken in recent years regarding the status and collective bargaining of mobile workers, one interviewee clarified the absence of those workers and two others indicated that no specific measures were implemented. On the contrary, the third interviewee highlighted educational initiatives, providing information on labor rights, immigration laws, and other pertinent issues.

The second group responded to the same question by stating that the organization offered training programs to inform migrant workers. This included:

- Implementing training programs to educate migrant workers.
- Informing employers about the legal framework governing the recruitment of migrant workers.

For the question “How has your union/association/company/institution dealt with the issue of wages, employment contracts and dismissals of mobile workers in recent years (before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic)?” the answers varied. One interviewee clarified the absence of such workers, another mentioned intervention to relevant bodies for fair treatment, a different respondent highlighted the provision of information, legal support, and mobilization, and another one noted no dismissals occurred.

The second group of responses highlighted practical approaches, including adherence to legal regulations to manage situations. Some mentioned they didn't encounter such circumstances, while others emphasized their organization's primary focus on providing institutional and legal information to both employers and mobile workers. One respondent expressed support for initiatives ensuring that companies requiring mobile workers for their production processes were adequately supplied. The final response reported no changes in this regard.

About the question “How has your union/association/company/institution dealt with the issue of social security and taxation of migrant workers in recent years (before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic)?” one respondent reiterated the absence of mobile workers. Another indicated dealing with the issue through interventions to competent bodies, while another mentioned using information, legal support, and mobilization. One respondent reported no changes in their approach.

The second group of responses to the same question included statements such as adherence to state-defined regulations, not having to deal with such situations, and no involvement beyond providing institutional and legal information to employers and mobile workers. The final response affirmed that there had been no change in their approach to handling these matters.

In response to the inquiry about the main trends in occupational health and safety, employment contracts, dismissals, and job losses among border, seasonal, and migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, the feedback outlined various challenges. Workers, including those in transit, encountered obstacles such as restricted work activities, heightened health risks, limited access to social and medical services, and job suspension or loss due to economic difficulties. To address these issues, government authorities and labor organizations typically implement measures and programs aimed at enhancing worker health and safety, supporting employment and economic stability, and providing social protection. The emphasis is often on strengthening health and safety protocols for workers in the face of these challenges. Another interviewee answered that there was a strengthening of the safety and personal protection of mobile workers.

In response to the question, the second group highlighted that the pandemic heightened attention to workplace health and safety issues, with employers and governments implementing restrictive measures to curb the virus's spread. Some participants

expressed concerns and noted the application of measures across all workers. Specifically for mobile workers, concerns were more pronounced due to the heightened risk of virus transmission. Another participant mentioned increased flexibility in the provision of work, particularly in terms of location and working hours.

Regarding the question about legal uncertainties for migrant workers concerning border crossing, social security, and taxation during the COVID-19 pandemic, the responses indicated a range of issues. Migrant workers encountered challenges in these areas:

- **Border Crossing:** The imposition of pandemic-related restrictive measures and border closures raised difficulties for migrant workers moving between countries, even banning their entry.
- **Social Security:** Legal uncertainties arose regarding the impact of social security measures on migrant workers and how their entitlement to social protection would be ensured.
- **Taxation:** Workers faced uncertainties about their tax status, including concerns about potential obligations to pay taxes in multiple countries or how changes in their workplace due to the pandemic could affect their tax situation.

In response to the question, the second group provided diverse perspectives. One participant mentioned that there's often a disciplined and fearful response towards immigrants until they integrate into the local society, primarily due to uncertainties surrounding their unknown destination. Another participant noted the challenges faced by immigrants, including suspensions and changes in social security systems that raised questions about their access to benefits. One person highlighted legal uncertainties and protests related to border crossings, particularly in a high-risk regime where citizens themselves faced movement restrictions. Regarding the institutional framework concerning social security and taxation, it was noted to be relatively clear. Two respondents candidly declared not having sufficient knowledge on the matter.

