

Governments and Employers Must Do More to Protect Workers

08 April 2020

<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-releases/article/governments-and-employers-must-do-more-to-protect-workers.html>

Governments and employers need to do more to protect jobs, wages and living standards amid the Covid-19 pandemic according to a new survey published by the International Trade Union Confederation.



Credit: IFJ Melbourne journalists rally

The results back up the findings of IFJ affiliates that while a number of countries have introduced wage or job protection measures they are often inadequate and too often leave behind hundreds of thousands of freelance journalists and media workers.

The impact of Covid-19 on jobs and employment has increased as more countries are responding to the pandemic with national lockdown measures including the closure of schools and non-essential business. Europe (75%) has the largest number of countries in lockdown followed by the Americas (71%). Asia-Pacific has the least with 61% of countries.

IFJ affiliates have reported widespread layoffs, wage cuts and some media closures. Advertising revenues have slumped and social distancing and quarantine regulations mean many media are unable to operate. Freelance journalists have been badly hit with tens of thousands having all work cancelled.

IFJ unions, working with sister unions, have been at the forefront of demanding government support for both media and workers pay and conditions. The ITUC survey reveals the views of unions on steps taken so far.

The vast majority of governments (72%) are providing wage protection and income support but there are big regional differences. 57% of countries surveyed in Africa and 35% surveyed in the Americas are not providing wage protection and income support for workers. Nearly half of the countries providing this level of support are in Europe/Pan European region. 15 of the seventeen G20 countries surveyed are providing income support or wage protection. 29 OECD countries are providing income support or wage protection.

In the countries which are providing wage protection and income support, 59% of countries say they are enough to cover essential costs including food, electricity and housing. 41% say they are not enough to cover essential costs – this is most strongly felt in the Asia-Pacific (64%) region followed by the Americas (45%).

The social contract is being re-written in many countries as governments, employers and unions work together to manage the social and economic impact of Covid-19. Governments are responding to the needs of workers well in 64% of countries. This view is held in all regions apart from the Americas where governments are responding badly in 65% of countries.

Employers are leaving workers behind. Respondents from 56% of countries think that employers are meeting the needs of workers badly. Employers in the Americas and Asia-Pacific are worse at responding to the needs of workers than other regions according to the survey.