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When asked to describe the measures taken by their trade union/association/company/institution regarding the position and collective bargaining for mobile workers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, one interviewee clarified the absence of mobile workers, two indicated no specific measures were taken, one mentioned actions involving information dissemination and assertion of rights, while the last one emphasized compliance with EU rules.

The second group outlined measures such as providing information on COVID-19 prevention and safety measures, offering flexible working hours or schedule changes to accommodate the new circumstances, and promoting teleworking where feasible to minimize virus transmission risks in the workplace. One respondent clarified their organization's supportive role, proposing measures and solutions at institutional and operational levels, as they are not authorized to address the legal status of workers. The remaining participants in this group expressed a lack of knowledge on the matter.

When questioned about medium-term measures crucial for enhancing collective bargaining and contracts for mobile workers in their country, the interviewees emphasized several practical steps:

- Education and Information: Prioritizing education for both employers and workers to enhance awareness of their rights and responsibilities within the context of collective bargaining.
- Cooperation between Trade Unions and Employers: Advocating for increased collaboration between workers' unions and employers' organizations to foster improved working conditions.
- Strengthening Collective Representation: Enhancing mechanisms that allow mobile workers to be more effectively represented during negotiations.
- Ensuring Equal Rights: Emphasizing the importance of guaranteeing equal rights for migrant workers in comparison to local workers concerning working conditions, wages, and social benefits.
- Establishment of Advisory Services: Creating advisory services dedicated to offering guidance to migrant workers regarding their rights and preparing them for collective bargaining scenarios.
- Clear Legal Framework, Insurance, and Social Benefits: Emphasizing the necessity of a transparent legal framework, along with insurance and social benefits, to provide a stable foundation for collective bargaining and worker protection.
- Inclusion of migrants in collective bargaining, transparency in labor contracts and training.

The second group answered:

- Streamlining Bureaucracy.
- Sustaining and fortifying trade union networks.
- Consistent provision of information to migrants regarding their labor rights.
- Offering legal support.
- Engaging with competent authorities to enhance employer oversight.
- Organizing initiatives to foster acceptance and inclusion of migrants within local communities.
- Efforts to deliver systematic and effective support.

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When asked to provide examples of successful practices to improve the situation of mobile workers, the interviewees highlighted practical initiatives:

- Information and Training: Successful efforts involved implementing training and information activities to heighten awareness among mobile workers about their rights, working conditions, and opportunities to engage in negotiations. Also, the inclusion of vocational training.
- Cross-Border Cooperation: Positive outcomes emerged from cross-border cooperation among trade unions and organizations in different countries, reinforcing solidarity and protecting the rights of mobile workers.
- Establishment of Advice Centers: Noteworthy examples included the establishment of advice centers in certain regions, offering guidance and support to migrant workers on various issues, including legal and social aspects.
- Establishment of reception and information centers.
- Social inclusion programs.
- Support networks.

- Extension, renewal of contracts, salary increase.

The second group answered that some organizations and social organizations provide free or subsidized training programs for migrants and mobile workers. A local agro-processing company employed 30 foreign and foreign-religious workers in its production in the summer of 2023. To integrate them, it implemented internal introduction activities with local workers to achieve acceptance by colleagues in the workplace and adapted their working hours in such a way that the daily practices imposed by their religion were respected.

FOCUS GROUP

Twenty-five individuals took part in the focus group, comprising trade union members, primarily private company directors. Additionally, representatives from the Fthiotida Chamber of Commerce and social and health workers were also present. Many interviewees found the subject quite fascinating. However, they admitted to having limited knowledge about mobile workers. Despite this, they expressed a genuine interest in delving deeper into the topic in the future.

- 1) To the best of your knowledge, what is the most common (predominant) form of employment of mobile workers (border, seasonal, or migrant workers), (a) In your country, (b) In your economic sector (in your country)?

In Greece, most mobile workers are seasonal and migrant workers. Construction, agriculture, tourism, and food-service sectors (e.g. restaurants) appear to be dominant.

- 2) To the best of your knowledge, how do the rights of mobile workers and local workers differ in your country (if any)?

Typically, mobile workers tend to trail behind their local counterparts in terms of workplace health and safety, often facing precarious conditions, especially when they lack insurance coverage. Adherence to working hours may also be compromised, and low wages further exacerbate the challenges faced by these workers.

- 3) What challenges (in general) do mobile workers face in terms of job security, benefits, social protection, and more, compared to local workers in your country?

One prominent challenge revolves around legal status and rights. Mobile workers often encounter difficulties in recognition and may have limited access to essential social and labor rights, creating a disparity compared to local workers. This lack of legal clarity can leave migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination, hampering their job security.

Occupational safety emerges as another significant concern. Insufficient information on labor rights and working conditions puts mobile workers at risk, making it crucial to enhance awareness and education on these matters to ensure a safer work environment for migrants. Language barriers and difficulties in adapting to a new environment were also highlighted. These challenges can impede effective communication and integration, further isolating mobile workers from social benefits and support systems available to locals. The alarming rate of uninsured work among migrant workers, as mentioned by some respondents, is a critical issue. Being uninsured not only jeopardizes the well-being

of mobile workers but also serves as a barrier to accessing various privileges, exacerbating the challenges they face in terms of job security and benefits.

- 4) Are there specific sectors or industries in which mobile workers in your country tend to have more or less favourable rights and conditions (compared to local workers)?

In the construction industry, it is acknowledged that challenging working conditions can be prevalent for both local and mobile workers. The cleaning services and hotel industry emerge as sectors where mobile workers may encounter positions with lower wages and fewer social benefits. Similarly, the agriculture sector, which includes manual work such as picking olives, chestnuts, apples, and soil crushing, may offer lower wages and limited social benefits for mobile workers.

- 5) Are you familiar with any of the regulations (either at EU or national level) on the status and collective bargaining of mobile workers (border, seasonal or migrant workers) (before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic)? If so, do you think they are effective?

Regarding the specific challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, both the European Union and its member states, including Greece, have implemented measures to address the impact on the labor market. These measures include flexibilities in areas such as working hours, job security, and unemployment. The general sentiment expressed in the responses is that these regulations are considered effective in managing the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

The majority were not familiar with relevant regulations. This information suggests a potential need for increased awareness and education within the trade union or relevant organizations regarding the existing regulations at both the national and EU levels.

- 6) In your opinion (whether you are a trade unionist/member or not), in what ways can trade unions help mobile workers?

Trade unions can play a crucial role in providing training sessions and information on labor rights, laws, and working conditions in the host country. By ensuring that migrant workers are well-informed, trade unions empower them to navigate the complexities of the labor market. Also, trade unions could extend support through services such as insurance, healthcare, and other benefits, contributing to the overall social protection of workers. This is especially crucial for migrant workers who may face unique challenges in accessing social services. Moreover, an interviewee thought that trade unions could set up a "worker's advocate" type of service that would include policies, institutional framework, etc. for migrant workers and assist them.

- 7) Describe the measures taken by your union/association/company/institution (if any) in recent years (before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic) regarding the status and collective bargaining of mobile workers.

Most participants declared that mobile workers were absent in their work environment.

One said that their organization, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, their union has prioritized educational initiatives aimed at empowering mobile workers with

knowledge on various aspects. Another said they implemented training programs to inform migrant workers about their labor rights, immigration laws, and other pertinent issues.

- 8) How has your union/association/company/institution dealt with the issue of wages, employment contracts and dismissals of migrant workers in recent years (before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic)?

Most participants declared that mobile workers were absent in their work environment.

Some of the interviewees said that their organizations played a proactive role in providing information, legal support, and mobilization efforts to address issues related to wages, employment contracts, and dismissals of mobile workers. By educating both workers and employers on their respective rights and obligations, they aim to foster a transparent and fair employment environment. One participant declared that in his organization there was a decrease in wages but no contract interruptions. Another one said that because of COVID-19 the contracts transformed to eight months duration with extension or renewal.

- 9) How has your union/association/company/institution dealt with the issue of social security and taxation of migrant workers in recent years (before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic)?

Most participants declared that mobile workers were absent in their work environment.

Some said that they actively engaged their mobile workers and local employers in providing information and legal support to them. Others stated that took steps to provide institutional and legal information to mobile workers. This helped the latter in fostering a transparent and informed approach to social security and taxation matters, ensuring compliance with regulations. Another participant declared that COVID-19 was an unprecedented phenomenon, and they didn't take many measurements regarding the social security of their mobile workers. Another interviewee said that the law for the security of mobile workers has not been implemented in general.

- 10) To the best of your knowledge, what were the main trends in occupational health and safety, employment contracts, dismissals, and job losses (including wage levels) of border, seasonal, and mobile workers in your country during the crisis caused by the pandemic COVID-19?

Workers, including those in transit, encountered several obstacles during the pandemic. These challenges included restricted work activities, heightened health risks, limited access to social and medical services, and job suspension or loss due to economic difficulties. The pandemic created a complex environment where both health and economic factors significantly impacted the well-being of mobile workers. Others' responses emphasized that the pandemic heightened attention to workplace health and safety issues more broadly. Employers and governments implemented restrictive measures to curb the spread of the virus, with a particular focus on ensuring the safety of all workers, including mobile workers.

- 11) To your knowledge, what legal uncertainties were there for migrant workers regarding border crossing, social security and taxation in your country during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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Focus group participants stated that the imposition of pandemic-related restrictive measures and border closures created significant challenges for migrant workers moving between countries. Furthermore, one said that mobile workers faced uncertainties regarding their tax status. The changes in their workplace dynamics due to the pandemic raised concerns about potential tax obligations in multiple countries.

- 12) Describe (in general terms) the measures (if any) taken by your trade union/association/company/institution regarding the position and collective bargaining for mobile workers in the context of pandemic COVID-19.

Some people stated that there were no specific measures regarding the position and collective bargaining for mobile workers during the pandemic. Others took actions that involved information dissemination and the assertion of rights for mobile workers. This approach aimed to ensure that mobile workers were well-informed about their rights and equipped to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic. Other measures involved offering flexible working hours or even teleworking to accommodate the new circumstances.

- 13) What medium-term measures (of institutions, trade unions, associations and companies) do you consider important to improve collective bargaining and contracts for mobile workers in your country?

Some spoke for increased collaboration between workers' unions and employers' organizations to foster improved working conditions. Also, somebody reminded the promotion of policies and practices that eliminate discriminatory practices and ensure fair treatment for all workers, would be helpful. One said that a measure could be to promote the active inclusion of migrants in collective bargaining processes, ensuring their voices are heard and considered.

- 14) Can you give examples of good practice or successful actions from your country or other regions to improve the situation of mobile workers?

Regarding this question, no feedback was given.

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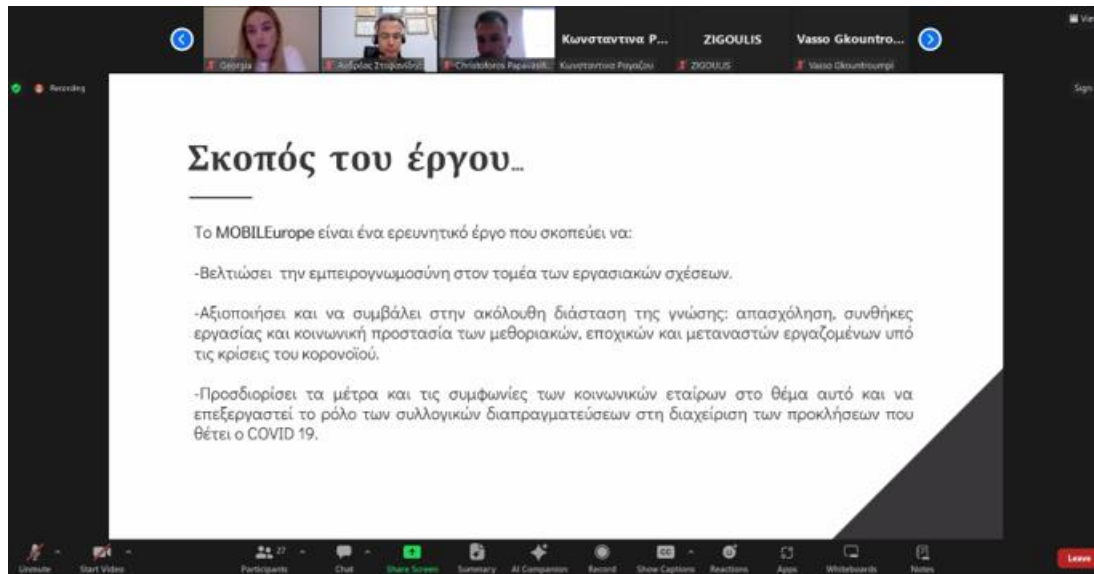
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ANNEX



Σκοπός του έργου...

Το MOBILEurope είναι ένα ερευνητικό έργο που σκοπεύει να:

- Βελτιώσει την εμπειρογνομosύνη στον τομέα των εργασιακών σχέσεων.
- Αξιοποιήσει και να συμβάλει στην ακόλουθη διάσταση της γνώσης: απασχόληση, συνθήκες εργασίας και κοινωνική προστασία των μεθοριακών, εποχικών και μεταναστών εργαζομένων υπό τις κρίσεις του κορονοϊού.
- Προσδιορίσει τα μέτρα και τις συμφωνίες των κοινωνικών εταίρων στο θέμα αυτό και να επεξεργαστεί το ρόλο των συλλογικών διαπραγματεύσεων στη διαχείριση των προκλήσεων που θέτει ο COVID 19.



ΣΥΛΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΔΙΑΠΡΑΓΜΑΤΕΥΣΗ – ΕΡΩΤΗΣΕΙΣ

5. Πώς αντιμετώπισε το σωματείο/ο σύλλογος/η εταιρεία/το ίδρυμά σας το θέμα της κοινωνικής ασφάλισης και της φορολογίας των μετακινούμενων εργαζομένων τα τελευταία χρόνια (πριν, κατά τη διάρκεια και μετά την πανδημία COVID-19);
6. Εξ όσων γνωρίζετε, ποιες ήταν οι κύριες τάσεις σχετικά με την υγεία και ασφάλεια στην εργασία, τις συμβάσεις εργασίας, τις απολύσεις και τις απώλειες θέσεων εργασίας (συμπεριλαμβανομένων των επιπέδων μισθών) μεθοριακών, εποχιακών και μεταναστών εργαζομένων στη χώρα σας κατά τη διάρκεια της κρίσης που προκλήθηκε από την πανδημία COVID-19;
7. Εξ όσων γνωρίζετε, ποιες νομικές αβεβαιότητες υπήρχαν για τους μετακινούμενους εργαζόμενους σχετικά με τη διέλευση των συνόρων, την κοινωνική ασφάλιση και τη φορολογία στη χώρα σας κατά τη διάρκεια της πανδημίας COVID-19;
8. Περιγράψτε (γενικά) τα μέτρα (εάν υπάρχουν) που έλαβε το σωματείο/ο σύλλογος/η εταιρεία/το ίδρυμά σας σχετικά με τη θέση και τις συλλογικές διαπραγματεύσεις για τους μετακινούμενους εργαζόμενους στο πλαίσιο της πανδημίας COVID-19.